HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 146 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 23, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 23, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, I have the honour to lay upon the table the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner's case report in the matter of an investigation into allegations of wrongdoing.

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2017-18

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting the main estimates for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

* * *

[*English*]

FEDERAL TAX EXPENDITURES

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table a document on behalf of the Minister of Finance, in both official languages, entitled "Report on Federal Tax Expenditures".

* * *

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 four petitions.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-240, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit — first aid). The committee has studied the bill and recommends that the House of Commons not proceed further with this bill.

* * *

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH SEXUAL ASSAULT LAW TRAINING ACT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-337, An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code (sexual assault).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand in the House to introduce a bill to address the need to build more confidence in our judicial system when it comes to the handling of cases involving sexual assault and sexual violence. Too often, those involved in these cases come away with the feeling they have experienced not just a judgment on their case but a judgment on their character.

[*Translation*]

I believe we must address this situation by starting with the people responsible for overseeing Canada's justice system.

There is a definite lack of transparency in the federal justice system with respect to how and how often judges get training and education around handling cases that involve sexual violence.

[*English*]

This is about making our legal system fairer for everyone involved in these difficult cases. I hope my colleagues from all parties will take the time to consider the steps we propose here and support my legislation, the judicial accountability through sexual assault law training act or, what we like to call it, the just act.

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

* * *

● (1010)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Carleton, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, March 7th, 2017, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, income splitting is a basic tax fairness measure because it ensures that families making the same income pay the same rate of tax and the same amount of tax. That is why I am pleased to table a petition today signed by people from my constituency calling for the reinstatement of the family tax credit, which was, unfortunately, cancelled by the government when it took office.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise this morning to present two petitions.

The first addresses the crisis of homelessness. It is from constituents within Saanich—Gulf Islands, who are asking the House to consider the national homelessness strategy as proposed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities as a model for dealing nationally with homelessness.

INSECTICIDES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, again from residents within my constituency but also a goodly number from Ontario, is calling for action to protect Canada's pollinators by banning, as other jurisdictions have done, the use of neonicotinoid insecticides.

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition signed by residents of the metropolitan region, including the riding of Mount Royal, who are asking for something pretty far-fetched: they want the percentage of seats occupied by parties in the House to reflect and represent the percentage of votes those parties obtain in an election.

I am pleased to join them in asking this of Canada's Parliament.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—IMPACT OF CARBON TAXES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That, given: (a) the Liberal election platform states that "government and its information should be open by default" and "data paid for by Canadians belongs to Canadians"; (b) the Department of Finance has indicated that a federally-mandated carbon tax will cause higher prices to "cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices"; (c) such regressive taxes cause low-income people to bear a larger burden as heat, gas, and groceries form a larger portion of their family budgets; and (d) the Department of Finance has produced numerous calculations of the impact of these taxes on low and middle-income families, and their effect on the gap between rich and poor; an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the Department of Finance's documents titled "Impact of a carbon price on households' consumption costs across the income distribution" and "Estimating economic impacts from various mitigation options for greenhouse gas emissions," and any other documents that calculate the cost of carbon taxes on Canadian workers, businesses, and families.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Brantford—Brant.

This week we learned the story of an Ottawa-area senior who said he could no longer afford to heat his home or fuel his car, so he is giving up both. Rick Russell even put up a sign on his house declaring, "Another senior loses home due to high energy costs", telling reporters he can only afford a home without heat or heat without a home.

He is not alone. Disabled grandmother Kathy Katula broke down into tears at the Prime Minister's recent town hall meeting, demanding to know how she would pay his new carbon tax on her home heating when she is already struggling with $1,000 a month electricity bills imposed by the provincial Liberal Government of Ontario. The Prime Minister gave her a warm hug, but unfortunately not warm enough to heat her home.

These are not isolated cases. The 2016 Ontario Association of Food Banks report entitled, "Hunger Report" said, "Since 2006, hydro rates have increased at a rate of 3.5 times inflation for peak hours, and at a rate of 8 times inflation for off-peak hours."

Sixty thousand Ontarians have had their electricity cut off for failing to pay their bills, the report noted, adding that many food bank clients struggle with electricity bills of $300 to $700 a month. The food banks themselves say they are struggling to afford the electricity for their massive refrigerator systems.

Ron Dunn, executive director of Windsor's Downtown Mission, has had people come to him and plead, "If you can help me with food, then I can pay for some of this hydro bill before it gets cut off."

These increases are the direct result of the Liberal Green Energy Act, which forces consumers to subsidize millionaire turbine and solar investors who sell overpriced, unneeded, and unreliable electricity to the government. While millionaires have prospered, Ontario has the worst poverty record of any province in Canada since the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals took power.

Between 2003 and 2014, the poverty rate dropped by one third in British Columbia, the Prairies, Atlantic Canada, and Quebec. It did not budge in Ontario.

Over the same time period, Ontario had the largest increase in the percentage of the population earning less than half the median income. It also has the worst record for middle-income growth across the country. Ontario's auditor general calculated that the government subsidies of wind and solar power companies will cost consumers like Kathy and Rick $170 billion, making the Ontario Liberal Green Energy Act likely the single-largest wealth transfer from the poor and middle class to the super rich in Canadian history.

The national carbon tax will do to gas, groceries, and heating costs exactly what the Green Energy Act has done to electricity. A Statistics Canada official recently testified at the House of Commons human resources committee that increases in fuel, food, and other basic necessities necessarily increased the number of people living below the poverty line.

Even carbon tax supporter Nicholas Rivers admitted that the tax will raise the price of gasoline by 11 cents a litre, electricity by another 10%, and natural gas by over 15%.

Annually, it will cost $1,028 per person, or $4,100 per family of four, according to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

This month, the Fraser Institute released proof that British Columbia, which has the least damaging carbon tax in the country, will still take a $870-million net tax increase from British Columbian taxpayers. That is to say, the average family of four in British Columbia will pay $728 more in carbon taxes than they get back in offsetting tax relief. That is the least damaging carbon tax in the country.

● (1015)

We know that the burdens of these taxes fall disproportionately on the backs of those with the least, for a number of reasons. First, we know that Stats Canada data shows that poor households spend roughly one-third more of household income on the basic necessities that will be taxed, like gas, groceries, and heat. While wealthy households still buy these goods, they constitute a much smaller share of a wealthy household's income. Therefore, the percentage tax increase is actually higher on those who are poor, which is the very definition of a regressive tax.

Second, the carbon tax will generate billions of dollars in new revenue for the government, but who will get that money? It is those who can afford to lobby for grants, rebates, and corporate welfare under the guise, of course, of saving the environment. I turn to the rebate that people can now receive if they can afford to buy a $150,000 Tesla car. I guess Rick Russell has now had to give up his truck, but if he wants to get back any of the money he is paying in the carbon tax, he will have to find $150,000 to buy one of these fancy Teslas or Mercedes-Benz electric vehicles, and then he can get $15,000 back. In reality, those wealthy enough to lobby for these rebates will get all the money back, as is so often the case with the theory of trickle-down government. Those at the top end up with the most.

That is why I filed an access to information request to find out how much poor and middle-class taxpayers will pay under the new Liberal carbon tax. I asked for the government to provide documents such as briefing notes, analyses, projections, and emails regarding the impact of a $50-a-tonne price on carbon or a carbon tax on the Canadian economy and include any analysis on the price of carbon on the impact on the consumer price index, median incomes, low-income household incomes, the poverty rate, the employment rate, and the unemployment rate.

The response was ominous. Imposing a carbon tax will lead to costs that will "cascade through the economy" said the finance department document, referring to two tables that would tell how much households would pay, but those tables are blacked out. These tables would break down the costs of the carbon tax by income quintile for the very poor, the poor, the middle class, the upper income, and the rich. The government says it wants to reduce the gap between rich and poor. Should it not then jump at the opportunity to release data on the tax's impact on income inequality, unless it has something to hide?

Could it be that, after running an entire election campaign on the supposed promise of taking more from the rich so that it could give back to the poor, the government is doing precisely the opposite and, worse, trying to cover it up? The most basic principle of parliamentary democracy is that people must consent for the taxes that they pay, through the assembled Parliament.

The Bill of Rights of 1689, which established the parliamentary system that we know today, through the mother Parliament in Britain, had as one of its basic principles what would become no taxation without representation. "Levying money for or to the use of the Crown...without grant of Parliament...is illegal." Simply put, government cannot tax what Parliament has not approved, but we cannot approve what we do not know, and therefore, there cannot be taxation without information.

This motion calls for the immediate release of that information. These may seem like abstract concepts, but they are real to people like Kathy Katula, Rick Russell, and others who have no money to influence government or pull its levers, two people seeking no program or wealth but merely asking for government to get off their backs and out of their pockets. They pay the bills. They have the right to see those bills. This motion would give them the chance. Anyone voting against the motion would take that right away from them.

I ask the House to vote for this motion, to bring the light of day. To pass this motion in the House of Commons is to stand for our duty to represent the common people here in the house of the commoners.

● (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is any policy issue for which the Conservatives can clearly demonstrate they have lost touch with Canadians, this has to be it. Even Patrick Brown, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, has recognized that we need to have a price on carbon. Provincial governments across Canada, with one exception, and governments around the world have recognized the need for a price on carbon. Only the Conservative Party of Canada inside the House of Commons has lost touch with reality on this issue.

My question to the member is this. Why does he believe that the Conservative Party is the only party in North America, it seems, that tends to want to say no to a price on carbon? Do its members not care about the environment? Why will they not listen to what Canadians have to say on the importance of the environment?

● (1025)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, even many of the supporters of carbon pricing that the member refers to have said that their plan would return to taxpayers everything collected through that price on carbon, in the form of rebates and income tax cuts. The only way to test that proposition is to know what people are paying in the first place. The government has that data. It has tables that demonstrate the costs to each family, broken down by income quintile. If it is so confident that Canadians will get back in corresponding tax relief and other measures what they pay in new taxes, then it will release that data. However, it will not release it because it knows that this is a net generator of money for politicians and government, which will be disproportionately flowed down to the richest people who are able to purchase the influence in order to get their hands on the money, and they know that money will disproportionately come out of the pockets of those with the least. This is another Liberal wealth transfer from the poorest to the richest. If I am wrong, then the government should release the data and prove me wrong.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing this motion forward. I have a question for the member for Carleton. I have noticed that the request for documents from the government had a rather narrow scope. The member is wanting information on what the impacts of imposing a carbon tax to Canadian families might be. Would he also consider amending his call and asking for information on the costing of the failure to take action to address or mitigate climate change, as well as the costs in delaying that action?

It is important that we look at this in a holistic way. I am sure the member is aware that most nations around the world have committed at Paris to take action to reduce. The International Energy Agency has called upon the current government, and all governments, to move toward investments in clean energy and reducing greenhouse gases. Therefore, I wonder if the member would give consideration to broadening his request for information from the government to also include the other side of the costs, those of not taking action on addressing climate change.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is that the carbon tax is about the environment. The government could try to make the case that it is about the environment if it would release data to show whether the tax is revenue neutral. A revenue generator brings in more money to government coffers than it returns through corresponding tax relief elsewhere. If it does not do that, then it is merely another tax grab. It has nothing to do with the environment; it is just meant to fund more bloated bureaucracy and more handouts to the wealthy and well connected.

One way to elucidate that question for all members of the House of Commons is to release the data. The government has detailed tables containing the real costs by income quintile; that is, the real costs to the very poor, the poor, the middle class, and everyone else. This motion today merely asks it to remove the black ink from those tables and release the data so Canadians know what this tax costs them. I ask for the member's support for the motion.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up and speak today.

What we are calling for today is pretty simple. As my colleague just articulated, we are asking for transparency, and I will quote from the motion itself:

> ...the Liberal election platform states that "government and its information should be open by default"....

Therefore, if there were no reason not to provide the data, then the data would be provided by default.

The question the government is facing is why. Why are the tables blacked out and redacted from the report that we are requesting? We simply want to show the effect of the carbon tax on various income levels of individuals in our society and also on business in terms of the effect it will have on competitiveness.

In that regard, I would like to talk about some of my constituents who employ a lot of the people in the manufacturing sector within my community. I will talk about some of the meetings I have been having with constituent business owners about the rising energy costs, and what the carbon tax will mean from their own rudimentary calculations based on the percentages that the federal government has dictated to the provinces and has said that will be phased in over time.

One such company manufactures very large pieces of stainless steel product that go into large installations, such as dam gates and things that are very unusual. These are one-off projects around the world. It employs just more than 400 people in good, well-paying jobs. On the production floor it has six enormous furnaces. These furnaces heat and shape the metal to make it into the final product.

Back in the 2008 election, we had been threatened with a carbon tax by the Liberals. In that election, they campaigned that they would bring in a carbon tax. The owner of that business came to me at the time and calculated the effects of what that carbon tax would mean, and it was at basically the same rates that exist today. The way he explained it to me was—because of the amount of natural gas he uses in heating the product to shape it, which is an enormous amount of money—that if a carbon tax like this came into existence, it would mean $9,000 per employee per year in extra overhead costs.

This company happens to own two other manufacturing facilities, one in Michigan and one in Ohio. Some 400 well-paying jobs in my community are at threat over a carbon tax, if we just do the basic thinking on this and use common sense. Therefore, I am talking about the impact that this tax will have on business, and already businesses are facing the prospect of competitive rates that will start to come into effect in the United States. They will start to look at their options, because basically they have to compete on an international level.

We do not know what the effect of the carbon tax will be on the Canadian population at large and on businesses. It is absolutely wrong that we cannot get that information when it is available in writing from the finance department in terms of what it will do.

This is probably the most damning quote that, again, forms part of what we are asking for today. The Department of Finance indicated that the federally mandated carbon tax will cause higher prices to "cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices" for everything.

● (1030)

This means exactly what my colleague was driving at with the examples of individuals who are disproportionately affected because they are at the lower end of the income scale. There are many people right now in Ontario, and my friend said 60,000, who have had their hydro cut off by Hydro One.

Over the last week, we witnessed in the legislature of Ontario people trying to get answers to questions like why the CEO of that corporation makes $4 million a year while in the same type of corporation in Quebec the CEO makes $400,000. There is no answer to those questions, because the government does not know why.

The other part of that equation is that all the people who work at Hydro One in Ontario have been taken off the sunshine list. In other words, there is no transparency with respect to the incomes they are earning as employees. Again, it is Liberals hiding transparency. This is another huge broken promise. It is exactly what they promised Canadians they would not do during the campaign in the last election.

We found out early on that the $10-billion deficit was just thrown out the window, because they had a majority and could do whatever they wanted, so it is $30 billion. Electoral reform is the same; promise made, promise broken. We can go on about the types of promises the Liberals made and how they were broken.

I will talk a little bit about the projected effect on seniors. It would be $1,208 per person from a carbon tax. This is the statistic that was given to us by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. It estimates that it will be$1,028 per person, or $4,102 per family of four, when fully implemented in 2020. Does the government agree with this figure? Is it higher? Is it lower? Why will it not say? Why will it not release the data it has that should be open and transparent, by default, for all Canadian to see? What is being hidden? That is what we are driving at today in the motion. We are driving at being transparent, exactly what the Liberals said they would be, and now they have had a change of heart and are doing it differently.

When we look at this in every community, people will actually have to decide whether they can afford to even have an automobile or afford groceries to eat over paying their hydro bills. Another example of this was asked, again, in the legislature of Ontario. It was about an individual whose hydro bill had arrived, and he had consumed $4 worth of hydro in the period measured in the hydro bill, which is generally 30 days, yet there was a charge of $100 for all the other charges, including the global adjustment fund and the delivery charge. How was this individual charged $4 for consuming a certain amount of hydro and $100 that was not. The Wynne Liberal government will not answer that question.

We are in a crisis situation in the province I come from, a crisis situation that is real for the people who are at the lower end of the economic scale. What we are striving to do today in opposition is ask the Liberals to be transparent, to do what they said they would do and provide us with the data, because we believe that the data is being covered up and hidden by the government. We are asking today for the support of all parliamentarians to live up to that promise.

● (1035)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my hon. friends for their concern for Canadians of lower and modest incomes, including seniors in Canada who fit into that category.

Of course, the carbon pricing the government has put forward is intended to be cost neutral, and as such, the provinces are free to give back all or some portion of the revenues generated to such groups as low and modest-income Canadians.

I wonder if the member had some ideas about how best those funds might be returned to the members of his constituency and those of others.

● (1040)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the provinces that have implemented them are putting them into their budgets as estimated revenues. In Ontario, the estimated revenue from the cap and trade system is $1.9 billion. That money is not going back to taxpayers. In British Columbia, the federal government charges GST on top of the carbon tax. We are getting income in our revenue stream through the GST. The government is taking that additional funding and putting it into operational funds.

My idea is that we not put a carbon tax in place, because it makes us uncompetitive and it affects people with the lowest incomes the most. We should not go down that road at this time.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech, but I have to say that 99% of it is irrelevant. He ranted on about what the provinces are doing. We have certain jurisdictions, and so do the provinces.

If we want to talk about a jurisdiction in Canada that significantly raised the cost of electricity, it is Alberta, where the previous Conservative government introduced deregulation, which that member's party loves to tout. There were astronomical increases in the cost of electricity, which had nothing to do with consumption.

I wonder if the member could speak to the issue I raised with his colleague. It is well known around the world, and certainly well known in this country, that the longer we delay action on reducing greenhouse gases, the higher the price. Sooner or later, that cost is going to be imposed on consumers. His government promised cap and trade but did nothing. His government put in place a home energy retrofit program and then cancelled it and used the money to cover its deficit.

Does the member not think it is time that measures be taken at the federal level to work with the provinces and territories to address climate change through programs like home energy retrofits?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct some of the information the member talked about. It was actually the Conservative targets the current government used for the Paris agreement. We set out a plan, sector by sector, to make progress toward achieving those goals, and they were put into effect.

That is rhetoric that nothing was happening and that we do not care about climate change. Of course we do. We just believe that there is a better way to do for the 400-plus people in my community who will have no income and will be on the list of the unemployed when $9000 is added to the overhead at their factory, making it uncompetitive, and that factory relocates to Michigan. We need to care about those individuals.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government laid out targets and a plan to reduce greenhouse gases using incentives and mechanisms other than a carbon tax. Those targets were adopted by the Liberal government and taken to Paris. An agreement was signed, and everybody was happy, because the Liberals were doing so much for the environment. I find that ironic, because when I look at what is happening in cities across this country and the reduction in greenhouse gases and all the programs and incentives that are in place, they are far better mechanisms than taxing the poor.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government set out realistic targets that could be achieved. We went about it sector by sector, putting incentive programs in place for people to move toward those targets. It was the stick and carrot idea. We believe, as Conservatives, that the way to move forward is to get people to do it in a way they agree with and that they agree to build into their cost structure, be they individuals or businesses.

We went down that road. We implemented a number of initiatives that were working. The rhetoric that we did nothing is absolutely false, and the record shows that. What more do I need to say?

● (1045)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question posed by the hon. member for Carleton. Our government knows that the economy and the environment go together. That is why we are committed to making investments that will lead to a cleaner, more innovative economy that will not only help us achieve our goal of reducing emissions but will create well-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians and those who are working hard to join them. We are taking concrete steps to protect our planet for our children and grandchildren.

The motion before us today references information that bears no reflection to our plan. Our government's plan to address climate change involves working with the provinces and territories to determine mechanisms and impacts in various regions of our country.

As was noted during the first ministers meeting last December, climate change is indisputable, as are the significant impacts it is having in Canada and around the world. We are already facing the social and economic cost of climate change, which poses significant risk to our environment as well as our health, security, and the future prosperity of our nation. This is why we have shown leadership by working together in close collaboration on behalf of all Canadians. We are working to develop a plan to grow our economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build resilience to the impact of climate change.

Our government is approaching this challenge in a prudent and flexible manner. We are committed to collaboration with provinces and territories on climate change issues. We will ensure that the provinces and territories continue to have the flexibility to design their own policies to meet their targets, including their own pollution pricing policies. Provinces are actively pursuing their own climate policy agenda and are introducing pollution pricing measures as part of their plans.

We have developed a pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon pollution. Under the new plan, all Canadian jurisdictions will have pollution pricing mechanisms in place by 2018. To facilitate this plan, the government has set a benchmark of pricing carbon pollution at a level that will help Canada meet its greenhouse gas emissions target while providing greater certainty and predictability for Canadian businesses.

Each jurisdiction will be given a choice on how to implement carbon pricing. They can put a direct price on carbon pollution, or they can adopt a cap and trade system. We propose that in jurisdictions with a direct price on carbon pollution, the price should start at a minimum of $10 per tonne in 2018, rising by $10 a year to $50 per tonne in 2022. Jurisdictions with a cap and trade system will need to set their annual caps to achieve at least the same emission reductions that would result from a carbon price in a price-based system. Cap and trade systems will also need a 2030 emissions reduction target equal to or greater than Canada's 30% reduction target.

Each jurisdiction will also have the flexibility to keep revenues to use as they see fit, whether it means giving it back to consumers, supporting their workers or families, helping the most vulnerable, including communities in the north, or supporting businesses that innovate and create jobs for middle-class Canadians.

Take the case of British Columbia, where carbon pricing is revenue neutral. Since 2008, B.C. has proven that it is possible to reduce emissions while growing the economy and creating good-paying jobs. B.C. has the highest broad-based carbon tax in North America. Its carbon tax sets a transparent and predictable price on carbon while returning all revenues to B.C. individuals and businesses. The price signal creates a real incentive to reduce emissions across the economy.

Again, jurisdictions have the freedom to use the revenues from this source as they see fit. It is their choice. In the case of B.C., it has meant that every dollar generated by the carbon tax is returned to British Columbians through reductions in other taxes. In fact, during the period between 2008 and 2015, the net benefit to taxpayers was $1.6 billion.

It also goes without saying that because of the very flexibility that defines the pan-Canadian framework, attaching a benefit or a cost to households or individuals at large is not as straightforward as the member opposite would have us believe. In fact, it is terribly misleading.

● (1050)

Since each province and territory has the flexibility to design a system that works for it and to use the revenues as it sees fit, much work remains to be done in the way of further analysis and modelling in collaboration with the provinces and territories before a relevant estimate can be provided.

It is important to understand as well that the memo being debated today and much bandied about by the member for Carleton was written before the current government was in office. Its data in no way reflects our government's pan-Canadian collaboration and flexible approach. It will not help him or anybody better understand the impact of our plan. How could it? It was drafted a year before it was even hatched. Its release could cause confusion for Canadians, industries, provinces and territories, and our partners around the world about Canada's actual plan and the cost associated with it. That is not something to toy with. That is my opinion. Members opposite may feel differently.

Luckily, as the member well knows, the professional public service manages access to information in the Government of Canada and applies certain restrictions to information that is released according to the rules set out by the Access to Information and Privacy Act. The impartiality and non-political nature of this process is important and must be upheld by all members of the House. It is in Canada's best interest that we not undermine these carefully considered decisions with partisan barbs.

[*Translation*]

In summary, pricing carbon pollution will give Canada an edge in building a clean-growth economy, will make Canadian businesses more innovative and competitive, will bring new and exciting job prospects for middle-class Canadians, and will reduce the pollution that threatens our clean air and oceans as well as the health of Canadians.

Together, we will create the clean-growth economy necessary for the collective health, prosperity, and security of this generation of Canadians and the next.

The government's overall approach will be reviewed in 2022 to ensure that it is effective and to confirm future price increases. The review will account for actions by other countries.

As far as Canada is concerned, I am pleased to say that we are working from a position of strength. We are in an enviable fiscal position. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is well above the average for the G7. This means that we have the flexibility needed to implement our long-term vision of ensuring that Canada's economy works for the middle class. If the economy works for the middle class, it works for everyone.

The measures to support the middle-class is what the Canadian economy needs and what Canadians deserve. It is what Canadians wanted and what we provided and will continue to provide in the future.

On January 1, 2016, nearly 9,000 Canadians had more money in their pockets thanks to the middle-class tax cut. This measure was not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do for our economy.

The middle-class tax cut and the measures that go with it help make the tax system fairer to give all Canadians the opportunity to succeed.

Specifically, the government lowered the tax rate in the second personal income tax bracket from 22% to 20.5%. Single individuals who benefit from the reduced second personal income tax rate will see an average tax reduction of $330 every year, while couples will see an average tax reduction of $540 every year. Only the higher income earners, the wealthiest 1%, will pay more taxes with the introduction of the 33% personal income tax rate on individual taxable income in excess of $200,000.

● (1055)

Finally, the government returned the tax-free savings account, or TFSA, annual contribution limit to $5,500 from $10,000, effective January 1, 2016. Returning the TFSA annual contribution limit to $5,500 was consistent with the government's objective of making the tax system fair and helping those who need it the most.

When combined with other registered savings plans, a $5,500 TFSA annual contribution limit will enable most individuals to meet their ongoing savings needs in a tax efficient manner. Furthermore, indexation of the TFSA annual contribution limit was reinstated. Thus, the annual limit will retain its real value over time.

Another cornerstone of the government's plan to help the middle class and those working hard to join it is the Canada child benefit. The benefit will help parents better meet the needs of their children. The CCB is simpler and more generous than the old benefit system it replaced, and it is completely tax-free. In addition, it does a better job of targeting the people who most need it.

I firmly believe that the many parents who receive this assistance agree that it is greatly needed and appreciated. With the introduction of a much better-targeted Canada child benefit, about 300,000 fewer children will be living in poverty in 2017 as compared to 2014. That means that Canada's child poverty rate will drop by about 40% relative to 2014.

Since the Canada child benefit was introduced in July 2016, nine out of 10 families are now receiving more money than they did under the previous system. They are receiving an average increase in annual benefits of $2,300 in 2016-17.

Parents with children under 18 will receive a maximum annual benefit of $6,400 per child under the age of six and up to $5,400 per child between the ages of 6 and 17. Whether these additional funds are used for things like buying school supplies, covering part of the cost of registering for sports activities, helping with the family grocery bill, or buying warm coats for winter, the Canada child benefit helps parents cover the high cost of raising their children.

Finally, the Canada child benefit will be indexed to inflation starting in 2020 so that families can continue to count on this additional support for a long time, with their benefits keeping pace with rising expenses.

[*English*]

As on pricing carbon pollution, our government has achieved other goals through collaboration with the provinces. We have reached a historic agreement with provincial governments to enhance the Canada pension plan. This project was undertaken given our knowledge that one in four Canadian families approaching retirement, 1.1 million families, is at risk of not saving enough to maintain the family's current standard of living. The risk is highest for middle-class families. Families without workplace pension plans are at an even greater risk of under-saving for retirement. In fact, a third of these families are at risk. Saving more through an enhanced CPP will mean Canadian families are more confident about their future and about their ability to secure a dignified retirement.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

Our government is particularly concerned about the situation of young Canadians. They tend to have more debt than previous generations and, in most cases, they will also live a lot longer than previous generations. They are faced with the challenge of trying to save enough money for retirement at a time when fewer of them can expect to have a job with a pension plan.

In summary, the measures that our government has taken show our commitment to helping the middle class and those working hard to join it. We have taken action to strengthen the Canada pension plan. We introduced the middle-class tax cut, which benefits nine million Canadians. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which provides additional financial assistance to nine out of ten Canadian families.

We will continue to work for Canadians in order to build a stronger and more equitable economy where all families can grow and prosper.

[*English*]

If it is a real, relevant, and factual debate the member for Carleton is looking for, I am hoping that we can use our time to talk about those numbers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to salute my colleague and thank her for her contribution to this debate.

The motion put forward by the member for Carleton is very clear. It calls on the government to release a study it did on how families will be affected by the Liberal carbon tax. I would remind the House that the government remains very tight-lipped when the news is not good. The Minister of Finance sat on this study for 10 weeks, a study done by his own bureaucrats that found that if nothing changes, we are heading toward a debt of $1.5 trillion by 2050, with no return to balanced budgets until 2055. I understand why the minister was probably embarrassed by his bureaucrats' work, which is why he kept the study to himself for 10 days.

If the Liberal government is so proud of the Liberal carbon tax and really believes it is going to be wonderful, why does it refuse to release a study regarding the direct, real, and concrete repercussions the Liberal carbon tax will have on Canadian families?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

Once again, it is the employees working for the access to information program who assess these requests. They are the ones who decide to provide information. Their work is extremely professional and non-partisan, and they are the ones who make the final decision.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as it is my first time to speak in the debate today, I have to say it was a breath of fresh air to hear from the parliamentary secretary.

My criticism of the Liberal government is that it is not doing nearly enough to price carbon at rates that are competitive in the world. Starting at $10 a tonne is too low. British Columbia already has a carbon tax of $30 a tonne. Contrary to the misinformation and, I will say with all due respect to my colleagues, disinformation coming from the Conservative benches talking about a Fraser Institute study that has been entirely discredited, the Government of British Columbia, its finance minister and finance civil servants have no possible way to explain the Fraser Institute propaganda. Our tax in British Columbia is revenue neutral. The problem with it is Christy Clark has not raised it every year on year, as was under the original plan of her ideological soulmate, former premier Gordon Campbell.

In this debate, we should talk about real impacts on real families. A revenue neutral carbon tax in British Columbia of $30 a tonne has not hurt our economy. We continue to lead nationally. British Columbians want the premier to raise the carbon tax.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her comments and for her ongoing work on this issue.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to creating a cleaner, more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects our environment while creating good jobs for middle-class Canadians.

At the first ministers meeting that was held in December 2016, most provinces and territories agreed to implement a Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. The framework includes a pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon pollution, such that carbon pricing will be implemented across the country by 2018. Under the pan-Canadian framework, provinces and territories have the flexibility to choose between the two systems and it is their choice to do so. We encourage provinces to take the lead on this. We want them to be the drivers on this. We are there to support the work they are going to be doing.

● (1105)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing I am very concerned with is the Liberal government's very slow action, or complete inaction, on a lot of climate issues. It could very easily and quickly bring back the eco-energy home retrofit program, which was initiated by the Conservative government in previous years and was very successful.

For some reason, the Conservatives stopped it when it was doing good things. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian families took advantage of this. It reduced energy costs by 20%, greenhouse gases by three tonnes per year in every household, and it leveraged four times the investment across the country for every dollar put in by the federal government. Instead, in the pan-Canadian framework, it is shuffled down to the provinces to maybe do something about retrofits in homes.

Why has the government not brought this back? It is such an efficient, no pun intended, way to get the country doing good things on climate action.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and the work he does on this file.

To us, this is just the first step. We want to work with the provinces and territories. The revenues generated from carbon pricing will remain in the province or territory where they are generated. We also want to ensure that such decisions are made by the provinces and territories and not by us here in Ottawa.

Every province or territory can use the revenues from carbon pricing as it sees fit, including dealing with pollution and the impact on vulnerable sectors, and supporting the achievement of climate change objectives and clean growth.

In fact, it will be up to the province or territory to make the necessary choices to meet its own needs.

[*English*]

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it just shows how out of touch the government is by the comments the member has made. We constantly hear in the House about how great the Liberal policies, such as the CPP increase and the carbon tax, are for jobs and people. We just heard a passionate speech from the member for Carleton. He indicated that a number of people in Ontario were losing their jobs. Just in Alberta last month, 25,000 full-time jobs were lost, and 8.8% of people are unemployed in the province.

We are told that Albertans and Ontarians are asking for a carbon tax. How can the member stand in the House and say that a carbon tax is exactly what the country needs right now?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, this member is saying that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. We cannot keep putting our heads in the sand about the issue of climate change. It is this government that is here to help middle-class Canadians and those who are most vulnerable. It is this government that has put in place the Canada child benefit program, which has helped hundreds of thousands of Canadians move out of poverty. It is the party opposite that has voted against that policy.

It is also our government that has put in place an increase in the guaranteed income supplement. I hear the opposition speak about seniors and say that we have done nothing to help them. We have done a lot to help our seniors, and we will move forward in that direction. We care about Canadians and we want to ensure they get the help they need to support them in their time.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the arguments we hear from the Conservatives are about whether this is revenue neutral. Could my colleague pick up on that point? We are seeing a strong national leadership working with the provinces. In fact, Ottawa does not receive any revenue from this. The provinces will get the revenue. Could my colleague explain that further?

● (1110)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with provinces and territories, and we have done so on many fronts, be it the Canada pension and the list goes on. For this situation, we ensured we consulted with provinces. We wanted to ensure they were the drivers in all of this, that they would determine where that money would be invested and how it could better help their provinces. We want them to take the lead and that is exactly what we have done. We are proud of that.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government claims it is borrowing and spending that money to put toward helping seniors and others, yet it does not have any idea how to pay it back.

Also, is the hon. member aware of the final report last week on the non-revenue neutral carbon tax in British Columbia? It was reported that the government generated over $450 million from it. Where is the revenue neutrality in that? I hope she is aware of that and will admit that this is true.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's interventions. Our government is committed to ensuring we help middle-class Canadians. We committed to do so in our platform as we formed government. We are continuing to move forward.

We are the government that has put in place the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors. We are the government that has put in place the Canada child benefit program. We are the government that has lowered taxes for low-income Canadians.

We have a plan to help middle-class Canadians, and we will continue to go forward with that plan.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

It is an interesting debate this morning. I have looked at the motion, listened to the speeches and I wonder if anybody here has actually read the motion. The motion tabled by the member for Carleton is in essence a call for an order of the House that the government deliver on its duties and commitments for openness and transparency, although the ask is narrow in scope.

The member has previously raised in this place his frustrations with the government providing significantly redacted documents, documents allegedly providing analyses of the impacts of the proposed carbon tax on low and middle-income families. The documents the member seeks to have released include reports titled "Impact of a carbon price on households' consumption costs across the income distribution" and "Estimating economic impacts from various mitigation options for greenhouse gas emissions". However, the Conservatives have also asked for any additional documents that the government may have prepared, or have in its possession, or have used public funding for to analyze the implementation and the costing of the carbon tax.

As I mentioned in my questions for some of the colleagues in this place, the motion does not call for release of any analyses documenting the cost of failing or delaying action to address climate change, including impacts associated with mitigation costs already experienced in our country. Natural Resources Canada commissioned such a report decades back, documenting climate impacts across sectors of the economy and across regions of the country. I recommend a read of that document by everyone in this place.

The motion also does not call for any measures to mitigate the costs associated with private investment and reducing greenhouse gases, such as the home energy retrofit program, installation of solar panels, and so forth.

I first wish to speak to the matter of the duty and commitment for open and transparent governance, including full disclosure of documents.

As the motion states, the Liberal Party was clear in its election platform on its commitment to restore openness and transparency in government. By way of example from its platform, it states, "Together, we can restore a sense of trust in our democracy. Greater openness and transparency are fundamental to accomplishing this". It goes on to say, "At its heart is a simple idea: transparent government is good government. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians".

Once elected, the government issued a policy document entitled "Open and Accountable Government". Under this policy directive issued by the Prime Minister, the Liberals undertake to ensure a policy of openness and transparency, and respect for the role of Parliament. It states:

> In our system of government, Parliament is both the legislative branch and the pre-eminent institution of democratic accountability. Clear ministerial accountability to Parliament is fundamental to responsible government, and requires that Ministers provide Parliament with the information it needs to fulfill its roles of legislating, approving the appropriation of funds and holding the government to account.

That is the most important role we have on both sides of the House.

This mantra is again repeated in the mandate letters issued by the Prime Minister to his ministers. For example, the mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change repeats this mantra of openness and transparency. It states:

> We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians....Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Again from the Liberal Party platform, I will share some of the actions the government committed to in the election. It states:

> We will work together to establish national emissions-reduction targets, and ensure that the provinces and territories have targeted federal funding and the flexibility to design their own policies to meet these commitments, including their own carbon pricing policies.
>
> These targets must recognise the economic cost and catastrophic impact that a greater-than-two-degree increase in average global temperatures would represent, as well as the need for Canada to do its part to prevent that from happening.

That is precisely what is being asked for in this motion, which is the deliverance of the documents so all sides of the House can make a determination on whether the government is moving appropriately and cost effectively in the measures it is introducing.

In the mandate letter to the Minister of the Environment, she is then specifically mandated to ensure that any reduction targets recognize the economic cost and catastrophic impact that a greater than 2° increase would deliver.

● (1115)

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Finance are mandated to undertake a cost estimate of delayed action. It would be nice if we could have that revealed as well. Certainly, when the Conservatives were in power, they did not reveal nor advertise the fact that even before their mandate the Department of Natural Resources had done an in-depth analysis showing considerable impacts across our country already occurring more than 15 years ago. Although the member does not request the release of information on the economic costs of mitigating that damage, failing or delaying to take action, it would be useful as well.

Where we differ with the Conservative Party on this motion is the Conservatives' persistence, first, in refusing to recognize that climate change even exists and, second, that Canada has inappropriately committed to do its part to prevent catastrophic climate change, including imposing a price on carbon. It is clear that the Conservative Party continually does not support any kind of measures to put a price on carbon, including the measures chosen to date by the Liberal Party. Third, the Conservatives refuse to accept that world leaders are taking action, including embracing a transition to a cleaner energy economy, and fourth, that credible entities, such as the International Energy Agency, have called on all nations, including Canada, to expedite this transition to investment in clean energy.

Yes, we need full disclosure of any considerations, studies, assessments, or estimates on the cost, policies, or measures for greenhouse gas reduction, including the proposed carbon tax and other measures which have not come forward yet and will be needed in order for the Liberals to deliver on the commitments made in Paris. However, the starting point must be toward delivering on our nation's commitments to reduce greenhouse gases. The Liberals committed to one thing in Paris and we have targets that came from the previous regime, which are not going to deliver on our commitments made in Paris. That should be done through a just transition.

If there is one thing we have not heard from either the Conservatives or the Liberals in this place, it is the need to start moving on action for a just transition. If we are going to move from an economy largely based on the oil and gas sector, we are going to need to support the people who work in those communities. Many workers in the oil and gas sector, including the oil sands sector, started their own organizations and are calling on the government to actually finance their retraining and deployment, not just research, on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

In closing, this motion is, frankly, all about openness and transparency and I grow tired of hearing that access to information requests are done independently. I, too, have been refused documents which, in fact, I knew were already publicly released. I call upon the government to rethink and commit to the our previous bill that called for improved access to information, including for members of this place.

● (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen a very open and transparent government on the environment file and in fact on all files. That has been a default position of this government.

In our debate today, we should go back to the Paris agreement, something that happened literally months after we became government. The Prime Minister went to Paris and an agreement was achieved. He came back to Canada, worked with the different stakeholders, in particular, the provinces, territories, indigenous people, and through national leadership, came up with a plan to deal with carbon pricing, something that is good and healthy for Canada's environment.

Would the member not acknowledge that as we move forward, we need to continue to work with the stakeholders? That seems to be lost in a lot of the discussions. What Ottawa should be doing, or continuing to do, is to demonstrate strong national leadership on the file, but we also need the buy-in from the other stakeholders, like our provinces, and so forth. Perhaps the member could comment on just how important that aspect is.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend 20 minutes responding, but I will not have the opportunity.

There were a lot of promises made by the Liberals in the election. One was that they would immediately restore and strengthen Canadian environmental laws. Those include the environmental assessment process, in which stakeholders, the communities that are impacted by resource developments, would have a voice on how they proceed, including the calculation of what the greenhouse gas emissions would be.

It is nice to talk about working with the provinces and territories. However, we are seeing a federal model where the government sits back and says to the provinces and territories that its their job. I have yet to see a federal plan from the government on how exactly it is going to deliver on its commitments in Paris. Is it going to be another Kyoto?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the member for Edmonton Strathcona, not only for her recent work but for her decades of work for the environment, and for understanding the climate crisis and its urgency. That is one of the things that is absent from most of the discussions in this place. We tend to have what I regard as a most unfortunate, ill-informed focus day after day on carbon taxes as opposed to discussing the imminent threat that we are going to be too late, with respect to the Paris commitment, to avoid a 1.5° global average temperature increase. We are going to be too late to focus on the fact, and it is a fact not an opinion, that the current federal target falls well below our Paris goals and is in fact incompatible with the Paris goals.

I want to give my hon. colleague an opportunity to speak to the enormous cost to Canada and future generations if we do not move more aggressively.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, of course, we all recognize in the House the member's hard work on the environment and climate file. I look forward to speaking with her on these matters at the University of Ottawa tomorrow evening.

It is already documented. I mentioned a report that was issued by NRCan, even before the Conservative government took power, and I have seen no one taking any measures to distribute that report. There already have been major impacts on agriculture, and major impacts on our cities and towns across the country. There have been significant impacts on the Arctic. We already know that the costs are rising, but we are dragging our heels.

I would like the Liberal government to step forward and start working with us in this place, and with Canadians, on what its actual fulsome plan is to actually meet those Paris targets. We are waiting. Time is running out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for her excellent speech and her very thoughtful answers.

Today we are debating a motion moved by the official opposition, the Conservative Party, an oddly drafted motion that addresses a number of different themes. The wording of the motion feels like a trap. In fact, it makes a tenuous connection between a number of things that might also be the subject of entirely separate debates. The motion tackles everything from access to information and transparency to the cost of home heating and climate change. It combines all these topics and patches them together for a debate that could go pretty much anywhere.

I am going to talk about three things. First, when it comes to transparency and access to information, let me take a moment to point out the irony of the Conservative Party moving a motion calling for access to more information. When I think of the Harper years and the Conservative Party's record on providing access to information, I do not know whether to laugh or cry.

Creating the parliamentary budget officer was a good idea on the Conservatives' part. It is a good thing. It is a watchdog that audits estimates, government expenses, and the repercussions and costs of various programs and measures. However, once they created the parliamentary budget officer position, they made it so difficult for the incumbent to access figures and data that he had to use the Access to Information Act to get departmental figures.

The Conservative government was anything but transparent and open. It was the worst. In 2014, journalists told us that never in Canadian history had the Access to Information Act been in such bad shape. That matters because that is how the government is meant to be accountable to Canadians, so they know how money is being spent and whether it is really helping people.

If the government makes decisions but keeps information hidden, how can citizens of a democracy understand the pros and cons of those decisions and judge whether they are appropriate?

The Information Commissioner used to give a report card, like the ones children are given, to the defence and transport departments concerning their handling of access to information requests. They received marks ranging from D to F. However, nothing was really done about this.

The Access to Information Act states that a disclosure must be made within thirty days of the request for access. The Conservative government set a record when the defence department took 1,100 days to respond to an access request. That is the equivalent of three years. It is just slightly longer than the siege of Leningrad.

In 2013, Information Commissioner Suzanne Legault said, “I know of no other federal law that is so openly flouted by government authorities.” Today, I have to admit that I find it a little funny that the Conservatives are lecturing us about transparency and the openness of government. Now that they are in opposition, they are changing their tune. However, they are not the only ones. The Liberals have also changed their tune now that they are in power. That is also interesting.

Pat Martin, our friend and former colleague, introduced a bill to improve access to information, and the Prime Minister himself supported it when in opposition. However, today, now that he is in power, he is doing absolutely nothing.

The NDP has been asking for years for the Access to Information Act to be modernized so that government information is open and accessible to associations, organizations, citizens, opposition parties, and the media.

● (1125)

Accessing information is still extremely difficult today. Despite all of the nice words and grand promises to be a different kind of government, develop a new policy, and restore public confidence, the Liberal government remains secretive and opaque.

It is not the intent of the motion, but it is still important to mention the Liberals' by-invitation-only fundraising activities, which gave privileged access to ministers and the Prime Minister. That is not at all the type of politics that the Liberals promised during the campaign.

Furthermore, the Conservatives have every reason to be concerned about energy costs, because they are causing a lot of trouble for many families across the country. I understand my Ontario colleague's concern about high heating costs, which are causing a lot of trouble for many individuals and families right now.

The NDP believes that a good public power generation and distribution system is part of the solution. In Quebec, we are lucky because the cost of energy is regulated and controlled. We are also fortunate to have many rivers, which means that our energy is renewable. That is important when it comes to climate change, an issue that we are going to talk about shortly.

We must not use the trouble some provinces are having with heating and electricity costs as an excuse to tear down measures that are a critical component of our contribution to fighting climate change and global warming.

I am surprised at the Conservatives' silence on the subject of energy costs even though they were the ones who cut the program. The Liberals' silence surprises me too. Why not bring back the ecoENERGY retrofit program, which I think was a win-win-win program? My colleague talked about it earlier. Why is that program no longer available? It worked. Its benefits were threefold: it lowered heating costs for families because houses were better insulated and lost less heat through their roofs, windows, and doors; it reduced greenhouse gas emissions because it lowered energy consumption in places where people heated with gas, oil, or coal; and it created jobs because people and small businesses needed workers to replace windows and doors to better insulate houses.

We can reduce the cost of heating, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create jobs, and yet what is the Liberal government doing? It stays silent, which is unfortunate. We in the NDP really want to hammer this home, because we think it is a good program that should be brought back.

Now I want to talk about climate change. We can see the trap set by the Conservatives, as they use pretexts like the cost of heating and so-called transparency to attack something that is necessary, that is, our contribution to what is probably the greatest challenge of our generation, the fight against global warming. Global warning will reach a tipping point and cause massive natural disasters.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government did absolutely nothing on this issue for 10 years. In fact, certain members of the Conservative cabinet and certain Conservative MPs even denied human activity's influence on global warming. That is absolutely incredible.

Former U.S. vice-president Al Gore was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and do members recall why? It was for his efforts to combat climate change and global warming. Indeed, if sea levels rise by one or two metres, it will create population movements so massive as to provoke conflicts. Some areas will be flooded, while others will become deserts.

● (1130)

We need to tackle all of these changes, and we want action from this Liberal government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. As he said, the problem goes beyond sea levels rising by a metre or more.

● (1135)

[*English*]

We do not like to talk about the risk of going above 1.5° global average temperature increase. At the Paris negotiations, I sought out scientists to find out what we would tell people if they asked what the difference would be between 1.5° and 2°. The low-lying island states will not survive if we go above 1.5° and we will lose large chunks of the Arctic. We are basically playing Russian roulette by hanging on to land-based ice, such as the Greenland ice sheet or the western Antarctic ice shelf. If we lose either one of those, we would see an eight-metre sea level rise for each event. We do not know when that will occur. The Greenland ice shelf is ice on land. Arctic ice melting would not lead to a sea level rise but it would disrupt the climate globally. With ice on land we are playing Russian roulette with catastrophic levels of quite sudden loss of coastlines and major urban areas.

I would ask my friend for any comments he might have on the urgency of the crisis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Green Party for her comments.

I was already quite concerned, but now I am starting to panic. That is why the federal government needs to take this issue seriously.

Let us not forget that the Liberal government under Jean Chrétien signed the Kyoto protocol. We found out later from a former chief of staff that it was in fact just a public relations operation. Under the Kyoto protocol, there was supposed to be a 6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels. What happened under the Liberal government? There was a 30% increase in greenhouse gas emissions. It was all talk and no action.

Today the government is talking about implementing a carbon tax. In an earlier intervention, my colleague said that this tax does not go nearly far enough to achieve the weak targets that this government has set.

A few months ago, on the program *RDI Économie*, a tax expert and professor from Montreal talked about how this carbon tax was inadequate and would not change much of anything. Marwah Rizqy criticized the Liberal government's targets and how its measures are incompatible with its own targets. The government should take a listen sometime.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech because he has identified the three major paradoxes in the subject of the motion presented by the Conservatives today.

I would like to hear more from him about the empty rhetoric of this Liberal government, which literally promised everything but the moon during the campaign. The Liberals probably did not expect to find themselves in government. Today, they are improvising by saying that the targets set by the Conservative government are fine and attainable. Not only are the targets too weak, but we will not even reach them. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands made that very clear.

How is it that we ended up with a government that congratulates itself and insists all of its plans are fantastic even though nothing ever happens?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We have a government that is all about image, appearances, and self-promotion. The Liberals like to indulge in such things. However, when the time comes to keep their promises, they are nowhere to be found.

I could talk about democratic reform, but I will refrain from talking about my favourite subject. As for the Liberals' main election promise, social and green infrastructure, my colleague is quite right and the parliamentary budget officer reminded us of this just recently. The Liberals had proudly announced that they would spend about $13.5 billion on infrastructure. Upon verification, only $4.3 billion has been spent.

What does that mean for Canadians? It means that the social housing and the additional buses promised are not there. It means that the Liberals talk about investing in our roads and everything that will help our economy, but they are not keeping their promises. It is absolutely deplorable. That is why we will continue to hold this government to account.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Lakeland.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the good people who live in the eastern Ontario riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to participate in today's debate in support of the motion put forth by my fellow Conservative colleague from eastern Ontario, the hon. member of Parliament for Carleton.

As someone who successfully ran against Stéphane Dion's 2008 carbon tax platform, I find that this debate is a trip down memory lane. I remember very clearly the Liberal candidate who ran against me, although there have been so many I forget their names, showing up at an all-candidates' meeting with a block of firewood, claiming her party had no intention to carbon tax firewood. Her more rabid supporters even claimed that her party would never ban the burning of firewood.

I invite Canadians to read the joint statement made on June 29 by the Prime Minister, the previous U.S. President, and the Mexican President. In addition to pledging to bring in carbon taxes is the promise to get rid of firewood being used to heat homes in rural communities, or ban the burning of firewood.

The Liberals hid their carbon tax, a hidden agenda in the last campaign, having learned the lesson of poor Stéphane Dion, who was so recently kicked under the wheels of the broken promises bus of the Liberal Party. It is no surprise the Liberal government refuses to be open and transparent with Canadians and provide the information my colleague, the member for Carleton, has been requesting and is requesting in today's motion about carbon taxes.

In the province of Ontario, a regressive carbon tax is not something new. The carbon tax in Ontario was authored by the Prime Minister's principal secretary, Gerald Butts. Taxpayers pay it every month as an item on their electricity bill. The Toronto Liberal Party calls it a "global adjustment".

For Canadians who may be curious as to exactly what the Liberal Party is hiding from Canadians about the destructive nature of carbon taxes, I turn to Canada's national broadcaster, the CBC, and an excellent article on its website entitled, "Be afraid: The brains behind Ontario's energy disaster are now running the country". The author then asks, "Phasing out coal, a feverish pursuit of green energy, new tax regimes—where have we all heard this before?"

Posted December 7, 2016, by Graeme Gordon, it sets out in clear language the carbon tax controversy in Ontario and what Canadians can expect with the same person in charge in Ottawa. Quoting the CBC:

> It is uncontroversial to call Ontario's energy situation a disaster. As [the liberal Premier] has herself conceded: Ontarians are now having to choose between paying the electricity bill and buying food or paying rent.

The article then clearly points out who was responsible for the carbon tax on electricity fiasco in Ontario, the Prime Minister's top adviser, Gerald Butts.

> ...it was former premier Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal team from 2003 to 2012—including his former principal secretary and "policy guru" Gerald Butts—who set Ontario onto this financially bleak, dead-end road. And now, Butts is headed on the same path, leading not the Premier, but the Prime Minister, on the way down.
>
> Butts was, according to the Toronto Star, "the man they call 'the brains behind the operation" and the "policy architect of the Liberal government since 2003."
>
> Butts departed from McGuinty's government in 2008, but not before he and the Ontario Liberal team set the stage for the ill-fated Green Energy Act, in part, by signing onto dubious wind power projects and its cripplingly inefficient Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program (RESOP).

Let us be clear, as the CBC pointed out:

> Butts himself takes—credit for initially enacting and seeing through those energy policies.

As the *Toronto Star* reported in 2012, "On his biography page at the WWF website, Butts cites how he was 'intimately' involved with the McGuinty government's environmental initiatives." Another Canadian Press article made it clear that Ontario's energy policy was Butts' design, "McGuinty's plan came from his senior adviser, Gerald Butts."

> Butts has graduated to the halls of Parliament Hill as [the Prime Minister's] own principal secretary, leaving behind a province still paying the price, literally, for his tenure. His promise to eliminate coal, for example—a worthy gambit, if done fiscally responsibly—cost Ontario consumers an extra $37 billion between 2006 and 2014, according to an auditor general, and is expected to cost another $133 billion from 2015 to 2032.

● (1140)

Let us read what else the CBC had to say about Gerald Butts:

> Now he's doubling down, via the prime minister, on his green energy gambit by promising to enact carbon pricing regimes (read: tax) on all provinces by 2018 and phasing out coal by 2030, even as our neighbour and biggest competitor [the United States] moves in the opposite direction. How team...[Butts] sees a carbon-priced Canada competing against the U.S. on an off-kilter playing field confounds most people's common sense....
>
> The federal Liberals, under the stewardship of Butts, has already run a projected $30 billion deficit in its first year in office.

This comes after promising a $10 billion deficit for each of the first three years. It is a $60 billion broken promise.

> Phasing out all coal by 2030 will have a cost that will add to that deficit. (This sounds awfully familiar, no?) Forcing carbon taxes on all Canadians by 2018 will, in theory, be a revenue generator for Canada, yet it also promises to eat up more of Canadians' paycheques, and potentially trigger businesses to flee to greener (and cheaper) pastures down south—a phenomenon that is of real and pressing concern for Ontario's government.

The CBC article finishes with the following warning for all Canadians:

> The architects of Ontario's energy fiasco are now stationed in the PMO. The whole country should be wary of the financial disaster of that province being replicated nationwide.

What could be in the finance department's own documents that are so damaging to the Liberal Party's flagship policy of carbon taxes that the Liberals are afraid to share it with Canadians?

To get an idea of what the documents reveal, Canadians need look no further than the report of Ontario's auditor general on the new set of carbon taxes brought in by the Toronto Liberal Party under the direction of the federal Liberal Party. According to the non-partisan auditor general, cap and trade carbon taxes, which kicked in at the beginning of 2017, will cost Ontarians billions of dollars in additional heating and transportation charges. They will lead to even higher electricity rate increases than are already expected, send billions of dollars out of the Ontario economy, and vastly overstate any environmental benefits.

The AG's report adds to what other critics of carbon tax policies have been saying all along. The biggest winner from the policy will be Toronto, which will have the power to create and distribute any number of credits it wishes and use any revenue from the program to fund a suite of pet projects that will have little to no environmental benefits.

The auditor general highlighted that carbon taxes in Ontario come at a major cost for the province's households and businesses, which are already struggling from the fastest electricity rate increases anywhere in North America. Between 2017 and 2020, households and businesses will be burdened with even higher taxes. The annual direct and indirect costs to the average household will rise to $285 by 2019. Households that drive more miles will pay more. As to the impact on rural and northern households, which are already suffering from high energy costs, either the information has not been analyzed by the province or, as with the Liberal Party in Ottawa, it is not being released to consumers. Cap and trade carbon tax pricing will make electricity price hikes worse for industrial customers, also according to the auditor general.

● (1145)

Perhaps the province will use the billions of dollars in proceeds of its carbon credit options as a subsidy to lower hydro bills. By 2030, large industrial customers will experience a 7% increase in their electricity rate, which is directly attributable to cap and trade carbon pricing. This price hike is over and above the increases the province has already laid out in its long-term energy plan.

Contrary to the vapid talking points prepared by Gerald Butts for the Minister of Environment, carbon taxes are bad for the economy. In Ontario, the Liberal carbon tax on electricity has eliminated more than 400,000 good, well-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector. Carbon taxes hurt the less advantaged the most. Carbon taxes lead directly to higher commodity prices, higher electricity bills, and a reduction of job opportunities.

The Minister of Environment should throw away her silly PMO/Gerald Butts talking points and take a look at what is really happening in Europe, in Germany. German households paid a renewable surcharge of 7.2 billion euros in the latest year.

● (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a treat to listen to the member across the way. As I was listening to her today, one thought that came across my mind was of Patrick Brown, one of her former colleagues. He served with the member on this side of the House for a number of years. He then decided to run for the leadership of the Conservative Party in the province of Ontario. Patrick Brown says today that the Conservative Party's position is in favour of a price on carbon. That is what the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is saying in the province of Ontario. He is not alone. There are many Conservatives across this country who have said that. All political parties across this country are saying that a price on carbon is good for the environment and for Canada. There are countries around the world that are saying that.

My question for the member is this. Why does she believe that the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, the only entity that I am aware of, is opposed to carbon pricing? What is the logic behind the Conservative Party saying it is in opposition?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Saskatchewan; Saskatchewan; that is a party.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, there is one province and one leader, that being Saskatchewan. I will give the member that.

However, why does this member believe that the Conservative Party here is so alone on this particular front?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go to the hon. member, I will say this. I do not know what it is, but every time the hon. member for Winnipeg North gets up, the Conservatives want to help him out and shout answers to him. I want to remind hon. members that there is a process, and shouting across the floor is not that process.

The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, in addition, all consumers' indirect costs are rising as industry must pass on its rising costs to consumers in product prices. Similar to the 20-year industrial wind turbine contracts signed by the Liberal Party in Ontario, because Germany has signed onto greed energy subsidies that guarantee prices for 20 years, costs will rise even higher. As more greed energy schemes are signed onto by the Liberal Party in Ottawa, the future looks even bleaker for young people. It is poor young families, the working and productive middle classes, and the elderly who are most hurt by carbon taxes, as we have seen in Ontario.

There are some observers who claim that the problem with out-of-control electricity prices in Ontario are a result of an unfortunate mix of Liberal greed and incompetence. The situation with British Columbia carbon taxes is no better. According to GEMCo, a not-for-profit corporation formed by Canadian energy companies to demonstrate industry leadership in the development of market-based approaches to greenhouse gas emissions management:

> The BC CTax shifts tax burden from large, profitable and, particularly, resource extracting businesses to the public sector, small [less profitable] businesses and low income families.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the hon. member heard the question. She appeared to be continuing with her speech.

I want to ask the member this. In the previous Parliament, the Conservative government cancelled the extremely important and very popular home retrofit program. I think most parties agree that it was a successful program. It reduced energy use, it reduced emissions, and it saved money. It seemed like a win-win-win. Therefore, I wonder if the member would support reinstating that program.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker:

> Carbon taxes are before income tax operating expenses and at least partially deductible from royalties payable by resource extractors (while families pay...[more] after tax income). ...the revenue gap in BC's income-to-carbon tax shift is...[about] $600-million.
>
> There is nothing revenue neutral about this.

It was further demonstrated that B.C. carbon tax credit payments to low-income families were far less than the gross amount of carbon taxes collected from the same families. There was no recycling of tax revenue to low-income families.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Carleton, for leading this motion today and for all his work on behalf of taxpayers and all Canadians, but especially on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable among us, the people who are struggling to make ends meet every day.

This Liberal carbon tax is already making things so much worse for families and for businesses across Lakeland, Alberta, and Canada. Before the Liberals unilaterally announced they would force a carbon tax on all of Canada, the finance department completed analysis on how the tax would impact everyday Canadians. Both documents were released through an access to information request, but much of that information was redacted and blacked out.

It is clear there is information contained in these reports that the Liberals do not want Canadians to see. Canadians can be forgiven for asking what the Liberals are hiding, just as when the Liberal members rejected a Conservative motion to study the impacts of the carbon tax on natural resources development in Canada in committee.

However, of course, we know why they are keeping facts from us and why they are resisting releasing this information to Canadians. It is because the Liberals do not want us to know how damaging it will be for businesses, families, communities, and the poor.

This reckless cash grab will harm small businesses. A local business owner from Lakeland runs a family-owned trucking operation near Bonnyville. At a town hall meeting, he explained that the price of everything will rise, and the cost to fuel his trucks will increase dramatically. He fears he will have to lay off up to four staff from his already-small group of employees. Trucks that are in perfect working condition will sit empty as he will not be able to afford to run them.

Like him, business owners across Alberta are warning consumers and clients that they will have to pay for this increase in operating costs, which will happen to almost all businesses across all of Canada, small, medium, and large, most of which ship and receive goods that are transported by trucks. Businesses will have no choice. They will have to figure out how to cover off these cost increases through higher prices or layoffs.

The Liberals pledged to be an open and transparent government. In fact the motto on the Liberal website is "Openness. Transparency. Fairness." How is unilaterally forcing and then hiding the true cost of this new tax on everything open, transparent, or fair?

School boards will need to cope with millions of dollars in extra bills. Alberta school boards have requested an exemption from the tax, warning about the possibility of mass layoffs without it. The answer was that there could be a rebate in the 2017 budget from the provincial NDP, but school boards are already facing the additional burden of this new tax.

The Elk Island Catholic Schools board in Lakeland will incur an additional $82,000 in increased costs for the remaining school year, and $143,000 next year, specifically for transportation and infrastructure costs. School board trustees question the ability to budget for replacement school buses in the future. Rural and small town kids biking and walking to school is not an option.

Municipalities will also struggle with this tax. The town of St. Paul worked to keep spending as low as possible this past year, knowing the carbon tax would make it even harder to stay in the black over the coming years. The Town of Vegreville did a projection of what the carbon tax will cost based on its fuel usage, and it will increase the town costs by $36,438.19 in 2017 and up to more than $54,000 in 2018. These are significant costs for small towns, municipalities, and counties.

All Canadians will feel this pain. A Lakeland resident recently shared a bill on Facebook, which showed an extra cost of $778 on a single truckload of energy products that was delivered to his home. This is the biggest tax hike in Alberta's history. It is not environmental policy. The federal Liberals and the provincial NDP are manipulating caring for the environment, a priority shared by all Albertans, all Canadians, all parties; and it is crass and disingenuous to suggest otherwise, to justify this cash grab, falsely claiming it will earn social licence and reduce emissions.

Alberta has always actually been a leader. Alberta, in fact, was the first jurisdiction in all of North America to regulate emissions, and to apply a targeted $15 a tonne carbon levy specifically on heavy industrial emitters, and only on heavy industrial emitters, including oil sands producers. That was in 2003.

Alberta leads Canada with biofuels and off-gas capture projects in the north, and with wind and solar projects in the south.

● (1155)

This all started more than a decade ago. Here were are, with both provincial and federal politicians falsely claiming this new massive cost increase of everything for everyone will suddenly stop extremist and foreign funded activists and protestors, international attacks from competitors protecting their competitive bottom line to try to push Canada out of oil and gas development and get pipelines built. It is nonsense.

Federal and provincial representatives instead should tell the truth unabashedly, at every opportunity, in every situation across Canada and to the world. Alberta produces the most environmentally and socially responsible oil and gas in the world, and operates under the highest standards and the most stringent regulatory regime of any country on the planet.

The result has been innovation and energy development that has been the driving force of Canadian prosperity and government revenue for many decades, increasing the standard of living of every person in every community, benefiting every province and every region. Alberta has earned its social licence many times over, and so has all of Canada.

I notice repeated misrepresentations, especially from the Liberals and also from the NDP throughout this debate of economists and Conservatives who support carbon taxes for emissions reduction. The fact about those economists is that they almost always also promote equivalent regulatory and red tape reductions and equivalent reductions in corporate and personal taxes.

Those economists are usually proponents to shift taxation from personal and corporate taxes to consumption and carbon taxes entirely. Those same experts, like an economist who helped develop the Alberta NDP plan, also say carbon taxes have to be about $150 to $200 per tonne to be punitive enough to cause significant emissions reductions.

However, that is not what the Liberals are doing, no government in Canada is proposing that, which makes the point. This scheme is a cash grab; it is not about environmental stewardship or emissions reduction. What they are doing will be disproportionately harmful to rural, remote, northern Canadians, to agriculture and energy-based communities, and to the most vulnerable, those who can least afford it, to the unemployed, low-income Canadians, people on fixed incomes, the working poor.

The fact is neither the U.S. nor any of the other top six major oil and gas producing countries in the world are even proposing or adopting carbon taxes. They know it would be harmful for their economies and bad for their people. It is stunning that the Liberals would force Canada down this road regardless of the way it will seriously undermine our competitiveness.

Even in the case of B.C., often hailed as the best example of the carbon tax, every year since 2010, B.C. emissions have increased. There has been no significant reduction in gasoline purchases.

It is not at all the case that the options are (a) carbon tax, or (b) do nothing, as the argument is often framed. That is a false choice to justify a revenue generator that will increase everyone's cost of living, the prices of all goods and services, and will hurt the most vulnerable, the people who can least afford the higher energy costs because they are a higher portion of their income.

I oppose the carbon tax for these reasons, and because it will not do what its proponents claim.

Bad policies that undermine competitiveness, increase costs, and hamper productivity with excessive red tape will deter investment and innovation. It is private sector investment that will generate the development of alternative and renewable energies long into the future, and it is conventional oil and gas companies that are already leading that way. We should not kick them while they are down.

We should be having fact-based conversations about environmental policy and outcomes. We all strongly believe in protecting the environment and in economic development. However, we should be clear what is actually being proposed in Canada right now. The Liberals' carbon tax is not about the environment. It is not about emissions reductions. It is a cash grab and the Liberals need to tell Canadians how much it will end up costing all of us and the damage it will do.

● (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, provincial Liberal, Conservative and NDP governments all have come to the table and have agreed with the Prime Minister and this government that now is the time for us to have carbon pricing.

The member made reference to a school division that would need more money as a direct result. She somewhat answered the question by making the statement that it would be the province to determine. We are saying that the time is now for a price on carbon, but the revenues generated from that are going to the provinces. Ottawa is not getting any money out of it. Provinces will deal with the issue the members have raised.

Does the member not agree that with the price on carbon, that it is best that the revenue goes to the provincial jurisdictions? This way they are able to address some of the issues the member has raised today.

● (1205)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, no, because I oppose a carbon tax.

The member seems to have a foggy memory of what happened there. In fact, at the beginning of a debate about meeting targets in the Paris agreement, the Prime Minister, before any debate occurred, or any MP could have a say, before anyone could represent his or her constituents, before anyone had any ability to consider a policy proposal or the impacts on the communities, stood and pre-empted that entire debate. He announced his government would be forcing a carbon tax on every community and every person in Canada from coast to coast to coast.

That happened on the same day when provincial environment ministers were gathered together for a meeting where they thought they would be negotiating a framework with the federal government about how to deal with environmental policy and with international commitments going forward.

I do not know what the member recalls about that. Perhaps he has been in here so long it is affecting his memory. However, environment ministers walked out. A number of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a saying that "opportunity makes the thief", and the game the Conservatives are playing here is really quite obvious. It is a bit pathetic. If any party is being dogmatic here, it is the Conservative Party.

I would like to know what the member thinks. It is wonderful that she is talking about transparency, since that was not the Conservatives' strong suit. Their carbon capture project cost Canadians a fortune.

Can the member tell me how much that project cost? That mistake or technological blunder obviously did not produce any results, because the industry did not even buy into it. Let us talk about transparency. How much did that project cost Canadians?

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, the debate is about the impact of the carbon tax on all Canadians and the Liberals refusal to release the information, the facts, to Canadians about what the carbon tax will cost them.

We all know what happened. Without debate with members of Parliament, without consultation with the provincial governments, the Liberals announced they would be forcing a carbon tax on every person and every community in Canada. That is the focus of this debate. Canadians are entitled to that information.

If the Liberals believe all their words about fact-based and evidence-based decision-making, about consulting with Canadians, caring for poor people, the middle class, small businesses, families, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, they would release that information. They would reverse the decision to force every Canadian and every province to undertake a carbon tax that will harm all of us. It will increase the cost of everything, undermine Canadian competitiveness internationally, and do untold damage.

Individual government rebates and token amounts mailed out a couple of times a year, which do not help people pay their bills when they actually have to pay them, will never cover all the costs the carbon tax will incur.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from LaSalle—Émard—Verdun.

It is with great pride and privilege that I stand to speak today to something that is important for the future of Canada, for the future of our economy, for growing the economy, and as we say, for strengthening our middle class and those hoping to join it.

Putting a price on pollution is the most efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach our objectives to protect the environment, while stimulating investments in low carbon innovation and creating a sustainable, clean growth economy. The pan-Canadian approach to price inclusion will give Canadian businesses, investors, and consumers a clear predictable basis for decision-making.

Confidence that the price of pollution in Canada will continue to increase over time in a gradual and predictable manner will encourage businesses and consumers to invest in clean technology and fuel, while avoiding major disruptions. It will also encourage businesses to invest in research into low carbon technology, which will better position them to compete in a low carbon economy.

A strong, predictable and rising pollution price sends an important signal to markets, informing consumer choices and investments in infrastructure and innovation.

Some people claim that pricing pollution is not good for economic growth, but emerging evidence indicates that pricing pollution and economic growth go hand in hand. The World Bank states that "early evidence suggests that a price on pollution is not an impediment to economic growth".

To cite just a few examples. British Columbia's direct price on carbon helped reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province between 2008 and 2013 at the same time as the provincial economy grew faster than the rest of Canada. British Columbia's growing clean technology sector now brings in an estimated $1.7 billion in annual revenue. Similarly, in Sweden, GDP and industry have grown while its emissions have dropped under the world's highest direct price on pollution, which currently stands at 137 euros per tonne.

The Canadian industry and investors know that pollution pricing will foster innovation and create new job prospects, those jobs that we know the middle class needs and deserves. That is why more than 30 Canadian companies have come out strongly in support of a price on pollution by joining the World Bank's carbon pricing leadership coalition. It is why many leading corporations, including Suncor, Canadian Tire, and General Electric, account for an internal price on pollution in their investment decisions.

In our discussions with Canadian industry leaders since being elected, a common theme that emerged was that Canada's business leaders believed that pollution pricing was one of the most economically efficient ways to reduce emissions, to stimulate the market to make investments in clean innovation, and to be positioned to compete in the emerging low-carbon global economy.

TD Bank's chief environmental officer Karen Clarke-Whistler says her company "believes that a strong low-carbon economy is not only key to reducing carbon emissions but also makes good economic sense. We believe carbon pricing has the potential to play a huge role in building the low carbon economy".

The impact of the pan-Canadian approach to pricing pollution in terms of costs on households and businesses will vary by province and territory, depending on differences in energy and fuel consumption and electricity generation mix across provinces and territories. It will also depend on the pollution pricing design approaches taken by individual provinces and territories, as well as the decisions made regarding how revenues from pricing pollution will be used.

An illustrative model conducted by Environment and Climate Change Canada estimates that the average increase in the annual cost of energy to households in Canada will be $290 when the backstop pollution price reaches $50 per tonne in 2022. This captures the increase in the fuel price, approximately 12¢ per litre of gasoline, and a modest reduction in the amount of energy used by the average family.

It is important, however, to recognize that these types of projected impacts do not take into account the significant gains in innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth that pricing pollution is likely and will generate. Also, in accounting for costs to households, it is important to account for the ways in which each jurisdiction chooses to use the revenues raised from pricing pollution. For example, Alberta's pollution pricing system includes rebates for low and middle-income households to offset the cost of the carbon pollution levy.

● (1210)

Six out of 10 Alberta households are expected to receive these rebates. The rebate amount for a household with two adults and two children is now as much as $540 per year. Alberta also provides small businesses a cut in the tax rate by one-third, from 3% to 2%. Further analysis on households, businesses, and sectors will become available as each province and territory establishes its pollution pricing systems.

At a macro level, significant economic impact analysis has been done to support the pan-Canadian plan to price pollution. According to modelling estimates produced for the federal, provincial, and territorial working group on carbon pricing mechanisms, the economic impacts of pricing pollution will be modest. The working group considered three scenarios: first, a price on pollution starting at $15 a tonne in 2018 and rising to $30 a tonne in 2030; second, a price starting at $30 a tonne in 2018 and rising to $40 a tonne in 2030; third, a price starting at $30 a tonne in 2018 and rising to $90 a tonne in 2030. These three scenarios were designed to broadly illustrate the impacts on the economy of pricing pollution at various levels of pricing rather than to reveal the impacts of a specific policy proposal. For each of these scenarios, the working group projected very modest reductions in the annual rate of GDP growth. Indeed, as the working group's report concludes, the projected impacts are so small that they fall within the range of forecast error for GDP projections.

Furthermore, the projected GDP growth reduction estimates provided to the working group are likely to over-estimate because the modelling tools used do not capture the full range of likely benefits from pricing pollution. What are the benefits? They include direct benefits from innovation, the development of new technologies, market opportunities, improved health from reduced emissions, and other benefits due to the avoided costs of climate change. For more details, please see the economic analysis of the pan-Canadian framework published by the government on December 9, 2016, which is available on the Government of Canada's website. External modelling analyses, including two studies published in 2016 by EnviroEconomics and a 2016 study by Clean Prosperity, support the conclusion of the working group on carbon pricing mechanisms that pricing pollution at levels comparable to the illustrated scenarios assessed at the 2022 federal benchmark price of $50 per tonne would not have a significant negative impact on GDP in Canada.

The impacts of a changing climate are already being felt and the costs of inaction are much bigger than the costs of addressing climate change. The national round table on the environment and the economy concluded that the costs of climate change could represent approximately $5 billion per year by 2020 in Canada and, depending on the levels of continued global emissions growth, could rise to a range of $21 billion to $43 billion per year by 2050, or even higher under more extreme scenarios. The Insurance Bureau of Canada recently cited estimates from the parliamentary budget office related to the financial costs of natural disasters driven in part by climate change. Between 1970 and 1994, the federal government paid out an average of $54 million each year from its disaster fund, adjusted to 2014 dollars. By contrast, the parliamentary budget office estimated that weather events connected to climate change over the next five years will cost the federal government $900 million annually. That is $900 million that could be spent on social programs, skills training, and education. We must address climate change.

The Government of Canada is committed to continue to work with provincial, territorial, and indigenous governments to ensure clean growth and address climate change. By acting now and acting together, we will build a better Canada for our children and our grandchildren.

● (1215)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am hearing a lot about research, studies, and information the government has on its website describing the conditions of climate change and why this is all so necessary. Since the member is so willing to share all of this information, would the member not see that there is value in sharing the information that was withheld and redacted in the report that our member requested of the government?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would actually recommend that the member look at the Government of Canada website. I would be more than happy to send her the link to the economic analysis of the pan-Canadian framework, which is actually published on the Government of Canada website.

I would add that globally there are economies that have embraced pricing mechanisms and renewable energy. For example, Germany, has an unemployment rate of about 4%, a strong budgetary surplus, and a strong manufacturing sector. The economy and the environment can go hand in hand. Other countries have proven this and we are going to go that way. That is the direction in which this government is going to go.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question about the Liberals' commitment to action on climate change. We have mainly seen the downloading of all responsibility to the provinces. The federal government seems to have no plan. It has a framework, and I always worry when I see the word "framework", but it has no plan to actually do concrete work itself to tackle climate change.

One of the topics that was brought up today is the ecoENERGY retrofit program, a program that was brought in by the former Conservative government. It was very successful. It was so successful that the Conservatives cancelled it. I am wondering whether the member would support the government bringing that program back, a program that allowed Canadians to invest money in their homes to make them more energy efficient and to reduce greenhouse gases and bring jobs to communities. It was a win-win solution all around.

● (1220)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the framework and approach the Government of Canada has taken is to sit down and work with the provinces and territories to come up with a pan-Canadian framework. Each province and territory has a different electricity generation mix, a different consumption mix. We have said to the provinces and territories that we will work with them and come to an agreement.

Each province has its own set of unique circumstances. The revenues collected by pricing carbon pollution, which leads to a better and stronger environment, a cleaner environment, and job growth, would flow directly to the provinces. It would be up to each individual province to use those revenues in the manner it sees fit to make investments in retrofit programs and assist those who may be impacted by pricing carbon pollution.

At the end of the day, we have to work together to build a stronger, cleaner, and more prosperous country.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week in the House, it was mentioned that recreation sites in the province of Ontario received astronomical power bills in December and January, over $10,000 a month. Since the Liberals have taken away the sports tax credit and the arts tax credit coast to coast, I wonder what the solution is for Ontario recreation facilities that are in the red right now and are worried that they cannot keep their recreation facilities open to the public.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, we have introduced what is called the Canada child benefit. This year alone it will put over $4.5 billion of incremental new investment in the pockets of Canadian families, versus the old program under the previous government. That works out to approximately $2,300 more, on average, per family. Nine out of 10 families are better off. It assists families to put their kids into recreational, arts, and fitness programs.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pricing pollution is the most efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach our objective to protect the environment and create a clean growth economy. For this reason, it is a foundational pillar of Canada's action on climate change.

The Government of Canada has demonstrated national leadership and has worked in partnership with provinces and territories to establish a pan-Canadian approach to pricing pollution. It is a core element of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change released by Canada's first ministers on December 9, 2016. Under this framework, pricing pollution will apply to a broad set of emission sources throughout Canada, with increasing stringency over time in order to reduce GHG emissions at lowest cost to business and consumers, and to support innovation and clean growth.

As affirmed in the pan-Canadian framework, provinces and territories have flexibility to design their own pollution pricing policies adapted to their specific circumstances. Provinces and territories can put a direct price on carbon pollution, either through a direct price on pollution, like in British Columbia, or in implementing a hybrid system along the lines used in the Alberta model, or they can adopt a cap-and-trade system.

A federal pollution pricing backstop will apply in provinces and territories that do not have a pollution pricing system in place that meets that benchmark in 2018. Pollution pricing revenues will remain in the jurisdiction of origin, and each jurisdiction can use those revenues according to its needs. This gives provinces and territories the flexibility to decide how to reinvest pollution pricing revenue in their economies to support their workers and their families, and to minimize the impact on vulnerable groups.

Pollution pricing systems create an incentive for households and businesses to reduce their consumption of carbon intensive goods and fuels and to choose lower carbon alternatives. For example, households could choose to reduce fuel consumption by either using public transit more often or by replacing their vehicle with a more fuel efficient vehicle.

The cost of pollution pricing to households will vary by province and territory, depending in part on differences in energy and fuel consumption, and the electricity generation mix across provinces and territories. The cost to households will also depend on the design of pollution pricing policies introduced by each jurisdiction as well as the decisions they make as to how to use the revenues from pollution pricing.

An illustrative modelling scenario conducted by Environment and Climate Change Canada estimates that the average increase in the cost of energy to households across Canada would be $290 per year when the backstop pollution price reaches $50 per tonne in 2022. This captures the increase in the fuel price, approximately 12¢ per litre, and a modest reduction in the amount of energy used by the average family. Further analyses on the economic impacts of pollution pricing, including analyses of impacts on households and businesses, will become available as each province and territory clarifies the precise design of its pollution pricing system, including how it will utilize its revenues and as experience is gained.

It is important to recognize that the goods and services purchased by low-income people are usually not more carbon intensive than those purchased by higher-income earners. Accordingly, a direct price on pollution does not exhibit a greater burden on low-income families. However, because low-income earners spend a greater share of their income, they may be disproportionately impacted by any price on consumption unless specific measures are taken to compensate them.

There are a number of ways to protect low-income Canadians and vulnerable communities from price increases associated with pollution pricing. Revenue generated from pricing pollution can be used in a variety of ways. Under the pan-Canadian approach to pricing pollution, all revenues raised, as we have stated, will remain in the province or territory of origin.

This gives provinces and territories maximum flexibility to decide how to reinvest the revenue from pollution pricing in their own economies and work to support their workers and their families, and to minimize the impact on other vulnerable groups. Provinces and territories can choose to use pollution pricing revenues to compensate low-income and middle-income families for higher energy costs, for example, while still maintaining an incentive to reduce energy use and thereby helping to reduce emissions.

● (1225)

For example, British Columbia provides a tax credit for low-income families and has made its direct price on carbon revenue-neutral by reducing income taxes for British Columbians and for businesses operating in the province.

Alberta's pollution pricing system includes rebates for low- and middle-income households to offset the cost of the carbon levy charged on fuels used for transportation and heating. The Government of Alberta has estimated that six out of 10 households will receive a rebate to compensate them for the cost of the carbon levy. For example, the full rebate amount for a household with two adults and two children will be $540 annually in 2018, when Alberta's carbon levy reaches $30 per tonne of carbon dioxide. This will exceed Alberta's estimate of the total annual cost of the levy for a household with two adults and two children, which is $508 for 2018. Alberta has stated that it will provide the full rebate amount for couples and families earning less than $95,000 per year and for singles earning less than $47,500 per year.

The approach chosen by the Province of Ontario is to include, in its climate action plan, investments that low-income individuals and households stand to benefit from. Ontario plans to spend $380 million to $500 million on social housing retrofits, starting in 2017-18, to improve comfort for residents and to save money for social housing providers to use to make other improvements.

Ontario also plans to consider options for legislative and regulatory changes that would lessen the impact of pollution pricing on all tenants who rent their housing to make sure that pollution pricing is not passed on to tenants who are unable to make changes to reduce energy use.

In addition, Ontario plans to invest $45 million to $75 million in post-secondary training and innovation to ensure that the province has the capacity to build, maintain, and repair low-carbon buildings. This will include training for first nation and Métis peoples. Low-carbon jobs and training partnerships will be established among post-secondary institutions and indigenous communities.

The Government of Canada is committed to working with all provincial, territorial, and indigenous partners in ensuring that vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples and low-income Canadians, are protected from any significant price increases resulting from pollution pricing.

Our climate is already changing, and Canadians are already feeling the effects. In the past, in some dream world, pollution was treated as an externality that people did not have to pay for and that the market did not have to worry about it. In fact, economists are telling us that it is time to internalize that so-called externality, make the price of pollution part of the market price of goods and services, and then let markets and governments take care of it. This is the approach taken by Patrick Brown, for example, who is the leader of the Conservative Party in Ontario.

The changes have already begun. Extreme weather, in the form of droughts and floods, is increasing in frequency. North of 60°, the average annual temperature has tripled, compared to the global average, since the middle of the last century. Snow, sea ice, glaciers, and permafrost are all in rapid decline.

We must address climate change now for the well-being of our people, our communities, and our economy and most of all, as a parent, for our children and grandchildren. We can no longer afford to not take action.

● (1230)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is that Canada absorbs almost four times as much carbon as it emits. Because of the size of our country, our forests, our wetlands, and our farm land, we absorb more carbon than we can create.

At the same time, we are very aware, in my province of Saskatchewan, of how important it is that we be good stewards of what we have. When our provinces were approached by the government to take on more responsibility for taking care of our environment, they were given five options, before they were blindsided, again, by the government and told that they had option one or option two.

In Saskatchewan, our people respond to incentives, not punitive measures. We were ready to continue with what we are already doing with incentives for innovation and research and making things better. We already do some of the best farming and best industry in the country.

Coal in Estevan was visited by the minister, and she made very little mention of it. I am wondering if the member would like to respond to my question. Why are we willing to sell our seniors' care to a company from China, where some of the worst pollution exists, when we could be selling them our innovation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that there are only five minutes for questions and comments. If members could keep their questions much shorter, that would be great.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I realize full well that we lost 10 years on innovation and having an innovation policy under the previous government, because they had none, and we missed an example—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I just want to remind members that when someone has the floor to have the respect to allow that person to answer. The member provided such respect while the question was being posed, so the same would be greatly appreciated.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, this carbon pricing plan our government has worked out with the territories and provinces is coupled with an innovation agenda that is breathtaking. We are going to move ahead to make sure that we profit from the clean, green economy so that we can work with innovative people in Saskatchewan and other parts of the country to make all of this work.

● (1235)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member opposite about the Liberals' commitment to climate change. We heard so many good words coming out of Paris, but now the federal government has adopted the former Conservative government's weak targets for greenhouse gas reductions, and these targets will not get us anywhere near the greenhouse gas reductions we are seeking.

I am just wondering where and when we will hear a concrete plan from the federal government on how we will meet those targets. Right now we are putting it off so that our grandchildren will have to deal with this.

Mr. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and his dedication on environmental issues.

There are many steps this government has to take to reach our climate change goals. I share the concerns raised by the hon. member.

We have the provinces on board with this pan-Canadian strategy. We will keep moving forward on reducing gas emissions, and hopefully, at some point, we will reach a point where we are satisfied with both the lowering of emissions and the targets that are in place.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the GST being charged on the carbon tax that is already being implemented, will the government stop taking revenues from the GST to make it revenue neutral?

Mr. David Lametti: Revenue neutrality, Madam Speaker, is something that will be determined by each province and territory. That is why they have the flexibility to create and craft the kind of program and policy they feel is best for their province or territory.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Foothills.

I want to turn this back into what we started with this morning, which is an opposition day motion that is not an indictment or an endorsement of the plan to price carbon, as the Liberals say, or as we like to say, to tax it, because a tax is a tax is a tax. One cannot hide it any other way.

This is a motion that deals with openness and transparency, the very foundation on which the Liberal government ran in the last election. The member for Carleton asked for information with respect to the pricing of the planned carbon tax the Liberals are looking to implement. There was some information that came back, but the information on the cost was, in fact, redacted. I chuckled in disbelief on the day the member for Carleton received that information, seeing that it was actually whited out.

The finance department and the government know what the cost is. They know what the impact is to Canadians, but they are simply not sharing that information. That flies in the face of their holding their hands over their hearts and speaking to Canadians during an election campaign about a Canada where better was possible, where they were going to be more transparent, more open, and more accountable.

For the fun of it, I actually went back to the Liberal platform. They said:

> Together, we can restore a sense of trust in our democracy. Greater openness and transparency are fundamental to accomplishing this....
>
> A Liberal government will implement all of these proposals, and go even further with new initiatives that expand Canadians' access to information.

They expand access to information only when it suits them, and it does not speak to the truth of this issue. The truth is that the carbon tax the Liberals are looking to implement across the country is going to cost Canadians.

In question period yesterday, I asked a question. It related to the Barrie chapter of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. They had a seminar this weekend, and the basis of the seminar was heat or eat. That is how dire the situation has become for seniors in our country, particularly with respect to energy prices in Ontario. When seniors are celebrating their golden years of retirement after contributing so much to Canada and our economy, it is awfully disheartening when the prospect of a carbon tax is going to fall on them and they are going to have to pay even more to heat their homes, even more for energy, and more for everything else, quite frankly.

In my riding of Barrie—Innisfail, there is a seniors community called Sandycove Acres. It is a 3,600 strong seniors community. Oftentimes at night, one can drive through that community and see the lights turned off, because for many of those seniors in that community, the reality is that they are making a choice between heating and eating. I know that the member for York—Simcoe knows that area well. They are good people who have worked very hard their whole lives. There are many veterans as well who live in that community. There are many first responders. They are having extreme difficulty paying their high energy costs right now in Ontario, so to add a carbon tax on top of that is just unimaginable.

I said earlier that I do not want to make this an indictment or an endorsement of a carbon tax. When I was a city councillor, I did my part. I made decisions to invest to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Whether it was to spend $11 million on LED lights or to invest in LEED certified buildings, there were things we could do.

We understand, as Conservatives, that, as the Liberals often say, the economy and the environment go hand in hand. However, they should not contradict each other. There are many things we can do. While I was not part of the previous government, I know that a lot of things were done.

I look at some of the stories. Jim Fraser, who has a small bungalow in Collingwood, Ontario, recently opened his hydro bill. It was $700. Dave Purdon, of Muskoka Meats, got a hydro bill of $1,700. He had to slash his prices on his inventory by 50% to pay his hydro bill.

● (1240)

When we talk about adding a carbon tax on top of that, how are these small and medium-sized businesses going to function?

Here is another one involving a butcher shop owned by a friend of mine, Lawrence Vindum. Lawrence lives in the riding of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte. He had to remove large freezers from his business because he could not afford his hydro bill anymore. He was quoted in the paper as saying he had chest pains when he opened up his bills. We can talk about the stress of that.

One thing we do know in the information that the member for Carleton received is that the proposed carbon tax as stated in the Ministry of Finance report will have a cascading effect on our economy.

Economist Trevor Tombe provides some estimates on the cost of carbon pricing in Canada and he did this in *Maclean's* magazine in October 2016. He said that the direct cost to Canadians annually will be roughly between $1,250 and $2,500. Those direct costs to homeowners include gasoline, home heating, and electricity. There are indirect costs as well to households that include natural gas increases, food production and distribution, public transportation, shelter costs, services, and clothing. He also said that further costs to household increases when revenues from carbon pricing are not channelled back to households. Some provincial governments just cannot help themselves.

We have heard the argument all day that it will be up to provincial governments to decide. When we have a situation like Ontario where it is billions of dollars in debt, any revenue that is generated is going toward paying or servicing that debt. Let us not fool ourselves here. It is not going to go back to residents, homeowners, or businesses.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation had to go to information that was provided to the UN to figure out just how much it would cost Canadians with respect to carbon taxes.

The member for Carleton said this morning that we are representation by population. We are the ones who represent our residents and if we cannot get the information from the government, how can we go back to our constituents, my residents of Barrie—Innisfil, residents of Foothills, residents of Saskatoon, and tell them how much this is going to cost if the government will not release that information?

I gave some examples of some of the businesses that are struggling in the current environment. They will have to absorb the impacts of the carbon tax. How do they absorb those impacts? They will pass them on to consumers. Already struggling seniors, already struggling middle-class families and those working hard to join it, will have to pay for the Liberal carbon tax. Again, we do not know what they are going to have to pay because the government will not release that information.

That is the basis of what today's debate is all about. The government should release the information. Why not release it? Why redact it? Why black it out? It is because the government is not happy with the information. That is the answer to the question. The Liberals know that Canadians will not be happy with the information.

With respect to the impact on businesses, I have a business in my riding called LEI Electronics Inc. It is run by Lionel Lalonde partnered with Mark Sachkiw. The company does some great things when it comes to creating carbon-neutral or zero-carbon products. It has an alkaline battery that is carbon neutral, which it sells around the world. I had these gentlemen at a round table and they also wrote me a letter dated February 23 in which they talk about companies that are carbon-neutral certified. Think of the ridiculousness of this. They are carbon-neutral certified and yet they will be subject to a Liberal carbon tax. These gentlemen are doing everything they can, every bit of investment that they make in their company goes toward creating carbon neutrality. They are going to have to pay for this.

Finally, the cost of Gerald Butts, Kathleen Wynne, Catherine McKenna, and Justin Trudeau green energy taxes will be about $1,000 to every senior at the age of 65. Seniors will have to make decisions every day to be healthy or to be warm, or to have a full tummy, or to visit their grandchildren who live far away.

● (1245)

I am receiving a tremendous amount of email correspondence about this carbon tax. I will say this. If I cannot answer the questions because I do not have the information, how will the Liberals answer those questions for their constituents?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I want to remind the member that he is not allowed to mention the names of sitting MPs in the House.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech, and that the Conservatives are trying to get information to fully cost what the effects are. However, what is not often talked about in our political discourse are the effects and the costs of doing nothing. I come from the coast of British Columbia, from Vancouver Island. With respect to Vancouver, Canada's third largest city, what would the costs be of rising sea levels to the millions of people who live on the Fraser River delta? What would the costs be to British Columbia for the increased ravages of forest fires? What would the costs be to the prairies when the glaciers that feed their waterways start melting? I wonder if the member could comment a bit more about the costs of doing nothing, and whether our discourse should be more concentrated on that rather than what we are trying to do to amend those facts?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I would first apologize for mentioning the names of members. It was an inadvertent mistake on my part.

● (1250)

Hon. Peter Van Loan: A rookie error.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, we can call it a rookie error, and I thank the hon. member for York—Simcoe for that.

nobody in this House will argue that we need to do our part. However, Canada emits 1.6% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, we need to have a global discussion and look to those countries that are the true carbon polluters in this world. Why are we not putting pressure on those countries? It is well-documented that over 50% of greenhouse gas emissions are emitted by four countries. That is over half. Canada is doing its part, and Canada will continue to do its part.

The issue here is transparency and accountability on the part of the government. It should release the information and let us know what the costs are to Canadians. At a minimum, let us start talking to our global partners to get them to also reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, "'Climate change is a fact. It is a threat. It is man-made', he told the party faithful. 'We have to do something about it, and that something includes putting a price on carbon.'" In the event that the hon. member does not know who said that, it was Patrick Brown, the leader of the Conservative Party in Ontario. Therefore, I want to know whether the member disagrees with his predecessor, that carbon should not be priced.

The second question I have for the member before he stands up is this. For the past 10 years, British Columbia has been the poster child for a carbon tax. It has also simultaneously had the most successful economy in the last 10 years. Does he see a correlation?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, having replaced Patrick Brown in his federal seat, I have had many conversations with Patrick, and he and I can agree to disagree on this issue. I know that the way the cap-and-trade system is implemented in Ontario, it is effectively a tax grab. Patrick's plan is to make this revenue neutral.

With respect to B.C., maybe the member should read the Fraser Institute report, which states that, in terms of the tax that has been collected in B.C, it has taken in tens of millions more than what it has given back. Therefore, I would respectfully submit to the hon. member that his information is wrong and that he needs to read the Fraser Institute report to find the truth.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, a lot of what we have heard today is about the Liberal government's profession of the benefits of a carbon tax, but what we are really talking about is transparency, openness, and being forthright with Canadians.

We heard it earlier today, but one of the fundamental cornerstones of our democracy is no taxation without representation. However, another big part of that is no taxation without information. Canadians know that the federal Liberal carbon tax grab is going to hurt and we want the government to show how much it is going to hurt. That is what is being asked here today. The information is there as, apparently, it has done the analysis, but is unwilling to share it.

We have been hit with this roadblock over and over again over the last six or eight months. For example, in the natural resources committee, my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope put forward a motion asking the Liberal government to move forward with an emergency study and analysis of the impact the carbon tax will have on the oil and gas sector. The Liberal members of the committee voted against that motion. Again, what this comes down to is if the carbon tax is going to be such a job-creation revelation and wonderful benefit to Canada, why are the Liberals being so coy with that data that would back that up? I would say that if this is going to be of such benefit and is really what Canadians want, then show me, prove it to me. However, throughout this entire process and why we brought this motion forward today, they are unwilling and unable to do that.

I want to tell members about something that really surprised me, which is that Canadians are really starting to realize that they are going to pay the carbon tax. My colleagues across the floor have talked about this being revenue neutral and that it will not impact anyone. That is absolutely not the case. First, they are shoving this off on the provinces to make those decisions, so there is no guarantee on the federal side that it will ensure this is revenue neutral. It has already been proven in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario that this is not revenue neutral. This is impacting the most vulnerable.

In January, when I was home during the constituency break, I joined some friends of mine and had the opportunity to play hockey. I walked into the Cardel arena in the south end of the city and there was a huge sign that said it was no longer turning on the heaters in the arena due to the carbon tax. My wife and kids came to watch hockey and had to wear their toques and mitts. It is not the worst experience of their lives, but it just goes to show the impact that this trickling down is going to have.

We heard in another Liberal colleague's speech today that although rec centres in Ontario are having a very difficult time making ends meet, the government has provided this Canada child benefit. Sure it has, but that will now be eaten up by the carbon tax because the child fitness and arts tax credits have been taken away. Any other money that rec centres may possibly have will now go to higher registration fees, utility fees, and program costs, because they will be passing those costs on to Canadians. To say this is revenue neutral in any way, shape, or form is just not the case. This is going to impact Canadians in every aspect of their lives.

Let me go back to what we are talking about here today. We know the Liberal government has conducted some analysis and my colleague from Carleton has asked for two Finance Canada documents, entitled, “Impact of a carbon price on households' consumption costs across the income distribution” and “Estimating economic impacts from various mitigation options for greenhouse gas emissions”. These were released under the Access to Information Act, but key information in those tables was redacted, blacked out. I find that to be incredibly unfair to Canadians.

We can call it a price on pollution, mechanisms, or a price on carbon, but it is a tax. This is a tax grab by the Liberals. I wish they would be very clear on it, but they will not be clear on what they are calling it or the impacts it is going to have on Canadians.

● (1255)

If the Liberals were confident that this was not going to have a detrimental impact on Canadians, especially rural and low-income Canadians, they would release the information in those data tables. However, they will not do it, despite the fact that this breaks it down to every quintile and despite the impact it will have on every Canadian, the very poor, middle class, wealthy, and very wealthy.

This is nothing but a wealth transfer from those who have the very least to those who have the ability to lobby the federal and provincial governments to ensure they get those rebates, whether for their Liberal friends or whatnot. This will not be beneficial to Canadians, and that is very clear.

We also heard some of my Liberal colleagues say today that countries and jurisdictions around the world were embracing a carbon tax. I would like to point out one very interesting fact the Liberals left out.

The carbon tax has not generated jobs. Our jobs report came out from Statistics Canada in Alberta for December. One hundred thousand Albertans are still out of work. This is despite the fact that oil prices have started to tick back up over that $50 a barrel, which shows me that the job losses in Alberta are not necessarily tied to commodity prices. Certainly that is part of it, but that is not all of it. Ninety-eight thousand Albertans are out of work. This is despite Alberta bringing in a carbon tax that is supposed to give us all this social licence.

The one province that has shown some strength to say that it will not go down this road is Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate has decreased by 3.6%. The one province that does not have a carbon tax has seen its unemployment rates go down. The reason for that is it is still competitive. What we see in Alberta right now, with 100,000 Albertans out of work, is that the carbon tax is forcing investment elsewhere. Investors are taking their dollars to Saskatchewan, to the United States, and to other jurisdictions where they do not have these obstacles to go through, where there is some certainty on their investment, their return on that investment, and their ability to be successful.

Alberta right now, with a $30 a tonne carbon tax and now a federal carbon tax being put on top of that and GST being charged on that carbon tax, is showing investors that it is not a good place to do business. That is going to be the same for Canada.

Again, we talked about jurisdictions that embraced a carbon tax. The United States, Australia, and France have abandoned plans of a carbon tax. The United States, our biggest competitor, is not going down this path. That is going to make our industries, energy, mining, forestry, and agriculture, globally uncompetitive. We have seen more than $50 billion of investment leave Alberta already. I do not have numbers on what that would be across Canada. However, once the federal carbon tax comes into play next year, we will see additional investment dollars go somewhere else. They are going to go where they have the least obstacles and they are going to be taking those dollars and the jobs that go with them, likely south to the United States where there is a much friendlier regime of investment in the energy sector, manufacturing, and perhaps even agriculture. We are going to see that trickle-down effect.

What this comes down to is transparency. We are asking the Liberal government to be honest with Canadians. They want to know what the impact of the carbon tax will be. Will it be something Canadians can be successful with, or will it be something that will force them to continue to close businesses and to take their kids out of sports and recreational programs? It took the taxpayers federation to do the homework for the Liberal government. It said that it would cost an average family of four more than $4,000 a year. That is absolutely unacceptable.

It comes down to no taxation without representation, but also no taxation without information. This is going to hurt. We want to know how much it is going to hurt.

● (1300)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would not question my hon. colleague's ability as a goaltender. He is a great goaltender. However, with respect to Alberta, has the member seen the report in which the Conference Board of Canada projects Alberta will lead the way in 2017 in terms of real GDP growth? Has he seen the report of 2.8% of real GDP growth?

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his nice comments. He was not the one who sprayed me, so I appreciate that.

We are starting to see some things turn around in Alberta, but I would invite him to come to Alberta. I had a jobs task force and I had four round tables in my constituency this fall. Overwhelmingly the number one recommendation from people was that the federal government not to impose the carbon tax. These are engineers, physicists, geologists who have not worked for more than 18 months and they do not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

I have lived in Alberta for most of my life and this is the one time that I can honestly say I have never felt this kind of frustration, despair, inability to see a future for people in Alberta. We are seeing so many go back to Saskatchewan. Studies may say that, but that just is not the reality right now.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I recognize the member for Foothills has roots in Saskatchewan. In fact, I have some insurance with his brother's firm. However, I think he has been away from the province for far too long because he seems to be out of date on the job market situation.

The member for Foothills suggested that everything is great in Saskatchewan without a carbon tax. If we look at the last labour force survey, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick were the only two provinces in which employment declined during the first month of this year. If we look over the past year, Saskatchewan was one of only three provinces in which employment declined.

Clearly the problem is the drop in commodity prices and clearly Saskatchewan is not having some sort of employment boom as a result of low carbon tax. Would the member for Foothills acknowledge these facts as reported by Statistics Canada?

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for supporting my family's business. I do not get anything in that.

Again, things are much better in Saskatchewan compared to Alberta. Its unemployment numbers have gone down, where Alberta is reaching double digits in several jurisdictions. Downtown Calgary has a vacancy rate of more than 30%.

The numbers that Statistics Canada released earlier this year for Alberta are the worst employment numbers in Alberta since it started keeping statistics. We just have to compare one to the other. We have two provinces with very similar economies. The one that has a carbon tax is struggling and the one that does not have a carbon tax is holding its own.

● (1305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is not a question, but very quickly to correct some factual errors.

The member for Yorkton—Melville said that forests absorbed more carbon than we emitted. That reversed a couple of decades ago. Forests now actually emit more carbon than they absorb.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil said that the Fraser Institute report was reliable. The ministry for finance for British Columbia has completely debunked that bogus report.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her soapbox, I guess. However, the facts have shown that when it comes to a carbon tax being revenue neutral, it is just not the case in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, the three prominent provinces that have a carbon tax. It is not revenue neutral. Whether it is on rebates or not, the costs trickle down to groceries, recreation, user fees. Those companies and businesses have to bring the carbon tax they pay down to the consumer.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to remind the members to be careful with the words they use. The contributions that members give in the House are all very important. We may have differing opinions, but we also need to be respectful of that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Quadra.

We are committed to building a strong, diverse, and competitive Canadian economy. Current global dynamics favour transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The market for effective, clean technologies is growing rapidly, and the cost of renewable energy continues to drop exponentially.

It was good news when the Paris agreement was adopted in December 2015. This was a historic event that sent the international community the clear message that we need to take action against climate change. Canada can be proud of the role it played on the international stage to advance the adoption of the Paris agreement. We committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2030.

We now have a realistic plan to meet that goal while building our resilience against the effects of a changing climate and while continuing to grow our economy. The pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change is an ambitious and comprehensive plan that was developed in close co-operation with the provinces, the territories, and indigenous peoples. It takes into account the input of many experts and stakeholders, as well as Canadians' priorities.

The pan-Canadian framework is built on four pillars: pricing carbon pollution; complementary actions to reduce emissions; adaptation and climate resilience; and supporting clean technologies, innovation, and jobs. Action taken based on these pillars will help drive economic growth and create jobs while ensuring innovation, creating investment opportunities, and reducing potential climate risks.

Pricing carbon pollution is one pillar of the pan-Canadian framework, because economists agree that it is the most cost-effective way to reduce climate change and carbon pollution. Based on the flexible approach we plan to take, jurisdictions across Canada can invest their carbon pricing revenues as they see fit, whether by reducing other taxes, helping their businesses and households, or investing in new innovative technologies.

The pan-Canadian framework also includes complementary actions to reduce emissions. These actions will reduce emissions while growing the economy by cutting costs for Canadians, creating new markets for low-carbon goods and services, and helping businesses use cleaner and more efficient technologies that give them a leg up on international competitors.

For example, we are working with the provinces and territories to find ways to build more energy-efficient buildings. Canada's construction industry is worth $161 billion and employs well over a million people. My brother is a contractor, actually.

The new building codes will foster innovation and help Canadian companies develop more efficient construction techniques and technologies. Investing in modernization to improve energy efficiency is a fantastic way to create jobs. Such investments benefit communities, create local jobs, and shrink energy costs. When our buildings use less energy, people save more money.

Helping businesses consume energy more efficiently is another priority. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments agreed to work together under the pan-Canadian framework to help industries save energy and money. One way to do that is to help them adopt energy management systems.

The federal government has already invested in infrastructure, clean technology, and mitigation measures through the low carbon economy fund to support business growth and job creation.

According to the Minister of Finance, initial infrastructure investments in budget 2016 will bump GDP up by 0.2% in 2016-17 and 0.4% in 2017-18. The pan-Canadian framework will help create jobs and stimulate short-term economic growth by investing in energy efficiency and infrastructure projects.

Canada's climate change action plan will make the most of short-term economic growth opportunities and look ahead to the future.

● (1310)

By taking action now, we are paving the road to success. We have to maintain our long-term competitiveness in a global low-carbon economy and thereby build a better future for our children and grandchildren. We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and we are the last generation that can slow down climate change.

There is growing evidence that the effects of climate change caused by global emissions have real and mounting economic implications. Insurance claims following extreme weather events in Canada ran at $373 million annually from 1983 to 2004, but have risen to $1.2 billion annually in the past decade.

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy estimates that the economic impacts of climate change in Canada might reach $5 billion annually by 2020 and between $21 billion and $43 billion annually by 2050. That is why we must take action now.

We have the opportunity to make sound investments that will not only reduce the risks associated with climate change but also help Canadians save money. For example, the Red River Floodway was built in 1968 for $63 million. A total of $627 million was invested to expand that floodway, which has saved the City of Winnipeg over $40 billion in flood disaster relief since 1968.

Our approach to climate change is based on risk management and knowing which opportunities to pursue.

There is already a global market of over $5,800 billion for low-carbon goods and services, and the value of that market should continue to increase by 3% a year. Canada is already home to more than 750 clean technology businesses. Many of them are SMEs, and some of them will grow into large corporations and major employers.

The industry already employs more Canadians than the forestry industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and the medical device manufacturing industry. The measures taken as part of the pan-Canadian framework will create the right conditions to ensure the prosperity of innovative Canadian businesses and drive job creation now and in the future.

We have the opportunity to take action on climate change, while developing a strong, innovative, and resilient Canadian economy. Thanks to the pan-Canadian framework, we will seize this opportunity. As we implement this plan, we will monitor our progress and report on it in a transparent manner to continue proving that what is good for the environment is also good for the economy.

● (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member did not touch upon the thrust of today's motion.

My question is very simple. Does the member support his government in the withholding of key statistics or numbers of analysis by Finance Canada, paid for by the public? It is being withheld, making it more difficult for us to even have an intelligent conversation about a public policy position that the government has made one of its most important measures.

Does the member agree with and support that, or does he believe that evidence-based decision-making in a democracy means sharing that information and allowing the people's representatives to debate, and then ultimately the people he represents, I represent, and we all represent here can make their own decision?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, not all provinces have implemented a price on carbon yet, so it would be too presumptuous to provide an analysis on that.

On that, I find it very ironic that it is the member for Carleton who put this motion forward, when he, himself, and that member, voted in favour of a cap-and-trade system in 2008 in the throne speech. They voted for an Ottawa-based approach. They voted to implement a system like those of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and all provinces.

What the member from Ottawa, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, has done is a decentralized approach. We have said, "Here is our plan, but you guys go ahead and implement your own plan." That is the real—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, that he was afforded the opportunity to ask the question, and I would ask for his respect to afford the member the opportunity to respond. If members are not in agreement with what is being said, they can always get up again and attempt to ask a question.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I just want to apologize to the member opposite. Obviously these issues are close to us, and I do take your advice rather well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. He is quite right to not accept any lectures on transparency from the former government.

I appreciated all the points he made about the positive prospects of the clean technologies for sustainable development associated with the implementation of this system. However, I would like to bring him back to the present situation given that the Conservatives like to talk about consumers who are unable to pay their bills. They are not wrong about that.

I would like to ask the member why it is taking so long for the Liberal government to restore the home energy efficiency program.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, we have adopted a decentralized carbon pricing approach. It is up to the provinces to decide whether they want to give consumers grants or tax credits. I know that some provinces are already doing this.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, particularly since the hon. member is a member of Parliament from Ontario, I want to address this conflation of electricity prices in Ontario, which have a lot to do with stranded nuclear debt, a lot to do with institutional problems within Ontario Hydro, and equating them with the impact of a carbon tax. As far as I can see from the information available, the cap and trade program of Ontario, Quebec, and California has yet to really take root and actually reduce greenhouse gases or bring in revenues to Ontario.

Does the hon. member agree that the electricity price in Ontario cannot be laid at the door of a carbon price?

● (1320)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, it will be a brief answer: absolutely.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion of the member for Carleton today.

I do have to say it is unfortunate to witness the Conservative members continuing alarmist attacks on pricing carbon pollution. It takes me back many years. It takes me back to 15 years ago, when I was British Columbia's environment minister and that was the argument of the day.

As we know, British Columbia's experience after having implemented a price on pollution 10 years ago is that, in most of the years since, emissions have dropped while the economy has grown; in fact, grown faster than anywhere else in the country.

I do encourage the members opposite to notice that the world has moved on from these kinds of arguments and that even many members of the business community and industry support the opportunity that pricing carbon creates for innovating and growing our clean energy economy.

I would like them to notice that the international community has moved on and has come together to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to ensure that warming stays below 2° centigrade, and hopefully 1.5° centigrade.

Moreover, in the current Liberal government's pan-Canadian framework, it will be up to the provinces and territories themselves to decide what tool to use to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and as to the funds that are raised through whatever mechanism they use, it will be up to the provinces and territories to determine how they are returned to their public.

I will use my opportunity to speak to this motion to discuss its aspect around open and transparent government. That is one of the key themes of the motion, and it is one of the key themes of this government. That vision comes from the top.

[*Translation*]

In his mandate letter to the President of the Treasury Board, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of these values for Canadians. He said:

> We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default.

All of the cabinet ministers got that same message in their mandate letters.

[*English*]

The fact that Canadians, members of Parliament, citizens, and the media can see these letters and hold the government to account is the proof in the pudding of our Prime Minister's commitment. It sets the tone for a more modern, open approach to government.

In fact, our guiding principle is that government information belongs to the people it serves and should be open by default. Open by default means publicly releasing government data and information to Canadians, except in limited situations, which we all understand are for reasons such as privacy, confidentiality, and security. It also means ensuring, wherever feasible, that requesters receive information in modern and easy to use formats.

Let me be clear. We are facing a cultural shift in this government's way of doing business. We are talking about reversing the onus.

[*Translation*]

Instead of asking individuals to justify why they should have the information, the onus is increasingly on the government to provide it except if there are privacy, confidentiality, or security reasons not to.

Rather than wait for Canadians to go looking for the information they want, we make that information easier to find by making our operations more open and transparent.

Access to information is a good example of that.

[*English*]

Last May, we waived all fees for these requests for information, apart from the $5 filing fee. These fees were waived to enhance Canadians' access to government information.

We intend to introduce legislation that will bring forward other important improvements to the act. It is our hope that the House will pass this legislation. Then, after our first round of commitments has been enacted, the President of the Treasury Board will begin the proposed first full mandatory five-year review of the act in 2018.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

The access to information review is a major component of our third biennial plan for open government.

[*English*]

This plan was released last July after extensive in-person and online consultations. It is part of our international relationship with the Open Government Partnership and its 75 members.

The President of the Treasury Board announced that Canada will take a leadership role to improve transparency and open government worldwide. In December, he announced that Canada would adopt the international Open Data Charter, and Canada is a candidate for a seat on the Open Government Partnership steering committee.

These are key parts of our international commitment to openness and transparency, and they will support strategic partnerships with governments and civil society organizations here and around the world. The shared global principles expressed in the Open Data Charter reflect our ongoing commitment to ensure government data is open by default.

[*Translation*]

For example, we are expanding and enhancing the government's open data and access to it. The government has a massive store of raw data that can transform how public servants make decisions, how people interact with government, and how organizations innovate.

We believe it is essential to make as much information as possible available to the public, charities, and so on. We have made a lot of progress, as people can see when they visit open.canada.ca.

[*English*]

We will do even more. We will increase the diversity, timeliness, and quality of this data. In addition, we have committed to streamlining requests for government information from citizens, including their own personal information. To that end, we will be creating a simple central website where Canadians can submit such requests to any federal institution.

[*Translation*]

It is hard to fully grasp just how much an open government could improve the world. That is why Canada has committed to providing open data training to governments and civil society groups in developing countries, for example.

[*English*]

That is why in last year's budget we doubled existing resources for open government initiatives. Beyond our new open government plan and its 22 commitments we are also fostering more open debate and more free votes in Parliament. We are working to reform the budgets and estimates processes to help parliamentarians hold the government to account. In fact, we are also inviting our subject matter experts in government, including scientists, to speak publicly about their work.

In closing, let me emphasize that open and transparent government puts government data in the hands of citizens as a vital resource in a digital world. It helps ensure the integrity of our public institution and strengthens trust in democracy. It stimulates innovation. It stimulates public engagement. We will continue to champion it for Canadians.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think that increasingly Canadians are coming to realize that what the Liberal Party promises and what it actually delivers in government are two very different things. The member talked repeatedly about transparency, and that is exactly what this motion is calling for. It is calling for the release of information that has been created by Finance Canada officials. We have asked for those tables to be released to the House so that we can make an informed decision.

We had a similar situation at the natural resources committee where we asked the government to conduct an economic impact assessment of the carbon tax on the natural resource sector before proceeding, and to release that information. The government refused. That tells me that either the government has not done an economic analysis and is flying blind when it comes to the impact on natural resources, or it refuses to release it to Canadians.

Of the things the member indicated, privacy, confidentiality, or national security, which is it that prevents the government from releasing this data to Canadians?

● (1330)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, the pan-Canadian framework is about empowering the provinces and territories to have their own plans, so the impact of pricing carbon pollution, whether it be about stimulating the clean energy economy, whether it be about strengthening the clusters of innovation in academia, or whether it be about reducing poverty by returning proceeds of pricing carbon to lowest income Canadians, that will be up to the provinces to decide.

Frankly, this is just more effort to cover up the fact that the Conservatives have been attacking taking action on climate change as long as I have been in the House with alarmist claims that are counterproductive to the future of the country.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder whether the member could comment more on the impacts of inaction on climate change. The national round table on the environment and the economy published the last analysis on those impacts. It said inaction would cost about $5 billion a year in Canada. We have that. We have not had much since because the national round table on the environment and the economy was disbanded by the previous government.

Perhaps she would have some quick comments on the impacts of inaction and whether the government will bring back that round table.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, those who are paying attention to the issue of climate change and the chaos that we risk internationally because of its impacts, with the floods, the fires, and the droughts, like the member who asked the question, understand the kinds of devastation that are already occurring through long-term historic droughts that are driving populations out of their homes and farms. There are so many impacts I cannot even begin to list them. There are local impacts and international impacts. There are impacts on security and defence. There are great economic impacts and risks that have been identified by respected international bodies and experts over years, if not decades, so we know it is time to act and end the kind of game playing that we are seeing from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question is quite simple. If it is so good, so great, so important, so essential to have a Liberal carbon tax, why do the Liberals hide all the information from the Canadian taxpayer?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, as I have already said, our government is committed to improving the openness of information. We have already used a number of tools and taken a number of steps to achieve that. We will continue this project because our objective is to make information more open and transparent for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member for York—Simcoe.

I am pleased to rise to discuss today's motion which calls upon the Liberals to end their carbon tax cover-up and release the Department of Finance's documents on the impact of carbon pricing on households and estimating the economic impacts from various carbon taxes.

This issue is particularly important to me as I represent constituents who have been hard hit by continued tax grabs and high unemployment. My constituents are hurting. Forcing them to pay more for gasoline, heat, and power is not what they need. They need tax relief.

With so many issues, the Liberal government says, “Just trust us. This is the right thing to do.” Whether it is huge deficits, the Liberal Phoenix fiasco, which is celebrating its first anniversary this week, sole-sourcing the Super Hornet jets, or promises to govern ethically and transparently, the government has shown repeatedly it cannot be trusted, and so with any policy, it is fair for us to ask on behalf of our constituents for the information mentioned in the motion.

That we have to devote an opposition day motion to this issue speaks to the lengths the government will go to cover up the impact of its tax hikes. It refuses to disclose these documents because the facts do not fit with its political narrative. This is unacceptable to Canadians who deserve to know exactly what they can expect to pay in higher taxes.

I want to quote someone here:

> ...Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. That is why we committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in Ottawa. Governments and its information must be open by default. Simply put, it is time to shine more light on government to make sure it remains focused on the people it was created to serve.

That was said by our current Prime Minister, and for once, I actually agree with what he says, although I do not agree with what he is doing.

Information should be open by default. The finance minister should, by default, release the information of the impact of the carbon tax.

Members on this side of the House are concerned about the impact of the Liberal carbon tax because estimates indicate that families could expect to pay up to $2,500 extra every year in new taxes. Families can expect to pay up to 15% more on their natural gas bill, up to 10% more on their power bill, and an extra 11.5¢ per litre for gasoline.

Governments will tax elastic behaviour that has been deemed as bad as a means of eliminating that behaviour, but here is the problem: Heating our homes, turning on our lights, having hot water, and buying groceries are not optional. It seems a little ridiculous that I have to say this, but Canada is cold. Our climate is not conducive to using just less heat, and Canadians do not have the option of turning it off. In winter, Canada is dark. Canadians do not have the choice to decide whether to turn their lights off. The Liberals think that heating our homes is a choice to be taxed, but it is not a choice and all of us as Canadians end up paying higher taxes. The government gets richer and Canadians just get poorer.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change continues to justify this flawed idea by saying that this corporation or that corporation supports a carbon tax. Some do, as they can simply download the price of the tax onto consumers.

I am sure the government has written a manual they call, “how to help the middle class and those working to join it”. Someone on that side of the House did a really lousy job of editing it because they have left in chapters titled, “how to make them pay higher prices” and “how to make them pay higher taxes”.

It follows logically that businesses will shift the burden of the carbon tax. They have a bottom line to meet. They have numbers that have to be hit. The government does not care because it will still get its tax revenue and get an endorsement from groups which do not hold the burden of the Liberal tax. For members opposite, it is practically a win-win, but there is a loser in this equation. It is those Canadians I mentioned earlier who are being forced to pay thousands more in taxes. That is the extent of the warning, that it could be thousands of dollars, because the government cannot even be open and transparent about the numbers used by its own department.

I have to ask, just how bad are the numbers that the Liberals are trying to hide from us? If they will not be open with the facts, and they even vote down the tabling of the blacked-out report the member for Carleton has tried repeatedly to table, how can Canadians learn how much they will be forced to pay?

Reporting on the blacked-out finance department report that the member for Carleton obtained, David Akin of the *National Post* said that the author is “crystal clear on this point: Pricing carbon, be it through a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system, will hit consumers in the pocketbook.”

The author of the finance department report states:

> These higher costs would then cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices, thus leading all firms and consumers to pay more for goods and services with higher carbon content.

● (1335)

It is in the finance minister's mandate letter to engage meaningfully with the opposition. Yet, when the member for Carleton asked the finance minister repeatedly to just release the unredacted report, the minister simply gives us talking points.

In January, I sent around a survey to my constituents with a simple question, "Do you support a carbon tax?" This is what people on the ground are saying, and the Liberals should listen. Keep in mind that my constituents have already been hit with a carbon tax, so they know of what they speak.

One of my constituents said, “I don't believe the Liberals know how much this tax will affect the average family, or those on a senior's pension.” We think they do know, but they just will not release the information.

Another said, “I am a single mom, trying to educate and raise 2 kids on my own. Added taxes are not exactly what I am looking for.” She is probably looking for tax relief, but the Liberals have already cut out her sports tax credit, her education tax credit, and clawed back her TFSA. Where is her help?

Another said, “I am barely hanging onto my job because of cutbacks. I have become the working poor but I am still a taxpayer. Stop this tax please.” That is the forgotten aspect of this conversation. The Minister of Environment repeatedly references the praise of businesses and corporations for the carbon tax, but where is the praise from Canadians on this issue? This constituent is barely hanging onto his job, but at least some corporations are on board.

Another wrote in to say, "I struggle to pay my bills as it is—especially in the winter when gas consumption is highest." This gets to the heart of the problem the Liberals will not address. Rather than openly provide information that they have about the impact of this tax, the Liberals accuse members on this side of the House of burying our heads in the sand and being deniers, because calling us names is easier than facing the hard truth: This tax will not help.

The Liberal carbon tax will hurt families, because it taxes things that Canadians have no choice but to buy. Rural Canadians cannot just take the bus instead of driving their cars. Not every Canadian is a millionaire who can buy a Tesla with a taxpayer subsidy courtesy of the Prime Minister's friend Kathleen Wynne. And no Canadian can just turn off the heat.

It is not just individuals who will be forced to pay higher taxes. Places of worship, charities, food banks, organizations that help our communities cannot just pass along the tax. We have a jobs crisis in Alberta right now that the government has systematically refused to address. Food bank usage is up 60% this year, and the Liberals want the food bank to pay higher taxes. I am curious about what the government thinks. I wonder if it thinks that the food bank can simply raise prices to customers.

Policies should promote good behaviour. I personally think that food banks are excellent organizations with a meaningful purpose. I would not tax them more. What would I do? Members on this side of the House advocate evidence-based policies that can have a meaningful impact.

In 2012, it was the Conservative government that established regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the coal-fired electricity sector. We were the first country to ban the construction of traditional coal units under these guidelines. Our previous Conservative government also pursued a responsible sector-by-sector approach to regulate methane emissions in alignment with the United States, because we know that joint initiatives in alignment with our North American allies will lead to significant environmental improvements.

We also know that while Canadians can have a meaningful impact in the world, we will never solve the problem of excessive greenhouse gas emissions without buy-in from the world's biggest polluters. Lost in Liberal spin is the simple fact that our previous government was the first Canadian government in history to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We are not going to solve the problem by punishing everyday Canadians for living every day. I will not advocate policies that punish a constituent because he or she needs to drive a great distance to work. I will not advocate policies that punish my constituents for daring to heat their homes in the winter.

The government should practise what it preaches. The Department of Finance should be open and transparent. It should release the documents it has showing the cost of carbon taxes on Canadian workers, businesses, and families.

I want to read from the finance minister's mandate letter:

> It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them.

Well, the finance minister should admit his mistake in covering up the costs of the carbon tax and tell us the truth. Canadian workers, businesses, and families, above all, deserve to know.

● (1340)

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague said that his constituents in Edmonton West all need tax cuts. Does he see that they at some point want a healthy environment, too, and an appropriate legacy for our children and grandchildren?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, my constituents are very clear. Things are difficult in Alberta. There have been excessive job losses, and the government has done nothing for them except spout talking points. They want tax relief. Yes, they want a strong environment, but they do not want to be taxed for no reason. They also want the government to be open and transparent and to stop hiding the truth about what these taxes are going to cost them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

I find the shift in the rhetoric being used rather deplorable. I hear my colleague talking about this government getting richer. It seems to me that this Republican-style rhetoric comes to us from south of the border.

I want to ask the member, very simply, what he recommends that Canada do to contribute to the fight against climate change.

● (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, which perhaps my colleague was not listening to, the previous Conservative government, by working with its allies and industries, was the very first government in history to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Last week we heard the laughable comment from the other side that this was because of all the great stuff Kathleen Wynne was doing. The reality is that the economy grew at the same time as greenhouse gas emissions were reduced. The economy is not going to grow by taxing people, and the government knows it.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about how the carbon tax is not going to fix the problem, and I thought about Australia, which implemented a carbon tax. It found that it drove the cost of everything up for everybody and that the major contributors were not doing their part, so it got rid of that tax and learned its lesson.

I heard the member opposite say that he wants to know if Conservatives want to help the environment. We do, but the fact remains that Canada could eliminate its entire footprint and it would not have any significant impact on global warming. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, we chatted with people from the Australian government. They told us that over a two-year period, they took $16 billion of taxpayers' money out of the economy through their carbon tax, and it resulted in, oddly enough, an increase in greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, which is why they got rid of it. It was very clear that the true fact was that the carbon tax did nothing, and in fact, even with taking out a huge percentage of its GDP, greenhouse gas emissions still increased.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, we are revisiting historical information in the House, which is useful to do, but let us not put on rose-coloured glasses looking backward. The only reason, and I underscore "only", that greenhouse gases dropped during the years of the Harper administration was due to the 2008 financial crisis. Unless the Conservatives want to take credit for engineering a global financial collapse, I do not think they can identify that dip in greenhouse gases with any government policy. In fact, as soon as our economy began to improve, greenhouse gases began to rise once again.

We are way overdue to be serious about reducing greenhouse gases in this country.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the alternative facts put forward by my colleague. The reality and the truth is that the economy grew during the period of the previous government and at the same time, greenhouse gas emissions dropped. The economy grew, and greenhouse gases dropped. That is the truth. That is a fact.

Ms. Elizabeth May: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I would like a ruling. The term "alternative facts" has come to mean lies. I wonder if the language my hon. colleague used was appropriate. Anyone can check what I said, because it is true.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is actually not a point of order, but debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, recently I was out in my constituency when a woman rushed up to me with an air of urgency. She asked me if I was a member of Parliament, and then came the follow-up. She asked plaintively, "Is there any help out there for a family that can't pay the hydro bill"? Welcome to the middle class experience in Ontario.

So deep is the financial desperation of ordinary families that they are, like that woman, willing to swallow their pride and admit for the first time in their lives that they cannot make it on their own. Energy prices have pushed them to the very edge of economic survival. It is into this environment that the Prime Minister and Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne have charged with their carbon tax to push these desperate, vulnerable families over the edge.

The story I told is just the most recent of many experiences I have had. Families have cried while telling me stories of what it is like to live after their hydro has been cut off or how they have had to shut their small businesses because energy costs have made it pointless to continue.

Consider how the dominoes fall. A dry cleaner/laundry is compelled to raise its prices a bit due to increased hydro rates. A customer already feeling the squeeze from higher hydro and gas bills on the family budget now has a new tax on gasoline that increases his commuting cost by 5% in a single day. He makes a decision. He will wash his shirts at home. After all, they are the no-iron kind, and he can get away with that. He figures that he will save enough each month to make up for this new carbon tax and the most recent rise in his hydro and home heating. A few other people come to the same conclusion. Suddenly, the cleaner finds that the three customers a day who represent his marginal revenue, his profit margin, are not showing up anymore. The cleaner cannot go on running his business without making money. The business closes. This is the new economic cycle in Liberal Ontario.

The new carbon tax championed by the Liberals is a tax that consumes what little is left for hard-pressed families at the margins. How crazy is the system the Prime Minister's advisers, Gerald Butts and Katie Telford, pioneered with Kathleen Wynne in Ontario?

The point of the carbon tax, we are told, is to discourage energy consumption. Guess what? Ontarians are actually keen on helping. They have made great strides and have, indeed, reduced their energy consumption by 25% per capita over the past 10 years. How are they rewarded for this reduction in their hydro consumption? Well, last year Ontario actually raised hydro rates, because we saved too much energy. Believe it or not, since conservation reduced energy consumption, hydro rates had to go up to make up for the reduced revenue, because less electricity was sold to consumers.

This is the logic of Liberal energy policy. Raise the cost to consumers so they use less. Consumers use less as a result, but revenue goes down, so the cost to consumers needs to be raised to make up the shortfall. This is the Liberal approach to energy. That is the Liberal approach to taxes and deficits too. Raise taxes, get less revenue, run deficits, decide taxes have to be raised again. Before we know it, we have a carbon tax.

It is not surprising that this is also the Liberals' approach to the carbon tax. They have already built it in for the future. The 5¢ per litre increase my constituents experienced on January 1 on their gasoline is just the first step in the phase-in of the carbon tax. It is already scheduled to go up another 2.5 times when implementation is complete, or about 13¢ per litre in my neighbourhood.

The Liberals say that it will not cost my constituents a thing, because it will be revenue neutral. The Liberals say that because they will spend the tax dollars on things like subsidizing Tesla automobiles. Again, I am not kidding. This is how they define revenue neutrality. It is not a joke. It is for real. The Liberals are proudly subsidizing Tesla automobiles, which cost somewhere between $130,000 and $200,000 or more, with a gift of $15,000 each. It is a big feature. Members just need to go to the Tesla website and they will see it. The Liberals are boasting about this big subsidy. Each of those $15,000 subsidies comes from my hard-pressed constituents paying for it on gas that they can ill afford.

If members have not seen a Tesla and they do not know what one is like, I can tell them where to find them. In Toronto, they just have to go to Rosedale or Post Road. That is where the millionaires have those cars. My poor constituents gassing up in Keswick at the Canadian Tire do not have those Teslas, but they are busy paying for them with every dollar they spend at the pump, funnelling that money down to the millionaires in Toronto. That is what the Liberals call revenue neutrality. That is how this carbon tax is working.

● (1350)

My constituents in York—Simcoe are exactly the kind of people who get hit the most by the carbon tax, people in the middle class and those struggling to get there. They just want the government to get out of the way and give them the freedom to do so. They live in Keswick, because that is how far out they need to go to afford a home. They need a car or a truck for the long commute to their jobs in Toronto or to work self-employed in the trades, and that is also usually a long drive to the south.

They have seen their hydro costs double under the Liberals, even as they have reduced electricity consumption by 25%, and now their gasoline and natural gas costs, already much higher than the average, are escalating ever higher because of a Liberal idea and determination that taxing them more is a good thing for society. That is right. It is because Kathleen Wynne and the Prime Minister believe it is intrinsically a good idea for them to pay even more for their daily commute and more to heat their homes. It is very difficult to grasp that, but think about it. The Liberals have instituted a carbon tax with the deliberate and conscious intent of forcing those hard-pressed families of York—Simcoe to pay an arbitrary tax increase on their heat and on their gasoline to get to work because it is good for those families.

I sometimes talk about the danger of a few smart people who, because they have educations and sit in important jobs, fall into the trap of believing that they know what is best for everyone. That is the process behind this carbon tax. A few smart people, the Prime Minister, Kathleen Wynne, and Gerald Butts, decided that they know what is best for the residents of York—Simcoe. They know how the residents of York—Simcoe should live their lives. Part of that attitude is that those smart people decided that York—Simcoe residents will be better off if they are forced to pay a new tax they can ill afford.

Why can they ill afford these costs? It is simple. Consider those residents of Georgina, the largest municipality in York—Simcoe. The median income in Georgina is $32,414, and the median household income is $63,579. Both are just under the comparable figures for Ontario. These folks are the middle class, and the carbon tax is hitting them hard. The proportion of the family budget they spend to commute to work is higher than it is for most because of the distance of the commute and because they do not have public transit alternatives. There is no subway there. There is no GO train. Their heating costs are higher than those of folks in the Toronto condo towers. The gasoline commuting costs take up a big share of the budget, so they are specifically targeted, more than most, by this Ontario and federal Liberal carbon tax. It hits these middle-class Canadians far more than it hits the wealthy, for whom such commuting costs and heating costs are a tiny part of the household budget.

This brings us to the point of this motion before the House. Middle-class Canadians are being hurt by this carbon tax far more than the wealthy. It is simple. Heating and gasoline costs are a larger share of their household budgets. The rich can afford expensive housing close to their workplaces in Toronto and can enjoy short commutes. Raising a family on a household income of $63,000 means that housing is more modest and is at the periphery of the greater Toronto area. They are trading to achieve housing affordability at the cost of time and the cost of a lengthy commute. The Liberal carbon tax targets exactly those people, the severely middle class. They know that it is hurting them.

The government has an obligation to those it is asking to pay this tax to tell them exactly how much they are asking them to pay. Tell them the truth. Own up to how much it is asking them to pay. That is the point of this resolution.

The Liberal government has asked these people and has decided that it is good for them to pay this tax. The most basic, decent, and simple thing for an honest group of those very smart people in towers in Ottawa to do would be to own up and be truthful about how much it is going to be and how much each Canadian will be asked to pay as a result. They will know how policy is being made and that someone is telling them the truth, which they already feel painfully when they are trying to balance that budget at the end of every month and finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

● (1355)

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Madam Speaker, apart from the hon. member's doomsday scenario in Ontario, does he not see a role for federal government leadership as we battle climate change? What would he do? Patrick Brown thinks a price on carbon is a great idea.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Madam Speaker, we saw what to do with the previous government. Patrick Brown has called the carbon tax in Ontario a “tax grab”. Why? Because that is exactly what it is.

When we were instituting a carbon reduction policy, our policy and approach was clear and simple. We were part of North America and we would march in lockstep with the Obama regime on a common policy to reduce emissions, one that would ensure our people would not have a higher burden than others, that our businesses would remain competitive with the Americans, and that we would use our leverage not through unilateral disarmament and bankrupting our people into poverty, while others abandon climate change reduction, but ensure others would also deliver climate change reduction by working in partnership.

The Liberal government is abandoning partnership on the climate change front and in the process is unilaterally driving our working class and middle class into poverty.

● (1400)

The Speaker: The member will have three and a half minutes remaining in questions and comments following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

LABRADOR BORDERS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 1, 1927, the Privy Council in London redrew the boundaries of Labrador and gave part of the Quebec territory to Newfoundland.

The watershed line has always been clear, and the border, as currently drawn, cuts off part of Quebec's territory. For 90 years, Quebec has denounced the Labrador border, just one more injustice Canada has subjected us to. The 150th anniversary of so-called Confederation is another one. We are quite accustomed to these little tricks and moves, meant to put Quebec at a disadvantage.

I would remind the House that no Quebec government, whether federalist, nationalist, or sovereignist, has ever recognized Labrador's border as Ottawa has chosen to draw it. The Bloc Québécois maintains that Quebec's territory extends to the watershed line between it and Newfoundland.

That is what Quebec has always demanded, and that is what we still demand today.

* * *

[*English*]

RARE DISEASE DAY

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, February 28 marks Rare Disease Day, a day celebrated internationally to bring awareness about the impacts of rare diseases on sufferers and their families. In Canada, rare diseases affect approximately one in 12 people, or three million Canadians.

Rare Disease Day holds significance for my family. My special nephew, Ethan, is one of fewer than 200 in the world to be diagnosed with ATRX syndrome.

We have seen first hand the struggles he and his parents face with respect to late diagnosis, lack of clinical expertise, and limited research into effective treatment options, not to mention the day-to-day emotional, physical, and financial stressors related to caring for a child with special needs.

In honour of my resilient nephew Ethan and his loving parents Kathryn and Chris, I remind members that *Rare Is Everywhere* and that on February 28 we raise awareness to those afflicted with rare diseases.

* * *

SHINE A LIGHT ON SLAVERY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, on February 22, 2007, the House unanimously adopted former MP Joy Smith's Motion 153 and made a powerful statement to the world by condemning human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery.

Today is Shine a Light on Slavery, when individuals and organizations from around the world unite their voices to end slavery.

Slavery continues to exist around the world, including in Canada, and generates an estimated $150 billion a year. That is more than Google, Amazon, or eBay combined. In Canada, men, women, and children are enslaved in forced labour and exploited through prostitution.

I would invite all members and all Canadians to join the movement to end slavery by raising awareness about slavery in their communities and supporting organizations that fight slavery. The easiest way to do this today is by drawing a red X on their hands and posting it in a picture on social media with #enditmovement. Canada is in it to end it.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to update the House on our study of innovative poverty reduction strategies. Our study has taken us to Saint John, Winnipeg, Medicine Hat, and Maple Ridge and other Vancouver area cities, and we will go to Toronto in two weeks.

I want to thank our committee staff, specifically clerk Julie Geoffrion, logistics officers Mylène and Nathalie, and analysts Elizabeth, Mayra, and Julie, and our translators and technical staff who captured all the information. The organizations we met with are too numerous to list, but I would like to thank them for their great work and innovative ideas to help reduce poverty in Canada.

Poverty touches all of our communities. In my riding of Cambridge, I want to highlight Paul Tavares, currently in a 90 day and night out-in-the-cold challenge to raise awareness and funds for homelessness. Paul is doing a great job.

The House can expect the committee's full report before we rise for the summer.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, I tabled Motion No. 119, which calls on the government to bring back the eco-energy retrofit program. This popular program ran from 2007 to 2012 and helped hundreds of thousands of Canadians retrofit their homes, which lowered their energy bills by 20%, created thousands of good local jobs, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by three tonnes per year for each house.

While the program cost the federal government $900 million over five years, it leveraged more than $4 billion in retrofit investments by Canadian families. The government got five times the economic impact from its investment. When homeowners invest in new windows, insulation, and other energy saving products, that money circulates through communities across this country.

The Liberals want infrastructure investment. They want to reduce carbon emissions. They want to help the middle the class. Therefore, I call on the government to revive the eco-energy retrofit program, and it will give them everything they want.

* * *

● (1405)

SCOTTIES TOURNAMENT OF HEARTS

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no issue telling my colleagues that St. Catharines rocks, but this week we are doing a bit more than usual. This is because St. Catharines has the honour of hosting the 2017 Scotties Tournament of Hearts. Fifteen teams, comprised of the most skilled women in curling, are facing off in this proud Canadian tradition.

Last Saturday, I stood in the Meridian Centre and welcomed teams and fans alike to our community.

On behalf of the residents of St. Catharines, I want to thank the over 400 volunteers who make this event possible. I also want to congratulate the local host committee for its great work in bringing this tournament to St. Catharines.

As well, I would like to thank the Sandra Schmirler Foundation. This foundation, in the name of the last curling great, donates each year to a hospital in the host community, and the St. Catharines General Hospital children's wing received $62,000.

With the championship only days away, I encourage all residents of St. Catharines and of course my colleagues to hurry hard to the Meridian Centre to take in the action.

BULLYING

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to recognize the achievements of a young leader in my riding.

Scott Smith is a 10th grade student at Orangeville District Secondary School and he lives with Asperger's syndrome. Scott was bullied as a young boy and has since dedicated himself to combatting bullying.

In grade 5, Scott developed a website to poll students on bullying, hosted an anti-bullying T-shirt design contest, and raised funds to bring guest speakers to his school to educate students on the effects of bullying.

Scott's education program has reduced incidents of bullying at Belfountain Public School by 50%. Schools in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Kentucky, and Colorado have expressed interest in Scott's program.

Scott is currently developing a community unity program, which aims to bring the local police and the community together to put an end to bullying.

Please join me in congratulating Scott and wishing him well on his future endeavours.

* * *

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, words can hurt. It is that simple but powerful message behind a campaign to end the use of the “r-word”.

People know the one: a clinical label for people with developmental disabilities, which has become an insult. It is offensive, it is derogatory, and it is demeaning. Worst of all, it reinforces a stereotype that people who are intellectually challenged have less value.

March 1 is Spread the Word to End the Word day.

[*Translation*]

In my riding, the South Temiscaming Committee has joined the global movement led by the Special Olympics. I am proud to say that this is a one-of-a-kind committee, because its campaign is bilingual.

[*English*]

On March l, please go to the official website r-word.org and make a pledge. Let us eliminate the “r-word” from our vocabulary and replace it with a new word, “respect”.

* * *

INCOME TAXES

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, my office ran a successful free tax clinic for constituents with modest incomes and simple tax situations in my riding of Don Valley North.

With tax season right around the corner this year, people need help filing their taxes. I am proud to say that this service will be running again this year.

This CRA-approved clinic is managed through my constituency office. Our volunteers are ready to prepare income tax returns for all eligible individuals from mid-February to the end of April.

I encourage all my colleagues to consider organizing similar services in their own ridings. Helping ordinary Canadians navigate their taxes is a simple, effective way to help strengthen communities across our country.

* * *

● (1410)

TAXATION

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the week that my constituents celebrated Family Day, I rise to voice serious concern that the increasing tax burden the Liberal government is placing on our families has reached a breaking point.

In Flamborough—Glanbrook, young families are the largest and fastest growing demographic. Young couples and parents are working hard in pursuit of their dream to own a home, to make a better life for themselves. We should be rewarding their hard work and not punishing it with new taxes.

When the Prime Minister travels to European galas to lecture others on middle-class angst, he needs to first look at his own actions, because actions speak louder than words: actions like the carbon tax and CPP hike, actions like the cancellation of tax credits families relied on for sports and arts programs for their children, actions taken by the government.

Here is my challenge to the members opposite who talk a big game on reconnecting with the middle class. Long before next Family Day, they should actually go to a local Tim Hortons or a breakfast diner and hear the increasing frustrations of young families before contemplating more taxes to fund the free-spending way of the Liberal government.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TOURISM

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian tourism industry had its best year in 2016. In the past 10 years, almost 20 million international tourists have visited different regions of our country, including my beautiful riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Our government realizes that tourism is an important economic engine. It supports more than 637,000 jobs, which represents almost 2% of Canada's GDP. It is the biggest employer of youth and also the sector with the most SMEs.

Through Destination Canada, our government has invested $50 million in the tourism industry in order to more strategically target international markets where we can improve our tourism performance.

Our connecting America program has been very successful. Last year it increased the number of U.S. visitors to Canada by 17%.

Given that we will be celebrating Canada's 150th, we hope that 2017 will be a record year.

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CANADIAN PARALYMPIC HALL OF FAME

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity in the House to salute the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities. She is part of a group of five exceptional people.

In fact, this year she was nominated by the Canadian Paralympic Committee to the Canadian Paralympic Hall of Fame.

Our minister is being inducted in the builder category along with Maureen Orchard of Winnipeg and Archie Allison of Toronto.

[*English*]

Likewise, Ozzie Sawicki, from Cochrane in Alberta as well as the para alpine skier Karolina Wisniewska from Calgary are named in the category of coaches and in the category of athletes respectively.

The Canadian Paralympic Hall of Fame pays tribute to those who have made significant contributions to the development of the paralympic movement in Canada. On behalf of all my colleagues, I congratulate all the nominees.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every week, MPs from Manitoba take a flight from Winnipeg to Ottawa. In doing so, we have the pleasure of meeting some wonderful people who work at the James A. Richardson International Airport.

I stand today to recognize three of those people, Glenn, Janice, and Don, all Air Canada employees, who will be retiring at the end of the month after over three decades of service. Glenn, Janice, and Don have always had a smile on their face, a warm welcome, and an air of reassurance, as weary travellers passed by them. Whether it was due to delayed flights, bad weather, or anything else that could go wrong, these three made sure that we as Manitoba MPs and all of their customers were helped and listened to.

We all know that airlines can be frustrating at times, but people like Glenn, Janice, and Don make the experience a good one. I wish them all the best as they begin the next chapter in their lives. All the Manitoba members of Parliament who they've been so good to over the years thank them. They will be missed.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's economic policies are working and we are delivering jobs to the middle class and those working hard to join it. According to a StatsCan report, jobs for core-age workers have the highest employment rate in Canada since October 2008, before the great recession. Here in Ottawa, unemployment is at its lowest in more than five years.

In a recent survey conducted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 62% of its members are either somewhat or very confident in their own futures. Four in five expect to maintain or increase their revenues in the next year. A quarter of businesses expect to hire more employees next year. The report also states business taxes are not a big problem, and in fact the top priority for 53% of them is acquiring suitable staff. This is indeed great news for the middle class.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

LONGUEUIL

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned about the discovery of seven habitable planets orbiting the star known as TRAPPIST-1, in a galaxy far, far away.

Closer to home, we also learned yesterday that everything is in place to sustain life in Pointe-de-Longueuil, this huge strip of federal land along the St. Lawrence that is rich in history and the source of drinking water for more than half of all Quebeckers.

The project announced yesterday by the City of Longueuil is the result of a joint effort between the municipality and the Canada Lands Company, who were open to the wishes of the people of Longueuil to finally have access to the banks of their river. The stars were aligned.

This is also an opportunity to applaud the mayor of Longueuil, Caroline St-Hilaire. People will be talking about her vision for years to come. The Pointe-de-Longueuil project is the crowning achievement in the mayor's two terms in office. She is passing the torch to us, as yesterday she announced that she is stepping down and leaving city hall.

Mayor St-Hilaire, thank you for this tremendous contribution. I hope to cross paths with you again.

* * *

[*English*]

RARE DISEASE DAY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next Tuesday, February 28, marks Rare Disease Day in Canada. This day raises awareness of the millions of Canadians directly affected by over 6,000 rare diseases and disorders. That is roughly one in 12 Canadians. Seventy-five per cent of these diseases affect children and 30% of those affected will die before their fifth birthday.

Speaking on behalf of a family impacted by a rare disease called Alport syndrome, a rare genetic condition that leads to a loss of hearing and eventually kidney failure, I have seen first-hand the impact a rare disease can have on a family. I understand the pain and worry of facing an incurable condition affecting one's children.

This year's theme is research, and I want to take a moment to thank the medical professionals and researchers who commit their time, as well as effort, every day to help those affected by rare diseases. On February 28, let us celebrate their work that saves lives and hope that the next research discovery breaks new ground in curing the incurable.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FRENCH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER IN NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 10, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*, the only French-language newspaper in the province, celebrated its 80th year of publication. *Le Petit Courrier* was founded in 1937 by Desiré d'Eon at a small print shop in Pubnico to report the local news in the southwestern part of the province.

[*English*]

Nearly 40 years ago, in 1977, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse* expanded its reach across the province, with the objective of linking together each Acadian community.

[*Translation*]

A great defender of the interests of Acadians and francophones in the province since its early days, *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse* continues to bolster the linguistic vitality of Acadian communities.

I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating *Le Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse* on its 80th anniversary.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like me, many Canadians would be surprised to learn that a lawyer does not need any experience in the sensitivities of sexual assault cases to become a judge overseeing these types of challenging trials. There currently is also no mandatory training for sitting judges. Today, I introduced a bill to help fix this.

We need to build confidence in our system so more sexual assault survivors feel comfortable coming forward. Will the Prime Minister join me and support this bill that requires mandatory sexual assault training for lawyers who want to become judges?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that there is a necessity to ensure that we have confidence in our justice system. With respect to victims of sexual assault or victims of gender-based violence, they need to be treated with respect and dignity at all stages.

I recognize that the hon. member across the way has introduced a private member's bill, and I look forward to continuing to speak with her, as well as reviewing the private member's bill as it proceeds through the House.

● (1420)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was in university, I worked at a rape crisis centre and I participated in a program that looked at how victims were treated by the courts. I saw what survivors of sexual assault have to go through. Judges not having the appropriate training only makes the process more difficult for everyone involved.

Today, I introduced a bill to solve that problem. I hope that all members will support these non-partisan measures.

Will the Prime Minister join me in standing up for women and girls and supporting mandatory sexual assault training?

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member across the way, and I think, without equivocation, all members of the House recognize and acknowledge that sexual assault and gender-based violence is wrong and we have to do everything we can to prevent it.

I also recognize that the member has introduced a private member's bill. I look forward to continuing my conversations with her. I look forward to reviewing the private member's bill in detail to see how we can continue with the objective of ensuring that victims of sexual assault are treated with respect and dignity.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in New Brunswick, in June 2014, Justin Bourque murdered constables David Ross, Fabrice Gevaudan, and Doug Larche. It has been described as one of the worst crimes in Canadian history. Because of back-to-back sentences for multiple murders, Bourque received a life sentence with no chance of parole for 75 years.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and commit today that he will not touch consecutive sentencing?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, our deepest sympathies go out to the families. We recognize that these were heinous crimes, that they need to be prevented, and public safety is paramount.

The Criminal Code currently has the strongest penalty for murder, which is life imprisonment, and judges have the opportunity or the ability to utilize their discretion to impose consecutive sentences with respect to individuals who have committed such heinous crimes.

I look forward to continuing to do the work around the criminal justice system as we move forward to make sure that we improve—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister stood in the House defending his decision to approve the sale of a piece of Canada's health care system to China, but he could not say exactly who owns this company. In addition to the time they have spent reviewing the approval, they have now had 24 hours to figure out who owns this company. Therefore, do they have an answer yet? Who owns Anbang Insurance?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that investment is so critical for creating economic growth and jobs, particularly here in Canada. We look at all investments that come to Canada under the Investment Canada Act.

With regard to this specific case, we did our due diligence, we looked at the job levels, and we made sure that we received good quality data around the jobs that would be secured, and also any additional resources for expansion of the facility to create new jobs.

The bottom line is, this is good for British Columbia. This is good for Canadians. This is good for jobs, and this is good for the economy.

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TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the Prime Minister will not tell Canadians how much his carbon tax will cost, especially considering it is his signature economic and environmental policy. Why hide it? He will not reveal the cost to families, seniors, and workers. In fact, this is now becoming widely known as the carbon tax cover-up.

My question is simple. Will he come clean and let Canadians know just how much the carbon tax will cost them?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, we understand that there is a real cost to not acting on climate change.

We know that it costs—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I know members are excited to hear the answer, but we need to hear it. Settle down. Stay calm. We are going to be away from here soon for a few days, working hard in our constituencies. The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change has the floor.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, we know that the cost to Canadians through insurance claims from climate change incidents, like floods, like forest fires, is more than $1 billion. That number is going to continue to rise.

That is why we are taking serious action. We are putting a price on pollution, we are going to grow our economy, and we are going to invest in good jobs, because it is the right thing to do and it makes business sense.

● (1425)

ETHICS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the law says people cannot give a bunch of money to a political party on Monday and then ask for special treatment on Tuesday. That is why we have a five-year ban between fundraising and lobbying.

However, the chairman of a pharmaceutical giant named Apotex held a $1,500-a-person fundraiser featuring the Prime Minister himself, and is now lobbying the Liberal government.

Just so we are all clear, this is totally illegal. Do the Liberals actually think it is appropriate to have lobbying meetings with a pharmaceutical giant that has raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Liberal Party, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the previous fundraising activity, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

That being said, we recognize that we can do more. That is why the Minister of Democratic Institutions will be introducing legislation to make political fundraising even more open and more transparent.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is once again the subject of an ethics investigation.

The Commissioner of Lobbying is going to be looking into the fundraiser that allegedly gave privileged access to the chairman of Apotex. We keep hearing that the Liberals obey the law. The Commissioner of Lobbying, however, believes something is amiss.

Does the Prime Minister really still believe that his government is a model of ethical behaviour?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The Commissioner of Lobbying looks at activities of lobbyists. With respect to the recent fundraising activities, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

That being said, we recognize that we can do more. That is why the Minister of Democratic Institutions will be introducing legislation to make political fundraising even more open and transparent.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government keeps telling us that it is following the rules, but we all know the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the Commissioner of Lobbying are constantly investigating its actions. This government promised to be the most ethical government ever, but it turns out to be not all that far removed from the party that gave us the sponsorship scandal.

How can the Prime Minister make claims about real change when he is once again being investigated for an ethical issue?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Commissioner of Lobbying monitors lobbyists' activities. Our government will continue to work very hard to address the real challenges Canadians are facing.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are seeing a very disturbing pattern here with the Liberals.

A giant pharmaceutical company or a billionaire with his own island, the Prime Minister is at their beck and call, even if it means breaking the law. However, for regular Canadians struggling to pay the bills, struggling to pay for those overpriced medicines, the Liberals are just not that into them.

If the Liberals will crawl across broken glass to answer the phone of the wealthy and well connected, when are they going to work half as hard for average Canadians who are just trying to follow the law and pay the bills?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in regard to the comments that the member is making, and I am sure he also knows better, the Commissioner of Lobbying looks at activities of lobbyists.

When it comes to everyday Canadians, it was this government that committed to working very hard for middle-class Canadians. That is why we reduced taxes on middle-class Canadians. That is why we introduced the Canada child benefit. We will continue to work hard for Canadians, because that is what they elected us to do.

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had a number of phone calls last night from seniors who were concerned about the Chinese takeover of facilities in B.C., including in my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. These seniors are concerned about the mysterious Chinese-owned organization with whom Morgan Stanley in the U.S. has refused to do business but the Liberals have welcomed with open arms. They want the Prime Minister to tell them who the owner is of this secretive company and who he agreed to sell their homes to.

● (1430)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in investments. We think it is absolutely critical that we have investments in Canada to grow the economy and create jobs. With respect to this particular case, under the Investment Canada Act, Cedar Tree will now be owned and operated by Canadians going forward. More importantly, it will have additional financial resources to expand its facility, which means it will be able to create more jobs. That is good for British Columbia, good for seniors, and good for all Canadians.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know many of the people who live in these facilities, and they deserve to know who owns their home. Our seniors are concerned about the quality of care, of food, and the credentials of the people caring for them. This transaction is clearly not about charity; it is about profit. Why would the Prime Minister put the care of our parents and grandparents at the mercy of profiteers pulling strings from Beijing?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is our government that has shown leadership when it comes to supporting our seniors. We have reduced the old-age security age limit from 67 to 65. We have increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10%. With respect to this particular transaction, the additional financial resources will allow Cedar Tree the ability to expand, provide better service, and create more jobs. This is good for seniors, good for the economy, and good for all Canadians.

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister defended his approval of the sale of Canadian seniors' care facilities to the Chinese, claiming that it would create jobs for Canadians. Today we learned that nothing could be further from the truth; there are absolutely no new jobs attached to this deal. Clearly, pleasing Chinese billionaires is more important than Canadian jobs and Canadian seniors. How can he justify selling Canadian medical facilities companies to his friends in Beijing with no guarantee of benefits to Canadians?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we engaged the British Columbia government and the minister of health to make sure that all of the regulations would be followed in that province.

However, more importantly, we believe that global investment is good for Canada, because when we bring investment to Canada, it creates opportunities for growth. When we grow the economy, we create good-quality jobs. What does "good-quality jobs" mean? They help strengthen the middle class. That is what this investment is all about, making sure that we maintain good jobs, and making sure that it has additional financial resources to expand its facilities and create more jobs. This is good for the economy, good for job creation, and good for the middle class.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, beyond the very real concerns for the welfare of Canadian seniors living in these care facilities, the Liberals' indecent rush to embrace this sketchy deal has skated too quickly past security and investment due diligence. American government regulators and investment houses have absolutely refused to deal with this Chinese company on the basis of its murky ownership and shareholder structure. If the minister is so confident in this backroom deal, will he make public the analysis of the Canadian security agencies that reviewed the deal?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that this deal was under the provision of the Investment Canada Act. We did our due diligence, followed the process, and made sure that this was in the overall net economic benefit of all Canadians. Otherwise we would not have proceeded. As I have reiterated before, it is about global investment, creating jobs, and growing the economy. We made the best decision in our national interest and in the net economic benefit for British Columbians and all Canadians.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated in this House that when it comes to trade deals, "we need more transparency on what is happening. We need not just great photo ops, but the details of what is going on". Therefore, it seems a little strange then that only Chinese state-run media is reporting that Canadian officials have been in Beijing since last Monday for secret meetings on a bilateral trade agreement. Will the minister be open and transparent with Canadians and tell us if she is negotiating a free trade agreement with China, yes or no?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we owe it to Canadian workers and their families to ensure that we have the access we need to the significant Asia-Pacific market. We will continue to explore ways to expand our commercial relations and our progressive trade agenda throughout the region in the most effective way possible. This will be the message of the Minister of International Trade at the upcoming high-level dialogue in China.

As well, and as the member opposite well knows, all of us in this House look forward to sharing the committee's recommendations on the future of our trade with the Asia region.

● (1435)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the committee has not done any work on China, and it is all about consultations until it should.

The Liberals have turned the softwood lumber deal into a crisis. The Liberals are failing Canadian farmers on pulse exports to India; that deal is up in March. The Liberals rolled over on negotiations on NAFTA without really knowing what they are putting at risk. Now, the Liberals are engaged in secret negotiations with Chinese officials. It is more of the same.

Why do the Liberals not start cleaning up the messes they have already created before they launch new negotiations with China?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, Canada is a trading nation. We understand the importance of strengthening Canada's role in the global economy and we are very concerned about the rising ways of protectionism we see around the world.

To turn to Japan, for instance, it is a long-standing and important partner for us, and that has not changed. The international trade report on TPP will help guide us as we expand commercial relations and our progressive trade agenda in the Asia region.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the University of Toronto's international human rights program released a shocking report on Canada's practice of detaining children in medium-security immigration jails. According to the report, Canada detains almost 250 children annually. Some of these children are even held in solitary confinement, in breach of international law and the charter. This is a disgrace.

Will the government finally amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and prohibit the detention of children?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immigration detention is a measure of absolute last resort. That is why we are investing $138 million to both improve the system and minimize its use. We want to avoid the housing of minors in detention facilities as much as humanly possible.

I would note that the report the hon. member refers to said this:

> CBSA has embarked on several new programs to improve transparency, alternatives to detention, and infrastructure.... the total number of children in detention across the country...has decreased significantly....

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the second anniversary of the first vote on Bill C-51. The Liberals and the Conservatives joined forces to pass a bill that violates our rights and freedoms.

History is repeating itself with Bill C-23, which is bad for human rights and Canadians' privacy.

The government has admitted that the current pre-clearance system works well, so why is it so determined to forge ahead with giving American officers more powers on Canadian soil?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point is simply this. Under the pre-clearance system improved by the legislation in Bill C-23, more Canadians will be able to clear customs in Canada before they cross the border, under the full umbrella of Canadian law, the protection of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the protection of the Bill of Rights, and the protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act. That is obviously a far superior process.

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[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, during one of my regular meetings with Canadian business people and economic stakeholders, I met with officials from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. These are entrepreneurs, job creators, and wealth creators from across the country, and they are all very worried about this government's lack of vision.

We know that the Liberal Party was elected on a promise to return to a balanced budget by 2019, but the Department of Finance has found that we will not return to a balanced budget until 2055. That is completely unacceptable, and the minister knows it.

Could the minister at least set the record straight for these entrepreneurs, job creators and wealth creators? When will Canada return—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to create good economic conditions for business across the country, for small and medium-sized businesses as well as large corporations.

That is why we need to make investments in our future. Our goal is to spur economic growth and create more opportunities for workers, and at the same time, more opportunities for companies of all sizes. We will therefore continue our investment program to grow the economy.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not even a hint of a response telling us when we are going to return to a balanced budget. When my colleague worked in the private sector, he would never have tolerated such a weak answer like that.

I will ask the question again on behalf of all Canadian business owners and all Canadian taxpayers: when will the government finally return to a balanced budget?

Will it be in 2019, like my colleague promised, or will it be in 2055, as the officials at the Department of Finance are sadly predicting?

● (1440)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our goal is clear: we want to have an economy that works for Canadians and companies across the country. That is very important.

It is very important to invest in infrastructure and to have innovative companies. There will be more growth in the future and more opportunities for individuals and companies.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the carbon tax cover-up, this week 68-year-old Rick Russell put up a massive sign on his house declaring “another senior loses home due to high energy costs”. He has given up his truck and house so he can pay a tax that will fund rebates for millionaires who buy $150,000 electric cars. Now the government is hiding what the tax will cost the poor and middle class.

Will the Prime Minister end the carbon tax cover-up and tell Rick what the tax will cost him?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 80% of Canadians already live in a jurisdiction where there is a price on carbon pollution. That is thanks to the leadership of the provinces.

I was actually heartened to see that it was not just Liberal governments which had done that, or NDP governments. We also have Conservative parties. The Conservative Party of Manitoba has committed to putting a price on pollution. Patrick Brown, the leader of the Conservative Party in Ontario, has said that putting a price on carbon pollution just makes sense.

Why does it make sense? Because it fosters a cleaner future, it reduces emissions, it creates good jobs, and it is the right thing to do.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I know hon. members want to assist the minister in how she might answer, but let us remember that one person asks the question, one person answers the question, and the rest of us need to listen.

Now we need to listen to the hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, still on the carbon tax cover-up, disabled grandmother Kathy Katula broke into tears at the Prime Minister's recent town hall, asking him how she would pay his new carbon tax on her home heating. The Prime Minister gave her a nice warm hug, but not warm enough to heat her home. Now he is censoring the cost of his tax on the poor and middle class.

Kathy is paying the bill. She should have the right to see the bill. Will the Prime Minister end the carbon tax cover-up and tell Kathy what his tax will cost her?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted for this opportunity to talk about the importance of working for a cleaner environment, a cleaner economy, an economy that protects the health, the clean water, and the clean air of this generation and future generations; a government that also works for economic growth to benefit the middle class; and a development that also is inclusive of everyone who is vulnerable in our population. We are working very hard to achieve these three goals.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, the AFN and Cindy Blackstock filed a human rights complaint against the federal government to end racial discrimination against first nations kids. Today, at committee, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs told us that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal was not the court of law, therefore implying that the government did not need to respect the tribunal.

All indigenous children have the right to a healthy childhood. Therefore, when will the government do the right thing and stop discriminating against first nations children?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we welcome the tribunal's ruling and we are working very hard with concrete steps to address its orders. We have committed $635 million over five years to close the gaps in child and family services. We have invested an additional $382 million over three years to expand the definition of Jordan's principle. We are working with the provinces and territories, the service providers, as well as first nations, to totally overhaul the system.

Today we are very pleased that Grand Chief Ed John has agreed to chair the national advisory committee to ensure we get this done.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many cases have demonstrated that applying the criterion of naturally foreseeable death is not effective. There has been another tragic case in Quebec. We cannot stand by and wait for judicial rulings. The Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying recommended the use of advance directives. Madam minister, action is urgently needed. We cannot let people suffer.

Will the minister insist that the study on advance directives be completed before December 2018?

● (1445)

The Speaker: I would like to remind the hon. member to direct her comments to the chair.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on specific cases. It is a very emotional subject.

By passing legislation on medical assistance in dying, our government sought to protect the most vulnerable Canadians while giving them safe and consistent access to medical assistance in dying across the country. We launched independent reviews of three complex issues that are outside the purview of the act. We believe that the reports from experts will provide Canadians with useful information.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that the economy and the environment go hand in hand and that everyone must be involved in a realistic plan to reduce greenhouse gases. In November, the President of the Treasury Board announced that the government will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and that a centre for greening government will be set up to coordinate those efforts.

Can the President of the Treasury Board give us an update on this issue?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to doing its part to create a cleaner and more innovative economy in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and create good, sustainable jobs for the middle class.

[*English*]

That is why I was proud today to participate in the launch of the new Centre for Greening Government. We launched a series of round table discussions focused on making sure the Government of Canada was part of the climate change solution.

I want to thank the member for Vancouver Quadra, my parliamentary secretary, for her leadership on this file.

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ETHICS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Another day, another investigation launched as a result of the Prime Minister's questionable cash-for-access events.

First, the Ethics Commissioner and now the Commissioner of Lobbying are asking the Prime Minister about his unethical conduct. We already know the Prime Minister has zero regard for the rules and ethics laws, and we learned yesterday that the lobbying commissioner is investigating the Prime Minister's shady cash-for-access events with his wealthy lobbyist friends.

Has the Prime Minister been questioned by the Commissioner of Lobbying regarding his cash-for-access fundraising activity?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The lobbying commissioner looks at the activity of lobbyists. That is what the lobbying commissioner does. Just so everyone in the House is able to hear, the lobbying commissioner looks at the activities of lobbyists.

This side of the House is working hard for Canadians, working hard for middle-class Canadians and those wanting to join it, so we can make the investments to help create the growth Canadians need us to create.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the lobbying commissioner is clearly looking at lobbyists who are lobbying the Prime Minister, which only makes sense as the Prime Minister and the House leader think this all is a big joke. The Prime Minister thinks he is untouchable. It is the Prime Minister's conduct and lack of ethics that has him under several investigations by multiple commissioners. It is hard, actually, for Canadians to keep track of them all.

The lobbying commissioner is now investigating the Prime Minister's cash-for-access events. We know he does not answer his own questions in the House. Therefore, will the Prime Minister answer the lobbying commissioner's questions or will he send the government House leader to answer questions for him?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of us have been elected to this place to do the good work Canadians expect us to do. The difference between the Conservatives and this government is that this government is taking unprecedented levels of consultation with Canadians so we can respond to the very real challenges they are facing. This government will continue to work hard for Canadians. This government will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing, because that is what we were elected to do.

With regard to the lobbying commissioner, it is important to inform the member that the lobbying commissioner looks at the interests of lobbyists.

● (1450)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with so many investigations going on, Canadians heads are literally spinning from the Liberal sunny ways.

Here is a tally: ministers using the power of their office to fundraise for the Liberal Party; secret getaways on private helicopters; inside deals for Chinese billionaires after big donations to the Trudeau Foundation; and now, illegal fundraising with lobbyists. The Liberal ethical lapses go on and on.

Why do Liberals and the Prime Minister act like the Liberals who have sat in those seats before them?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to repeat the answer the member has received. It is interesting that members opposite choose to keep repeating the same questions, but never understand why they get the same answers.

When it comes to the lobbyist commissioner, the lobbyist commissioner looks at the activity of lobbyists. When it comes to previous fundraising activities, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

Members opposite might choose to focus on work that others need to do, but we will focus on work that Canadians want us to do. That is why we are responding to the very real challenges they are facing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been in office for 18 months and is already under investigation by a number of commissioners, including the Ethics Commissioner. That is unheard of for a Canadian prime minister.

Even though the Gomery commission brought to light the Liberals' questionable ethics, they clearly did not learn anything from their 10-year exile.

How many times will the Prime Minister have to be investigated before he finally puts an end to his questionable practices and flexible ethics?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am being asked the same question so I will give the same answer.

Let us be clear. The Commissioner of Lobbying looks at activities of lobbyists. With respect to the recent fundraising activities, the commissioner has said that no rules were broken.

We are going to continue to work for Canadians in order to respond to the very real challenges they are facing. That is what we were elected to do, and we are going to continue to work hard for them.

* * *

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the one year anniversary of Phoenix, thousands of public servants still have not been paid what they have earned. Now, in the midst of tax season, an estimated 50,000 erroneous tax slips were sent out and the CRA has said that even if T4s are inaccurate, public servants must still file their taxes on time. That is shameful.

Since the Liberals have failed to fix this fiasco, will they do what is right by issuing a delay to this year's tax deadline?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very hard to resolve the pay issues associated with Phoenix. We have put in additional measures to ensure employees get paid for the work they have performed.

In terms of the T4 slips, 300,000 T4 slips have already been issued. If any of them are erroneous, we will work very hard with Revenue Canada and Revenu Québec to ensure they get corrected, revised T4 slips.

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[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, rumour has it that the mysterious infrastructure investment bank would be set up as a crown corporation. On the surface, that seems fine, but if we dig deeper, we see that there will be major consequences.

What it means is that this bank, which will handle billions of dollars in private and public investment, will not report to the parliamentary budget officer. It will be shielded from the watchful eye of our primary budget watchdog.

Is the Liberal government setting up a sweet little secret garden where it can make covert deals with its friends?

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the campaign, we promised that we would mobilize private capital to build more infrastructure for Canadian communities. Municipalities and provinces have identified a huge infrastructure deficit. We have doubled our investments from $60 billion, more than doubling, to $180 billion. We will mobilize private capital through the bank to build more infrastructure.

* * *

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more and more experts are criticizing the Liberals' ridiculous decision to buy 18 outdated Super Hornets.

Thirteen generals, all former Royal Canadian Air Force commanders, have condemned this "ill-advised, costly, and unnecessary" decision. They say the Liberals will be burdening the Royal Canadian Air Force for decades to come to the point where it will be doing less with more. That makes no sense. The generals even suggested a solution that would increase the number of jets for a fraction of the price.

Why are the Liberals so bent on buying Super Hornets at $300 million apiece?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure that our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces, especially our air force, have the right aircraft. We as a government have committed to replacing the fighters, hence the reason we are actually committed to an open competition to replace the entire fleet. We are investing into the legacy fleet as well. Plus, we are buying new Super Hornets. The discussions are ongoing on that to make sure that we can fill this capability gap. I do not know why the member opposite has a concern with investing in defence.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current commander of the air force says there is no capability gap, and now 13 former commanders of the air force are demanding the Prime Minister put an end to his "ill-advised, costly, and unnecessary" sole-source purchase of 18 Super Hornets. The generals say that the Prime Minister's partisan decision will damage the nation's defence posture. They have even offered alternative strategies based upon their air force experience that would be more beneficial to Canadian industry, Canadian taxpayers, and our national security. The experts have spoken. Why are the Liberals not listening?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank those former generals for their service. The chief of the defence staff, General Vance, has exceptional experience and I have an air force commander with exceptional experience as well. I read that letter. No, we will not be buying used aircraft for our air force. We will be buying new equipment for our air force, making sure that we replace all the fighters, and making sure that we actually fill the interim capability gap and invest in the legacy fleet. We will be investing in defence. That is what our government committed to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to spending sprees, the sky is the limit for the Liberals except when it comes to honouring the memory of Canadians who served their country in the Canadian Forces.

We have learned that more than 70 military museums across the country will receive no more funding. How very generous of the Liberals to cut them off as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. As a former serviceman, I find this lack of respect deeply troubling.

Why did the minister, who is also a veteran, agree to this drastic cut?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for raising this concern with me. I will take a look at it and get back to him. However, as both my critics know, my office and I are always open to any questions. I will look into this and get back to the member.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRIFOOD

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, trading is crucial to our Canadian agricultural sectors. We are the fifth largest agricultural exporter in the world, and our agricultural and agrifood industries employ 2.2 million Canadians. In Manitoba, most of those producers are SMEs.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell us what steps he is taking to promote our agrifood SMEs and expand Canada's agricultural trade around the world?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be leading an upcoming trade mission to Vietnam and India as part of our government's effort to strengthen and expand trade in the Asia-Pacific region. I look forward to promoting world-class Canadian products, including Canadian pulses, in India. Our government has already produced great results for Canadian farmers, and we will continue to expand our agricultural exports, create jobs and growth for Canadian farmers, and help more people join the middle class.

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FINANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians would be shocked to learn that we currently pay more in interest on Canada's debt than we do on national defence. Canadians have every right to be worried. The finance department tabled a report just before Christmas that says that without major changes, Canada may not balance its budget until 2050 or 2051, but the Liberals will not allow parliamentarians to study this report. Why the cover-up? Is it because the minister questions the work of his own department, or does he not want Canadians to know the truth about their reckless spending path?

● (1500)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report in question showed that Canada's economy is sustainable over the long term. What it did not do is examine the impacts of the measures that we are taking to improve Canada's economy. It did not show the impact of the measures we have taken to reduce taxes on middle-class Canadians. It did not show the impact of the investments we have made in infrastructure and will continue to make so that we can grow our economy. It did not show the impact that a newly more innovative Canada, through skills development and innovation funding, will make on our economy. Over the long term, our economy will be strong with the investments we are making to help Canadians.

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BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last spring I tabled a motion in this chamber calling for an apology to the 100,000 British home children who were sent to Canada from 1869 to 1948, most of them simply used as cheap labour throughout their childhood. Last Thursday, the House unanimously passed a similar motion, and I thank the member for Montcalm and all the members of the House.

When will the government present an official apology to the British home children and their descendants, and what measures will be taken to ensure that survivors and families can take part in this important moment?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member's work on this motion. I am happy to say that unanimously we all supported it and we will be studying the question.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, the average processing time for family reunification was 22 months. Time and time again in Brampton East I hear that this is putting immense pressure on parents, spouses, and children.

Could the hon. Minister of Immigration please give this House an update on our government's commitment to reducing the wait time for family reunification?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Brampton East for his hard work on behalf of his constituents.

We inherited an immigration system that was broken. Applicants faced long processing times, which usually kept families apart. This is why we worked really hard to make sure that we attacked that processing time, lowering it, and now we have a new standard of 12 months for all family class applications.

We will continue to lower processing times, and I commit to the hon. member and this House that we will have better client service in the immigration department.

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TAXATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the finance minister a clear question, but the answer I got was about as clear as mud. It is just like the muddled answers that small business owners are getting from the CRA. Because they cannot get a clear answer, small businesses are fearing the worst: yet another Liberal tax grab.

Again, I ask the minister, will the new rules requiring Canadians to report the sale of their principal residence on their tax returns eliminate any portion of the capital gains exemption if they run a small business from part of their home?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to focus on how we can ensure that Canadians have a fair tax system. We introduced measures to ensure that people reported the sale of their principal residence. I can tell the member that this is an important thing to ensure that people get the appropriate tax exemption. I can say that CRA has a process to allow people the principal residence exemption, which continues to be the case. There is no change. People will continue to have their exemption from tax on their principal residence sale through that process.

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when Rona was sold, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development claimed that he made his decision based on a net benefit analysis. Following an access to information request, we learned that the minister did not rely on any documentation before making his decision. No analysis, no studies, nothing.

Why is the minister claiming to have documents that he does not have? Is it because, ultimately, he could not care less about the sale of leading Quebec companies?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of the review, Lowe's made some firm commitments to Canada, including the following: it will set up the headquarters of its Canadian companies in Boucherville, Quebec; keep Canadians in senior management positions; and maintain a high level of jobs in its businesses in Canada.

After analyzing all the relevant factors, I am confident that this investment will be a net benefit for Canada and Quebec.

● (1505)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Rona is a big company and accounts for thousands of jobs.

In the end, we do not know if there was a review or how serious it was. However, what we do know is that in response to our request under the Access to Information Act, officials said, “we regret to inform you that we did not find any documents that correspond to your request”.

That was the response. There were no documents. Either someone is hiding something, or there is literally nothing to hide.

The truth is that Rona is not worth a dime to them.

How does the minister go about making decisions? Does he flip a coin?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Investment Canada Act we made sure we followed the process, did our due diligence. Based on that, we were able to get significant commitments on employment levels with regard to Rona. We made sure that the head office was in Boucherville. This analysis was done. We made sure that this was shared with the public when we made the decision.

Again, this was a net economic benefit for Quebecers and Canadians. We always make sure we advance our national interest when it comes to the economy, growth, and jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, further to the question I raised about the government's misguided decision to reduce funding for Canada's military museums, I would like to table in the House the letter signed in February confirming to the museum directors that their budgets had been cut.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In keeping with protocol to recognize the presence in the gallery of two of Alberta's fiercest carbon tax fighters, MLAs Prasad Panda and Derek Fildebrandt—

The Speaker: I am afraid I must point out to the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that members do not carry that out. Members can use members' statements, Standing Order 31s to say someone is on the Hill or in Ottawa, but not like that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to table the response to the request for access to information regarding the sale of Rona to Lowe's, which indicates that no document was submitted to the minister.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. government House leader if she could tell us what the business of the government is for the rest of this week and, if she is able to, for the week when we return after our constituency week.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon the House will resume consideration of the opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will continue second reading debate of Bill C-23 on pre-clearance.

[*English*]

Monday, March 6, and Thursday, March 9, shall be allotted days. In terms of legislation for that week, we will be focusing on report stage of Bill C-22, concerning the national security committee of parliamentarians.

I wish all members a good week in their constituencies.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—IMPACT OF CARBON TAXES

The Speaker: The hon. member for York—Simcoe has three and a half minutes remaining in questions and comments.

● (1510)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by the member across the way on this very important issue of carbon pricing. I want to highlight what I think is really important as we have this debate, and that is that it has become very clear that there is one entity in the country, it seems, the Conservative Party here on the Hill, that opposes any form of a price on carbon.

I would like the member across the way to be very clear on that particular point, that in fact the Conservative Party opposes a price on carbon. I say that because it illustrates just how out of touch the Conservatives are with Canadians. There are NDP governments, Liberal governments, Progressive Conservative governments, and even Patrick Brown in Ontario, the former MP and current PC leader in Ontario, all saying yes to a price on carbon.

Why not the Conservative Party of Canada?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. First of all, Patrick Brown, the leader of the Ontario PC Party, has been quite clear in his opposition to Ontario's implementation of the federal carbon tax. He has called it a tax grab, because that is what it does. It simply taxes people for their use of carbon. It takes the money out of their pockets and gives it to the government to spend on things that in no way are going to help those people. It does not achieve revenue neutrality that way. It is spent on things like $15,000 car subsidies for Teslas for millionaires. That is not at all the kind of policy we would have. It is that kind of bad policy we oppose.

Our approach in government was to work very closely with our other major continental partner, the American government, the Obama government, on a continent-wide policy. The principles were clear: not adopt any taxes or any carbon pricing that put us at a competitive disadvantage and work together with them on a continent-wide policy so that our employers are not put at a disadvantage. The approach of this government has been exactly the opposite. It is to forget about a partnership, forget about using our leverage to get the Americans to do the right thing, just unilaterally disarm, impose taxes on our businesses, taxes on our consumers, while the Americans appear to be moving in the opposite direction. That ensures that we are not just hurting businesses and families through outright taxes, but through competitive disadvantage we are going to lose employers, jobs, economic competitiveness, and we are going to hurt our economy.

That will effectively reduce energy consumption, no doubt. However, if the policy is to reduce energy consumption by killing the economy and jobs, that is a very reckless policy. That is the policy of this Liberal government and the Ontario Liberal government through the carbon tax it has imposed, which only hurts families.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

It is my pleasure today to rise in this debate. In our campaign platform, we were very clear. We promised to provide national leadership on climate change, to take action to reduce emissions, and yes, to put a price on carbon pollution. To respond to the hon. member's question, I will outline why and how such action is to work.

In late October, the United Nations delivered a message that put climate matters into sharp focus. The UN World Meteorological Organization said it had found concentrations of carbon dioxide had reached record levels at 400 parts per million in the atmosphere. To put this into perspective, that level is almost 50% higher than before the industrial revolution. However, the WMO findings were not considered significant, simply because of how they compared today's GHG emissions to those in the past; it was really what they said about the future. Carbon dioxide levels are not expected to drop below these latest recorded levels for many generations, even assuming very aggressive global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the WMO went on to say. It called its findings, “a new era of climate change reality”.

[*Translation*]

This year, the UN confirmed that 2016 was the hottest year on record, hotter than 2015 and 2014. Every year, the temperature rises and the effects of climate change become increasingly obvious.

● (1515)

[*English*]

Climate change is not a distant threat, something only for future generations to worry about. It is affecting us now, here at home and around the world. In the Arctic, where temperature increases in some areas are twice as high as the rest of the planet, ice cover is rapidly thinning, putting lives and traditions at risk. In the west, wildfires rage longer and harsher than ever before, leaving local economies devastated and thousands of Canadians without homes.

Insurance claims for severe storm damage now average $1 billion a year, up from $300 million at the turn of the century. The national round table on the environment and the economy estimated that the domestic costs associated with climate change could rise to $43 billion per year by 2050.

[*Translation*]

The science of climate change is unequivocal. Our ability to respond with long-term solutions could potentially change the course of human history. It is absolutely vital that we address the problems of climate change with concrete action if we want to leave a better world for our children.

[*English*]

Addressing climate change in effective ways also, however, represents an enormous economic opportunity. Whole new industries of very significant size will be created by those who act quickly to develop and deploy new technologies that enable cost-effective progress toward such a future.

This is, in some sense, a race. It is one that Canada started on fairly early, but it is one in which we have recently been flagging. Over the past decade, Canada's share of global clean tech exports has shrunk by half. This was a product, in significant measure, of the lack of interest and the lack of commitment on the part of the previous government. This is now a significant challenge, but for Canada to maintain and enhance its current level of prosperity, this is a race that we simply cannot afford to lose.

The global opportunity is immense and growing. In 2015, there was record investment of nearly $350 billion in the global clean energy sector, up from just over $60 billion in 2004.

The International Energy Agency estimates that the full implementation of climate pledges made under the Paris agreement would require the energy sector to invest $13.5 trillion in energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies between 2015 and 2030.

As a result of technological progress, the costs for renewable energy have been falling significantly over time and have become cost-competitive with fossil fuels in certain regions. In fact, in 2013, for the first time ever, the world added more renewable energy capacity than it added capacity from all fossil fuels combined. Clean energy investment continued to break records in 2015, and is now seeing twice as much global funding as fossil fuels.

The clean tech sector is already an important contributor to Canada's economy. Canada is home to more than 800 clean technology companies. It is an industry that employs more Canadians than the forestry, pharmaceutical, or medical device manufacturing industries.

The sector grew three times as fast as the economy as a whole between 2008 and 2013. However, during that same period, the global clean tech market grew at even faster rate of 10%, suggesting that we have work to do to keep up with other countries.

Canada's clean technology companies are led by innovative entrepreneurs developing technologies like carbon capture and storage, next generation biofuels, advanced batteries for electric vehicles, and cleaner oil sands extraction processes among many others.

In 2014, Canada's clean technology sector spent $1.2 billion on research and development, which is more than 8% of Canada's total business expenditures on R and D.

Going forward, supporting investment in clean technology, if done in a thoughtful and strategic way, can grow our economy, create good jobs, and help Canadian businesses to be at the forefront of the clean energy revolution. Countries that innovate will have a competitive advantage. A price on carbon will help to drive innovation and will help to give Canada a competitive advantage in the clean tech space. This has been demonstrated in my home province of British Columbia. The clean tech sector I was part of, as a senior executive and a chief executive officer for 20 years, was energized by Premier Campbell's decision, in 2008, to implement a price on carbon pollution.

To address both the threat and the opportunity associated with climate change, the federal government worked through 2016 with the provinces and territories to develop the pan-Canadian framework on climate change and clean growth. This framework represents a plan to grow the Canadian economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and help our communities to adapt to a changing climate. The focus of the document is on creating a road map as to how Canada will reduce domestic emissions and transition toward a clean growth economy; a transition that will be necessary for the collective health, prosperity, and security for this generation of Canadians and for generations to come.

Key initiatives identified in the framework include the following: accelerating the phase-out of highly polluting traditional coal power; developing a clean fuels standard to stimulate greater user of biofuels; investing in public transit and electric vehicle infrastructure; taking action on short-lived climate pollutants, including hydrofluorocarbons; and pricing carbon pollution.

Carbon pricing is one of the key measures that will provide a clear signal to businesses under the pan-Canadian framework. Carbon pricing is broadly recognized as one of the most effective, transparent, and efficient policy approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while fostering innovation.

Many provinces are already leading the way on carbon pricing. In fact, 80% of Canadians already live in a provincial jurisdiction that has chosen to implement a price on carbon pollution. Building on existing and planned provincial action, the government is moving toward ensuring that pricing of carbon pollution exists across Canada. The pricing of carbon pollution sends a clear signal to drive innovation and creates the right conditions and incentives for companies and individuals to reduce their emissions.

All revenues from a price on carbon pollution will remain in the provinces and territories to use as they see fit, whether to give back to consumers; support workers and their families; help the vulnerable, including communities in the north; or to support businesses that innovate and create good jobs for the middle class.

The pricing of carbon pollution has been endorsed by economists, by leading Canadian businesses, and indeed by many leading Conservatives, including Preston Manning, Mark Cameron, Ontario Conservative leader Patrick Brown, and some MPs from across the way.

Let me just briefly quote a couple of leading voices on the issue of carbon pricing.

Cenovus Energy, for example, has said that it supports a price on carbon pollution, "Having a price on carbon is one of the fairest and best ways to stimulate innovation to reduce the emissions associated with oil."

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Do the members in the House of Commons really believe that pollution, with all its detrimental effects on our environment, our economy, and our world, should be free? Should individuals have the right to pollute anywhere without consequences?

[*English*]

On this side of the House, we are delivering for Canadians by pricing pollution to protect our environment and drive innovation. As a parent of two teenage daughters, I got into politics in 2015 in large part to be part of addressing the climate issue in a thoughtful and substantive way. Pricing carbon pollution is part of any reasonable and thoughtful approach if one is serious about combatting climate change.

Our children and our grandchildren should not have—

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today we are debating my motion, which relates precisely to the release of documents in the possession of the Department of Finance about the cost per household of this new federally mandated tax. The member has not mentioned those documents once in his entire speech. Under the standing orders, members are told that they must keep their remarks relevant to the subject at hand. The member is talking about all kinds of interesting policy conversations on issues related to the environment and other matters, which may or may not be of interest to his constituents. However, this motion is about documents that clearly cost out the impact on household budgets of the tax, and the member has not mentioned a single one of those documents or explained why they cannot be released.

I ask that you, Mr. Speaker, return the member to the subject that is being debated in this motion.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for his point of order. As he knows, members of this House are given wide leeway in relation to relevance. Of course I encourage all members, including the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment, to generally make their comments relevant to the debate in question, but as I have said, the members are given wide leeway.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, to conclude, our children and our grandchildren should not have to foot the bill and live with all of the other challenging consequences of inaction. They deserve to inherit a clean, healthy planet. This is something that this government is working hard every day to deliver.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the point of order earlier, the debate today is about whether the government should release the cost to Canadian families of this new tax. I have obtained a Finance Canada document, which warns of a cascading effect on prices that consumers, families, and businesses will pay as a result of this new tax. Those documents make reference to data tables in which those costs are laid out for families, broken down by income quintile: the very poor, the poor, the middle class, the upper middle class, and the very rich. The data will indicate the distributional impacts of the tax; that is to say, whether it widens the gap between rich and poor. The data will also tell us what harm the tax will do to those with the least. The government says it wants to help the middle class and those working to join it. This data would tell us whether the Liberals are keeping that promise.

I respect that the member and others support putting a price, as they call it, or a tax on carbon. That is their right. We are not debating that today. We are debating whether Canadians should be aware of what those costs are to them, so that we can judge whether this policy is a revenue generator for government or actually an environmental policy, as the government claims.

My question for the hon. member is this. What will be the additional cost of the carbon tax to a family in the lowest income quintile?

● (1525)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I would first say that research on carbon pricing has been done for decades. It is clearly the most efficient and effective way to reduce emissions and grow the economy. Many companies, economists, and others in Canada have been very public in their support of a market mechanism to address carbon pollution.

Extensive modelling has been done by universities, think tanks, provincial governments, and the federal government, and they all point to the same conclusion: the best way to reduce pollution is to put a price on it and put any revenues back in the pockets of taxpayers. If we look at how the whole approach to carbon pricing is structured in Canada, we see it is the provinces that actually make the determination of both how the system is structured and how the revenues resulting from that will be used.

The member is certainly free to look at how British Columbia, for example, which has had a carbon price since 2008, has structured it and how it has used those revenues. The bulk of those revenues, if he would look, are used to lower income taxes for the lowest-income people in British Columbia, to provide a tax credit, a rebate, for the lowest-income folks in British Columbia, and to provide a rural and northern rebate for folks in British Columbia.

There is a lot of evidence and a lot of opportunities for the member to have a look at how the whole issue of the approach is utilized. I would also say that, if he is interested in economic analyses associated with carbon pricing, he should look at the Environment Canada website, where it is posted as part of a working group report that was done. I suggest that would perhaps be more relevant than working from a document that was prepared under the previous government.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it completely hilarious when the environment minister and the parliamentary secretary use the phrase "carbon pollution". We are talking about carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is the stuff of life.

I have a question for the parliamentary secretary. Has he ever heard of the process called photosynthesis, does he understand how important photosynthesis is, and can he describe the photosynthetic process? Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant. Volatile organic compounds that contain carbon are carbon pollution; carbon dioxide is not.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, it is fair to say that nobody would question that photosynthesis is a process and that things like trees and plants can actually act as carbon sinks, but I would suggest the member read some of the science on climate change, certainly on the issue of CO2. It is a pollutant, it is causing global warming, and the vast majority of the scientific community agrees with that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and add some thoughts to the debate, whether it be on an opposition day motion, on government business legislation, or whatever the case may be.

Today, we are witnessing an interesting debate. I listened to the question posed by the introducer of the opposition day motion. He seems to have this fixation about whether or not this is about a price on carbon, a cash grab, or possibly an environmental policy. It is a fair question to ask, but I am surprised the member does not realize what the answer is. Maybe it is because the modern-day Conservative Party's perspective, which has lost touch with what I believe Canadians are talking about, which is the importance of the environment and responsible policies, is somewhat out of tune with reality on this very important issue.

Shortly after the last federal election, members will recall the meeting that took place in Paris. World leaders, individuals, stakeholder groups, young people, and old people alike around the globe who were concerned about the future of our world and our environment wanted to see strong leadership coming out of Paris to provide some hope for the future. In good part, that is really what this price on carbon is about, future generations. We all have a role and responsibility to ensure that our policies are good, are sound, and are moving us in a forward direction. We have seen that with this government. I make reference to the Paris agreement. Our Prime Minister was there and demonstrated incredible leadership on the idea that it is time we act. Shortly thereafter, the provinces came together and ultimately agreed that a price on carbon was a great foot forward. We need to recognize that these provincial governments that came onside were of all political stripes: Liberal, New Democrat, and Progressive Conservative. We saw the consultations that took place and what I believe is so very important coming from Ottawa, strong national leadership.

We now hear members saying that this is Ottawa trying to get more money. There is no truth to that argument whatsoever. Ottawa does not generate money by putting a price on carbon because the agreement that is there is clear that it is the provinces that will be receiving the revenues that are generated by it. Therefore, when the mover of the motion talked a few minutes ago about whether this was about cash or sound environmental policy, that should answer his question, because this Prime Minister and this government are not receiving any federal revenues as a direct result of the price on carbon. We understand the importance of having that balance. We saw that not long ago with respect to some of the decisions that were being made on the price on carbon and the growth that will come as a direct result of approving some of the pipeline requests that were in the hopper.

We understand the importance of sustainable development, the idea of reducing emissions while at the same time allowing the economy to grow. That is something this government takes very seriously, which is why the Prime Minister was in Paris with world leaders and others to talk about achieving an agreement. That is why we saw the Prime Minister, the provinces, and the premiers come together to agree almost unanimously that a price on carbon is the way to go. I understand there was one that opted out.

● (1530)

The science is there. The facts are there. Many studies have been done. The best way to positively deal with this particular issue is to implement a price on carbon.

Why is it important to have strong national leadership on this issue? It goes beyond the few comments I have already put on the record. It is important to recognize that a national plan will ensure that there is more equality and equity among the different jurisdictions that make up our great country.

There is an industry I am a very big fan of. I rarely hear it being talked about here, but it is a very important industry. It is our taxi industry. A number of years ago, when I was an MLA, there was an incentive by the government of the day to get the taxi industry to look at hybrid cars. There seemed to be a focus on the Toyota Prius

Members could fly into Winnipeg and see the amazing taxi fleet we have in Winnipeg. They will probably find that 80%, or possibly even more than that, is made up of the Toyota Prius. The government provided a little incentive, but it was the industry as a whole that recognized that it would like to do more for the environment. It does not have to be just the government that stirs the pot to try to get people and companies thinking about our environment. In fact, there are many clean technology companies. It is an area of tremendous growth. If we look at it from a worldwide perspective, it is about industries thinking green. It is about things that can have a positive impact on our environment and still promote economic activity. It is expanding at a tremendous rate.

There is an advantage for those provinces that work with the industries in their jurisdictions. Already 80% of Canadians have some form of price on carbon in place, or it is going to be in place. British Columbia has had it in some form for a number of years. It has actually done quite well in comparison to other provinces in Canada.

It is important that we recognize that contrary to what the Conservative Party seems to believe, we do not have to fear company losses and job losses in the numbers they are referring to. There will in fact be job creation in many other areas, which will ultimately make a positive difference and build Canada's middle class.

● (1535)

Let me conclude by saying that when we see other levels of government, of all political stripes, agreeing that a price on carbon is the way to go, why do we see an opposition party that is so much opposed to it? I do not quite understand that.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, given that my colleague opposite extolled the virtues of this tax in terms of a public policy option, I am wondering, if he is so sure of its efficacy, if he could tell the House what price elasticity assumptions the government used in modelling its carbon tax as it relates to carbon consumption in western Canada.

● (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we learn about elasticity in economics 101 or in second year. Maybe the member is trying to trick me, but what I would suggest to the member is that at the end of the day, we have governments, even the Alberta government, that recognize the value of a price on carbon.

There are many able individuals who are very much aware of the economics of the price on carbon, and it is no doubt overwhelmingly positive for Canada's environment and our economy to continue to move forward. It is only some Conservative members of Parliament who seem to think otherwise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

What always really surprises me is how well the Liberals illustrate the expression “all talk, no action”. I will explain. They promised change and spoke a great deal about fighting global warming. They say they will do things differently. However, they are using the same plan and the same targets as the Conservatives, and the Liberals' plan will not even come close to meeting the targets. This is what most environmentalists and ecologists are saying. Even well-known tax expert Marwah Rizqy is saying that this carbon tax will not help meet the weak Conservative targets that the Liberals are going to adopt.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I disagree with the member. He says that there is no difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservative Party is dead against a price on carbon. That is something that is significantly different.

For New Democrats, we can never do enough on any policy. They would spend billions and billions more, yet they would still have a balanced budget.

There is no pleasing New Democrats on issues such as this. Having said that, we appreciate the fact that they are supporting a price on carbon.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to enlighten my colleague a little bit. If he would go to his computer and type in “cap and trade, European scandal”, he will see why there are concerns about it. Actually, over 90% of the carbon trading in Europe may be contributing to fraud in that system. He says that everybody around the world is doing this. He should look to see the results of that in Europe.

He brought up something really important about government policy. He brought up the Prius. I am from Oshawa. We actually build cars in Canada and create Canadian jobs. He brought up an example of how government policy can drive jobs out of the country, because the Prius was at that time built in Japan.

I am worried about jobs in Canada. I am worried about our competitiveness. I am worried that right now Donald Trump says he will drop corporate taxes in the United States. What are we seeing on this side of the table? We are seeing a Liberal government that is raising taxes. There is a new carbon tax and taxes on business. We are talking about the highest electrical rates in North America in Ontario and adding a carbon tax to it, the CPP changes, EI, and the cancellation of the reduction for businesses. It is about simple competitiveness.

Could the member please explain, with his economics 101 and how he tries to condescend to us, how that will work for competitiveness for Canadian automotive builders?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that the member underestimates the potential of our Canadian automobile associations and manufacturers. They do not take a back seat to anyone. We have seen that in the expansion we witnessed first-hand in a number of plans in the last year. I am a little bit more optimistic about their ability to compete. I can assure the member that they will continue to do so.

By having these expanded trade agreements, whether it is CETA, with the Ukraine, or other potential agreements down the pipe, I think those are all good stories. With regard to the price on carbon, the member needs to reflect that it is only some of the Conservatives within this House—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, the member's time is up. Maybe through a question the parliamentary secretary will be able to bring some of those issues back up.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, in government, we have to ask ourselves what we manage to. If one is in the private sector, what one is managing to is usually as simple as profit and loss. In social entrepreneurship, the conversation around what one is managing to might be profit and loss in the context of delivering a socially acceptable good.

In government, when we put policy forward, we should always be asking ourselves what we are managing to. When it comes to the issue of Canada's approach to dealing with climate change, the current government has said that it is managing to the following: our 2030 target for reducing emissions 30% below 2005 levels.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

The Liberal government has articulated that this is the goal, that this is where we are going. How do we decide if what we are managing to is something that, first, we should be managing to, and second, whether whatever public policy instrument we put in place to get there is actually working? To me, this is very simple economics. It is an opportunity-cost calculation. For those in the House who are not familiar with it, opportunity cost is the loss of potential gain from other alternatives when one alternative is chosen. It could also be described as a benefit we could have received but gave up to take another course of action. It is the value of the next-best alternative. Simply put, if we are trying to calculate the opportunity cost of something, we are asking this: what is the value of what we are sacrificing over what we are gaining?

By saying that a price on carbon, the price the government has articulated, is the correct public policy option, the government has an obligation to Canadians to provide information such that they can make that opportunity-cost calculation and then evaluate the government accordingly.

For a government that has said that transparency is something its members value and it wants Canadians to have information, there is a woeful lack of information for Canadians to make the cost calculation, on both sides of the equation. My concern is that if we are trying to calculate what Canadians are sacrificing to achieve this policy end, we have to have the information that is in the reports that are the subject of this motion today.

As I believe the Department of Finance actually said, a federally mandated carbon tax will cause "higher prices to cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices". Canadian families should have that data, the estimates that show how much a price on carbon will actually increase their cost of living versus whether they think this emissions target that has been articulated by the government is worth sacrificing that cost for. What is more important is even more complicated than that. There are no data. Not only do we not know that, because the government is trying to hide the true costs to Canadians, we also do not know if this policy is actually going to work.

Why did I ask the parliamentary secretary earlier about the price elasticity assumptions, to which he quite hilariously asked if I was trying to trick him? I have never had that said to me in the House of Commons before, but wonders never cease. The reason I asked that question is that we actually need to understand how demand will be influenced by the price on carbon, this tax, to see if demand will actually decrease over time.

For those who are not aware of what price elasticity is, I put this forward to show the Canadian public that I was not trying to trick the member opposite. Price elasticity of demand is the measure of the relationship between a change in the quantity demanded of a particular good and a change in its price. Price elasticity of demand is a term in economics often used when discussing price sensitivity. The formula for calculating price elasticity of demand is price elasticity of demand equals the percentage change in quantity demanded over the percentage change in price.

If Canadians are to evaluate the government on this policy at all, first they need to ask whether this emissions target is something they are willing to accept.

● (1545)

How do they get to that decision? How much is it going to cost them? Is it actually going to work? Is demand actually going to decrease as a result of this price?

Right now, every single speech that has happened here in the House from the government side has a lot of rhetoric. I notice that the speech given before me was, "There are going to be jobs created. Our demand is going to decrease. This is going to be the greatest thing since sliced bread." It sounds like a snake oil salesman to me. It smells like a bill of goods. It sounds like something is hiding.

Now, if the government wants to refute this principle, wants to say it is not hiding anything and in fact this is an opportunity cost calculation that Canadians want to make, why would it not release these documents?

For those who are listening today, what we are debating is the fact that the Department of Finance actually put together a report on how much it would cost Canadians. How much is this carbon tax and its cascading effect going to cost? We know that the increase in price on a raw good that is produced by a manufacturer is going to be carried down and exponentially increase down to the consumer. The department calculated this. The documents are called "Impact of a carbon price on households' consumption costs across the income distribution" and "Estimating economic impacts from various mitigation options for greenhouse gas emissions". These are fancy, complicated titles for saying, "This is how much this policy instrument is going to cost you".

If the government really was open and transparent, and if the government was confident that this is the policy instrument that Canadians should be saying that, yes, they support, why would it not put those documents out there, outside of the fact that it has something to hide?

We have seen reports recently, and British Columbia's much-touted carbon tax is something that many of you are familiar with. The government, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of the environment, says, "Oh, British Columbia, fantastic, and it's working so well in its supposed revenue neutrality". However, according to data from reports that have been released, according to the government's own projections, the carbon tax will result in a cumulative $865-million tax increase on British Columbians between 2013-14 and 2018-19. This is because the revenue neutrality of that carbon tax and the tax reductions in other areas have not kept up with the cost increases caused by this carbon tax.

Again, why is this information in this document so important to Canadians? It is because dollars to donuts, it shows that this costs Canadians a lot of money. However, in some ways, we really do not need these documents. The proof is in the pudding, because when somebody is going to fill up their car right now, certainly for myself in Alberta, I know that I am paying more for the same product than I did a few months ago. Has my demand for that product decreased? No. Why? It is because it is cold, and because we should be talking about public transit infrastructure.

● (1550)

In fact, in my riding in Calgary, the government has delayed investments into public transit projects such as the Green Line in Calgary. There are so many other public policy options that could be looked at, but in terms of being able to do that opportunity cost calculation, in terms of being able to say, "What are you sacrificing over what are you gaining", Canadians need this information. The government has already produced it. It has looked at it. My issue is that the government has come up with a policy in spite of facts showing that this opportunity cost calculation is not in the best interests of Canadians.

Therefore, if the government were truly transparent, if it actually cared about the environment rather than just taking money out of the pockets of Canadians, it would do two things: it would release these documents and let Canadians decide about its competency based on putting forward a policy instrument without showing Canadians that data; and second, the government would release the price elasticity assumptions that it used when modelling this carbon tax.

I do not think the Liberals have either. I know they do not have either, and because of that, because this is a poor public policy instrument, all of us on this side of the House in the Conservative Party will continue to stand up for middle-class families, workers, their jobs, and their right to prosperity.

● (1555)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up with a couple of pointed questions. Maybe the member could help Canadians understand the position of the Conservative opposition.

In the previous government, Mr. Harper as prime minister, announced a cap-and-trade program for the country. He unilaterally decried a price on carbon for Canadians. He went to London and gave a massive speech, which he called the energy superpower speech for Canada. If I recall, he announced that by 2019, carbon would be priced at $160 a tonne. That was a unilateral decree from a central federal government. That is not one that builds in the flexibility of our plan, where provinces are able to find the mechanism that is preferable for themselves, including those that already have a price on carbon, and then deciding themselves what they would like to do with those revenues. That is the kicker here. We are giving the provinces the authority to decide what they want to do with those revenues. If Saskatchewan wants to reduce personal income taxes, it can do so.

Could the member produce the same analysis she calls for now, the same analysis that she arguably would have had done in the previous government, with all the details—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, it is in this document entitled "Canada's Emissions Trends", a 2014 report from Environment Canada. If my colleague opposite flips to page 14, under Table 2 he will see that the per capita emissions that Canada saw in 2005, which were at 22.8 are projected under the plan of our government to be reduced to 19.7 in 2020. In 2012, they were reduced to 20.1, and this was because our government took a pragmatic approach.

The member quoted the former prime minister, who stood up in the House and said it would be crazy for Canada to price itself out of competitivity with the United States.

My colleague stood up and talked about how the United States has signalled to the world that it wants to reduce regulatory burden and will reduce taxes on job-creating companies, ergo, creating an investment climate where we will see capital flight to the U.S. because of that.

The point is that under our previous government we saw the decoupling of greenhouse gas emissions and economic growth. The Liberal government has no track record on being able to do that. It cannot even produce the data to show that this policy is going to work.

To my colleague's question, yes, I certainly can produce the data. I referenced the document and I encourage him to read it.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned other things that the government could be doing and one of those of course is the ecoENERGY retrofit program, which was brought in by the former Conservative government. It ran for a number of years and was suddenly cancelled just when it was getting popular. It did a lot for families across this country to retrofit their homes, to cut their energy bills, and to reduce greenhouse gases at the same time.

I just wondered if she would like to comment on whether she and her party might be willing to get behind that program again.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, I wrote an opinion piece in the *National Post* which was published on August 9, 2016. I put forward some suggestions around what Canada could be doing to have a more comprehensive and more common-sense approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I said that:

> ...presenting a price on carbon as a painless, standalone cure-all is a fallacy in the cold, natural resource-intensive economy that is Canada. Our GHG policy will likely need to consider phased-in, sector-specific regulations (the current federal government isn't talking about repealing regulations put in place by the previous government), developing and adopting new, more efficient technologies and other approaches. It will also require Canadians to make a financial sacrifice, and Canadians should have a say on whether or not they want to make it. The cost of GHG policy shouldn't be hidden in bafflegab line items on their electricity bills, in order to avoid political scrutiny.

It also certainly should not be hidden in reports that the government refuses to release.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to follow my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill.

As someone who has had a career in environmental policy and environmental science for more years than I care to admit, I have come across a philosophy that I follow. Every environmental policy, program, and dollar spent needs to generate real and measurable environmental results. For example, in 1989, the Mulroney government introduced the pulp and paper effluent regulations that required every single paper mill to put a waste-water treatment plant in. That generated a real result. Scrubbers were mandated on smokestacks, which resulted in the Sudbury miracle, a landscape that was restored.

It is very important in environmental policy and environmental science to do the math. The results must be measurable and belief alone has no place in proper environmental policy-making. I noticed that my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill presented verifiable results. She read from scientific and economic documents, whereas the member for Winnipeg North and parliamentary secretary went on and on, with no math or citations whatsoever.

In terms of the Conservative government, I was very proud of its environmental record. Sulphur dioxide went down and nitrous oxide went down. The UN, in 2010, said Canada had the second-best water quality in the industrialized world. Our natural area conservation plan conserved 800,000 hectares of high-quality biodiversity habitat. Our recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, in one year alone, restored 2,000 linear kilometres of fisheries habitat. That is a real and measurable environmental result.

When we do that math, and I know math is hard for both opposition parties, Canada has 1.6% of global emissions, and this is not my opinion. Quite frankly, not much we do will make any difference to the global climate, and it is simply math. The math also says, if we look at what China is doing right now, it is building two coal-fired projects every single week.

How does the carbon tax, or, more correctly, a carbon dioxide tax measure up? Let us first ask the question: What is CO_2? CO_2 is an odourless, tasteless gas that makes up 0.04% of our atmosphere. When I brought up the issue of photosynthesis in my question before, I noticed both opposition parties laughed. I find that quite surprising. I guess they do not understand what photosynthesis is. It is only the most important equation on earth. The first molecule in the photosynthetic equation from which most life flows is carbon dioxide.

To school my colleagues opposite in biochemistry, because my colleagues on this side of the House certainly know this, it is carbon dioxide plus water through the miracle of photosynthesis that creates sugar and oxygen. That is a simplified equation, but that is what carbon dioxide does. I still maintain it is absurd to use the phrase "carbon pollution" when referring to CO_2. It is a loaded phrase that Liberals use to drive a very wrong agenda, which the minister and the parliamentary secretary do. Volatile organic compounds are carbon pollution, not carbon dioxide, which is literally vital for life itself.

Again, my career in biology spanned some 35 years and I did a lot of fieldwork, so I have a deep affinity for landscapes, forests, waterways, rivers, fish, wildlife, all the things that make up the Canadian environment. I would remind the government that there are more environmental issues than climate change, which are extremely important. They are being ignored by the government and never mentioned by the NDP. For example, the eutrophication of Lake Erie is proceeding apace. I will read a quote, "In the mid-1990s, excessive algal growth began to re-emerge as a problem in the Great Lakes." The government has not mentioned the Great Lakes once, not that I have heard, and most Canadians live around the Great Lakes.

Wetland loss in Canada is estimated to be about 70% in the settled area of Canada. Again, these are real and pressing environmental issues that should be addressed, but are not being addressed by the Liberal government.

● (1600)

In environmental science, we have something called environmental indicators that are actual measurements of certain environmental factors, things like sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide, biodiversity, fish populations. We measure these over the span of time so we can assess what is going on in the environment.

Again, when it comes to environmental indicators, we have to ask what the environmental return is on a carbon tax. Notice again that there was not a quantative statement between the two Liberal members who spoke before.

Part of the climate change agenda of the government is a push for so-called green energy. Interestingly, the Liberals never talk about the environmental harm caused by some green energy projects. For example, wind turbines are notorious killers of birds. Some have called them bird cuisinarts. I have a paper from Avian Conservation Ecology 2013 regarding Canada. It states:

> Installed wind capacity is growing rapidly, and is predicted to increase more than 10-fold over the next 10-15 years, which could lead to direct mortality of approximately 233,000 birds / year, and displacement of 57,000 pairs.

Where are the opposition parties when it comes to this? Nowhere.

In terms of bald eagles and wind turbines, research from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows in the United States alone more than 4,000 bald eagles are killed by wind turbines.

With respect to a species that I am quite familiar with, the Myotis, or the little brown bat, it used to be common in my area. Now it is a COSEWIC listed species. A paper from *Popular Science* says, "Wind Turbines Kill More Than 600,000 Bats A Year. What Should We Do?" Again, it went on to say how bats were killed by wind turbines. "Even if the bat isn't struck, spinning turbines create changes in air pressure as they move, which can essentially cause the animals' lungs to explode". Again, none of these negative impacts of green energy projects is ever mentioned by anybody in the opposition parties.

There is a solar plant in California that kills 6,000 birds a year. The report says, "A macabre fireworks show unfolds each day along I-15 west of Las Vegas, as birds fly into concentrated beams of sunlight and are instantly incinerated, leaving wisps of white smoke against the blue desert sky". Yes, that is green energy all right.

In terms of people, again, I refer to Ontario where the great wind turbine fight is going on. In the bulletin of science and technology journal 2011, researchers studied the health effects of wind turbines. It says:

> People who live near wind turbines complain of symptoms that include some combination of the following: difficulty sleeping, fatigue, depression, irritability, aggressiveness, cognitive dysfunction, chest pain/pressure, headaches, joint pain, skin irritations, nausea, dizziness, tinnitus, and stress. These symptoms have been attributed to the pressure...waves that wind turbines generate in the form of noise and infrasound.

Yes, that is green energy all right. Again, the wind turbine fights in Ontario will only get stronger over time.

There is an article from February 23, 2016, entitled "Rules Ignored in Ontario Wind Energy Plan". A local resident, Jane Wilson, was quoted as saying, "Just in terms of the fabric of the community (it is) ripping people apart". She chairs Ottawa wind concerns.

People have lost complete faith in their government. People had no say whatever in what happened in their communities. Furthermore, if we look at Ontario, over the years when it has been going down this green energy path, it has only managed to create 13% of their energy mix from wind, biofuel, and solar.

In the case of my constituency, which is a very vast rural constituency, my constituents live on very modest incomes. In fact, it is one of the lower income constituencies in the entire country. What do modest incomes and the need to travel long distance add up to? A devastating effect from the Liberal carbon tax, which will hurt my constituents directly.

● (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague and I are members of Parliament from Manitoba. Our premier gave a throne speech and in it he stated that Manitoba's climate action plan, "will include carbon pricing that fosters emissions reductions, retains investment capital and stimulates new innovation in clean energy, businesses and jobs". That comes from our premier, a Progressive Conservative premier. Has the member anything to say about those statements?

Members opposite need to understand that this is revenue neutral for the Government of Canada. The revenue is going toward to the provinces and the provinces will determine, in good part, what they will do with that revenue. If, for example, our premier decides to cut the PST, he can do that. If he wants to give more money to seniors, to non-profit groups, or to different sectors, he is entitled to do that.

I would be interested in my colleague's comments, specifically on the throne speech.

● (1610)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, what I find interesting about my colleague's comments is he did not mention the environment once. He assumes we tax citizens, which is a tax, and then we give it back to them. Where is the environment in this? Where is the impact on water quality? Where is the impact on air quality? Where is the impact on biodiversity? He never mentioned the environment once. The money is taken from citizens and then is given back to do things that may or may not have anything to do with the environment.

I thought this was an environmental policy. As somebody who spent a lot of time in the environmental policy business, what I care about is delivering real and measurable environmental results on which we can count.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not hear much about the carbon tax in his speech either, just the environmental impacts of renewable energy. What he also did not talk about was the environmental and health impacts of using fossil fuels to provide electricity.

The reason Alberta moved forward first, and then the Liberal government followed, in shutting down coal-fired power sooner was not simply because it was one of the largest sources of carbon in Alberta. It was because of documentation by the Canadian Medical Association of severe life and death results of burning fossil fuels.

We know we had a ongoing problem in the tar ponds with the loss of wildlife, including birds. Therefore, I agree that we have to be fair and balanced in talking about this. However, is the member completely against all movement toward the use of alternative sources of power, despite the fact that many who work in the fossil fuel sector would like to have the opportunity of good jobs in that sector as well?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, I happen to have had the honour of working in the oil sands myself, doing environmental monitoring in the winter of 2009-10. Regarding the oil sands, the total aerial extent of the oil sands is 143,000 square kilometres, of which 700 square kilometres have been exploited and 70 square kilometres have been restored.

In terms of her point regarding pollution from various industrial facilities, what happens in modern industrial societies is that industrial processes keep getting better. I will never argue for environmental processes that cause environmental harm or human health damage.

The trend in modern industrial societies is for both the environmental performance of the economy and environmental quality to get better, and Canada is on that path.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about birds dying and that sort of thing.

I would like to remind him that, in 2010, a Canadian judge found the Syncrude oil company guilty in connection with the deaths of 1,600 ducks in a tailings pond at its oil sands site. I would also like to remind him that most experts around the world are saying that we must put a price on carbon.

Where are the Conservatives getting their information? Is it on the same websites where Donald Trump's team is getting its alternative facts?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Madam Speaker, the number of ducks that were killed in that incident was 500. A fall flight to North America is 48 million ducks. Therefore, let us put it in perspective.

It is very important that we address real and measurable environmental issues. I know some members will pooh-pooh the issue of birds. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change should engage the Migratory Birds Convention Act and have a really good look at the effects of alternate energy on some of our most vulnerable and endangered species. She is not doing that.

● (1615)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I am happy to speak this afternoon to this motion. On its surface, it would seem to be about holding the government to account to commitments for openness and transparency. My two NDP colleagues, who spoke earlier, spoke to that theme of transparency. I have to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for pointing out the delicious irony of a Conservative motion asking for more openness and transparency.

There is another irony in the Conservative debate, and that is the focus of standing up for low-income Canadians. The first two speeches we heard from the Conservatives told stories of low-income people in Ontario who literally had to choose between heating their home and eating, or even being able to afford to keep their home at all. These stories say more about the low incomes of these citizens after years of unreasonably low pensions for seniors and people with disabilities, restrictions on employment insurance, bungled energy pricing, and a complete retreat from affordable housing than they do with any inflated fears about what carbon pricing might bring. Too many Canadians live below or near the poverty line, and we all should all be constantly working in the House to change that shameful record.

While some Conservative speakers have insisted that this is not an indictment of carbon pricing, it is clearly a tactic to attack that policy.

I want to spend much of my time talking not about the costs of climate action but the costs of inaction.

On a global scale, *The Economist* published an analysis that said that an increase of 5°C would cost at least $7 trillion. That is where we are headed if the world follows the policies of this and previous Canadian governments on climate action. That is more than the capitalization of the London Stock Exchange. Imagine the London Stock Exchange collapsing. That is what we are facing on the global front. Citibank has come up with an even more drastic cost estimate of over $40 trillion over the next 40 years.

In Canada, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy came up with estimates of the price of inaction back in 2011. That price for Canadians was put at $5 billion per year, and would rise to $43 billion by 2050. That estimate has not been updated lately because the previous government disbanded that round table, which did such good non-partisan work on this and other issues. Another thing the Liberal government could do is bring back the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy.

The federal government does come up with cost estimates as well, although they tend to be hidden as footnotes in other reports, as we have seen today. The latest figures are about $40 per tonne of carbon now, which would rise to $75 per tonne by 2050. These costs are still higher than the revenues brought in by any carbon pricing scheme in Canada.

Many of the costs of inaction are not well represented by dollars alone. The catastrophic fires at Fort McMurray last year, and those in my riding around Rock Creek, British Columbia the year before, forever altered the lives of thousands of people. Floods in Calgary had a similar impact. Calgary faces the opposite effect over the long term as the glaciers in the Rocky Mountains, the sole source of water for that city, disappear over the next century.

Ocean acidification is already impacting shellfish farms along the B.C. coast.

Forests are being devastated by more frequent fires and insect outbreaks across Canada, both driven by climate change. It is hard to come up with a cost for the mountain pine beetle epidemic that killed more than half of the pines in British Columbia in a few short years. Those beetles took off during a long period of year after year hot, dry summers and warm winters. That epidemic changed the forest industry of B.C. forever, hollowing out communities across the interior of the province, and is now threatening the Alberta forest industry.

Now that the salvage operations are over for the beetle kill, allowable cuts will be lowered significantly in B.C. over the next few years, exacerbating the economic impact. We are now facing spruce beetle epidemics in B.C. that are taking advantage of similar climate patterns.

Finally, there are deep cultural impacts that climate change is having, and will continue to have, in communities throughout the Canadian Arctic. These communities and cultures have developed over millennia, with traditions dependent on seasonal patterns of sea ice. Those patterns are changing quickly, and even disappearing. The effect this will have on Arctic communities is difficult to assess or even put into words.

● (1620)

The price of inaction is astronomical. We must look for ways to minimize these unacceptable costs. Pretty much any economist from any country in the world will tell us that the cheapest way to tackle climate change is to put a price on carbon. That action would minimize the ongoing impacts of climate change, both financially and socially, on all Canadians.

There are other actions that would help as well. One expert I recently talked to told me that efficiency is the best new fuel, so one easy action for the government to take would be to bring back the eco-energy home retrofit program. This popular program ran from 2007 to 2012 and helped hundreds of thousands of Canadians retrofit their homes, lowering their energy bills by 20%, creating thousands of good local jobs, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by three tonnes per year for each house. While the program cost the federal government $900 million over about five years, it leveraged more than $4 billion in retrofit investments by Canadian families. When homeowners invest in new windows, insulation, and other energy-saving projects, that money circulates through communities across the country. The program combined everything that the Liberal government likes: leveraged infrastructure investments, carbon emission reductions, and helping the middle class and those struggling to join it.

The Conservatives, who usually champion policies that help the financial bottom line of Canadians, should get behind the price on carbon. Climate change is one of the biggest threats facing Canadians in the global community, and avoiding action now would cost all of us significantly in the long term.

I would remind the government that it promised to be open and transparent with Canadians, and it is beyond time that it clearly articulated how it will address climate change with a real plan. We have heard a lot about real change. Now we need a real plan. Several provinces have introduced measures to help low- and middle-income households adapt to measures to combat climate change, but there is no sign of federal leadership to ensure that fair programs are in place across the country.

We in the NDP want the government to build a just transition to a greener economy, one that creates good jobs across the country. That is what Canadians expect from the government, not foot-dragging.

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for an excellent speech. I really appreciate the passion he has for this topic. It came out very clearly in his speech this afternoon, particularly as he talked about the impact of climate change and the cost of inaction. That is something our government has recognized, and it is why we are moving forward in such an aggressive way on this very important topic.

I would like the member's comments on the approach the government has taken with respect to tackling climate change; that is, the collaborative approach we are taking with the provinces. What we are doing is giving the decision-making authority to the provinces, working collaboratively with them, then empowering them to make the decisions as to how they are going to use the revenues they generate from the ways in which they improve their climate change approach.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, obviously, in many of these cases the provinces have jurisdiction, but what we need from this government is a sense of urgency and boldness. We heard a lot of talk in Paris that Canada was back and we were going to take action. Then we spent a year consulting Canadians across the country about what to do about climate change. I know I held several town halls in my riding, and members in the House all did the same. Everyone told me "We know what we need to do about climate change. You guys should be doing it".

That is one thing I would say to the government. I am glad you are thinking about this, but we really have to get going and do it. We should have started a year ago.

● (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he might want to not use the word "you" and he should direct his comments to the Chair as opposed to the government.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on the speech given by the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa with the member who just spoke.

I just flipped to the Wikipedia page for the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, because I know he is one of British Columbia's leading bird experts. I found that he has written 12 books on birds in British Columbia.

Since the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa suggested that renewable energy was slaughtering our birds, I thought he might be able to tell me if it is correct that there are far more birds killed by striking office towers in urban centres than are affected by renewable energy, and that the biggest threat to the survival of bird life on this planet is the threat of climate change.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I could go on and on about birds, but I'll try to be succinct.

Yes, there are certain impacts that renewable energy projects have on birds, but we have done a lot of studies on this and we know how we can mitigate that. We know how we can operate wind farms to really reduce those losses, and some of the losses that the member mentioned were from years ago. As the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands mentioned, it is really the relative numbers of birds that are killed by habitat loss from climate change are very high.

I will also mention cats, which is the one thing that humans have done to this world that really affects birds much more than wind farms ever will, and I know I will get some mail about that.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not know if I should start with a rant as a crazy cat lady.

I respect my hon. colleague so much for the work he has done, the thoughtfulness he has put into his speech, and his understanding of the environment.

I have family members who were highly traumatized by the losses they experienced in the Fort McMurray fire. However, it is very disconcerting to know that people have lost their homes not only due to the actual destruction by the fire, but also because of the toxicity levels. Some people cannot go back into their homes for 30 years.

We heard a member ask if another member knew what photosynthesis was. Can we maybe go into the depth a little more of the basis for this carbon pricing initiative?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, on photosynthesis and carbon dioxide, we have long passed the time, years and years ago, when all the trees and plants in the world could take up the carbon dioxide we are producing; and that is what is causing this. The carbon dioxide levels are increasing in the atmosphere, we have the greenhouse effect, and the world is warming.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the preceding speaker, the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, and in fact, the whole NDP caucus for allowing me 10 minutes to speak in this very important debate.

I have been struggling today. I keep thinking to myself that people who live in glass houses should not keep an abundance of stones. Every time a Conservative speaks, I find myself thinking, “Do you not remember the last 10 years of cancelling all the carbon plans?” There was a very decent, workable plan in place in 2005 and 2006 that was cancelled within weeks of Stephen Harper becoming prime minister. Three different times, Canada's carbon target was weakened. It has been referenced already that Stephen Harper put a cap and trade program into a plan that he never really intended to execute.

I do feel enormous empathy for the parade of environment ministers who suffered under that regime. I think they were all told that they would be able to deliver the plan. The current leader of the official opposition, who was the first minister of environment, said they were intending to reach Kyoto, and the rug was pulled out from under her. John Baird came along and said he had a turning-the-corner plan, that there would be regulations sector by sector. Nothing ever happened, except that we shamed ourselves in the world over and over again by obstructing global negotiations. That is something Canadians do not understand: how much, under the previous government, we did not just stand back, but we got in the way. Those are a few glass houses and stone moments that I wanted to get rid of before proceeding to a review of carbon pricing and what it means.

I did not get the chance to put this to the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa in questions and comments, but he said he had not heard anything about the Great Lakes. I remember distinctly that one of the Harper government budgets spent more money on barbed wire and fencing to go around the Great Lakes to make sure that terrorists were not getting access into Canada across the Great Lakes than for water quality. I just picked up the 2016 budget, and if we go to page 162, and several pages therein, we see there is finally a return to some Great Lakes policy; not enough, I have to say. I was part of the government back in 1986 to 1988 that put together the Great Lakes water quality strategy and a St. Lawrence cleanup plan, but at least there are some millions of dollars for the Great Lakes now.

It is really a rhetorical trick to have framed today's opposition day motion around the idea that electricity prices in Ontario are what we can expect everywhere if we adopt carbon pricing. Electricity prices in Ontario currently are very high, but they have nothing to do with carbon pricing. The only way we could replicate it across Canada is if we could somehow impose on every province the bad energy decisions made by Ontario Hydro for generations in building nuclear plants that created billions of dollars of stranded debt.

If we look at the breakdown of electricity prices for Ontario, and I urge everyone to google it and have a look, the number one price is the cost of generation, of course. Then there is the cost of distribution. The next biggest price, over $1 billion a year, is retiring the debt. This is related not to green energy but to nuclear energy.

There has also been a great deal of nonsense about the B.C. carbon prices and the carbon tax there. I want to put that to bed. The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill did not cite a reference on this one. She was referring to the Fraser Institute report, which claims, falsely, that the B.C. carbon tax is not revenue neutral. For those listening who do not know the term “revenue neutral”, it means that for every $1 of tax taken in on carbon, $1 of tax is reduced on small business and individual British Columbians.

It is working very well, and the B.C. finance department has completely rebutted the Fraser Institute, but of course, the Fraser Institute is funded by the fossil fuel industry, the Koch brothers, ExxonMobil. We can examine the source and not be surprised. The finance ministry of B.C. says that the carbon tax has actually not been revenue neutral recently. It is giving more tax cuts than it is getting in revenue. In terms of how British Columbians receive it, it is a very positive thing.

Let me turn to what a price on carbon is and is not. It needs to be said really clearly that a price on carbon is not the magic silver bullet. We put a price on carbon in Canada and we have not reached our Paris targets magically. We have not averted the climate crisis magically. We need a whole range of measures, a whole suite of measures. What a carbon price attempts to do is correct market failure, because in that perfect world on the blackboard of economics 101, everything has an input cost.

● (1630)

We have materials and labour. Pollution is free. It is an externality to the economic equation, but it is not external to real life. It piles up. Whether it is the Sydney tar ponds and toxic waste that had to be cleaned up at a cost of $400 million, or whether it is the future cost of cleaning up the oil sands tailings ponds, or whether it is overloading our global atmosphere with warming gases that threaten, and I am not using hyperbole here as this is actually what is at risk, human civilization itself, this is not a free good, so we have to put a price on it so our free market system can actually pay attention to it. It almost does not matter, in response to the member for Calgary Nose Hill, whether we have elasticity of price or not. There is such a demand for gasoline that we would have to put a huge carbon price on to affect the demand for gasoline.

That is not the point of a carbon price. A carbon price is to make sure there is a signal at almost any level that this will cost something. It is to try to create some incentive, but on its own it is not enough. We need regulations and we need other plans. We need to bring on renewable energy so that we can decarbonize all of our electricity. That is a top priority. Ontario did it first, but others need to do it.

What kind of institutions favour a carbon tax? Looney left-wing ones? No. The International Monetary Fund says that every country needs to put in place a carbon price and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. This was a promise in the Liberal platform that we need to see executed. It has not happened yet. We still have fossil fuel subsidies for liquefied natural gas and dwindling but still in the oil sands. The World Bank also favours carbon pricing and the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies. It is the same for the International Energy Agency.

The first carbon price that was applied by any nation was by Finland in 1990, followed by Sweden in 1991. By the way, the carbon price in Sweden is now hovering at around $150 a tonne. Norway applied its carbon price as it began to develop its North Sea oil resources. It was at the point of becoming potentially a petro-state but decided not to go that route. It decided not to let its currency be linked to the money that it was taking in. Norway took in royalties. It also applied a carbon tax. It now has a sovereign wealth fund, so as North Sea oil dwindles, it will have a $900-billion sovereign wealth fund.

Guess whose advice Norway followed when it did that? That was the advice of former Alberta premier Peter Lougheed. If only Albertans had followed the advice of former premier Peter Lougheed, there would be a huge amount of money to adapt to transitions. They would not have put all of their money into the bitumen basket, all of their eggs into the bitumen basket, of shipping out raw bitumen but would have followed Peter Lougheed's plan and had ancillary infrastructure for refining and upgrading.

Today's debate is about the Liberals revealing numbers. Guess what, folks? I do not think there are any numbers, because no one can know yet. In the absence of any federal role on carbon pricing or carbon action under the Harper era, we have a patchwork, because provinces began to take action on their own. Frankly, I am no fan of cap and trade. It is open to fraud and it is a difficult system. But they had nothing else going on, so Ontario and Quebec decided to work with California.

British Columbia brought in the best architecture of a carbon price with returning every dollar collected to reduce taxes across the province. Gordon Campbell would not have been re-elected without having brought in a carbon tax. He fell later on because he never told anyone he was going to bring in a harmonized sales tax, but that is another issue. Carbon tax saved him. HST took him down.

Here we are in a situation where we have a patchwork. The federal government has stepped up and I think the architecture of what it is proposing is very good. It is backfill and infill. The federal government is saying it is not going to tax on top of what B.C. is already taxing, which is already at $30 a tonne, or Ontario and Quebec and California. It wants to make sure there is an even playing field for business certainty to send out that carbon signal.

We need a carbon price that is uniform across Canada, but we do not know that every province is going to design a revenue neutral tax. I wish they would. We do know that the federal government will return to every province all the money it collects from that province if by the time the carbon tax rolls around that province has not designed its own system.

● (1635)

Frankly, all the people in the Conservative caucus who are suddenly concerned that there is going to be an impact by doing something need to think about the situation. There is no hidden report. The report they want was prepared under the Harper administration. If they want transparency, they should help everyone work together to deliver a carbon price that is effective, reduces pollution, and helps us move into a 21st century green economy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are many things I could say on this topic and that the member and I might disagree on in terms of the specific issue of a carbon tax, but I do want to ask her about the transparency component of the motion, because the motion speaks to the fact that the government should release data about who would be most impacted by the carbon tax. The member and I might disagree about a carbon tax, but at the end of the day, I think we should agree that Canadians have a right to access that information. They can make an evaluation based on the information out there about the pros and cons of a carbon tax if they have all the data in front of them.

Would the member agree that Canadians should be able to see the data about who is paying more or less, vis-à-vis the carbon tax, so that they can come to an informed conclusion?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I do believe in transparency. The specific document that the member for Carleton has found and he wants released was redacted because, as I understand it from other media commentary, it includes confidential advice to cabinet. That is the previous cabinet of the Harper government. It was prepared before the election, and who knows what form of tax it is imagining.

Where we are right now, we would have a series of hypotheticals. One hypothetical would be what if Saskatchewan developed its own carbon tax and it decided to go with $50 a tonne and it decided to put that $50 a tonne into renewable energy? The impact on Saskatchewan residents and homeowners would be entirely different than if the Government of Saskatchewan decided to put in a tax of $20 a tonne and make it revenue neutral.

We could ask the Department of Finance to give us a string of hypotheticals, because at this point the government of the day plans to bring in a very weak carbon price at $10 a tonne in 2018, and every province gets to do its own thing first, so we simply would only be able to guess at a series of options.

● (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the leader of the Green Party is very much in tune with British Columbia, in particular the provincial government and the environment.

I am interested in the member's perspective on the price on carbon and how she feels from a local point of view how British Columbia has moved forward with respect to its policy on the price on carbon.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I have been astonished by how popular it is. Regarding the carbon tax in British Columbia, and I do not want to make a political comment because it is only through the good graces of the NDP that I am standing here, it was a fatal mistake of the NDP provincially to run an "ax the tax" campaign against the B.C. Liberals when they first brought it in, because British Columbians actually liked it. Because it was revenue neutral, there was more money in our own pocketbooks to decide, "I know the price of gas will go up, so the next car I get will be a gas miser, not a gas guzzler."

My local airport is the Victoria International Airport, a very well-run and friendly airport, by the way. I parked my Prius in long-term parking on Monday to come back to Ottawa, and I was thrilled to see that there are brand new plug-in electric vehicle chargers for free in the airport parking lot.

We see electric chargers all over the place. I think Salt Spring Island may have the highest per capita ownership of electric vehicles, and it is not people who can afford to buy a Tesla, by the way. They are increasingly affordable cars because people do not have to put gas in their cars at all.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a brief follow-up to my previous question.

The member said the incidence, depending on income group, will depend on how a product is implemented, but I do not think that would be the case if we are talking about a tax on carbon, because a tax on carbon is a tax on carbon. Of course, the rebate could be different. What we do with the money could be different. However, if we charge a particular tax on carbon, that will have the same impact. The way it will impact will depend on what carbon we use, not on other factors. Is that not correct?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, briefly, no, because the impact is very dependent on whether the government is actually taking that money as revenue and keeping it or redistributing it immediately in tax cuts, so the effect on every household's income is entirely dependent. That is why I strongly favour carbon fee and dividend or, at the minimum, revenue neutral carbon pricing so people have more money in their own pocketbooks.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Status of Women; the hon. member for Carleton, Employment.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, who represents perhaps the second most beautiful riding in the country.

I want to take the opportunity to continue the dialogue I was having with the leader of the Green Party on some of these questions, but let me start first by introducing those who are watching at home to the topic that we are talking about and the importance of this motion.

This is a motion that deals with carbon taxes, but also more fundamentally deals with the issue of transparency. We had a Conservative member who asked the government to provide information about what the impact of the carbon tax would be on different income groups: for individuals who are very wealthy, what the impact is going to be of a carbon tax; for people who are struggling economically, what the impact is going to be; for those who are in the middle, what the impact will be; and so on and so forth. It is reasonable for Canadians to expect to have access to this kind of information so that they can make an informed decision. We are having a debate in this House about the possible merits and demerits of a carbon tax, but Canadians need to have full information about what the impact will be on their lives so that they can make an informed decision.

I know a lot of the discussion from all sides has been about the merits, and I will get into some of that as well, but the central point of this motion is whether or not members of the government and members of other parties think that Canadians deserve to have the full information. Initially, the Liberals had suggested that this information was not available, that they had no idea what the impact of this carbon tax will be on different people in different income groups. Then they said, "Actually we know, but we are just not going to tell you." They came up with various excuses for redacting that information.

It is striking because if the government is so confident in this policy, then it should not be shy about giving all the information to Canadians and making its case in a transparent way, but in fact the government has not done that. The Liberals are not sharing this information. We can only suspect it is because they know and do not want to share, that there will be a disproportionate impact of this tax on those who are struggling, and that they are imposing a tax that will hit hardest those people who are worst off. They do not want people to know that, so they are hiding that information. We are saying the government should share that information so that we can have a clear and open debate.

There is one important question that this whole debate speaks to, but before I get to that, I was having an exchange with the leader of the Green Party specifically about the question of whether we can know the differential impact of a carbon tax given that the way in which this carbon tax will be implemented will vary from province to province. The member quite rightly made the point that there may be different rebates in response to the carbon tax, which will impact people in different income levels and the nature and volume of those rebates may vary from province to province. That is all true, but it does not change the fact that setting aside the rebates we can still have a discussion about what the impact of the tax itself will be on individuals in different income brackets. We should have this information.

The government purportedly has that information but will not share that information. It will be the same from province to province, because with a tax on carbon there are many different mechanisms through which it could happen. There are many different possible uses of the money by the government. However, a tax on carbon is a tax on carbon. At a certain value, we can know based on likely usage patterns of carbon what the differential implications would be. Again, most of the research would suggest that those who are least well off will actually pay the most when it comes to the carbon tax.

There is an important question in this discussion, and that question is, does big government help the poor? Are those who are least well off better off with a bigger government? That is the presumption of some on the political left, especially of the current government, that somehow invariably more taxes, more programs, more government intervention in people's lives is going to respond to questions of income inequality and is going to help those who are least well off. Frankly, the Liberals say it so often that they may actually believe it, but there is no evidence at all that big government is what people who are struggling economically need or want. In fact, in many cases we can see the opposite. We can see big government intervention policies being worse for those who are struggling economically.

● (1645)

In this context, it is important to revisit the record of the previous government, as well as the current government, when it comes to tax policy. The previous government lowered the GST; lowered the tax rate for the lowest-income bracket; raised the base personal exemption; made reforms to EI, which would have positioned us for significant reductions in payroll taxes; and introduced the small business hiring credit.

What do these tax changes all have in common? They all target those who are least well-off.

The GST is the tax that everybody pays. Raising the base personal exemption means that many low-income Canadians would no longer pay taxes. We took those policies and opened the door for lower payroll taxes. Again, these are taxes that anyone who is employed is going to pay and that max out at a certain point. The small business hiring credit, again, is aimed at cutting taxes in a way that would help people get jobs. These were all tax changes that we made that helped those who are least well-off.

The Prime Minister says, frequently, that Conservatives think that if we help those at the top, that is the way to help society. In fact, it is a fact, and he should know it if he does not, that the previous Conservative government actually did not make any changes to the tax rates for high-income earners. We only lowered the income tax rates for the lowest tax bracket, and we made other tax reductions and changes that stimulated economic activity by actually targeting that tax relief to those who are in the lowest tax bracket.

That is what low-income Canadians, those working hard to join the middle class, as well as those who are in the middle class, need; that is what they want.

What is the record of the present government when it comes to taxes affecting low-income Canadians? It eliminated various tax credits for families; it undid the EI reforms that we brought in; in fact, it is in the process of raising payroll taxes, through the changes that it is making to the pension program; it raised the small business tax rate; and it eliminated the hiring credit.

Already up to now, even before the carbon tax, we have seen the government raise taxes on those who are struggling the most, and its so-called middle-class tax cut provides no benefit whatsoever for those making $45,000 a year or less.

The government's decision to cut back the tax-free savings account maximum disproportionately affects those who are struggling economically. We know that, because of the relative impact of tax-free savings accounts versus RRSPs, tax-free savings accounts are often the savings vehicles of choice for the middle class and those working hard to join it, to coin a phrase, not for those who are on the higher end.

It is really striking, if we compare the realities of the record, that indisputably it has always been Conservatives who have been helping those who are economically struggling. We have done it, not by expanding government, but by lowering their taxes, and it is Liberals who have often, perversely, in the name of economic equality concerns, raised taxes, including raised taxes on those struggling. They have used the money to facilitate their government largesse, which ostensibly includes travelling around the world giving speeches about income inequality. They take from the poor to facilitate opportunities to speak in all kinds of fora about income inequality. I would say this is the height of cynicism, but we had the whole electoral reform flip-flop, so I will say it is close to the height of cynicism.

This brings us, though, to the carbon tax because, again, we see the government bringing in new taxes that target those, we suspect, who are struggling the most and its completely unwillingness to provide any kind of clear information about this at all.

I just want to say, in response to one of the points that have been made, it is important for Canadians to know that many of the Conservatives who the government has cited as supposedly supporting its approach to the carbon tax have actually been very critical of the current government's approach when it comes to carbon taxation. They have suggested other models, but they have not at all supported the government's approach when it comes to this area. I think that is an important clarification. We are the party that is helping people of all incomes but especially by targeting tax relief to those who need it most. It is the current government that is raising taxes for those who actually need the help the most.

● (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's questions that he posed earlier. As the member tries to get a better understanding of the impact that the price on carbon is going to have on Canadians, it is important that the member and the Conservative Party recognize that because it is revenue neutral in terms of Ottawa, that means the price on carbon and the revenues generated by it will be going to the provinces. The impact it has on those individuals living in those respective provinces and territories will differ, as some provinces will put a higher priority on other things with respect to the revenues that are being generated.

Would the member not agree that if we really wanted to get the impact that they are trying to better understand, one of the things they might consider is to start talking with some of the provinces to find out what they plan to do with the revenue that is being generated? We know for sure that there is a general consensus of all political parties that a price on carbon is the right thing to do. That is what Canadians want us to do and that is what this national government is doing, but there is a role for our provinces.

● (1655)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, Canadians watching this will notice that at no point in today's debate do members of the government actually want to speak to the transparency issue. That is very clear. They actually do not want to because they cannot provide explanations of why, even though they are so convinced of the rightness of their position, they do not want to provide that information to Canadians.

I think members can hear in the questioner's comments just how slippery this term "revenue neutral" has become because revenue neutral used to mean that the people would get the money back. Now, "Oh, it is revenue neutral for Ottawa because we are taking money from people and it will go to a different level of government." This redefinition of language to justify new taxes is consistent from the government, but certainly is troubling for many Canadians.

It is interesting talking about what is happening in the provinces. In Alberta, we have a province that has imposed a carbon tax that was not discussed in the election. If we talk to the people, we will find that these carbon taxes are very unpopular and very often imposed by provincial governments that do not talk about them before elections and are not listening to the objections of people on the ground. We are seeing that in Alberta as well as in Ontario.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

When it comes to climate change, the clock is ticking. Let us cross our fingers that it is not too late to prevent the earth's temperature from rising more than 2°C, since that would have irreparable consequences.

I know that the effectiveness of putting a price on carbon is up for debate. However, since the government is all talk and no action, what does my colleague think about the fact that this small measure will not even allow us to meet the targets and objectives that the Liberal government has set? Is this just more smoke and mirrors?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, in terms of climate change and in terms of these targets, it is a matter of public record that the previous government was the first government in Canadian history to lower carbon emissions. We did that while the economy was growing. If we look across the board at the different provinces, in every single province if we compare our record to the record of the previous government, emissions went down or they went up by less than they had under the previous Liberal government.

That impact of the policy that we implemented was evident across provinces and it was clearly evident internationally. Some would say it is just because of the global economic downturn, but the fact is our economy grew while our emissions went down and global emissions were growing at the same time, even though Canada was one of the countries least affected by the global recession.

I think it was because we had a policy that recognized that there can be economic growth while reducing emissions, but we have to be smart and targeted about how it is done and there have to be sector-by-sector intensity-based regulations that still allow economic growth and do not encourage businesses to shut things off and go to other jurisdictions, that they encourage business to invest here in Canada but also help us to advance ourselves economically and environmentally.

We had a record. It was working. We will happily put our record against the record of any Liberal government in terms of addressing economic as well as environmental issues.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to participate in debate in this place, although whenever a debate includes the subject of the Liberals' national carbon tax, it typically becomes almost a circular discussion.

Even on this side of the House, I have memorized the Liberal talking points on the topic, which can basically be summarized as the Liberals saying, "We are taking action on the environment after the previous government's inaction". Here is one thing about those Liberal talking points. We all know that the Liberal government is using the very same targets for greenhouse gas reductions as the former Conservative government. In other words, when the former Conservative government took action to set those targets, the Liberal government agreed with them and now is using them. That is fact. That is not opinion. That is the problem with the entire Liberal mantra on carbon taxes. It is all smoke and mirrors.

Let me explain. Not long ago, the Liberals made hoopla announcing that they were ending coal burning power by 2030, despite the fact that most provinces already do not utilize coal power or are already on the way to doing precisely that. It sounded like the Liberals were taking action, yet quietly, the Liberals turned around and gave extensions to the two provinces that use coal power to continue doing so after the year 2030. In other words, that announcement was also all smoke and mirrors.

As I mentioned recently in the debate on the comprehensive economic trade agreement between Canada and the European Union, the Liberals say that they are taking action and leading the way with this carbon tax, but none of our major competitors, not the United States of America, not China, not India, and not Mexico, are following our lead with a national carbon tax. When people are not following us, we are not leading the way. In other words, we are going at it alone. Put another way, claims of leading the way are simply more smoke and mirrors.

I would like to take this discussion a step further. I am from British Columbia, where it is well known that B.C. led the way with a provincial carbon tax. Let us take a moment to talk about that, now that we have some empirical evidence to look at the outcome. I hear talking points from the Liberal members saying that they value evidence-based decision-making. It is curious, when they will not share the evidence with this place as to what the costs will be. It puts Parliament at a disadvantage, and they will not even admit that they are blocking that information. When the government does that, it does a disserve to every Canadian. Why? It is because we are their representatives. If we are to have a fair discussion about this, it should be sharing that information, something this motion calls for.

Let us go back to British Columbia. In 2008, at the time the B.C. carbon tax was introduced, basically 100% of the cement used in British Columbia was manufactured in British Columbia, and why not? Concrete is not exactly a lightweight, inexpensive product to import and transport from other jurisdictions. What happened when B.C. produced concrete that was subject to a carbon tax in 2008? It became more expensive. In fact, by 2014, British Columbia-produced concrete accounted for only roughly 65% of all concrete used in British Columbia, because cheaper concrete was being imported from jurisdictions with no carbon tax.

Because of this, the British Columbia government is now providing financial subsidies to the B.C. concrete industry. Of course, now we have the B.C. pulp and paper sector looking for similar carbon tax relief. It should also be pointed out that B.C. greenhouse growers have also secured B.C. carbon tax exemptions, not unlike many of Ontario's worst industrial polluters, which have also received extensions and exclusions from the Ontario cap-and-trade way of pricing carbon.

We all know, in every one of these situations, that these exemptions or subsidies are being provided to protect jobs and support local economies, but we must not overlook who we are protecting these jobs from. It is simple. It is from ourselves.

● (1700)

Here is the thing: while governments give exemptions and subsidies to these industries and corporations, the costs of all of these subsidies are being paid by taxpayers, who will also have to pay a carbon tax, if they are not paying it already. Of course, that is why we are all here today with this motion.

How much is the Liberal carbon tax going to cost Canadians? We do not know, because the current Liberal government refuses to come clean and share that information. Again, I say "evidence-based decision-making". I guess the Liberals believe in evidence-based decision-making when it comes to their cabinet-making decisions, but they do not empower their own members of Parliament.

I felt embarrassed for those members when I asked them earlier if they thought it was fair in a modern western democracy that Parliament does not have the same information to debate the merits of one of the most important public policies the government has pushed ahead. They simply ignore and deflect. They talk about something else. It is not good for democracy and it is not good public policy.

They say that the Liberal carbon tax will be revenue neutral. If it is really revenue neutral, why then do the Liberals refuse to release the data that demonstrates that? Seriously, let us all be logical about this. If it were truly revenue neutral, the government would be releasing that data. We all know the reason why that data is being withheld from Canadians.

We can look at the theory of a carbon tax: put a tax on burning carbon so that it becomes more expensive and people will not be able to afford to burn it and thus will use less of it. Guess what? In Ontario, we now hear about something called energy poverty, where people can no longer afford to turn the heat on to stay warm in the winter or to cook their own food.

Global News ran a story of a 76-year-old man who was without heat and power for three months in a home he had occupied for 45 years, because of Liberal energy policy producing poverty. CTV ran a story of a senior citizen who had to sell his beloved truck just to pay the hydro bill.

Now, this is the Ontario energy poverty that Liberals want to bring in all across Canada with this new carbon tax. No wonder Liberals are hiding the data that show the true cost of what the Liberal carbon tax will cost Canadians.

Let us keep in mind that, while big corporations get exemptions, subsidies, and handouts, there is no relief for everyday Canadians left paying the bill, like that 76-year-old senior I referenced in Ontario. Is it any wonder that the same people responsible for devastating the Ontario energy policy are now working in the inside circle of the Prime Minister?

Before I close, I would like to add one final thought. Recently the Prime Minister stated that he believed that Canada needed to phase out the Alberta oil sands. Of course, that was before he decided to say while visiting Alberta that he misspoke. I mention this because, while the Prime Minister is forcing his carbon tax onto Canadians, at the very same time he is borrowing money to give to corporations like Bombardier so that it can develop a new luxury corporate business jet that will do nothing but burn carbon, and lots of it. Clearly, the Prime Minister sees a bright carbon-burning future at Bombardier, just not in Alberta. Once again, it is Canadians who will be footing that bill.

Given that we are literally seeing daily examples of the devastation of Ontario energy poverty in action, I submit that the current Liberal government has a moral duty to disclose the true cost to Canadians of this Liberal carbon tax. However, I believe that the Liberals are afraid to come clean, disclose the true costs, because they know that the price is something Canadians cannot afford, which is what Ontario energy poverty has shown us.

As every member in this place from Ontario well knows, people in Ontario are hurting due to Liberal-created energy poverty. I ask that we think of them tonight. I ask members opposite to consider their responsibilities. Even if members have the title “parliamentary secretary” added to their official titles, they are also members of this place and their job is to hold the government to account. Is it fair to Canadians whom they represent to not have that information so that they can listen to both sides of the debate and make their views known to their members of Parliament?

● (1705)

I ask that we think of those Canadians and support this motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thinking of those Canadians.

I am thinking that we have a Canada child benefit program that is lifting thousands of children out of poverty. We have a GIS increase that is taking thousands of seniors out of poverty. We have millions of Canadians who are getting middle-class tax cuts, which is putting hundreds of millions of dollars of disposable income in the pockets of Canadians.

We are demonstrating strong leadership on the environment file by saying that Canada needs to have a price on carbon. We are allowing the provinces to have the revenues that are generated. If those provinces deem that a priority for them is to invest that revenue into whatever causes they feel are beneficial for their economies and their social fabric, we would encourage them to do that.

Would the member not agree that the provinces have an important role, given that they are receiving the revenues, and that maybe some of the lobbying the member is suggesting should be directed at those provincial governments, including his own?

● (1710)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, in its budget every year, British Columbia reports on its carbon tax. That is where I got this information about the cement industry.

The member and many of the members on that side of the floor continue to deflect. I specifically ask this member to consider this when he goes home tonight. It sounds to me as if the member is recounting all these things, including the GIS and the Canada child benefit, to justify that the Liberals are blocking information from Parliament.

If that member can sleep well at night, all the more power to him, but he is creating an non-level playing field where we cannot debate public policy. He is shielding the government. He needs to take a look in the mirror and ask himself whether he is a member of Parliament who is here to hold the government to account, or whether he is carrying water for it.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member's opinion about moving forward instead of positioning ourselves in a way that does repulse ordinary Canadians. Since we do have ordinary Canadians at heart here in this whole issue, how we can move forward enthusiastically is a little ambiguous.

I am hearing that maybe there is a chance for us to move forward with some other options that the Conservatives would embrace now. Particularly, it was the Conservative government that cancelled the home energy retrofit program. That would have reduced emissions at the same time as reducing energy costs for ordinary Canadians.

Am I hearing that this is something on which we could all collectively look forward to working productively, together?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to hear from a member who is open-minded. I do not hold it against her, because this is her first time in this place as a member of Parliament. I congratulate her on that, but actually, it was the previous Conservative government that put the eco-energy retrofit program into the budget. Her party twice voted against it, because we had the budget pre- and post-election 2011. Unfortunately, that was obviously not an avenue that they felt was important when it was a Conservative government.

Getting back to next steps, all I ask is that we hit the pause button. Before we go further down the road where we are leading no one, perhaps we should ask who is doing this to our seniors. It is us. Who is doing this to our businesses that will be less competitive? It is us. Who is denying the information needed so that we could have a proper debate about carbon pricing and its impacts on Canadians? It is the government.

Let us stay focused on that conversation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, March 7, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

● (1715)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I just want to warn you that I am going to be speaking in my second language.

If you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

OTTAWA RIVER WATERSHED

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 104

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed, in order to foster ecological integrity, sustainable economic opportunities, and quality of life; in its study, the Committee shall examine (i) the council membership, which would include, but would not be limited to, federal, provincial, regional, and municipal governments, First Nations, industry groups, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, (ii) important indicators such as water quality, biodiversity, and shoreline integrity, in order to assist with the creation of a co-management plan and conservation strategy, (iii) the economic, cultural, heritage, and natural values within the Ottawa River Watershed; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House no later than December 2017.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise this evening to speak to this motion. I have the good fortune of being the grandson of Irish pioneers who settled in the Ottawa Valley and my great grandparents lived very close to the Ottawa River. There is a very strong tradition that runs through the veins of so many Canadians in this region and beyond, those who have been touched by the beauty and stupendous power of the Ottawa River, which I have always described as the jewel in the crown of the national capital region. I am pleased to move this motion not only as the MP for Ottawa South, but also as the chair of the government's national capital region caucus.

There are now 1.4 million Canadians living in this catchment area called the national capital region and it is growing at a rate of 7% to 8% a year. This is the fifth largest census metropolitan area in the country.

The motion calls for a study to revamp our thinking when it comes to managing the way we do business and the way we relate to something as essential as a watershed. It is an incredible opportunity for Canada, not just in the context of the Ottawa River watershed but right across the country. I will come back to that theme in a moment, because there are many trends and positive developments in this regard right across the country.

This is a case where we get to illustrate, through the study, the fact that we need a new form of management. We need a new form of co-management, which is widely described as integrated watershed management. It tries to overcome a fundamental challenge when it comes to the way in which we organize our affairs as a society and how we interface with something as important as, for example, the Ottawa River, how we interface with natural carrying capacity. It is to overcome the challenge of what my parents used to present to their 10 children when they would say that we just could not have a situation where everybody's job was nobody's job.

The Ottawa River watershed, and watersheds writ large across the country and the planet, is what we have to start addressing. Although there is a myriad of actors that interface or deal with the Ottawa River watershed, there is only one watershed. That is one of the stark realizations that folks who live around the watershed, the provinces, the federal government, and different actors, have now realized, that it is a delicate, important asset. It is, frankly, a very valuable asset that forms part of our overall natural capital, not necessarily built capital or human capital but our natural capital.

The motion calls for a major study that would analyze how we could take the management of the Ottawa River watershed to the next level, to the next iteration. This has been informed by the good work of a number of examples in Canada, for example, the Fraser Basin Council in British Columbia. It began in early 1990 and has proceeded in a very sophisticated way to bring together different stakeholders and groups that treat the Fraser Basin as one. They realize it is an asset to be managed with great determination and care as there is only one Fraser Basin. There are not 10 or 20; there is one.

On that note, I am also delighted that many stakeholders in this region are strongly supportive of conducting a study, not least among them the Ottawa Riverkeeper. I really want to commend the Ottawa Riverkeeper and the team, Meredith Brown and Jean Perras, in particular, for their extraordinary leadership and work. They are to be congratulated on pushing out the envelope and thinking in terms of the opportunity in front of us to do something very powerful in our national capital. From here, we can springboard and challenge national capitals right around the world.

We have many competing interests with the Ottawa River, but, first, why this motion? It is the border. The Ottawa River forms the border between Ontario and Quebec and makes it an interprovincial waterway. Therefore, the management of the Ottawa River is an area of shared jurisdiction. Obviously, the federal government is implicated, the provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec, regional and municipal governments, watershed organizations, and our indigenous peoples.

● (1720)

This motion recognizes the importance of the Ottawa River watershed to our overall economic, ecological, and cultural well-being. A comprehensive study on the creation of an Ottawa River watershed council would ensure that multiple levels of governments, indigenous peoples, and all stakeholders work closely together to coordinate their activities and their decisions that serve to protect and to preserve this incredible asset for all Canadians.

What kinds of competing interests do we have when it comes to something as powerful as this Ottawa River? By the way, Canadians should know that the Ottawa River's flow on a daily basis is greater than every western European tributary combined. It is a mighty, powerful river and in large part helped build lots of early central Canada. There are competing interests. For example, economic ones are hydro power, tourism, forestry, fisheries, agriculture. On the environment there is water quality, with this city and the city of Gatineau extracting most of their drinking water from the surface of the Ottawa River. There is biodiversity, pollution, and climate change. Within the Ottawa River watershed, there are 18 Ontario parks and eight Quebec parks. When it comes to social well-being as I referred to a moment ago, we can speak to water quality and drinking water. We must consider flood risk, recreational purposes, and of course river access. The Ottawa River watershed is a massive part of our local culture, our economy, and our environment. It is an asset. It is, as I said, the jewel in the crown.

How big is it? The Ottawa River watershed covers more than 140,000 square kilometres. It straddles the border between Ontario and Quebec. It is also the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence River. It is very large, larger than many European states, larger than the province of New Brunswick.

What is the present state of affairs now when it comes to the management of this precious asset? We have an Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board. It is the only governance body for the Ottawa River that includes both federal and provincial representatives, including Ontario Power Generation and Hydro-Québec. It is mostly concerned with the question of hydro-electric energy production and of course flooding and other related issues. It does not allow for the broader mandate that this study would examine where other stakeholders, a more diverse array of stakeholders, would come together and treat the watershed as one whole.

This is not simply something that is timely in the context of this region and this particular watershed. On the contrary, the watershed movement, this whole question of evolving toward what is now being called integrated watershed management, is a national and international trend. It allows for a meeting place, an agora as they said in ancient Greece, a place where we can manage human activities and ecosystems at the watershed scale. It would integrate multiple concepts and methods, including water- and land-use planning and management. It evaluates the management of cumulative effects from multiple environmental stressors. Therefore, if we have one municipality releasing waste into the river and yet we have another organization like Atomic Energy of Canada dealing with the challenge of nuclear waste also along the shores of the Ottawa River, we have these different stressors at play but we have no place to sit down collectively to say, "How do we manage these collectively so we can ensure the sustainability of this important watershed?"

It brings together many aspects of governance such as policy, planning, and legislation on the basis of a geographic area, this watershed approach. It brings people together so that their activities can be shared and their relationships are better fostered among the different actors who live, who operate, who act, and who have a bearing on the watershed. This is very important. It is something that exists right across the country.

● (1725)

I alluded earlier to the Fraser Basin Council in British Columbia. Many of my B.C. colleagues here know full well how successful it has been. It brings together dozens of stakeholders and has meetings to assess the overall health of the Fraser Basin and what different effects different activities are having on the Fraser Basin, because it reflects the reality of the concept of there being only one Fraser Basin. Here the study would examine the fact that there is only one Ottawa River watershed.

What are some of the drivers for this integrated watershed management trend in Canada this study might embrace? We know that activities upstream are going to have detrimental effects downstream. I am reminded of what New York City did. Instead of building a multi-billion dollar water treatment facility at the back end, it went upstream and negotiated a series of deals with different municipalities, industries, first nations, etc., to invest in cleaning up the river upstream. By the time the water got to New York City, it was cleaner drinking water. The cost of protecting that watershed in the context of upper New York State was much lower than the cost of building a tertiary water treatment facility in New York City. They treated it as it should, as a form of natural capital to be protected and invested in.

It is also now known that it is just not desirable or feasible any longer to have a single water agency. This is clearly not working. We know that water is connected through the hydrologic cycle, and groundwater and surface water have to be connected in our management activities.

Recently, in a meeting I had with a senior senator from California, I remember having a broad conversation, but the only thing he was fixated on talking about was whether California was going to have access to Canada's water and whether we would be performing inter-basin water transfers, not something this country is particularly interested in seeing happen whatsoever.

We need to know what is happening to the hydrologic cycles, and this can be analyzed through this study. We have to recognize that there will be water shortages, flooding, and water quality issues throughout the globe, including in Canada, southern Saskatchewan, the Red River, the Saguenay River, the Richelieu River, Walkerton, the Great Lakes, and many others.

We also have to consider and examine increased water users and the types of water use, including increased awareness of the need to better balance ecosystem needs and withdrawals. This has led to more conflicts and more difficulty in overcoming the conflicts. Having a watershed council would allow us to deal with and diffuse these conflicts up front, because we would know collectively what is happening in the watershed basin as a whole.

Canadians everywhere now insist on more opportunity for participation, for community-based management approaches. The council would provide such an opportunity.

There are many other drivers at play, not least of which is that we appreciate that aboriginal peoples living in parts of many watersheds, like here in the Ottawa Valley, and throughout Canada, rely on many water resource services, and they must be involved in the planning and management of those resources.

The case for the study to examine this watershed council is pretty darn strong. It is a question of sitting down with the right players, coming up with a management plan and strategy, and coming up with the metrics we need. We do not even have agreed upon metrics to evaluate the state of the watershed.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

I am now convinced that all the stakeholders would want to be part of this council. That includes Quebec, the municipality of Gatineau and those on the other side of the river, and all of the communities located along the river, which is thousands of kilometres long.

[*English*]

I am asking my colleagues to support the notion that we examine this in greater detail, study the possibility of having such an approach, and use this as a wonderful opportunity to showcase what a national capital can do, not just in the context of other integrated watershed management approaches for Canada but globally. Let us start with Washington and the Potomac River, for example, and expand beyond there. Canada has this wonderful opportunity and obligation.

I am asking my colleagues to support the motion in due course, and it is an honour for me to present it.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we see this trend, from a procedural perspective, of motions being proposed in the House asking committees to conduct studies on certain things, and I have voted in favour of such motions on certain occasions. However, at the same time, we usually allow committees to be masters of their own domain.

The member has set a fairly tight timeline. Very likely the committee has other business it has envisioned. He is proposing a motion to instruct a committee to do a study on something that is of particular concern in one region. Could the member speak to the wisdom of doing that?

Why would he not simply engage members of the committee and ask when there would be time, in the context of the schedule of the committee, when it might be interested in doing this study, if it fit in with the committee's study plans?

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of opportunity for negotiation going forward with respect to the timing, the depth, and the how.

Why would one put a motion forward to examine a particular watershed? Because my 30 years of environmental legal experience have taught me that we need to ground truth, this kind of example in practical ways so Canadians can understand, and they do understand. This is a way to build a council that can be replicated. It can build on the wonderful experiences, for example, of the Fraser Basin Council, of what happened in Lake Winnipeg, of what is going on throughout Quebec with its watershed management approach, which is extremely progressive.

It is not so much the localization of this watershed as it is a study that can be used and extrapolated right across the country.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this forward. It is a matter that a number of members have brought forward a number of times. We already have mechanisms under the Canada Water Act that have been in place for decades. Neither Conservative nor Liberal governments have taken any action to move forward and to do this.

We have many instances where we have watershed agreements, for example, in northern Alberta, nice agreements between two provinces, between the feds and province, but nothing happens.

Why would the member refer this to a committee that has no technical resources, frankly very few resources? Why is he not asking the government of the day to finally move on this?

● (1735)

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, that remains entirely a possibility. I believe the member is still a member of the environment committee and has a very distinguished background in the field of sustainable development. I consider her to be an expert on that committee and hopefully would be able to lend her expertise.

Coming back to the need for this now, we know there is no forum here today with the watershed to even share data, knowledge, or ideas for improvements across the many silos that exist. We know that at the watershed scale, there is no shared management plan, no conservation strategy, no shared vision of common agenda. We can do much better than that. That is the import of this study. I am convinced it is the way forward.

Co-management, whether it is with watersheds or whether it is ocean resources, is the only way to overcome the fiction that there is a limitless caring capacity with our natural ecosystems, and there is not. We know that, not the least of which through all the evidence, all the knowledge we now have about climate change.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague who I have known for quite some time. As he compliments our colleague from Edmonton, I would like to compliment him in his expertise, even preceding his time in the House of Commons.

He spoke about the Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board. It sounds to me that it is quite restricted in allowing other opinions. He uses the Fraser River as a prime example. I would like him to comment further on that and to describe to the House what stakeholders need to be included right now and what his initiative will do to include them.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at the Fraser Basin Council as a model that should be emulated. There are 38 directors, which includes an impartial chair and 37 directors, four orders of government, private sector, civil society, aboriginal leadership. That is a place where people sit down, as adults, with science, evidence, criteria with measurable outcomes, with a performance plan, with a management plan and steward that precious resource for Canada going forward.

We should examine this in great detail for the Ottawa River watershed. It is a wonderful asset for Canada and all Canadians. Again, our responsibility as the national capital region is to show leadership in this regard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague who introduced this bill. Unfortunately, I find his proposal problematic.

[*English*]

I will go into that later on.

I want to recognize the member for bringing this motion forward. I know he has served in this House for a long time, and I am sure he brings this motion forward with the best of intentions. I heard him speak once at an election forum when I was a student at Carleton University. It was that day that I decided to become a Conservative.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Garnett Genuis: More seriously, I want to go through a few of the issues on this motion.

This motion asks the House of Commons to direct a particular committee to undertake a study with respect to an issue in the national capital region. From time to time on certain matters of national importance there is an argument for the House of Commons to give this kind of direction to a committee. However, we are seeing an increase in the use of this tool of private members' motions to instruct committees. In general, I do not think that is ideal, because committees provide an opportunity for members of different parties to come together and set an agenda that reflects a view of the larger priorities and the imminent needs with respect to a particular area. Therefore, when a motion instructs a committee, that can really interrupt that process, especially when it is in the context of a fairly tight timeline.

The demand of this motion is for the study to be completed no later than December 2017. We are in the first hour of debate on this motion. Of course there are opportunities for flexibility around the timeline if the member wants to trade the second hour of debate, but it is very likely that if this motion were to pass, it would not pass for a number of months, which would give a fairly limited window of time for the committee that is being instructed to actually undertake the study. That creates some issues, especially when there may be issues of broader national importance. That is not to say that this is not an important question, but it is an important question with respect to a particular region. There may be issues that the committee, in its wisdom, decides need to be studied.

I would encourage members that with issues like this, it is probably worthwhile for members to talk to the members of the committee. There is a provision for members to substitute in at a committee, even to move motions at committees of which they are not regularly a member, and to ask that committee to undertake a study on that basis.

There is a process concern. At some point, as members of this House, if we want to encourage committees to have more autonomy, there is value in saying, even if particular members may agree with the underlying idea, "No, this is something that really should be discussed in the context of the environment committee." It is important that we discuss and consider those procedural dimensions, as well as the substantive dimensions, because there may be cases where there is a laudable objective, but the process is not the best at proceeding to a discussion on that issue.

I have some concerns not just on the procedural side but also in terms of some of the substantive proposals with respect to this motion. It calls for a study perhaps with a view to the creation of an Ottawa River watershed council. It identifies some specific objectives in the context of the creation of that council, and includes a reference to "ecological integrity".

I know that many of my colleagues have a concern about what the implications of this would be for development. There are also some concerns about whether this really moves us in the direction of creating additional red tape that is not needed. There are existing organizations. There is a voluntary river-keeper organization that presently exists. It is not clear at all, based on the text of the motion, how this proposed new council would function with the existing organization in place. It adds another organization.

● (1740)

The concern is that as layers are added, with additional requirements, maybe we want to affirm the importance of the Ottawa River. I would certainly affirm that importance, having spent time in Ottawa as a student, as well as spending a fair bit of time here in Ottawa now. Adding an additional council, additional levels of review, and perhaps bureaucracy would make potential development projects much more difficult. That is something we need to have some real pause about.

The member was quite right to point out that there are inter-jurisdictional issues involved, because this is a river that goes between Ontario and Quebec, and the federal government can be part of that discussion. As much as possible, it is ideal that, while recognizing the right of the federal government to impose certain things like this, we try to take advantage of existing mechanisms like a voluntary organization that is already in place and pass the authority and control over as much as possible to more local entities that can be more directly responsible. When we have motions like this one, we are asking the House of Commons as a whole to pronounce on something that in practice has a particular impact in a particular region. Giving authority to those closest to that region creates maximum responsiveness to the needs that may come from the community.

I also alluded to the issue of development. We dealt with this in Bill C-18, which the government proposed with respect to Rouge park. The insertion of the language "ecological integrity" certainly sounds like a good thing on the face of it. I do not think anyone said they were opposed to ecological integrity, but when that term is used in a certain context it can create some real problems for development. The way in which something is managed in a more urbanized setting may not be practical to preserve it exactly as it would be in the absence of human habitation. Therefore, we have to be cautious and realistic when we use certain language that may create a certain chill for development.

These are some of the concerns that I have and I think my colleagues have with respect to the bill. It is proposing a new organization, which looks like it would add administrative layers and red tape that really is not needed. It is proposing a study on the creation of that, when in fact, as my NDP colleague has pointed out, there may be some direct action that can be taken right now. The important thing is that any action taken in this area respects the realities that already exist, such as the voluntary organization that is there and the opportunities for this situation to be managed and dealt with in a more local way.

I have talked about the importance of respecting the committee process. I would not say, always and everywhere, we should never have the House of Commons instruct a committee. There are cases on issues of clear priority for the entire country where the House can give that direction to a committee. However, we should not be doing that all the time with every committee. Just looking at the private member's motions that we have, the trend is to give a lot of instructions to committees to do studies. Those seem to emerge without even being preceded by an attempt to propose that same study in the context of the committee. It would at least be worthwhile to propose a study in the context of a committee and then perhaps if the committee was unwilling to do the study, but the member felt strongly for it, then at least that might be a discussion we could have here in the House. However, in general, it does make sense to defer to the wisdom of the members on that committee as much as possible.

There are procedural questions here. There are questions about what the impact would be in terms of development and possibly putting a chill on development. There are questions about whether it is necessary to propose this additional level of administration, especially when there is an existing voluntary organization in place. By all indications, it is working very well, and it is not at all clear, based on this motion, what the interaction would be between this proposed new organization and that voluntary organization.

I look forward to the continuing debate on this, but certainly those are some concerns I have about the motion.

● (1745)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we have discussed here, Motion No. 104 calls for actions to protect the Ottawa watershed. I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this. There have been a good number of members over time who have raised this. It is time for action. There is just a difference in perspective on who should be taking the action.

As the member has mentioned, the Ottawa River is also known as Kitchissippi, meaning the great river by the Algonquin. It may be worth noting that the current Canada Water Act does not include engagement of first nations people, so those are some of the things I will mention later that could be pursued by the committee. It rises from its source in Lake Capimitchigama in the Laurentian mountains of central Quebec and flows west to Lake Timiskaming, and there its route has been used to define the interprovincial border with Ontario, so it is clearly transboundary.

From Lake Timiskaming, the river flows southeast to Ottawa and Gatineau, where it tumbles over the Chaudière Falls and further takes in the Rideau and Gatineau rivers. It drains into the Lac des Deux Montagnes in the St. Lawrence River at Montreal. I would like to share that when I first moved here eight years ago, I was living in the market, and I regularly came to the Hill by walking along the beautiful trail along the river, so I fully appreciate the need to take action to protect that natural landscape.

I have also been told that the drainage area of the Ottawa River includes many significant wetlands. It has been designated a heritage river and is listed, unlike a lot of rivers, under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. Many rivers were removed by the Conservatives.

Another thing to be pointed out is the long history of paying attention to pollution of this river. The member mentioned a number of sources: pulp and paper pollution; Atomic Energy of Canada Limited Lab, Chalk River; municipal sewage, the third being the one that has really been dealt with. Today, apparently the main pollutant in the Ottawa River is from plastic micro beads and micro fibres, and I am glad that one of my former colleagues actually brought forward measures to address that.

One of the things that is worth sharing is that a very famous writer, Oscar Wilde, visiting the city in May 1882, was outraged at the state of the river and the level of sawdust. He said, "This is an outrage. No one has the right to pollute the air and water, which are the common inheritance of all. We should leave them to our children as we have received them."

Of course, he was controversial, and that was one of the good reasons for him being controversial.

This is the latest call. I know that the member for Ottawa South has raised this matter a number of times in the media and perhaps in the House, and called for federal-level intervention to get things moving between the two provincial jurisdictions and civil society.

It is an intervention long called for by many, including my friend and former MP, Paul Dewar. Inspired by the dedication of local citizens, including the Ottawa Riverkeeper and Waterlution, another group that has been very involved, Paul made repeated calls for federal action to protect the Ottawa River, including tabling an action plan and motion calling for regulations to protect and preserve the integrity of the river; environmental regulations; enforcement of the Federal Fisheries Act, which of course has been downgraded by the last government; calling for increased funding to municipalities to improve water treatment, and I understand some action has been taken on that; and calling for public disclosure of compliance records, regular monitoring of ecological indicators, and a watershed management plan.

Due to the constant efforts of local citizens, some action has been taken to garner the efforts in both Quebec and Ontario and the federal authorities to at least provide some level of commitment to take action. Unfortunately, we have not had action. There has been a signing on to an agreement that there needs to be an integrated watershed plan, but no action.

In May 2015, the number of parties, including representatives of the provinces and the federal government, signed on to the Gatineau Declaration Toward an Integrated Approach to Sustainable Water Management Within the Ottawa River Watershed. Regrettably, river advocates tell me that there has then been little concrete action taken, including by the empowered federal authorities to actually finalize the watershed plan and put in place the necessary enforceable measures to protect the watershed. This is despite the existing powers already under federal law, under the federal Fisheries Act and under the Canada Water Act. This is fully possible.

In the past, the federal government has moved to work with the provinces, for example, in the Mackenzie River Basin and, as was mentioned, in the Fraser. There has been a record of taking action together.

I am concerned about others in transborder areas, including the Mackenzie River Basin and the North Saskatchewan River, that similarly the federal government is dropping the ball on taking action to bring together all the parties on transboundary rivers.

● (1750)

Over a period of many decades, successive federal governments, Liberal and Conservative, have relinquished responsibility for the protection of transboundary or transborder rivers or rivers considered of national significance: the demise of the inland waters directorate; the failure to enforce the federal Fisheries Act; the delisting of navigable rivers; the failure to intervene in project reviews to assert duties over protection of transborder rivers and lakes.

While the motion by the member is laudatory in calling for action to move forward for a watershed plan for the Ottawa River, I wish to share concerns that I have heard from others. As my colleague from the Conservative Party pointed out, the suggested forum, the parliamentary committee on environment and climate change, may not be the best-suited entity to undertake the actions that the member is calling for to actually establish a watershed council, which should be up to the various government entities, which should be up to civil society, which should be up to scientific experts. Certainly the committee, and I know this because I sit on the committee, lacks the resources and the technical and scientific expertise to undertake a number of the measures that the member for Ottawa South is calling for.

In my view, and in the view of those I have conferred with, the preferable locus for action is the government itself, including the environment department, the fisheries department, and possibly the heritage department, and their officials.

For that reason, I wish to present an amendment to the member's motion to enable a broader review and analysis of how well the federal government is delivering on its mandate to protect transboundary waters, more generally, and consideration of measures to ensure more effective and timely action over all of these watersheds.

The parliamentary committee could serve as a useful forum to examine the current legislated mandate, current policies, current instruments available to the federal government, and record of actions taken, including examining case examples of a number of transboundary rivers.

I wish, here, to submit the following amendment.

I move that motion M-104 be amended by deleting all of the words between “regards to” and “and that the Committee” and inserting the following: “(i) reviewing federal jurisdiction, legislation, policies and agreements related to watershed management and protection with an emphasis on transboundary waters and watersheds on federal lands (ii) examining federal actions for selected transboundary watersheds such as the Ottawa River, Mackenzie River Basin and the North Saskatchewan River as case studies to be determined by the Committee, (iii) identifying mechanisms for clarified and enhanced federal interventions to protect Canadian waters;”

● (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty to inform the hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93 (3) no amendments may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Ottawa South if he consents to this amendment being moved?

Mr. David McGuinty: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, no.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 93, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Pontiac.

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating the member for Ottawa South for his consistent advocacy in support of the protection of the Ottawa River and its watershed.

I support Motion No. 104, and I really look forward to the work that will be done in support of the establishment of the Ottawa River watershed council.

In the late 1980s, I grew up in west Ottawa just a stone's throw away from the river. I drank from the river, swam in it, fiddled around on it, and paddled up and down on it. This is the aquatic spinal cord of our national capital. It is meaningful to me personally that the member for Ottawa South has brought this motion.

In the late 1990s, I commuted in a canoe up and down to my work at the Terrasses de la Chaudière building in Gatineau and back home. We would go down the Ottawa River in the morning, down the rapids, and back up against the flow in the afternoon. I have a great champion for the Ottawa River as a friend, Max Finkelstein. He was the real engine as we paddled upstream.

This river inspired me to become an environmental lawyer, to defend our rights as Canadians to a healthy environment. In turn, this afforded me the opportunity to work with the great organization, the Ottawa Riverkeeper, on the very topic we are debating today: the proper governance of this national capital watershed.

For about a decade, I have advocated that we establish a similar kind of council. Therefore, I want to commend the member for Ottawa South for bringing this motion forward.

Now I represent the riding of Pontiac whose very history is defined by the Ottawa River and all its great tributaries, the Dumoine, the Coulonge, the Noir, and the Gatineau. As the member for Edmonton Strathcona pointed out, it was the Anishinabe peoples who called it the Kitchissippi, the great river. *Meegwetch* for our indigenous friends who have taught us so much over the years about the importance of this waterway. In particular, I would highlight the incredible contributions of the late Grand Chief William Commanda with whom I collaborated to prevent uranium exploration in this watershed.

[*Translation*]

Over 400 years ago, Samuel de Champlain met the Algonquin chief, Tessouat, who collected the tolls that the Algonquins charged fur traders travelling on the Ottawa River. Chief Tessouat's authority and the historic role of the Algonquins in controlling passage on the Ottawa River is a good starting point for debate on this motion.

The Ottawa River watershed is among the most impressive in Canada and continues to play an important historic, environmental, and economic role. For much of its length, it functions as the boundary between Quebec and Ontario. Located on traditional Algonquin land, it flows through our nation's capital and serves as a wildlife corridor and a natural route for the region's inhabitants.

The river provides us with fresh drinking water, fertile agricultural land, hydroelectricity, and lumber to build our houses. The watershed provides for us all.

The Ottawa River watershed is an engine of economic growth in the region and supports many small and medium-sized businesses in such industries as forestry, fishing, and tourism. It is home to an agricultural industry estimated at $100 million.

The rivers itself is also the main source of drinking water for many communities in the region, including the 30,000 people that I represent in the Plateau, Aylmer, Limbour, and Mont-Luc areas of Gatineau. It is also a continual source of hydroelectric energy for western Quebec and eastern Ontario.

However, it is a fragile ecosystem, and its habitat, which is home to a number of endangered species, is threatened by the historical and current use. A good example is the recent dumping of millions of litres of untreated sewage into the Lièvre River, which flows directly into the Ottawa River.

All levels of government—federal, provincial, municipal, and indigenous—must work together to do more to protect this resource. Water management in Canada does not fall clearly within the jurisdiction of a single level of government. It falls under federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdiction.

● (1800)

Indigenous peoples, particularly the Algonquin Nation, also have various constitutionally protected rights associated with the use of water, including fishing and navigation.

[*English*]

The current governance structure of the Ottawa River watershed is, in my opinion, inadequate. The Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board, which was established in 1983 as an intergovernmental body composed of the governments of Canada, Ontario, and Quebec, is responsible for regulating water flows for hydroelectric production and for flood prevention along the Ottawa River basin. Its mandate is to achieve integrated management by which dam operators can make water flow decisions with full knowledge of the impact that they will have on water levels downstream in other areas of the basin.

However, the committee does not have a mandate to protect the environment. In fact, the board does not actually have an integrated management structure in place where environmental, municipal, aboriginal, and other interests with respect to the watershed can contribute their views, and contribute their knowledge. It creates a bit of a jurisdictional silo in respect of flows and hydroelectricity, but not the entire ecological picture. This is an anomaly, as my learned colleague from Ottawa South pointed out, as many other important watersheds, like the St. Lawrence and Fraser rivers, have integrated management plans, which involve co-operation between, at the minimum, the federal and provincial levels of government.

I support this motion because it will enable our Liberal government and those experts who are so familiar with the Ottawa River to work with different levels of government, Ontario, Quebec, Gatineau, Ottawa, and other local municipalities, to enact and implement improvements in Ottawa River watershed protection and governance.

This motion would allow our government to negotiate an Ottawa River watershed action plan. That is what I would hope would come out of the work of such a council. I hope that would be a collaborative initiative with all levels of government.

In my view, this kind of plan could help pool the resources and expertise of over 20 government agencies, universities, first nations, and other organizations as partners; harmonize regional investments in the waterway to sustainably develop the ecosystem; build on our government's ongoing work to strengthen federal law and policy impacting our waterways, and repealing the Harper Conservatives' drastic measures that weakened all sorts of federal laws, from the Fisheries Act, to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Species at Risk Act, and the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

Before concluding, I would simply like to say that it is so important that we continue to work with the leading voices on this file.

[*Translation*]

The federal government must continue to engage in co-operative federalism and to work with Ontario, Quebec, and organizations like Ottawa Riverkeeper and CREDDO, the Conseil régional de l'environnement et du développement durable de l'Outaouais, which have done a lot of work on this file in the past.

[*English*]

I would like to congratulate the member for Ottawa South on his motion, and having regard to the suggestion made by my hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, I am in agreement with her that the government should move expeditiously on this file. I would like to propose an amendment to the motion.

I move:

> That the motion be amended by:
>
> (a) replacing the words 'the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be instructed to' with the words, 'in the opinion of the House, the government should';
>
> (b) replacing the words 'the Committee shall' with the words 'the government should';
>
> (c) deleting all the words after the words 'within the Ottawa River Watershed;'.

The motion as amended would read: "That, in the opinion of the House, the government should undertake a detailed study with regard to the creation of an Ottawa River Watershed Council, which would bring a comprehensive, inclusive, co-management approach to the Ottawa River Watershed, in order to foster ecological integrity, sustainable economic opportunities, and quality of life; in its study, the government should examine (i) the council membership, which would include, but would not be limited to, federal, provincial, regional, and municipal governments, First Nations, industry groups, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, (ii) important indicators such as water quality, biodiversity, and shore-line integrity, in order to assist with the creation of a co-management plan and conservation strategy, (iii) the economic, cultural, heritage, and natural values within the Ottawa River Watershed."

● (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Once again, it is my duty to inform the hon. member that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3) no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Ottawa South if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. David McGuinty: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of the Ottawa Valley riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to speak to a motion that is being put forth by an MP from the city of Ottawa. Motion No. 104 asks for another study to join the multitude of studies that have already been done on the Ottawa River and its watershed. The motion then asks for a study to justify the expenditure of more taxpayer dollars to create a new layer of bureaucracy to interfere with the lives of the people who call the Ottawa River watershed home. Residents who live in the Ottawa River watershed know that it will not be the residents of Ottawa who will be asked to pay for this new level of bureaucracy that is being proposed in this motion; it will be the rural residents who live out on the land who will be required to pay.

Before this debate goes any further, I believe it is important to inform this House that the detailed study that the motion calls for has already recently been completed. A detailed study of the Ottawa River watershed was done in preparation for the designation of the Ottawa River as a Canadian heritage river. The study was undertaken by the former MP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, the late Leonard Hopkins. There are veteran MPs in this House who served with Lenny and are aware of his efforts.

Mr. Hopkins worked with a large volunteer committee for years in preparation for the designation of the Ottawa River as a heritage river. That study was finished and is easily available on the web today. It covers everything that is in the motion. Unfortunately for Mr. Hopkins and for this motion, a fatal flaw in the study has been replicated in the motion. One of the concerns I raised as the sitting member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was the inability of Mr. Hopkins and his committee to obtain the consent of the Province of Quebec to designate the Ottawa River as a Canadian heritage river, which would have then included the two-thirds of the Ottawa River watershed that is in the province of Quebec. When I asked my fellow Ottawa Valley MP, Robert Bertrand, who represented the Quebec riding of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, what his position was on the issue, he told me he was not consulted. This surprised me, as Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Bertrand had been caucus colleagues.

The Quebec provincial government of the day took the position that it was not interested in participating in the designation process, as this could result in relinquishing provincial jurisdiction to the federal government. This motion is asking to set up a management plan for the Ottawa River watershed with no authority to act in two-thirds of the Ottawa River watershed. The Province of Quebec has no interest to invite the federal government to interfere in matters of provincial jurisdiction.

I note with curiosity that the then Quebec minister of the environment representing the Quebec government on the issue as a Liberal member of the Quebec National Assembly, who turned down participation in any heritage designation of the Ottawa River, sits in this House today as the MP for Outremont, the leader of the NDP. I have no reason to believe that his position has changed today.

That represents a major flaw in the designation of the Ottawa River as a Canadian heritage river by the federal government. The designation only includes the Ontario portion of the Ottawa River, which is just 35% of the watershed. Sixty-five per cent of the Ottawa River watershed, including the bank of the Ottawa River in Quebec, is not designated. Except where the river is an international boundary that limits Canadian jurisdiction, such as the St. Croix River in New Brunswick, there are no designated heritage rivers in Canada where just one side of the river is so designated.

Recognizing the position of the Government of Quebec today, I ask this. What good is the creation of an Ottawa River watershed council when two-thirds of the watershed will be excluded from any study? Is it the intention of this motion to ignore the concerns of the people of Quebec and set up a bureaucracy, which is not wanted, to impose regulations and controls that are not needed, starting with this proposed study, and to take actions that will be rejected?

People who live in the Ottawa River watershed have been co-operating for years when it comes to common shared interests. The Ottawa River Regulation Planning Board was established in 1983 by the governments of Canada, Quebec, and Ontario to ensure integrated management of the principal reservoirs of the Ottawa River basin. Costs are shared, with Canada picking up 50% of the tab and with Ontario and Quebec sharing the remaining cost, 25% each. The board consists of seven members: Canada with three members, Ontario with two members, Quebec with two members. The member agencies that make up the board are the Quebec ministry of sustainable development, environment, and parks, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Hydro-Québec, Ontario Power Generation, Environment Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and the Canadian Coast Guard. The goal of this integrated management is to provide protection against flooding along the Ottawa River and its tributaries, particularly in the Montreal region, and at the same time maintain the interests of the various users, particularly in hydroelectric energy production. As has been demonstrated before, rivers bring people together more often than they artificially separate people as a boundary. This is true with the Ottawa River.

● (1810)

The next most important reason I will be voting against Motion No. 104, and I encourage all members of the House to reject it also, is that the motion before us today fails to recognize the comprehensive agreement in principle recently signed between the federal and provincial governments and the Algonquins of Ontario. That agreement, among other things, proposes to transfer ownership of 36,000 square kilometres, or 117,000 acres, of land in the Ottawa River watershed to the Algonquins of Ontario. In addition to land and cash, Algonquins have negotiated hunting, fishing, and trapping rights as well as other natural resources in the Ontario portion of the Ottawa River watershed beyond what is being proposed for land transfer. That includes Algonquin Park for hunting and fishing.

Ottawa River watershed management is an integral part of that negotiation, which is ongoing. What has been signed in this agreement is in principle only. It is anticipated that it will be years before a final agreement is reached, so negotiations continue.

● (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am afraid the time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

The hon. member will have four minutes and 30 seconds remaining when the House next returns to the motion.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 14, I directed a question to the Prime Minister on behalf of Corporal Terra Janz, a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, regarding her eligibility for an entitlement to a disability pension in relation to an accident that occurred as a result of her service to Canada.

In 2005, Corporal Terra Janz suffered a severe back injury in the line of duty. She was medically released and is in receipt of a partial medical pension from Veterans Affairs. According to Terra's medical specialist and her family doctor, as a consequence of her injury, she suffers from a painful condition referred to as an atonic bladder. This is in addition to the condition for which she receives a partial medical pension.

Sometimes referred to as a flaccid bladder, in her case the condition developed as a consequence of her severe back injury. The back injury impaired the ability of the nerves in the bladder to relay proper signals to the brain. This causes a buildup of urine that requires her to self-catheterize, a painful and expensive procedure she must follow for the rest of her life.

Based on the bureaucratic opinion that because women are more susceptible to bladder infections, and that a bladder infection and this condition must be related, she was denied a pension for this disability based on a previous bladder infection. Rejected by the Department of Veterans Affairs for an entitlement for her bladder condition in November 2013, Corporal Janz appealed that decision to the entitlement review panel, which confirmed the earlier decision.

On October 12, 2016, Corporal Janz was denied her appeal by the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, which upheld the decision of the review panel to refuse to acknowledge that the condition known as atonic bladder, which Corporal Janz suffers from, was caused by the condition of mechanical lower back pain, for which she is currently in receipt of a partial pension payment from the Government of Canada. Ironically, the appeal board was prepared to confirm that Corporal Janz suffered from atonic bladder that occurred at the same time as her severe back injury. It chose to treat the two as coincidence rather than recognizing the obvious link.

Corporal Janz had a very unsatisfactory experience with the appeal board. She found that the counsel provided to her by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates was unprofessional and generally unprepared to represent Corporal Janz's case. Corporal Janz received no opportunity to review her case with the assigned advocate, other than, at the most, for several minutes before appearing before the appeal board.

Important details were omitted from her appeal case, such as the presence of two spinal fractures, facts that were omitted in her original assessment that are considered highly relevant to the assessment of this type of injury and condition. Somehow the presence of a tear on Corporal Janz's disk was missed. Her file was riddled with other inconsistencies, suggesting that other medical issues were missed. This had a negative effect on her case. While referring to her family doctor as a general practitioner and suggesting that, as a non-specialist, his opinion should be discounted, no mention was made that this doctor was formerly a military doctor operating in the capacity of a chief base surgeon.

Veterans are not interested in hearing how many new bureaucrats have been hired or that empty offices are being opened in government-held ridings. They are not interested in listening to the Liberal Party fight the last election using the same tired campaign rhetoric that was used to confuse veterans and their families. Mindless talking points scripted by the Prime Minister's Office are not acceptable to veterans. Veterans want action. Veterans want fair hearings, and I request a thorough review of this case.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows full well, due to the federal Privacy Act I am unable to comment on any specific cases nor any appeals at the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

[*Translation*]

Our government recognizes the notable contributions that veterans and Canadian Armed Forces members have made and continue to make to preserve the peace and protect the safety of Canadians here and around the world.

[*English*]

We owe an immense amount of gratitude to the women and men who have served in times of war, military conflict, and in peace, and to their families who serve along with them. This is especially so for those who were injured in the course of their duties.

While I cannot talk about specific cases, I can discuss how our government is committed to providing veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, the RCMP, and their families with the support and benefits they need and have earned, when and where they need them.

Veterans Affairs Canada provides a range of programs to promote the well-being of those who were injured or became ill in the performance of their duties, including disability and related health care benefits, rehabilitation services, financial benefits, and support to families. In budget 2016 we committed $5.6 billion to increase financial benefits for disabled veterans. This includes increasing the value of disability awards to a maximum of $360,000, increasing the amount of earnings loss benefit to 90% of an eligible veteran's military salary, and expanding access to the permanent impairment allowance for those with career-limiting, service-related injuries.

These enhancements deliver on commitments in the mandate of the Minister of Veterans Affairs and they respond to recommendations from key stakeholders, including the veterans ombudsman.

To increase services to veterans we also began to reopen the nine veterans affairs offices that had been closed across the country, providing veterans with access to services that they need. We are on track to have these offices open by this spring.

This government is and will remain committed to supporting our veterans and their families by providing the benefits and programs they need to succeed in civilian life. I encourage any veteran who feels he or she may have a service-related illness or injury to reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada so their needs can be discussed and support provided wherever possible.

While I have outlined some of the services and benefits provided by Veterans Affairs Canada and the efforts taken to support veterans and their families, we recognize that we can do better and we will. When a specific case issue is raised, I can assure the House that we are fully committed to making every effort to address the issue and to find ways to improve the system.

I welcome an opportunity to meet with the member opposite to discuss this further.

● (1820)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the decision by the Liberal government to not compensate a veteran for an injury sustained while on duty on the basis of gender is just plain wrong.

What was particularly distressing to the veteran when I raised this question in the House of Commons last week was the nonsensical answer from the Liberals that hiring more bureaucrats would somehow make up for poor decision-making. This has nothing to do with hiring more bureaucrats or opening empty offices in government-held ridings. Veterans are not interested in fake promises. The Liberals have been in government for over a year. A selfie picture is no substitute for real action.

This decision needs to be fixed and there is a fix. The military ombudsman has given his report and made a recommendation that reads, “We recommend that the CAF determine whether an illness or injury is caused or aggravated by that member’s military service and that the CAF’s determination be presumed by VAC to be sufficient evidence to support an application for benefits.” I have moved that we implement that recommendation on two separate occasions, the latest being today, and the Liberals all denied implementing this on behalf of veterans.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada takes the health and well-being of veterans very seriously. We remain committed to providing veterans with the support they need to lead successful, financially secure, and healthy lives beyond their service to Canada. I am proud of what we have achieved to date, but there is more work to do to advance the overall well-being of veterans and their families.

I reiterate the invitation to the member across the aisle or any member of the House to meet with me so that we can work together to improve the lives of veterans and their families.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last time I took up the issue of the government's commitments to indigenous women and the environment was in November when Amnesty International had just released a report on resource development in northeastern B.C. The headlines the following days read, "In approving dam permits, Ottawa forgets its reconciliation promises". We said at the time that the federal government had been green lighting development projects without any consideration for inequalities and risks to women that were too often a result of megaproject development.

The Amnesty International report also identified that there were no federally funded on reserve shelters in northeastern British Columbia.

I would like to know what the government has done since this very troubling study was released in November, when we last talked about it in question period.

I had the privilege of travelling to the Peace River Valley in July last year to meet with the landowners, the indigenous chiefs, the traditional territory of Treaty 8 nations. I met Yvonne Tupper, who is an inspiring, strong, Cree activist woman. She has made her home in the Peace River Valley. She wrote to me last night to say:

> Site C will destroy migration paths for Predators and they will stay on either side of river. Wolves, grizzly bears, bears, wolverines. And Eagles nests destroyed. We are connected to land....Women and young girls should feel valued, appreciated, and respect like any and all women and young girls should in BC, Canada and world. We deserve it considering our lands, are being stolen in vast paces.

I also heard from Craig Benjamin who was one of the authors of the Amnesty report. He wrote to me this week to say:

> The thing that has really stuck with me from conversations with Indigenous women in Treaty 8 territory, is hearing again and again that places like the lands threatened by Site C are vital healing places and that a government committed to stopping violence against women, has to be committed to standing with Indigenous women and their communities when they seek to protect those healing places.
>
> The other point that we stressed in our...report is that we have more than two decades of studies in northeast BC repeatedly linking large-scale resource development to known threats to women's safety and wellbeing, from rising costs of living to shortages of housing and child care to rising substance abuse and violence—all of which was quite simply ignored in the assessment of the largest resource development in the region in recent history.

We heard testimony this week at the Status of Women committee from Kathleen Lahey, saying, "Canada has for a long time looked at infrastructure spending as its number one solution to economic growth problems". She went on to describe the need to do a gender lens assessment of such spending to ensure it would have equal benefits for men and women, but also, and most important, not disproportionate negative impacts on women.

What has the government done since the tabling of this Amnesty International report on the Site C dam approvals to ensure there will not be further federal approvals that do not go through a gender test to ensure our most vulnerable people and environments are protected?

● (1825)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the question put forth by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith regarding the Site C project.

In the fall of 2014, the former government approved the project and set legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply. The Federal Court upheld the decision of the Governor in Council on August 28, 2015, and this decision of the Federal Court is now under appeal. The validity of this decision is currently in front of the Court of Appeal and will be settled in due time.

Our government is committed to building a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples that is based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. I am aware that the Amnesty International report indicates that the increased rates of violent crimes and diminished access to social services have placed indigenous women and girls at increased risk of harm while denying them the protections and support they need. There is no place for gender-based violence of any kind in this country, whether it is committed against an indigenous woman or any other woman. That is why the federal government is taking a series of concrete actions to address this critical issue.

Across this country, some $89.9 million will be spent over two years for the construction and renovation of shelters and transition houses for victims of violence in provinces and territories. Budget 2016 committed additional investments for women's shelters on reserves, up to $33.6 million over five years, and up to $8.3 million ongoing. There are other investments that will provide women and girls better opportunities and hope for a future where they will be safer, more secure, and have better choices. There is nearly $970 million for education infrastructure on reserves, $100 million in 2017-18 toward early learning and child care on reserve, more than $330 million for a renewed youth employment strategy, and a renewal of the urban aboriginal strategy, to name just a few. It is all part of an $8.4-billion investment over five years to improve the socio-economic conditions of indigenous peoples and their communities, and bring about transformational change.

In closing, I want to assure the House that we will honour our commitments to Canadians. We will work with Canada's indigenous peoples and other interested parties to achieve results for all Canadians, and for generations to come.

● (1830)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I will point out that it was the Liberal government that issued the fisheries permits in July last year which allowed the project to go forward. This is entirely in the Liberal government's lap, as has been pointed out by National Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, and many other leaders in the strongest words.

Recently, we heard from Margot Young at the status of women committee. In talking about the disproportionate impacts on women, she said:

> It really points again to the need to think about the gendered consequences and to have a lens that allows you access to the gender inequality consequences across a range of policy options. Really, what a national gender equality strategy would allow is the kind of systematic thinking about this issue that really would make the change to women's status in Canada.

Therefore, I ask again if the government will evaluate infrastructure projects with a gender lens.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, to reiterate, our government is committed to gender equality, and to ensuring that women and girls can live free from violence. Our government engaged with experts, advocates, and survivors across the country to develop a federal strategy to address gender-based violence. Approximately 300 individuals from over 175 organizations participated in round tables and consultations, and over 7,500 responded to an online survey. This feedback from Canadians will help to inform the development of a federal strategy. We are working to create the conditions to ensure that Canada is a place where all women can reach their full potential. We look forward to launching the strategy in the coming weeks.

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to address the question of the carbon tax cover-up, as it is being popularly called by Canadians.

The issue at hand is that the government has promised to introduce a nation-wide so-called price on carbon that will rise to $50 per tonne of carbon. That sounds like an academic question, but what it will do, according to finance department documents I have obtained and made public, is lead to a cascading effect of rising prices on consumers, businesses, and families. Naturally, these three groups want to know how much they will have to pay.

That was the subject of my access to information request of the government.

The government responded by indicating it had tables that calculated the cost of a carbon tax on families, depending on their income. It broke households down into five groups, quintiles: the very poor, the poor, the middle class, the upper middle class, and then the rich. The only problem is these tables have no numbers. They are blacked out so nobody can see them, hence the term "carbon tax cover-up".

We know, based on the admission of the document, that there will be higher prices for consumers, businesses, and families and higher gas prices, home heating prices, and electricity prices. Groceries that are shipped by truck and train will become more expensive. People who are low income will pay disproportionately more because the items taxed form a larger share of their household budgets. Rural people and remote residents will pay more because they have to travel longer distances and, in some cases, they have longer and colder winters during which they must heat their homes.

The question is this. How much more will they have to pay?

There are some people who support carbon taxes, and that is their right. However, most of those people claim they want carbon taxes to be revenue neutral; that is to say that any new taxes Canadians will pay would theoretically be returned to them through offsetting tax reductions. Some say, for example, income taxes could be reduced. The old saying is "We will tax what you burn, not what you earn". Others say to give it back in the form of rebates, or cheques in the mail.

However, to know whether a family is experiencing a net cost as a result of the carbon tax, we need to know what they are paying for it in the first place. If, for example, a family has to spend $4,000 on carbon taxes, then any government claiming that it is going to neutralize the cost would have to bring in measures to return $4,000 to that same family.

The government was elected on the promise of helping the middle class, but if the middle class is paying more in carbon taxes than getting back in benefits, then the government is doing the opposite of helping. It is harming the middle class. Therefore, to determine which it is, we ask the government to be open and transparent, as it also promised during the election, and release these documents, unredacted, for all eyes to see.

● (1835)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening to give a response to the question that had been asked regarding employment, and I am going to continue forward.

Our government has been implementing its bold plan to strengthening the middle class and those who are working hard to join it, actually, for ordinary Canadians. We know it is working.

Here are the facts. Job growth is the best it has ever been in over a decade. The last six months were Canada's best six-month stretch since 2002. In our first full year in office, the government created more jobs than the previous government did in 2013, in 2014, and in 2015.

For the most recent labour force survey this past January, employment rose by 48,300, following a gain of 46,100 in December. These employment gains were well above market expectations. This is the fifth gain in the last six months and continues the strong trend of 2016. However, we know there is still more to do.

We will continue to invest in families and in communities to help the middle class today and build a sustainable future for the entire country.

[*Translation*]

We moved forward knowing very well that when Canadians realize their full potential, they can build a better life for themselves, their family, and their entire community, and in doing so, build a better, stronger Canada for current and future generations.

As Canada's population ages, our prosperity will increasingly depend on young Canadians getting the education and training they need to prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Our government is making those investments. We have increased funding for Canadian scholarships and bursaries, for students from low- and middle-income families, and for part-time students. As a result, over 360,000 students across Canada will receive more help to continue their studies.

We are working with the provinces and territories in order to expand the eligibility for Canadian scholarships so that even more students can receive non-repayable student financial assistance. In addition, through our youth employment strategy, the government is investing up to $330 million per year to help young Canadians get the skills and work experience they need to find and keep a good job.

Our government then built on these foundations by investing an additional $165 million in 2016-17 to enhance the youth employment strategy. These funds will help increase the number of youth who access the skills link program, a program that helps young Canadians overcome obstacles to employment. They will also create new green jobs for young people and increase job opportunities in the heritage sector.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we just witnessed the problem of the lack of transparency with the government. I asked a question about revealing government data on the cost of the carbon tax for the average person and family. The member stood up and read a totally unrelated speech provided to her by a minister's office, or probably by the PMO. Either she does not have an answer or she is afraid to provide the one she has. The reality is, Canadians are suffering.

Just this week, an elderly man said he is giving up his home and his truck because he cannot afford to pay for the heat and the fuel. Meanwhile, the carbon taxes that he will pay will help millionaires get rebates to purchase $150,000 electric cars. The member, who is supposed to speak on behalf of the government, cannot even address his concern or explain why her government is covering up the costs. Why is that?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, again, I will respond to the question that I was asked and prepared for this evening.

[*English*]

I am happy to say that I do not share my hon. colleague's pessimism with regard to Canada's workforce. Canadians are among the most highly educated people in the world, placing at the top of all members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, for post-secondary attainments.

More than half of Canadian adults have a post-secondary education or degree. We are world renowned for scientific research and discovery, and can often be found on the cutting edge of clean technologies emerging right now on the world stage. We have abundant natural resources, outmatched only by our greatest resource. That is our people. I think I have made it abundantly clear that we are making effective targeted investments that continue to unleash their full potential, and in turn, Canada's full potential.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:42 p.m.)

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