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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 13, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

• (1005)

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from December 12 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to take part in the reply to the Speech from the Throne. Before I do so, I want to congratulate you on your election. You will make a very honourable Speaker.

I want to express my appreciation to the people of Scarborough—Guildwood who have returned me to this chamber for the eighth time. When I started in 1997, I did not anticipate that I would be here for eight successive elections, but it has been an interesting journey for the last 22 years. The other very encouraging thing is that the percentage of the vote went up to the highest level that I have achieved in eight years.

As we know, elections are strange enterprises at times, with a lot of non-substantive things and occasionally some substantive things. I do not want to dwell on the non-substantive things. Today I want to take the opportunity to reflect on what I consider to be the most substantive issue that affected Scarborough—Guildwood during this election, and that is the Canada child benefit. The Canada child benefit is, in my judgment, the signature initiative of this Prime Minister. Once he leaves and history is written about these parliaments, that will be one of the things that historians comment on, namely, the significance of the Canada child benefit and its significance to all people in Canada, but particularly low-income people.

The Canada child benefit is a very large initiative. If we go to table A2.6 in the 2019 budget, at page 289, in the top lines we will see the amount of money that is returned to Canadians, that is sent to Canadians as a benefit. There are revenues from taxes that come in and then the first set of lines indicate the benefit amounts that go back to Canadians. The first line in that set of lines shows that \$56

billion will go to elderly benefits, the second line shows that about \$20 billion will be returned to Canadians in the form of employment insurance and the third line shows that \$24 billion will go to the Canada child benefit. That is the second most significant benefit that goes directly to Canadians from their federal government.

It is reasonable to ask ourselves whether we are, in effect, getting value for money. This is of particular interest to me as the member of Parliament for the riding of Scarborough—Guildwood. When we break that \$24 billion down, what does that mean to the riding of Scarborough—Guildwood? What that means is that, each and every year, \$100 million goes into my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood. That is a significant sum of money for a riding that has about 115,000 to 120,000 people in it. Centennial College would contribute to the riding with a somewhat similar amount of money, I should imagine, or more. The University of Toronto Scarborough Campus would contribute a similar and significant amount of money. The Scarborough hospitals have huge budgets. Toyota contributes a huge amount of money to the riding. I am sure there are other industries that contribute significant amounts of money to the riding.

This is the order of magnitude of the amount of money that comes into Scarborough—Guildwood, and it is even more significant for its people because Scarborough—Guildwood in the last four years had the greatest reduction in child poverty in the country. There was a 25% reduction in child poverty in Scarborough—Guildwood in the last four years, the number one riding in all of the country.

Why would that be? I can think of at least two reasons. One is improved employment opportunities. At the beginning of 2015 the unemployment rate nationally was around 7.1%. Generally speaking, Scarborough—Guildwood is at a higher rate than the national rate. By the election in 2019, the rate was about 5.7%, again with Scarborough—Guildwood slightly above that. Increased benefits and increased employment opportunities would account for some significant elements of that 25% reduction in child poverty.

The second thing has to be the Canada child benefit, because it acts as a guaranteed minimum income for families. I think it will turn out to be a historic initiative, but it will also turn out to be a test case as to whether this is the best way to alleviate poverty and reduce the growing inequality between people who do very well in our society and those who struggle.

The Address

Those are the two reasons that I think Scarborough—Guildwood had such a significant reduction in child poverty. We have to ask why that would have such an economic impact on the people of Scarborough—Guildwood, and the most obvious and intuitive reason is that people in the lower-income quintiles actually spend their money on necessities. It is intuitive and it does seem to make sense, but I am very grateful to the people at the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis who put together a paper called “Economic Contribution of the Canada Child Benefit: A Basic Income Guarantee for Canadian Families with Children”. They started to put data, flesh to that intuition, the intuition being that poorer people will spend money on food, shelter and core necessities. Indeed, that is exactly what the data does show.

The number one expenditure of the people who receive the Canada child benefit is increases to their shelter. The second, and this is counterintuitive, is on tax and I will come back to that shortly. The third is transportation, the fourth is food and the fifth is household operations. Four out of the five elements fall within one's sense of intuition, which is that lower-income folks will spend their money on things that they actually need. That seems to be borne out by the data.

The other interesting component of the data is that the benefit decreases as income increases. In the upper echelons of the quintiles that have a higher income, the money starts to get diverted to other things such as savings, investments and various other things, all of which we argue are good things.

• (1010)

However, there is an argument to be made that it is somewhat dead money. The lower-income quintiles spend the money on food and shelter, which goes directly and immediately into the economy, while the upper quintiles spend some on things like investments, etc., which is money that is set aside properly, but nevertheless is money not spent immediately and therefore has no significant immediate economic impact.

The interesting argument is this: if the federal government is a steward of taxpayer dollars, then what is the highest and best use of taxpayer dollars in order to stimulate the economy? What the data starts to show on the Canada child benefit is that it is benefit money going directly into the hands of Canadians. Whether it is through elderly benefits, employment benefits or child benefits, that is the money that gives the greatest stimulus, as opposed to tax cuts.

The data really starts to jump out at us. However, I want to deal with one thing before we get into further discussions about the benefits of the stimulative effect of a benefit as opposed to the stimulative benefit of a tax cut, which is that \$24 billion is a lot of money. It is actually greater than our National Defence budget; \$24 billion is actually greater than almost all other departments.

It is reasonable to ask what \$24 billion actually costs. As it turns out, \$24 billion does not cost \$24 billion, because \$13 billion comes back in taxes. For the federal government's \$24 billion, \$13 billion comes back in taxes to both the provinces and the federal government. Of that \$13 billion, \$7 billion comes back to the federal government and \$6 billion comes back to the provinces. The federal government has a \$24-billion investment that really only costs the federal government \$17 billion. The provinces have no invest-

ment in the Canada child benefit and yet reap a \$6-billion benefit. It works rather well for the provinces.

What does \$24 billion get us in terms of economic stimulus? It gets us roughly the GDP of the province of Nova Scotia in terms of economic stimulus, or around \$46 billion in direct and indirect economic stimulus that is inputted through this investment of \$24 billion. That \$24 billion provides stimulus that is roughly equal to 0.5% of the nation's GDP annually. Since the inception of the program, it has contributed \$139 billion to the nation's GDP.

All sectors of the economy benefit. It is intuitive, but makes a lot of sense that the number one beneficiary is housing. People who receive the Canada child benefit spend their money on housing.

The second is manufacturing. People with kids who receive the money spend it on clothing, shoes, bicycles and other things that need to be manufactured.

• (1015)

The third economic sector that benefits the most is construction.

Every year, this \$24 billion in direct and indirect stimulus creates 418,000 full-time jobs and about 70,000 part-time jobs. That is a lot of jobs: 1.4 million jobs since its inception. Those are merely the benefits and the stimuli that can be measured.

There are, of course, a great number of benefits to the Canada child benefit that cannot be measured, that do not fit nicely within the economists' metric. It is intuitive. If a child goes to school properly clothed and with a full stomach, the greater likelihood is that the child will learn a lot better. Similarly, children who are properly clothed and well fed will not have as many negative health issues.

Therefore, the indirect benefits that are not measurable, which I am perfectly prepared to concede, but intuitively make a great deal of sense are huge to families and people with children.

The benefits of the Canada child benefit on the health system are not measurable, but make a great deal of sense. The benefit reduces financial stress. The multiplier is enormous. A healthier child is a more productive child. A better-educated child is ultimately a more productive citizen.

Admittedly, this initiative costs a great deal of money, but it makes economic sense, which I hope I have made some case for from an economic standpoint, health sense and education sense. There is an argument to be made that this is the highest and best use of taxpayer dollars.

The Address

Let me finish with a comment from one of my favourite Conservatives, and I do not have many favourite Conservatives. I know they are a little upset, but I would recommend they talk to former Canadian senator Hugh Segal, who said, “we don't want 3.5 million...Canadians to be left behind. That's not who we are... It is in our interest to have an economy where liquidity and financial capacity is available to all.”

I submit that my Conservative colleagues should review Mr. Segal's views on this matter. He and his other colleague, former Senator Eggleton, conducted a massive study into Canadian poverty when they were both senators. One of their most significant recommendations was that there be a Canada child benefit and that it act as a minimum income guarantee for all families in Canada.

• (1020)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that Mr. Trudeau will be the one who actually goes down in the books of history for the child tax benefit. I know I have children, and I was very grateful to benefit from the child tax credit.

I am curious to know if the member truly thinks the Prime Minister will go into the books of history for this.

The Speaker: I want to remind everyone that we are not to use names. The hon. member caught herself, but it is a good learning opportunity for everyone else in the chamber as well, that we do not name someone by his or her name but by the position he or she holds in the chamber.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my speech, elections have a lot of non-substantive issues and some substantive issues. I rather hoped we could stay on the substantive issues.

After all is said and done, historians will record that the Prime Minister consolidated all the benefits that accrued to families and to children, wrapped them into one very significant program, and that significant program has alleviated massive amounts of child poverty across the country. Most significantly, the number one riding in Canada for the reduction of child poverty is Scarborough—Guildwood. For Scarborough—Guildwood, the Prime Minister will be, presently and historically, remembered as having initiated a very significant program.

• (1025)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was really disappointed not to see something specific about the plight of wild salmon in the throne speech. In my riding, a lot of jobs have been lost due to some of the challenges we face with respect to wild salmon.

One of the biggest frustrations across the board for so many stakeholder groups is the lack of meaningful conversation and consultation. There is a need for a comprehensive plan.

Could the member tell us if that comprehensive plan is coming, and is that a priority for the government like it is for the residents of North Island—Powell River?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I have nothing but sympathy and concern for people who suffer job losses.

I understand the issue of alienation. For many years, Ontario was not doing all that well. The riding of Scarborough—Guildwood was not doing all that well. However, things have sort of turned around.

If the conversation was not initiated during the election, the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister shows a real willingness on the part of the Prime Minister to engage.

Canadians need to know that there is a framework in place for the hon. member's riding, Scarborough—Guildwood and every riding. That framework is in effect a minimum annual income protection for families, as I set out in my speech when I talked about the Canada child benefit.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the people of Manicouagan for returning me to the House with a solid vote of confidence. I can assure them that I will serve them well and with integrity.

I have a question for my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood about an issue that affects the people of my riding. We have heard a lot about equality, about how to help people escape poverty, about development and about all the positive impacts of certain measures.

Employment insurance is a very important issue for the Bloc Québécois, but it did not come up in the throne speech. This week, we talked about sickness benefits, which are very important, vital even, no pun intended and no disrespect to people with serious illnesses. The same goes for people in seasonal jobs, such as in fisheries, tourism and forestry. Where I am from, entire communities are in jeopardy. Population drain is a real threat, and my riding is in danger.

What exactly is the government going to do?

As my colleague opposite said, our economy is going well in theory. Contributions are high. Why reduce contributions?

Why are we not investing in the EI program instead, to ensure that people currently grappling with the spring gap can have some peace of mind and celebrate Christmas like everyone else who can do so because they have good jobs that allow them to get the services they need?

• (1030)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. friend on her election. She has learned quite quickly that one can make a mini-speech in the process of asking a question.

There are three significant benefits for Canadians that come directly from the federal government: benefits for elderly people, which are about \$56 billion; benefits for families with children, which are about \$24 billion, and I touched on that in my speech; and then unemployment benefits, which are about \$20 billion. That program is continually monitored and adjusted according to whether unemployment is up or down in a particular area.

The Address

I encourage the hon. member to see whether the local adjustments are, in fact, fair and reflective of the needs of the local people. She can go to the agency that runs unemployment insurance and discuss that directly with it to see whether the needs of her constituents are being recognized.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood. He spent much of his time talking about the cost-benefit ratio of the Canada child benefit. Near the end of his speech, he said that the costs were low relative to the benefits society will certainly derive. The second part of his speech is very important. When poverty is reduced, people have more opportunities. That is not rhetoric; this is very serious. For our young people to have a good future, it is critical that they not grow up in poverty.

I would like to hear my colleague comment on the importance of a program like the Canada child benefit in his riding.

What effect will it have on the future of young people?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his appointment yesterday. I know him as a very able member of Parliament and he will be a very able parliamentary secretary as well.

With respect to the speech, I made a conscious decision to try to talk only about the measurable benefits of the Canada child benefits. Frankly, it is an economic argument for the benefit. I did not dwell on the intangible, non-measurable benefits. The health benefits, the education benefits, the social benefits and the opportunity benefits, all of which, in my judgment, are largely intuitive, are not necessarily measurable, but they are as important as, if not more important than, the actual economic benefits generated.

A child with a full stomach and a decent set of clothes and shoes is a child who is healthy and who will be better educated. That just makes perfectly good sense. You are absolutely right to say that the indirect, non-measurable benefits are as important as, if not more important than, the measurable benefits about which economists would talk.

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members, even if someone is close by, to direct their comments to the Chair. I am sure the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood meant that the member for Hull—Aylmer was right, not that the Speaker was right. I just wanted to clarify.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Regina—Lewvan.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the throne speech. I would first like to thank the people in my riding for placing their trust in me in the last election for the third time in my political career. I am very happy about it. I would also like to thank my family and the volunteers and staff who supported me during the election cam-

paign. It was by far the best campaign we have run and we were able to get to where we are through our hard work.

I want to use the time I have to speak to the throne speech to talk about my riding, which boasts a wide range of occupations, professions and educational backgrounds. What unites the people of my riding is an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to have a representative for the region who understands the importance of supporting and promoting organizations and businesses. They are the economic pillars of our community. I am talking about agriculture, manufacturing companies, community organizations, tourism and many other sectors.

The outreach work that I did with the people in my riding over the past four years did not go unnoticed, which explains the outcome of the most recent election. Recently, I was very proud to learn that my leader had decided to offer me a position in the shadow cabinet as critic for rural economic development for the regions of Quebec. As an entrepreneur myself, I am very proud to take on that role entrusted to me by my leader.

I must note that the majority of voters do not necessarily share the Liberal government's rose-coloured view of the country's economic development over the past four years.

Moreover, the Rivière-du-Loup area regularly ranks as one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the country. Voters remembered when the Liberals sought to go after SMEs by changing the tax rules on the pretext that these companies were tax loopholes. That did not make people very happy.

The Prime Minister still has his job, but with this minority government the future of his party is becoming more and more uncertain. We can see that his support has dropped across the country. Last week, we expected the Speech from the Throne to tell us whether the government would finally take the economy in the regions seriously. On the surface, that does not seem to be the case. I did not have to scroll through the entire speech because a search of the term “rural economic development” produced just one hit in an excerpt that I will read now.

Wherever they live—in small rural communities or in big cities; in the foothills of the Rockies or the fishing villages along our coastlines; in the Far North or along the Canada-US border—all Canadians want to make Canada a better place for themselves, their children, and their communities.

What exactly does that mean? In my opinion, it means absolutely nothing. It is poetry. It is art. There is nothing tangible in this speech to make us believe that the government is taking rural economic development and our communities seriously. What does the government plan to do to improve quality of life in rural communities?

That is what a throne speech should be for. A throne speech should list our priorities. When we cannot find the words “rural” or “economic development” used to any meaningful purpose, that tells us what this government's priorities are for the coming years. The government is supposed to list its priorities, not lull us to sleep with a piece of poetry.

• (1035)

Will the government abolish the infrastructure bank, which takes money that was promised for infrastructure projects across the country and diverts it to fund megaprojects in cities and urban centres, or in some cases even in China, including pipelines?

For example—and I have plenty of examples I can give to the government free of charge—will the government reinstate the community infrastructure program that Canada Economic Development used to offer in the Conservative era to finance projects in rural areas? This program, which was known as CIP 150, was one of the best programs that has ever been offered by the federal government.

We know that the federal government cannot have a direct relationship with the municipalities of Quebec. However, community organizations and economic development organizations used to be able to get projects approved under this program. My colleagues must remember. It was an absolutely fantastic program.

There is absolutely nothing like it in the current government's plans. There is nothing about this. There is nothing for our forestry, agricultural or manufacturing sectors. There is nothing about a single income tax return or a better alignment of immigration with the labour market.

There is also nothing about the state of our ports. We know that in my region in particular and throughout Quebec, many ports are grappling with significant problems caused by dredging. Volunteers are exhausted. Action must be taken on this file. I will be talking to the minister about this. We must grab the bull by the horns and solve this problem once and for all.

That is not to mention the dumping of sewage into the river. We raised that issue during the election campaign. We gifted that file to the government, which could have taken charge. It could have set up an infrastructure program, instead of sending money to China, and financed our programs to ensure that sewage is no longer dumped into the St. Lawrence River. That is just ridiculous.

People living in Quebec's regions are Canadians just like the people of Montreal or Toronto. They pay their taxes like everyone else. The government has a duty to not forget about them as it has these past four years.

Also missing from the throne speech is a succession-planning strategy for SMEs. Just over a year ago, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported that 72% of small business owners plan to exit their businesses, and the reason given by the vast majority of them was retirement. We are talking about a potential transfer of \$1.5 trillion of business assets, which is a massive amount.

I am a business owner and my daughter wants to take over my business. We must be able to help these young people who want to take over businesses of a certain value. We must help them be able to do so. Statistics show that 46% of business owners want to hand over their business to a family member. However, the government currently penalizes business transfers, especially in the agriculture sector. We have been talking about this for many years. It is less profitable to transfer a business to a family member than to sell it to a stranger.

The Address

This week, the Institut de la statistique du Québec confirmed that populations continue to decline in the Lower St. Lawrence, on the North Shore and in the Gaspé.

Does this government want to help family businesses, many of which have been around for generations, remain on our soil, or would it rather these businesses close shop or be sold to Chinese interests?

The Liberal and NDP urban elites do not appear to be taking this matter seriously.

I am disappointed not only in this government, but also in the Bloc Québécois for rushing to get behind the Liberals and support the throne speech immediately after it was delivered. I think the Bloc Québécois should have objected to the Liberals' decision to include the NDP promise to create a federal pharmacare plan in the throne speech, rather than support it. That is clearly an intrusion into an area of provincial jurisdiction. The Bloc always seems quick to accept this vision of a centralizing federalism as long as Quebec has the right to opt out with compensation. Basically, the federal government is trying to buy some peace, and the Bloc fell right into the trap.

We will obviously not be supporting this throne speech. I do not see anything in it for the regions or for economic development. Quebec is different and is proud to be different.

• (1040)

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here in Parliament we hear speeches expressing very different opinions. I listened to my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, as well as my hon. colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, and their speeches could not have been more different.

I have a question for my colleague regarding the throne speech, which he slammed. Is he for or against the Canada child benefit?

We want to expand this benefit in order to further reduce poverty and support Canadian families. Ever since I have lived in this area, so since the late 1980s, people have been making solemn promises here in the House to put an end to child poverty, but nothing was ever done until 2015. Since 2015, in just four short years, we have reduced poverty by a third.

Does my hon. colleague support that initiative?

• (1045)

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, no one can be against doing the right thing, but that program was launched before the Liberals came into power. In fact, we were the ones who launched it, and we did it while balancing the budget.

The Address

Members should bear in mind that the economic boom we have been seeing over the past four years did not happen because of the Liberal government but because of the economic conditions we put in place, which led to this economic recovery. It was a global economic recovery, not just a Canadian one. In such circumstances, the normal thing to do would be to save up money, not increase the debt as the Liberal government has been doing for the past four years and plans to keep doing for decades more, which is even worse. That is the legacy it is going to leave behind for our children and my colleague's children.

Yes, we can agree on putting money in the pockets of families. We have no problem with that. In fact, we did it ourselves for years, but in a responsible way, unlike this government.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who criticized the dearth of measures to support regional development in the throne speech.

The Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment in the House that was primarily aimed at defending supply management tooth and nail and increasing the health transfers. I think all regions in Quebec want health services to be better funded.

Why did my colleague choose to vote against that amendment? Instead of pulling out all the rhetorical stops and saying that the Bloc Québécois supports centralizing federalism, he could have stood up in the House and defended the regions by voting for the Bloc's amendment.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to answer my colleague's question.

During yesterday's question period in the House of Commons, three Bloc Québécois MPs asked the Liberals questions and said there was nothing for Quebec in the throne speech. Be that as it may, the Bloc Québécois was certainly quick on the draw in deciding to support the Liberals' throne speech.

The Bloc Québécois cannot help Quebec get ahead. Our party is the one that put all kinds of things in place for Quebec, and we recognized the Quebec nation. The Bloc is in no position to tell us what to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House.

This is my maiden speech, so I have some thanks to go through. Then I will get to the crux of what was, or what was not, in the Speech from the Throne that was presented last week.

All of us in this House have a huge responsibility to represent their constituents in each and every riding. For myself, I could not do this job without the people and volunteers who helped me win this seat. We all have great volunteers on campaigns, and Regina—Lewvan had the best volunteers in the country, in my opinion. We were 300 strong on election day, and there were a lot of people who helped ensure that the Conservatives won the seat in Regina—Lewvan.

I had an amazing team of core supporters and I would like to take this time to thank Shelly and Mike Janostin. Shelley was my campaign manager and worked tirelessly to keep me on task. I want to thank her for all the support that she has given me and my family over the last 18 months. We had a great time, and without her help we would not have been able to win this seat.

Laura Ross is a great friend and our EDA president. She was a colleague of mine when I was the member for the Saskatchewan legislature for Regina Walsh Acres and Laura was the member for Regina Rochdale and she was a tireless advocate. Both she and her husband Terry worked so hard. He was a great sign guy. We had a sign crew that put over 1,200 signs up in Regina—Lewvan. I appreciate the support of Terry, Mike and all the other guys who came out and put up signs. Everyone who took a sign as well, we appreciate their having the courage of their convictions and putting a sign on their front lawn. I appreciate that very much.

As a member of the Legislative Assembly I had the honour of having the best constituency assistant in the province, Heather Kuntz. She is now my assistant in Regina—Lewvan. She is a tireless advocate for the people of Regina. She works very hard on case files, and she is honestly one of my strongest supporters.

I always make the comment that she has been one of the women who has been in my life the longest. She has been with me for eight years and my wife has been with me for 10 years, so she is like an auntie to our three young kids. She is not only a great supporter and worker, but a confidante and a very good friend. I thank Heather for all the work she has done for us over the last eight years. I am very lucky to have her heading up our office in Regina and helping the people of Regina—Lewvan.

It comes down to having so many good people on our team. Mike Emiry, his wife Taryn and my good friends Dustin and Ali are auntie and uncle to my kids, and they helped support us throughout the campaign. When Larissa and I were out doing events or functions, they were there to look after the kids. My kids are very lucky to have two people in their life who love them so much. I thank Dustin and Ali for all they have done for our family.

It is an honour to rise and thank people who helped us get here. Obviously, the people who help us the most are our families. Without the support of a spouse, there is no one in this chamber who can do this job. I am very fortunate to have an amazing woman by my side.

Larissa is by far my strongest advocate. She also gives me advice from time to time and makes sure, for example, that I wear the right suit with the right tie. It is always good to have a wardrobe consultant. I appreciate everything she does for us.

The Address

Over the last eight years, we have had three children together. We have won three campaigns, two nominations and gone through a couple of leadership races. She has been by my side through it all. She has also finished her degree, finished an MBA and worked full time as well. She is an amazing woman and I am lucky enough that I convinced her to share a life together.

People always say, “Congratulations on marrying up,” and I say, “Yes, I definitely did.” If one does not, that is silly. I appreciate her and she obviously means the world to me. We have three young children under six: Nickson is six years old, Claire is four and Jameson turns three on January 2.

I believe the reason most of us get into this job and commit to public service is to make things better for the next generation, and that is an example I set in our household. We do this job so that our children have better opportunities going forward and into the future. I think that everyone in the House is in it for those reasons, to make sure that we have a better environment for our children and great job opportunities so that they can be more successful than we are.

● (1050)

I would say to Nickson, Claire and Jameson that dad is coming home in exactly four hours. I cannot wait to be home and spend some time with the family. I think Nickson has hockey practice tonight, so I hope he makes sure to skate hard and keeps his stick on the ice. I love him very much.

Obviously, there has been a lot going on over the last 24 hours for our party. I have known the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for a long time. I want to thank him and his wife Jill for all they have done for the Conservative Party of Canada. He was a strong leader. When Premier Wall gave his farewell speech in the legislature, he said that one thing all politicians should aspire to do is leave things better than they found them. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle did that for the Conservative Party, so I thank him very much for everything he has done over the last 14 years for us.

I took some time to go over the throne speech. I want to talk about what is and is not in it. One thing I saw was the lowering of taxes for Canadians. I hope that the members opposite fulfill that commitment. What I heard on the doorsteps during the last campaign was that it is getting harder to get by in Regina—Lewvan. The constituents there are feeling overtaxed and that each month there is less money left at the end of the month.

As a government, I hope the Liberals across the aisle will commit to lowering taxes. I know they said they were going to lower them by \$300-some by 2023, but on the flip side, they are also going to increase CPP commitments to \$600. Therefore, if they are going to lower taxes by around \$300 and raise them by \$600, that leaves less money in the pockets of Canadians, which is like giving with one hand and taking with the other. Across Regina—Lewvan, people want to see a commitment to making life more affordable for Canadians across the country. The throne speech does mention lowering taxes. I hope that is something the government will commit to and fulfill.

There were a few things that were not in the throne speech, such as Saskatchewan, Alberta, the oil and gas sector and agriculture.

These are all important to our constituents in Regina—Lewvan. The fact those words were not in the throne speech speaks volumes.

On election night, I remember watching the Prime Minister say “I am listening. I hear your frustrations in western Canada.” I looked through the throne speech to see if he was going to follow through on that commitment and I saw nothing. It totally bypasses western Canada. We sent 14 strong MPs from Saskatchewan and 33 from Alberta. There is not a Liberal who won a seat in those two provinces.

That speaks to the frustration that western Canadians are feeling. They are feeling left out and that their voices are not being heard. I want to make sure I put on the record that their voices will be heard, not by that side but by this side of the House. We will take the concerns of western Canadians seriously and hold the Liberal government to account on following through with some of the commitments it has made.

One of the most important things I hear is that Bill C-69 needs to be amended or repealed, and preferably repealed. The no-more-pipelines bill is devastating our energy sector in western Canada. There are hundreds of thousands of people who are not working in our provinces. That is not because of the weather or anything they can control. It is because of a direct hit from government policies.

That is probably what hurts us in western Canada the most. We are hard, entrepreneurial people. We know that there are some things out of our control. With respect to agriculture, we cannot control the weather. We know that sometimes we cannot control the markets outside of our country. However, when the government can control policy and implements policy that directly affects our livelihoods, it is frustrating for us. There is something to be said for listening to western Canadians. We will ensure that we work hard to hold the government to account.

● (1055)

We are going to ask the government to change policies such as Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, policies that directly affect families.

There is something that reflects what the government is doing in western Canada. On social media I saw three pictures: The first was of a young couple getting married in 2014 and buying a new house. The second was taking their baby girl to their new home in 2016, and the third is a farewell picture. They have their baby in a stroller standing outside their house and there is a foreclosure sign on the front lawn. That is what many families in western Canada are facing right now.

The fact is that westerners cannot get by. They cannot make the money to provide a stable home for their young families, and it is something that needs to change in Canada. Canada should be a country of aspirations and big dreams, where big projects can get done. That is why we are here. I want to make sure our children realize that Canada can be that country, and it will be. They just need a government that listens. Hopefully in the not too distant future, Conservatives will be on that side to make sure people have the opportunities to succeed.

Statements by Members

• (1100)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan will have five minutes for questions and comments when we next return to the debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

WINNIPEG BLUE BOMBERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the drought is over. Not only did the Bombers win the classic Banjo Bowl this year, but we won the Grey Cup this year as well.

In the western semifinal, the Bombers defeated the favoured defending champions, the Calgary Stampeders, and that was in Calgary. From there, the blue and gold travelled to Regina, the home of Rider pride and Gainer the Gopher, for the western final. They did us proud. The Blue Bombers won that game, which advanced us to the Grey Cup game, and what a game it was. The Winnipeg Blue Bombers beat the Hamilton Tiger-Cats 33 to 12. It was a near perfect game from offence, defence and specialty teams. It was a well-played game.

Winnipeg's local hero, Andrew Harris, became the first player in CFL history to win the Grey Cup's Most Outstanding Player and the Most Outstanding Canadian awards.

* * *

BAY OF QUINTE WATER LEVELS

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since my election as the member of Parliament for Hastings—Lennox and Addington, I have heard from constituents, mayors and chiefs about water levels in the Bay of Quinte. Many believe these historically high water levels are due in part to the International Joint Commission's Plan 2014. Since this policy was adopted by the IJC, Lake Ontario has flooded in two of the last three years, hurting countless communities and homeowners, including the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.

Right now, water levels are historically high for this late in the year. Concerns are growing that without immediate action, Ontario will face a catastrophic level of flooding in the spring of 2020. It has become clear that without alterations to Plan 2014, Ontario will continue to be damaged by outflow policies being dictated by the IJC.

I call on the federal government to acknowledge the apparent issues with Plan 2014 and to initiate an immediate review of the plan to examine the risks posed to communities and homeowners on Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte.

* * *

KEVIN FOURNIER

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise once again to represent the residents of Spadina—Fort York and to represent the wonderful, beautiful, diverse communities across the waterfront in Toronto.

However, days ago, residents in my riding gathered on the shore of Lake Ontario to recognize a very sombre occasion. Richard, properly known as Kevin Fournier, was a person who chose to live in the parks along the waterfront. Unfortunately, we came together to mark his passing.

Richard lived in the Music Garden and Little Norway Park, and if anyone walked a dog there, he would know the person and the dog by name. He freely shared his poetry and his love of the outdoors. However, despite all who tried to help him and find a way to get him into housing, he chose to live outside and unfortunately passed away in a bus shelter along the waterfront.

We as a nation decided to tolerate homelessness and not solve the crisis. This Parliament has a choice to make. We can end homelessness in this term of Parliament if we decide to do it. Let that be the work of this Parliament and let that be the way we remember Richard's life.

* * *

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Winnipeg Centre for electing me to represent our strong and progressive community.

Winnipeg Centre has the third-highest poverty rate in the country. Lately we have seen increasing rates of violence, violence that has included the murder of innocent children and youth. It is a poverty and human rights crisis, with a lack of mental health and trauma supports. When we do not look after people, we have a crisis. It is about choices.

The government has consistently chosen to bail out its corporate friends and protect the top 1%. Instead, we have a proposal to pay for the help Canadians desperately need by getting the ultra-wealthy to pay just a little bit more.

Our community needs support, and it is time for those who earn more to pay more so that those who are struggling get the help they desperately need before this crisis gets worse.

* * *

• (1105)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I come to Ottawa from Nova Scotia, the land of the Mi'kmaq, the People of the Dawn. I am bearing an urgent message from some of my youngest constituents, the students of l'École académique de Truro, who write:

Today, all around the world, millions of students have taken to the streets demanding government action to stop the exponential growth of climate change...

These young protesters, many of whom are not old enough to vote, are sacrificing their education because they know that without help from all levels of government, there will be no future. They are demanding there be an immediate reduction in the use of fossil fuels.

They go on to say that Canada has already invested in renewable energy sources, and we must continue. They say that their goal in writing is to continue to fuel the flame that they know is burning inside me in order to help preserve our way of life before it is too late, because, in the end, climate change has no borders.

* * *

LEEDS—GRENVILLE—THOUSAND ISLANDS AND RIDEAU LAKES

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in the House, having been re-elected by the good people of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. With just 10 months between my by-election victory and the general election this October, I have more people to thank for their support than I have time to mention today.

However, I must thank my wife Amanda and my children Luke, Ama, Michaela and James for their love and encouragement. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers and the donors for their support and for their tireless efforts, and give special mention to Joan Lahey and Barb O'Reilly for their critical roles in the success of our campaign.

The people of my riding have sent me to this place to fight for them: to stand up for jobs, for small businesses, for farms, for seniors, and to cut red tape and lower taxes. We know that as the official opposition we are the guardians of the confidence Canadians have in public institutions. Conservatives take this role seriously, and we will hold the government to account.

I am proud to be part of this strong Conservative team. We are ready to deliver for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being the first time I have the floor in the 43rd Parliament, I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Vaudreuil—Soulanges for placing their trust in me once again.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers who give their time to help our community all year long and especially during the holidays.

Volunteers deliver food baskets through Meals on Wheels and Le Pont Bridging, work with the dedicated team at L'Actuel to collect and distribute donations, make sure people get home safe with the amazing team at Operation Red Nose, and collect money for families in need at various fundraisers. Volunteers are pillars of generosity in my community.

Statements by Members

[*English*]

Because of them, thousands of people and their families in my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges will have a healthier and more joyful holiday. On behalf of this entire House, I thank them.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the holiday season is here, a time of giving and sharing with those around us. However, every year during this season Canadians throw away 540,000 tonnes of wrapping paper and gift bags that are not recyclable.

This was brought to my attention by the elementary school students at the Woodroffe Avenue Public School craft fair.

By creating homemade ornaments, reusing gift bags and creating compost bags made out of old newspaper, these students are demonstrating how to celebrate this holiday season in an eco-friendly manner. I was delighted to see the drive and dedication of these young entrepreneurs from my riding.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate these students for showing leadership in the fight against climate change.

[*English*]

I encourage Canadians to follow the lead of these students and to reduce their waste this holiday season.

Merry Christmas.

* * *

HONG KONG ELECTION

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, November 24 may be a normal day for Canada, but it was a good day for democracy in Hong Kong. Participation in the district councils election was peaceful and orderly. Voters turned out in record numbers and made a clear statement in support of democracy.

It was an honour to serve as an independent observer, and from what I saw, execution of the election was open, fair and transparent.

This is a tremendous achievement for a city that has for so long been gripped by turmoil. Here in Canada, democracy, freedom and the rule of law are essential to our way of life and must be nurtured and protected.

As a Canadian immigrant born in Hong Kong, I am truly blessed to be a member of Parliament here in my home country of Canada.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank the people of Steveston—Richmond East for giving me this opportunity to serve them and I wish them and all members of the House and their families a merry Christmas.

* * *

• (1110)

NEPEAN

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the residents of Nepean for electing me again to represent them in this Parliament. I promise to continue to work hard for them.

In particular, I will focus on the transit, community and cultural infrastructure requirements of Nepean, in addition to working on creating high-quality jobs for my constituents' benefit.

I will also continue to work on affordable housing, securing retirement income benefits and safeguarding Canada's position in the global knowledge-based economy.

I will continue to recognize and celebrate cultures and heritage of all ethnicities, as in the recent Hindu Heritage Day on Parliament Hill. I will also work to encourage new Canadians all across Canada to take active interest in our great democratic process.

* * *

CARLETON

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment, my first time commanding the floor for a full statement, to thank the constituents of Carleton for re-electing me back to this place for a second time. This last campaign was an opportunity to reach out to countless residents. We knocked on 160,000 doors. In fact, we even had three visits from the Prime Minister to my riding. We were thinking about setting aside a nice condo so that he could have a place to stay every time he came.

I encourage all members of all parties to come and visit the historic riding of Carleton, once represented by the great John A. Macdonald, a great symbol of eastern Ontario's thriving mill towns back in the Victorian Age, but today among the most modern places in the world. The people there work hard. They build their communities and have a strong sense of neighbourliness and community effort. It is an honour to represent them. I thank them all and I wish everybody a very merry Christmas.

* * *

UNITED KINGDOM ELECTION RESULTS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the people of the United Kingdom went to the ballot box, and it was a great success for the Conservative and Unionist Party, the world's oldest and most successful political party. Our sister party was re-elected for a fourth mandate, putting Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the helm of a majority government.

Despite a history of success, the party of Disraeli, Churchill and Thatcher notched another new record last night. The Tories are the first government in British history to be re-elected three times while scoring an increasing share of the vote every time. This result also

reminds us that when elites try to substitute their own judgment for the will of the people, the people will have the final say.

When Conservatives are united and when they focus on the people, Conservatives will win. We extend congratulations to Prime Minister Johnson.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we have heard from the government since the beginning of negotiations of the new NAFTA is that at every stage we had, in Voltaire's words, the best of all possible worlds. Canadians were not included in the negotiations. Today, we have an agreement that ignores producers under the supply management system and the aluminum industry, among others. The agreement should be transparent.

In the United States, the Democrats made progress. What we have today is better than what we saw last year. It happened after the government told us that it had negotiated the best possible deal. The NDP are going over the agreement with a fine-tooth comb.

In future, the government will have to guarantee from the outset that Canadians are included in the agreement in a transparent manner. We must ensure that we can truly negotiate the best possible agreement rather than rushing to sign just any agreement no matter the provisions.

* * *

DENIS VILLENEUVE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Hollywood Critics Association named Denis Villeneuve filmmaker of the decade. This is just the latest achievement in a career full of accolades.

Denis Villeneuve was chosen to represent Canada in the best foreign film category at the Oscars for his first feature film *August 32nd on Earth*.

He brought our darkest day to the screen in *Polytechnique* and directed a tragic story in *Incendies*. He made a name for himself with his first Hollywood feature film, *Prisoners*. He brought Hollywood to us to film the unsettling film *Arrival* in Montreal and Saint-Fabien. He showed courage in tackling *Blade Runner 2049*, a sequel to the classic film. I am being courageous in saying that it was better than the original.

Denis Villeneuve manages to immerse us in his universe and keep us there. I am a diehard fan, and I can say that he has left his mark on Quebec and international cinema.

• (1115)

[English]

CHRISTMAS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ghost of Cuzner past haunts us still on both sides of the aisle.

'Twas just before Christmas and the six-week long break,
Which after six days of hard work, all we members must take.

The PM could not nestle all snug in his bed
Any time the election replayed in his head.

In votes he'd come second but of seats he'd won most
He had new-found love for first-past-the post.

Far more voters had liked the Conservative pitch
But we got fewer seats, which is just such a—let down.

The Bloc had 32 members including our Dean,
Who seems like he's been here since 1915.

New Dems really miss Layton's vote-winning flair.
They may even miss Thomas Mulcair.

We're glad to be joined by our dear friends the Greens,
Three MPs from two coasts. Sadly, no in-betweens.

An independent MP is now here from B.C.,
Who's got plenty to say about SNC.

In a minority perhaps the best gift we can give,
Is if we all learn to live and let live.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House of Commons for my first remarks, and I would like to thank the residents of Windsor—Tecumseh for putting their trust in me to be their voice in Ottawa.

Today marks the 38th anniversary of the declaration of martial law in Poland by the Communist dictatorship. Thousands of members of Solidarity, the first independent trade union in the Soviet bloc, were rounded up and imprisoned. In the middle of the night, the secret police came to our door and arrested my father.

After the crackdown, Canada opened its doors to over 6,000 Polish immigrants and political refugees like my family, who contributed their skills and energy to building communities across Canada while supporting the struggle for freedom in their homeland.

Today we honour the brave spirit of the workers and members of the Solidarity movement and recognize Canada's role in providing safe harbour to those who fled Communist persecution. We thank Canada. How can we ever thank Canada enough?

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the holidays should be a time to get warm by the fire, thanks to the Prime Minister many Canadians are being left out in the cold: 13% more people cannot pay their credit cards, half of Canadians are within \$200 of not being able to make ends meet and 27% more working Canadians are having to turn to food banks. All that Canadians want for Christmas is a government that is going to take this seriously.

When will the Prime Minister change course on the economy?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that many Canadians have seen their household debt levels rise in recent years, in large part due to strength in the housing market. That is why we took prudent actions to address pockets of risk and support long-term affordability. We are also putting more money back into the pockets of middle-class Canadians by cutting taxes and increasing the Canada child benefit.

Our government will remain focused on making life more affordable for Canadians, especially the middle class and people working hard to join it.

• (1120)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ghosts of Christmas past are not going to help Canadians today and in the future. What kind of holidays are the 71,000 Canadians who lost their jobs last month going to have, or the workers at the GM plant that is closing, or the thousands in the aerospace industry or at CN Rail who have lost their jobs or the over 200,000 in the oil and gas sector who are out of work?

The finance minister says he is not worried about the economy. If this is not enough to worry him, then just what is?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that despite a strong and growing economy, many Canadians are still having trouble making ends meet. We are firmly focused on creating more good, well-paying jobs for Canadians across the country. We know there is much more work to do and we will continue to make life more affordable and create more opportunities for middle-class Canadians.

I am looking forward to working with the hon. member and making sure we find ways to grow our economy.

Oral Questions

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy is falling behind and it is the government's fault. Foreign direct investment has dropped by 56%, chased to our competitors by the Prime Minister. Canada's unemployment rate is significantly higher than that of the U.S., the U.K., Germany and Japan. Our economic growth is flat while the U.S.'s is up by 4%. Canada lost 71,000 jobs while the U.S. created 266,000.

Canada is on the brink of a made-in-Canada recession. When will the Prime Minister take it seriously and just change course?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Despite growing uncertainty around the world, Canada's economy continues to remain strong. We are focused on building an economy that works for everyone. As a result, Canadians created more than one million jobs and unemployment is at its lowest rate in 40 years. What is more, 900,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty, including 300,000 children. We know that there is still a lot of work to do and we will continue to work to make life more affordable and create better-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her cabinet appointment, but she cannot tell us that the Canadian economy is doing well. Last month, 71,000 Canadians who support their families lost their jobs, including 45,000 Quebecers. Foreign investment is in a free fall. It is at 56% of what it was this time last year. That is why we asked for an economic update two weeks ago. The House is adjourning in a matter of hours.

Will the government do the right thing and issue the economic update today?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. We know that despite Canada's growing economy, far too many families still have a hard time making ends meet. We are focused on building an economy that works for everyone. As a result, Canadians created more than one million jobs and unemployment is at an all-time low. We know that there is still a lot of work to do and we will continue to work to make life more affordable and create better-paying jobs for Canadians. We will update our fiscal plan by Christmas.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, unemployment in Canada is on the rise. Seventy-one thousand breadwinners have lost their jobs. Unemployment has gone up to 5.6%. We are no longer leading the G7 in a good way. Now we are at the back of the pack, and that is troubling.

It is sad to see the government shirking its parliamentary responsibilities yet again. The economic update should be delivered here, before Parliament, so that the ministers can answer questions.

Why is the government hiding the economic update? Why not deliver it honourably and enthusiastically by tabling it here in the House of Commons, in front of parliamentarians?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We will update our economic plan before the holidays. We know that, despite Canada's growing economy, many families are struggling to make ends meet. We are going to keep working together on measures that will help Canadians make a living in a country that is a great place to call home.

* * *

● (1125)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unlike Canada, the United States knows how to negotiate. The U.S. government, which is also a minority government, took the opportunity to increase its negotiating power, include the Democrats' priorities and get concessions on drug prices and labour rights.

Here, it is just the opposite. The government went off alone and weak and ended up abandoning aluminum workers. Now it is telling us that it will do nothing more and that is it.

Why is the government refusing to leverage the outstanding public engagement we see in our ridings to get protections for aluminum workers?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those who were involved in the NAFTA negotiations, particularly the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and aluminum workers, who worked hard with our government.

The president of the Aluminium Association of Canada, Jean Simard, said that CUSMA will help strengthen Canada's relationship with its main trading partner, the United States. It has just been said that he did not hesitate to talk about the exceptional work done by the Trudeau government. He is encouraging everyone in the country to put pressure on the Bloc Québécois in particular so that it votes in favour of the ratification of NAFTA.

The Speaker: I would like to remind members to refer to their colleagues using their titles and not their names. We sometimes let it slide in the heat of debate, but this is a good opportunity for a reminder.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Aluminium Association of Canada is not the workers. It is mostly Rio Tinto.

It does not matter to foreign multinationals like Rio Tinto whether they make aluminum in India or China instead of Quebec. As long as they can make money and supply the U.S. market via Mexico, they are happy. That does not help Quebec. That does help my region. That does not help employ our workers.

Why is the government refusing to provide the same protection to aluminum workers as it does to steel workers?

[English]

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Public Service Renewal) and to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, our government has always supported our steel and aluminum workers in Quebec and around Canada.

Our government fought hard to lift the U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum, and today the new NAFTA offers extra guarantees for the steel and aluminum industry. Today, with this NAFTA, 70% of the aluminum contained in a NAFTA car must come from North America. At the moment, the current NAFTA guarantees nothing.

This agreement is better for Quebec and better for all of Canada.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night the Liberals, Conservatives and the Bloc voted against making life better for Canadians. They voted against affordable housing. They voted against a real fight against the climate crisis. They voted against national universal pharmacare for all. These are all things that Canadians desperately need and want.

[Translation]

How are people to believe the Liberals when they say one thing and do another?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that no Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescriptions and putting food on the table. We have already done more than any other government in a generation to lower drug prices. Now it is time to take that final step, sitting down with provinces and territories to implement pharmacare guided by the Hoskins report. This will build on steps we have already taken, including new rules on patented drugs that will save Canadians close to \$13 billion.

We will not rest until Canadians can get and afford the medication they need.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those are fine words, but as people saw yesterday, there is no action.

The secret agreement with Volkswagen illustrates how the Liberals are prepared to hide their climate inaction.

Oral Questions

[English]

After six meetings with various government departments, including the Prime Minister's Office, Volkswagen got a special deal. No other accused gets to speak with the government before striking its plea deal.

Why did the Liberal government and the Prime Minister's Office give such special treatment to this massive corporate fraud?

• (1130)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is asking about our government's agenda. It is focused on the middle class. Since 2015, we have seen over one million jobs created and that is because we are building partnerships with the private sector to bring in foreign direct investment.

That is why we are also addressing the concerns of middle-class Canadians by investing in measures like the Canada child benefit. It has helped lift 300,000 kids out of poverty and overall we have seen a reduction and 900,000 individuals have lifted themselves out of poverty. That is our track record.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister did not manage to reassure aluminum workers when she met with Mr. Maltais yesterday.

As long as Mexico is allowed to use aluminum that was not produced by electrolysis and cast in North America, and as long as Mexico does not enforce strict import guidelines like we do, Canadian aluminum workers will have concerns.

Can the government clarify how the new agreement will affect our workers in the regions and propose some concrete solutions?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, naturally, we understand that aluminum workers are important to the economy in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and particularly in Quebec, and that is why we have always been there for them.

Oral Questions

We were there when the Americans imposed tariffs. We were there to stand up for them and advocate for removing the tariffs. We were also there to compensate them for the losses associated with the tariffs, and we are there now to ensure that they can access the American market.

Aluminum workers in Quebec can count on our government, and we will continue our meaningful talks with them.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked the finance minister to bring forward a fall economic update to respond to the 71,000 job losses in November. He said no. I asked the finance minister to bring in an action plan to help relieve the burden for the half of Canadians who are \$200 away from insolvency. He said no, again. I asked him to take any action to salvage Canada's declining economy. He said no. We wanted more yes and we got more no.

When will the finance minister tell Canadians what he will do to get this economy back on track?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 21, Canadians chose to continue moving forward with an economic plan focused on investing in them and rejected a short-sighted Conservative vision of cuts and austerity. Criticizing the state of Canada's economy is not a plan. It does not help people or build resilience in communities across the country.

While we will always remain vigilant to any potential risks to our economy, Canada has a stable and resilient financial sector and we will continue to work on the economy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals talk about investment. The people who are out of work now would like to know how they can invest for their own future, the people who are \$200 away from financial insolvency. There is a 13% increase in the number of Canadians who have claimed insolvency. All of these people are asking how they will not just invest, but actually pay their bills.

How can the government in good conscience go on Christmas vacation while so many are suffering so much?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has been working to strengthen and grow the middle class. People want an affordable place to call home. They want a good education for their kids. They want an ability to save for a secure and dignified retirement. That is who we are focused on and it is why our very first act this mandate is to lower their taxes.

I look forward to working with the member opposite as we make life more affordable for middle-class Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the most frightening data to come out recently came out this week with regard to the seven-year high in non-mortgage credit defaults. In simple terms, that means people cannot pay their credit card bills. They are up to their eyeballs. They cannot pay their bills, so

they are putting them on their credit card. Then they cannot pay the credit card bill. Then they cannot pay the interest. This problem compounds on top of itself.

We would expect the government to take urgent action to unleash our private sector to create jobs and relieve the burden of our workers. Why did it not do that just in time for Christmas?

• (1135)

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although there is growing uncertainty around the world, Canada's economy remains strong.

We are focused on building an economy that works for everyone, and as a result, middle-class Canadians have more money in their pockets. We will continue to fund services that support Canadians.

Canada's economy has one of the highest levels of growth and investments in the G7. We know that there is still a lot to do, and we will continue to work to make life more affordable and to create good, better-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest issues for proud Atlantic Canadians is realizing that we are constantly being forgotten. It happened yet again when the Liberals across the way appointed someone from Montreal as the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, apparently forgetting that Montreal is not part of my region. Not once since coming to power have they given someone from my region that portfolio.

When will the government show some respect for the Atlantic provinces and give them the representation they deserve?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in Moncton and Halifax just a week ago for a quick meeting with people at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. I will also have the support of a parliamentary secretary who is from the region to ensure that we make the right investments.

I would like to remind my colleague that even though his government had a minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the fact is that the Conservatives cut ACOA's budget by \$50 million. Not being from the region does not mean the minister responsible cannot support the region. We will be there for the people of Atlantic Canada.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government's failed economic policies have led to the recent news of 71,000 jobs lost nationwide. This will hit home in my riding, where the jobs for 200 people at Web.com centre in Yarmouth will be lost as a result of the company's departure. Being so close to Christmas, this, of course, is devastating.

What will the government do to reassure those workers?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be supported by the great MP for Madawaska—Restigouche who comes from the region to make sure that we make the right investments.

Of course, our hearts and thoughts are with the families of the people affected. We want to make sure that we create opportunities for them and that we are there while some parts of the country are facing economic downturns. I will be willing to work with my colleague to make sure that we can find solutions for people affected by this decision.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in anticipation of the meeting between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec, I think it is important to remind members that Mr. Legault has asked that federally regulated businesses, such as banks, interprovincial transportation companies and airports, be subject to the Charter of the French Language when they do business in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for that for a long time. French is important to Quebecers.

Will the government listen to Quebec and subject federally regulated businesses to the rights and obligations of Bill 101?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, we recognize the importance of French in Canada and particularly in Quebec, but we also recognize that we have to play a role in protecting our language minorities both inside and outside Quebec. In light of that, I will be pleased to work with the House on the modernization of the Official Languages Act in order to protect our two official languages and always ensure access to an important bilingualism policy that is rooted in the very heart of our values and our vision for the country.

Oral Questions

• (1140)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec National Assembly is unanimous: Quebec wants a single tax return.

This is achievable, and without any job losses. Premier Legault even made a formal request during the recent election campaign. This afternoon's meeting with the Premier of Quebec is an excellent opportunity for this government to respect the will of the Quebec National Assembly—for once.

Will the Prime Minister commit to implementing a single tax return administered by Quebec, as Quebecers want?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency employs nearly 6,000 people across Quebec and is an important economic driver in Quebec's regions.

Whether we are talking about Rimouski, Abitibi, Shawinigan or Jonquière, we have always been very clear: We will never put those jobs at risk. That said, we continue to work with Revenu Québec to make it easier for Quebecers to file their tax returns. Our government is constantly improving the services provided by the Canada Revenue Agency in order to make a real difference in the lives of Quebecers.

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[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago the Liberals offered up the welfare of residents of British Columbia seniors homes to a Chinese company with no experience in seniors care, perhaps as an offering ahead of a free trade agreement that never happened. Since then, that company has been seized by the Chinese government and today a third Anbang-owned seniors home has had to have its operations taken over because of deplorable living conditions.

How much do these seniors have to suffer before the Liberals will act?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very important issue and the safety and well-being of seniors is of the utmost priority. As the member knows, the provincial government in British Columbia is responsible for health care, and it has put forward a rigorous standard of care on all operators.

With respect to the Investment Canada Act, which I am responsible for, we are monitoring and making sure that those obligations are met and we will take swift actions if those obligations are not met.

Oral Questions

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that neglect, abuse, hygiene issues and everything that has led to this takeover is an action that requires some sort of review under the act that the minister is responsible for. Come on; abdicating responsibility to the provincial government when seniors are suffering is ridiculous. When will the minister take his responsibility under the act, review this transaction and make sure that these seniors have a better life?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we understand this is very difficult and challenging for the seniors and we want to make sure that their well-being is of the utmost priority. However, with respect to health care, the rigorous standards are applied by the provincial government. It is overseeing the operator and will make sure those obligations are met.

With respect to jobs and the footprint with regard to Cedar Tree, those are legal obligations under the Investment Canada Act, and we will make sure that it follows through on those obligations.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs is shutting down mental health services for veterans' families while it creates new criteria. Family members are going to have to reapply and they are terrified because they know that right now Veterans Affairs has a backlog of over 40,000 cases.

The Liberal government in its throne speech promised better mental health care for our veterans and their families, so why are veterans' spouses and their children being punished when the Minister of Veterans Affairs allowed VAC to fund a criminal who was incarcerated for the murder of a policewoman?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for my hon. colleague that my department has not changed its policy regarding mental health services for family members. If support to family members is required as part of a veteran's treatment plan, they will receive that support. However, if a family member is incarcerated, we will not duplicate services with those of Correctional Service of Canada.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, lawyers for the government were in court trying to block a court order directing the Commissioner of Lobbying to reconsider an investigation into the possible breach of the Lobbying Act related to the Prime Minister's illegal trip to billionaire island.

The government has one hallmark and that is ethical breaches and then trying to cover them up. Why is the government trying to block the investigation into this scandal at every turn? What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

• (1145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we look over the last few years, one of the things that stands out is that, whether it is the Ethics Commissioner or the independence of the elections officer, or any of the independent officers, this side of the House respects and listens to the decisions made and follows through on them, unlike the Conservatives.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members that when someone asks a question we want to hear it, just like we want to hear the answer. Shouting across the floor impedes that right that we have as members.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

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HEALTH

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is easy to be cynical about the budget speech. We heard fine words about the importance of pharmacare but only certain steps toward it. People need a full system now, not suggesting a study on universal dental care guaranteed to take years when we proposed a doable system that would benefit half the families in Newfoundland and Labrador right away. I have talked to many people who really need this.

Will the government amend its tax plan so that money goes to dental care for the millions who need it now, instead of a tax break for those wealthy enough not to need one?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said in the House before, we will listen, we will collaborate and we will work with the other parties in this House to see what is best for Canadians. We will consider all options for what is best under national pharmacare.

Unlike the NDP, we have done our homework. When it comes to something as big and as important as pharmacare, we want and we need to get this right. Canadians demand that we get this right.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last spring, New Democrats worked with the Liberals and together presented a motion with a goal to end homelessness for veterans by 2025. Now, veterans deserve action. In Vancouver alone, over 100 veterans are living on the streets, and sadly, this is happening across this beautiful country.

Will the minister commit to working with us to provide this House a fully developed and funded plan to end veteran homelessness now?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague is fully sincere on this issue, and so is the government, and to making sure that even one homeless veteran is one veteran too many. I can assure members that in my mandate letter one of the things that the Prime Minister indicated to me is that we have to make sure that every veteran has a home. We will work to make sure that this takes place.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it is my first time rising in this Parliament, I would like to thank my family for their unfailing support, my team for its extraordinary hard work and the people of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for once again returning me to this distinguished place.

Indigenous peoples have a right of self-determination, yet there are many barriers remaining that prevent them from accessing this right.

Would the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations please inform us what the government is doing to change this in British Columbia?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his advocacy on this really important topic. In August, the new recognition and reconciliation of rights policy for treaty negotiations in British Columbia was signed with the Government of British Columbia and the First Nations Summit.

Treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements negotiated in B.C. will affirm indigenous rights without cede, surrender or extinguishment. This will revolutionize the negotiation process with B.C. first nations and accelerate self-determination. It reinforces our commitment to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and outlines the new relationship.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clean-burning liquefied natural gas is a fantastic Canadian product that we should be exporting around the world not tomorrow, but yesterday. We should be proudly championing this great industry, as Canada's provincial and territorial leaders recently agreed unanimously. However, our environmental minister's recent comments show he does not care about creating jobs or exporting clean energy or he would be the champion for it.

Oral Questions

Why will this government not stand up for Canadian LNG?

● (1150)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it is the first time that I rise in this 43rd Parliament, I want to thank the residents of Sudbury for having the confidence in me to represent them again in this beautiful House.

When it comes to LNG, Canada is well positioned to become a major player in the global LNG industry with proposed projects in the west and in the east. We have strong measures in place to attract investment while also reducing emissions. After securing the single largest private sector investment in Canadian history, it is clear our plan is working. We will continue to take action to ensure Canada is on track to become the world's cleanest producer of LNG and reach global markets.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Friday the 13th, the namesake of one of the longest-running horror movie franchises in history. It cannot help but remind me of the Liberal no-more-pipelines bill and its effect on the western Canadian resource sector. Will the Liberal government amend Bill C-69 so pipeline projects stop disappearing like teenagers in a bad horror movie?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation that was there before was called CEAA 2012 and everybody in the energy sector wanted it changed. Why? Because no projects were moving ahead, and if they were, there were duplications and delays.

With Bill C-69, the Impact Assessment Act, it is clear that there will be one review for one project. The mining industry is supportive of this act. We are discussing with the provinces to make sure that, as we implement it, we hear the concerns and we move forward in the right way.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many people in my riding of Edmonton Mill Woods and right across Alberta are hurting. In fact, the unemployment rate among young men is approaching 20%, something that we have not seen in almost 40 years. We are in this crisis because of Liberal policies like Bill C-69, yet the Liberals have refused to make changes to their no-more-pipelines bill. When will the Liberals make changes to Bill C-69 that will help Albertans and all Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that, with respect to investments in Alberta, we have seen the production and advancement of the TMX file, which created 2,200 good, well-paying jobs that have already started. Also, I want to highlight the fact that we have made significant investments in Inter Pipeline and the CKPC, which is a \$100-million investment that will help create 400 jobs and establish 4,000 new construction jobs as well. These are the types of investments we continue to make while the opposition talks down the economy.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has promised to listen really hard to western Canada. I am wondering if he has heard the resounding screams of 180,000 lost jobs, the squealing tires of \$100 billion of investment leaving this country or the alarm bells ringing as resource producers are forced to accept a value for our resource far below world price, all because of the current government's inaction. Will the government take out its earplugs and recognize that its approach to building energy infrastructure in Canada embodied in Bill C-69 is fatally flawed and amend this dreadful bill?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under our government, we have secured the single largest private sector investment in Canadian history with LNG Canada, which is going to create 10,000 jobs. We did the hard work necessary on TMX. Again, the pipes are in the ground right now, creating over 4,000 jobs in Alberta alone. We unlocked over \$8 billion in petrochemical investments in the greater Edmonton region, creating hundreds of jobs. We approved the Line 3 replacement project. It is online and in service here on the Canadian side. We will continue working hard for the energy sector and creating those great jobs.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec, François Legault, will meet with the Prime Minister in a few hours.

I recall that during the election campaign, Mr. Legault made it clear that Quebec's environmental laws would apply at all times, including to federal projects.

In the first week of this Parliament, the Liberal government voted against the Bloc's subamendment on this legitimate and responsible request made by Quebec.

How will the Prime Minister explain this insult to Quebec to Mr. Legault, and why is he refusing to let the most rigorous environmental laws take precedence?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her question.

We are working in a constructive manner with all of Canada's provinces and territories. Environmental issues have a federal and a provincial component, and it is important that we work together on these issues.

We will continue to work with all members of the House and the Province of Quebec to protect the environment and fight climate change.

* * *

• (1155)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Prime Minister of something before he meets with François Legault later.

During the election campaign, Mr. Legault asked that the federal government respect Quebec's jurisdiction. He wants the unconditional right to opt out with full financial compensation if, by some misfortune, the federal government interferes in Quebec's jurisdiction.

The throne speech is full of interferences. If you remove those from the speech, the rest of the text would fit on a Christmas card.

How will the Prime Minister justify to Mr. Legault that he wants to have full say when he does not have the necessary expertise?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the Prime Minister and Premier Legault will have the opportunity to have good conversations throughout the day. One item on the agenda is certainly the importance of Quebec supporting ratification of NAFTA to ensure that we can keep our jobs across Quebec and across the country.

We will have the opportunity to work on several shared priorities.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week I heard from Laura, who is a greenhouse grower in my riding. She said, "I was paying the farm gas bill today. I noticed the federal carbon tax was even more than the HST. Also, the HST is calculated after the carbon tax, so we are being taxed twice. Carbon tax should not be taxed on our HST."

The Liberals have spent the last four years making life harder and more unaffordable for Canadians.

I have a simple question. Why are the Liberals making Canadians like Laura pay a tax on a tax?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that Canadian farmers are part of the climate change solution. That is why our pollution pricing policy reflects the realities of Canada's agricultural industry. Both gasoline and diesel fuels for on-farm use will be exempted from pricing pollution under the federal backstop.

We will continue to work with our experts and stakeholders on the best ways to cut pollution and support farmers to ensure that we get this right.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers across western Canada are being forced to pay a carbon tax to dry their crops after a wet and difficult harvest. Many of these farmers are drying canola and still have no timeline as to when they will be able to sell their product to China, our largest export market for canola.

Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell Canadian farmers what plan they have, if any, to restore market access to China, and tell the House if the government will immediately remove the carbon tax from the cost of drying their grain?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are working with canola producers and their representatives to make sure that we make the right moves. We are working in collaboration with the provinces as well.

We are working hard to diversify the markets. We are having technical discussions between CFIA and Chinese officials. Ambassador Barton is in the field working hard as well.

The member can be assured that we are taking this very seriously.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal record on the economy is one of higher taxes, massive deficit spending and rising job losses. Recent numbers from Statistics Canada show that since the imposition of the federal carbon tax, in my province of Saskatchewan job losses have increased.

Why do the Liberals claim they want to listen to Saskatchewan while they are taking active steps to hurt us with a carbon tax meant to destroy our economy?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Canadians voted for climate action. We have a credible and affordable plan with over 50 measures to cut pollution, support clean growth and make life more affordable for Canadians. We put a price on carbon pollution because it is a cost-effective way to cut emissions and create good jobs while leaving the majority of families better off.

Oral Questions

Fighting climate change should not be a partisan issue. We look forward to working with all members of the House to advance our carbon reduction targets.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our energy sector has a long history of creating prosperity and opportunity for Canadians; however, this sector has been going through the most difficult time, which has caused stress and hardship for workers, families and communities. Our government has made market access, especially access to new markets, a priority, so we can support hard-working Canadians in the energy sector.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please update the House on projects under way in Canada that will increase market access?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the minister was in Acheson, Alberta to mark an important milestone, the beginning of construction on spread 1 of the Trans Mountain expansion project. On top of this, the Canadian portion of the Line 3 replacement project, which our government approved, came online at the beginning of December. This is very good news for workers in our energy sector and for all Canadians.

These projects are proof of what happens when we do the hard work necessary to move forward in the right way every step of the way.

* * *

● (1200)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tragically, on Canadian Forces Base Borden in my riding, there were recently two suicides. The Minister of National Defence once said, "one suicide is too many". I agree.

There are 3,000-plus families rotating through Borden. Families struggle to find access to primary care and psychiatric services. The CEO of my local hospital has offered to bring psychiatric services to the base with support from the federal government.

Is the minister open to listening to creative local solutions to help soldiers who need psychiatric services?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one suicide is too many when it comes to our Canadian Armed Forces members. We are investing in our mental health services, with a joint suicide prevention strategy with the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Oral Questions

Yes, I am open not only to the member opposite, but to all members of the House for any ideas they might have to make sure we provide the right support to our veterans.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture, all hard-working farmers in my riding. They are suffering from a lack of market access for soybean and canola as a result of unresolved trade disputes.

In the U.S., the government is stepping up with a \$28 billion market facilitation program. Other than words like “we stand with” or “we always support”, what is the government actually doing to support soybean and canola farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we stand with our partners and farmers because this is very important. It is a priority for us. I spend a lot of time talking to stakeholders and farmers themselves. We have a strategy that we have developed with them to reopen the market in China and diversify our markets.

Next week, I will be meeting with the ministers of agriculture from the provinces and the territories. We are committed to improving our business risk management programs as well. We know the risks have changed through recent years in terms of climate, in terms of trade and we are committed to improve the business risk management suite.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, concerns are rising about the Liberals' focus on legal firearm owners versus efforts to stop gangs and guns. The Liberals are proposing a gun buyback program that could cost billions of dollars, much more than they spend actually combatting gang crime.

The members of clubs like the Napanee Rod & Gun Club and the Bancroft Fish & Game Club worry that the Liberals will target them instead of actual criminals.

Could the government explain how its approach will be effective, when we know that existing laws are not even being followed by criminals?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the member opposite for the question and give him the opportunity to understand some of the significant investments our government has actually made in combatting guns and gang violence.

We have allocated and dispersed to the provinces right across Canada \$347 million to invest in policing and in our courts to ensure that people who are engaged in violent criminal activity with guns are held to proper account.

We have made significant investment in policing. However, we also know that if we are going to keep our communities safe, we

have to ensure that our gun control laws keep guns out of the hands of criminals. We are prepared to act to keep communities safe.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government committed to investing in Canadians and their communities. For four years, we have done just that. Canadians across the country, including the people of Mississauga—Lakeshore, have benefited from those investments, for example those made in public transit and safe drinking water.

Now that we are back in the House, can the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities tell us what the government's infrastructure plan is?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for his question and his hard work.

I am proud to be now in charge of the government's infrastructure plan, which has led to the approval of over 48,000 projects that improve Canadians' quality of life, including public transit, affordable housing and safe drinking water projects. We are just getting started.

In the coming years, we will build on those accomplishments and invest in sustainable projects that are essential to the future of our country, while making Canada more resilient to climate change.

* * *

● (1205)

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when asked about the constructive dismissal of senior anti-racism expert Manjot Bains for her work on, and wait for it, anti-racism, the minister said that employees worked under a specific code of conduct. Ms. Bains said that she would have been required to take loyalty training in order to keep her job.

She was reportedly constructively dismissed for sharing disappointment in the Prime Minister for his multiple displays of brown-face and blackface.

How can the government dismantle white supremacy when its own anti-racism experts cannot even talk about it publicly?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a white, straight, cisgender male, I acknowledge my own privilege. I have never and will never experience racism, bigotry or homophobia. Darkening one's face, regardless of the context or the circumstances, is always unacceptable because of this racist history and the practice.

We in the House have a mutually held obligation, every member, to continue to work hard toward a racism-free society in Canada.

The Speaker: That is all the questions for today.

While I have your attention, I want to wish all of you a very merry Christmas and a wonderful new year.

[Translation]

I would like to thank you for the gift you have given me, the honour of representing you as the Speaker of the House.

[English]

I am your humble servant.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

FIRST NATIONS CHILD WELFARE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a question of privilege, and I will do it as quickly as possible.

It is about something that happened yesterday in question period. I will come back to that in a moment. This is the first time we have had routine proceedings since yesterday's question period.

• (1210)

[English]

I appreciate the opportunity to present this question of privilege today.

As I know members are very well aware, the House has the power to punish contempt, which explicitly includes disobeying an order of the House.

I will cite *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 80 and 81, which reads:

Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members, either by an outside person or body, or by a Member of the House, is referred to as a "breach of privilege" and is punishable by the House. There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands...

As you are well aware, Mr. Speaker, even in other parliaments worldwide, including the United Kingdom, decisions have been made by Speakers in regard to this. The United Kingdom Joint Committee on Joint Parliamentary Privilege also attempted to pro-

Privilege

vide a list of some types of contempt in its 1999 report. One of them that I will cite is "without reasonable excuse, disobeying a lawful order of the House or a committee."

Wednesday, December 11, the member for Timmins—James Bay rose to present a motion that passed and provided clear direction. The motion reads as follows:

That the House call on the government to comply with the historic ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordering the end of discrimination against First Nations children, including by:

(a) fully complying with all orders made by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal as well as ensuring that children and their families don't have to testify their trauma in court; and

(b) establishing a legislated funding plan for future years that will end the systemic shortfalls in First Nations child welfare.

It was adopted unanimously by the House.

Quickly referencing the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, "call on" can also be defined as a demand, which constitutes clear direction, and the definition of "comply", again in the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, is to act in accordance with a command, regulation, etc.

[Translation]

Parliament called on the government to comply with the rulings of the tribunal, which wrote:

...that Canada's systemic racial discrimination...resulted in harming First Nations children living on reserve and in the Yukon Territory who, as a result of poverty, lack of housing or deemed appropriate housing, neglect and substance abuse were unnecessarily apprehended and placed in care outside of their homes, families and communities and especially in regards to substance abuse, did not benefit from prevention services in the form of least disruptive measures or other prevention services permitting them to remain safely in their homes, families and communities. Those children experienced pain and suffering of the worst kind warranting the maximum award of remedy of \$20,000...Canada is ordered to pay \$20,000 to each First Nation child removed from its home, family and Community between January 1, 2006...

[English]

The direction is very clear.

In question period yesterday, the government response showed a willful disregard of the direction that was given by the House, both outside and inside Parliament.

First, CBC News online quoted the Minister of Indigenous Services saying that the government had no plans to drop the court challenge. Then yesterday in question period in the House, the Minister of Indigenous Services said "our commitment to implementing other orders from the CHRT or reforming child and family services has not changed in any way." Nothing changes. In effect, in reply to a question from the member for Timmins—James Bay, he said the government was simply not changing its fashion of proceeding.

Routine Proceedings

This is unprecedented, I would submit, and is a procedural grey area. There is no jurisprudence or Speaker's ruling that specifically covers such a situation, and we certainly went many decades back late into the evening last night. The closest equivalent was from Speaker Milliken on March 8, 2005, in relation to Bill C-31 and Bill C-32, bills that proposed creating a department of international trade separate from the Department of Foreign Affairs. In that instance, despite seeing legislation enabling departmental reorganizations defeated in the House, the government continued with its plan to split the departments.

In that ruling, Speaker Milliken ruled that no breach of privilege had occurred, in large part because Parliament had, in terms of order in council, provided direction to the government. He also cited the main estimates. In other words, there was ambiguity about the direction that was received from the House. Also, the Speaker mentioned that the comments were outside the House, so he questioned the validity of those comments and the accuracy of the quotation. In this case, we rely on Hansard and the quotes are very direct and present in this House.

However, Speaker Milliken expressed serious concern. He stated, "That is not to say that the comments, if reported accurately, do not concern me. I can fully appreciate the frustration of the House and the confusion of hon. Members, let alone those who follow parliamentary affairs from outside this Chamber." Speaker Milliken then asked, "How can the decisions of this House...be without practical consequence?" That is from page 53 of *Selected Decisions of Speaker Milliken*, on a decision rendered on March 23, 2005.

There is ambiguity that needs to be carefully regarded and decided upon by you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the House of Commons is supreme and has issued direction to the government. The government has stated in the House that nothing has changed, and I submit that this is in breach of the privileges of the House. However, as you know, ultimately it is up to the House to decide if its privileges have been infringed upon and if the government is in contempt.

As you well know, the role of the Speaker is to determine whether this matter warrants further discussion in this chamber. I would ask that you find a prima facie case of privilege, and allow space for members of this House to determine whether this warrants being reviewed by the procedure and House affairs committee. Particularly in a minority Parliament, this is of fundamental importance.

You will be studying my submission and perhaps other members would want to weigh in, but the reality is that the government has the ability over the break to fix what was, to my mind, a clear contradiction between the direction set by the House and the government's response. I certainly hope it does so. If that is the case, I would be more than pleased to withdraw this question of privilege.

The fact remains, and Canadians understand, that in democracy the voters make a decision. They choose who fills the House, and then we make decisions. The government then, when there is a clear direction, should have the understanding that the clear direction should be followed. There is no doubt that on Wednesday the House directed the government and on Thursday, less than 24 hours later, the minister indicated in the House that nothing had changed.

I submit that the House should be charged in this matter and if, after careful study, you agree, I am prepared to move the necessary motion, Mr. Speaker.

• (1215)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing this question of privilege forward and I will take it under advisement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1220)

[English]

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be presenting a petition in support of two bills that were in the 42nd Parliament: Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. These bills sought to deal with the scourge of forced organ harvesting and trafficking by making it a criminal offence for a Canadian to go abroad and receive an organ for which there had not been consent.

The petitioners no doubt hope that this important legislative initiative will be taken up in this, the 43rd Parliament.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition that calls upon the government to eliminate the practice of charging interest on all outstanding and future Canada student loans.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand today and present a petition from Canadians from across the country in support of Bill C-350 and Bill S-240, regarding forced organ harvesting that happens around the world.

Human trafficking is a horrific human rights violation that happens right here in this country as well. I hope that we can pass similar bills in this Parliament forthwith.

The Address

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition that is very important to my riding of Cumberland—Colchester. The petitioners call upon the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to honour their commitment to have an independent study to thoroughly review the potential risks of moving Nova Scotia's RCMP OCC from Truro, Nova Scotia, to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. They also call upon the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to immediately halt the move of the Truro OCC to Dartmouth and to immediately halt all work related to the move pending the outcome of a thorough independent review and risk assessment.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had a wonderful Grey Cup game in 2019, which I made reference to. Being from Winnipeg, one of the things we really enjoy is a nice Saskatchewan-Winnipeg rivalry. We won the Banjo Bowl, but I believe they won the Classic. However, we know that we have good football fans in Winnipeg and Saskatchewan.

My question for the member is in the spirit of teamship and having a good game. Would the member not agree that the people we represent would like to see us work collaboratively to see if we can produce that much more for Canadians as a whole, in many different ways?

• (1225)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about collaboration and teamship. I congratulate Winnipeg on winning its first Grey Cup, maybe since I was born.

I love to work with the government when we have common interests. One of those common interests, with the member from Manitoba, is getting pipelines built in the oil and gas sector. I am hoping we can work together to either scrap Bill C-69 or amend it so that we can get the hard-working oil and gas sector workers back to work as soon as possible, get some pipelines built and use some good EVRAZ steel to make those pipelines.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the debate earlier today, we heard about the Canada child benefit. I heard the hon. member across the way talk about reducing debt for the next generation and reducing taxes. In addition, there was the analogy of getting married, having children and then having a foreclosure sign. In this time of a climate crisis, it is far more likely that the last image is going to be of a family who lost their house to a wildfire, who fled a flood or who had their house decimated by a hurricane or tornado.

Right now we are at the end of the COP25 conference in Madrid, and the government has not brought forward a change to its climate targets for 2030. They have set net-zero for 2050. That is a long way away. I am going to be a very old man by then. My oldest daughter and my granddaughter appreciate the child tax benefit, but my youngest daughter is anxious. She is anxious like other people who worked on my election campaign who are on a child strike right now: They do not want to have children because they are worried about the future. As parliamentarians and leaders, we need to deal with this climate crisis properly.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have a lot of challenges facing this country, including environmental challenges. I have three young children and I want to be committed to leaving a greener, cleaner environment for them. It is incumbent on all of us to do so. I do not want to leave the next generation with a financial or environmental deficit. We have to work hard to make sure we create environments for success in all those areas.

We had a great plan in our campaign to make a cleaner environment by cleaning up lakes, rivers and oceans and by stopping pollution being dumped into the oceans on either coast. I am very much committed to ensuring we have a greener, safer and cleaner environment for the next generation.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that in the throne speech we simply hear the Liberal government saying that it will continue its good work on housing. In the Lower Mainland, and in my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby, there is a fundamental affordable housing crisis. People are struggling. They have to choose between paying for their medication and paying to keep a roof over their heads. We see families who are literally fighting to keep a roof over their heads. Some are failing to do so, and an increasing number are found on the streets.

Given all that, seniors are not able to afford the skyrocketing cost of rent, simply because their pensions cannot keep up, and they are finding themselves on the street. John Young of New Westminster was in the parkade in his last possession, his car, because he could not afford to keep up with rental payments.

Why is the government not taking the affordable housing crisis in this country seriously?

The Address

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I will not answer for the Liberal government, but I believe that we should all work together to make life more affordable for all Canadians. That is something we can agree on.

In the riding of Regina—Lewvan, I heard time and again across the doorsteps that people are paying too much in taxes. All parliamentarians need to work together on affordability, and put suggestions forward to the minority Liberal government to ensure that Canadians can get ahead. Working hard and getting ahead in Canada is something that we can all diligently work toward as a group in this House.

As this is probably my last question, I want to take this time on behalf of my wife Larissa and our kids Jameson, Nickson and Claire to wish everyone a very merry Christmas across Canada and merry Christmas to the constituents of Regina—Lewvan. Have a very happy 2020.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back here in the House for the 43rd Parliament and to have an opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

Between July and December, I missed being able to deliver speeches in the House, though I must say I got plenty of speech-giving opportunities during the election campaign.

[*English*]

It gives me enormous pleasure to return to the House for the 43rd Parliament. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne. It is a very important speech to share with Canadians because it is a road map, the vision of our government. I kind of missed being in the House between June and now because of the election. I like to share what is happening in my constituency of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook and to continue to advocate on behalf of my constituents.

I have to thank the people of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for putting their confidence in me once again to continue to work with them and for them. That is exactly what I shall continue to do as we move forward. I also want to thank the many volunteers in my riding and outside of my riding. A large number of volunteers participated throughout the campaign, from day one right through to October 21. That is really what democracy is all about when we think about it. These individuals want to be engaged in the electoral process and they want their words to be heard. The support that I received from them is much appreciated and I thank them for that.

As well, I want to thank my family. As members know, being parliamentarians is not a task that allows us to be home as much as we might like to be. The real work is in the community for our people, but members have to be here in the House to make laws and to work together to make life better for Canadians in general but also for the people in our ridings.

I have to say that I felt throughout the campaign that there were two elections happening. I would like to share a few words con-

cerning the election and how my constituents and I were able to see how things were happening at the national level and at the local level. To be quite honest, at the national level, it was a different campaign that Canadians had not experienced. By that I mean there were insults and misinformation and there was even some fearmongering. All kinds of things were happening throughout the campaign at the national level on television that many Canadians did not feel very comfortable with because that is not the way we do business. We work together. We trust each other to get things done for Canadians.

At the end of the day, I ended up putting my head down and concentrating on the work at hand, working closely with my constituents, listening to them. That allowed me to articulate some of the great things our government was able to do in the last four years, talking with seniors and how we were able to support them, investing in bringing many seniors above the poverty line, and moving the age of retirement from 67 to 65. The Conservatives raised it from 65 to 67, but we stopped that quickly.

• (1235)

The conversation around climate change is important. Climate change is a very important file. It is probably the greatest challenge of our time. Many people in my constituency have many suggestions to make. They welcome some of the great things we did, such as increasing environmental protection of water and land from 1% to 14%, and they understand that we will move it up to 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Those are very important discussions to be having.

I had the opportunity as well to speak with many veterans. Nova Scotia has the highest number of veterans and military personnel in Canada by ratio. Let me add that my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has the most in Nova Scotia, so it is extremely important that I continue to have a dialogue with veterans and individuals in the military.

Colleagues are probably aware of this, but I have been honoured and privileged by the Prime Minister to take on the role of parliamentary secretary for veterans affairs and defence. That is a privilege because I have been working closely with veterans and individuals in the military. I have also been working at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for the last two years.

We have had some great conversations locally, but not such great conversations, I believe, nationally. At the end of the day, Canadians made the right decision and brought us back here to form government. However, we have been handed a new, important task of a minority government. I believe that this government is the best government to lead Canada for the future of this country.

We know that we need to do more on pharmacare. That is extremely important. We have to do more on social enterprises. We have to do more on housing.

The Address

We also know that we have to move forward aggressively on trade deals. We did so in the past. We had 14 trade deals signed in one mandate. I do not want to go too deep into that, but the three important ones are NAFTA, which we did extremely well, and of course, the Asia-Pacific one and the one with the European Union. Both of the last two brought to the table 500 million people we can trade with. That is a billion people.

We have the challenge of how we are going to work together. I was very pleased to listen to some, not all, leaders of the opposition in the House last week who clearly stated that they understood the challenge. The challenge is that Canadians want us to work together. Canadians want us to collaborate. Canadians know that we are the party to do so and we shall do that because it is extremely important. We are going to have to stop pointing fingers, I guess, and stop blaming people. A good idea is a good idea, no matter where it comes from in this chamber. It is extremely important to remember that.

I now want to talk about minority governments. We have had some fabulous minority governments that have been very successful in making major changes for Canadians. I think right away of the Lester B. Pearson minority government. It was known as the golden age. It was given that title because it was a very important time. I will share some of the key successes during those years.

● (1240)

An extremely important one is the Official Languages Act. It is funny because here we are 50 years later modernizing the bilingualism act. It recognized both founding fathers or peoples. Today we are much richer not only with respect to understanding each other, but also in allowing us to trade with many countries, because of the two official languages we have in Canada.

Another is the Canada pension plan. Only last year, this government was able to work closely with the provinces and territories to bring forward a much needed updated Canada pension plan that Canadians can be proud of. Canadians will benefit more and more as we move forward.

Medicare is another success that came from a minority government. It is extremely important. I have to share this. One of the key individuals who led the Liberal government through that minority government was Allan J. MacEachen from Cape Breton Island. He became the deputy prime minister of the country and sat next to Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

We brought forward the new student loans program. We had a question today about it. Our government has made major changes to that in the last two or three years which will make life better for young students who are trying to get ahead.

We also ended capital punishment during those years.

Let us talk about the Martin minority government. I can think of two major improvements for Canadians. The first is same sex marriage. That is extremely important. Our government led the charge on that one. The second is the gas tax, which was a new program incentive to support municipal governments and invest in new infrastructure. It is so important that last year, for one year, we doubled the investments from the gas tax.

Those are some of the great changes that were made through minority governments.

Am I happy? I would rather have a majority government, but I will say this. I know that with a minority government and the people in this important chamber, we will get the job done in many areas. Canadians want us to do it and I know we can and shall do it.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about national unity. That is a very important topic. National unity did not start yesterday, last week or last year. We have a great nation because we have challenges. When we have challenges, they become opportunities, and we take advantage of those opportunities to make life better.

I have to share this with members of the House. In the very early eighties, my dad, George A. Samson, a plumber and electrician from Cape Breton Island, to be more specific Isle Madame, who had a grade 6 education, was a councillor in the municipal government. He enjoyed speaking and representing the people. In 1980, he was invited by the Davis government in Ontario to an assembly of many Canadians to talk about the Constitution and national unity. It was quite a pleasure and exciting for him to be part of that. He contributed to those discussions. I know that allowed many great things to happen as we moved forward in the eighties.

We have to stop this division and stop focusing on our differences. We need to focus on our strengths. What we are asking for today is something that Canadians have done so well in the past.

● (1245)

When I hear about prominent politicians running around saying there are differences and creating regional insecurity, it hurts, I have to be honest, because I know we can do much better.

I want to share a quote from the first Prime Minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald:

If I had influence over the minds of the people of Canada, any power over their intellects, I would leave them this legacy—"whatever you do, adhere to the Union—we are a great country and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it; we shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken."

I could not say it any better.

That is what this is all about. It is about working together. How great is this country? It is one of the greatest countries in the world. We have been rated number one on quality of life four years in a row. That is not bad. We are number three in education, number four in freedom, number six among the best countries to do business with and number nine in happiness. What a great country. Let us continue working together to make life better for all Canadians.

The Address

To do what we are doing, we need to continue to get support from members of all parties. We have to help and work closely with the business community to make sure it has the tools to connect and take advantage of the international trade deals we sign. We have to work together on climate change, because it is the greatest challenge of our time. We have to work together to make sure we have what we promised on pharmacare for all Canadians. It is extremely important. We must continue to work together for housing, creating more housing for seniors. That is the next challenge.

We are focused on these challenges, and that is important. We have to focus on families, youth, veterans and seniors. These are important issues and we need to work together to make this happen. I believe we will. We need to make this work.

Let me focus on Wexit. Westerners are anxious. We will work with them, because when times are hard in one part of this nation we come together and find ways to connect and support. That is what we will do.

I have already seen movement in Alberta on climate change. The premier said he is now open to that. That is what I call making a great effort to work together to continue building on this great country.

What about the pipeline? We already have 2,200 people working on the pipeline and by summer we will have 4,200 working on it. We are now moving forward on the pipeline, as we committed and promised.

I am also hearing about Bill C-69 in Wexit. I believe the Prime Minister said the other day that we are open to listening if we need to tweak it somewhat. He even asked the premiers to get together and work at it to see if they had some suggestions. That is the third thing.

The fourth issue I am hearing a lot about is equalization payments or the fiscal stability program. That is what it is for. We have been trying to support westerners and will continue to support them. One way to do it is by making adjustments. When we make adjustments because there are hard times, we are supporting those provinces, and when times are good, we expect them to support the rest of Canada.

It is a pleasure to be back in the House of Commons to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

• (1250)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member across the way likes to paint everything as coming up roses, but of course not everything is perfect.

Earlier this week, the taxpayers' ombudsman announced a review of CRA and the Canada child benefit. She said there are negative impacts on people's lives and she has repeatedly raised this with the government.

Applications from vulnerable families have faced continual documentation issues with the CRA: women fleeing domestic violence have needed signatures from abusive partners, newcomers are not

receiving benefits because of documentation issues and families have been ordered to repay benefits.

Why did it get to the point that the taxpayers' ombudsman, after repeatedly talking to the government about fixing this problem, had to announce she is conducting a review into why it is so difficult for Canada's most vulnerable families to receive the Canada child benefit?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member brought up the Canada child benefit. When I was campaigning in my riding over the last two months, I heard a lot of really good things about the Canada child benefit. Many families are receiving the help they need to continue to support their kids. That is essential.

I welcome the member's asking a question about the CRA and the vulnerable Canadians facing challenges. That is how we work together. If the ombudsman wants to do a report or an investigation, I believe that means there have been a sufficient number of complaints. Our job is to then look at that to see how we can solve the problem. At the end of the day, if something is wrong then it is our responsibility to fix it. We will, with the member's support.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to debate with someone who will be working with me closely. As the spokesperson for the NDP on veterans affairs, I welcome the member to his role as parliamentary secretary and look forward to collaborating to get results for the veterans of this country.

Today I would like to speak about seniors in this country. Earlier this year, I presented a private member's bill to the House of Commons because I realized that seniors across Canada are being cut off from their guaranteed income supplement every July. In fact, it is between 30,000 and 40,000 seniors. That is happening because they are having challenges for one reason or another, such as ill health, the loss of a loved one or health challenges that prevent them from getting their taxes done on time.

I presented a private member's bill to give all seniors in this country receiving the guaranteed income supplement, who are some of the poorest in our country, a one-year grace period so that they do not lose their guaranteed income supplement if they get their taxes in a little late.

Will the member support me as I reintroduce that bill in the House?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I am eager to begin work on the veterans file with the member at the veterans committee. It is extremely important that we continue doing the work we need to do to support our men and women.

The Address

The member's question about seniors is very important. Our government said that it would be introducing a tax cut in the new year, as promised. It is extremely important and will help seniors. For example, I believe that the first \$12,400 that every Canadian makes is tax-free. Our government said that it would change the amount to \$15,000. Hundreds of thousands of seniors will benefit from this tax cut and will not have to pay any taxes. Also, students who work part-time will not need to pay taxes on the first \$15,000 they make. For many of them this means no taxes at all.

We are working to support seniors, but this tax cut will also help students and thousands of other Canadians.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about the fight against poverty, in particular child poverty. I am a family law lawyer by training, and this is an important issue for me.

He spoke a lot about child benefits, which effectively can have a significant impact on families. However, there are vulnerable families who really need these benefits but do not qualify for them. I am referring mainly to families with children who have been placed in care or in shelters. In these cases, the families lose their family benefits even if the child only spends one day a month in a youth facility.

These families, which are often working on their parenting skills, are at a disadvantage as they have even fewer resources than other families. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Is he open to discussing changes to the program?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which is definitely extremely important.

In my speech, I talked about the benefits families receive. That is extremely important. For example, just in my riding, Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, families receive \$5.2 million a month, or \$60 million a year. We only have to multiply that amount by 338, the number of MPs, to see the total amount that Canada is investing to support families. That does not specifically answer my colleague's question, but I wanted to briefly address this.

With respect to the families you mentioned, I have heard that some families do not qualify for the benefits because their children are not with them for the whole week. I will therefore look into it. It would seem logical to me that these families should at the very least receive a certain percentage of the benefit based on the number of days that the child spends at home.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to address their comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity, as it is my first speech, to thank my constituents in Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, central Newfoundland, for giving me this wonderful honour.

I want to ask a question of my colleague, but first I will congratulate him. He said he was going to tone it down, so he did. What we witnessed here was done with relative restraint. I have seen him in full oratory flight, and to say that he can shiver the timbers of this very hall is an understatement. I thank him for toning it down a little, as I am sitting just to the front of him.

On this past campaign, a lot of what I heard had to do with prescription drugs and their prices. The rise in prices, especially over the last five to 10 years, has been somewhat dramatic. That is understating it.

Over the past little while, the conversation has brought us to a point where we have to engage seriously with the provinces across this country, in a respectable manner, for us to provide relief, especially for seniors, who are most vulnerable.

I would like for my colleague, with his relative restraint, to get passionate this time and talk about how he cares for the seniors of his riding.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I have to apologize if I am at times looking across this chamber. I am a former schoolteacher, and that is what I needed to do to make sure I had the attention of all individuals in the classroom. I had to look them in the eyes to know they were there with me when I was speaking. I apologize for that, but it is part of who I am and I am proud of it.

I thank my colleague for his comment. I did promise to tone it down and I am working on it, but it is not an easy task. One cannot take oneself out of that.

My colleague spoke about the prices of prescription drugs and that is extremely important. I want to share with him and the House what our government did in its last mandate. We created the Canadian drug agency. It allows us to purchase drugs in bulk. By doing that we are able to save \$3 billion per year, so that is extremely important.

My colleague made reference to how important that is for seniors. It is extremely important to seniors. In the few weeks following the election, I was able to spend extra time at home with seniors, and we had some great conversations. I will continue to do that as we move forward.

• (1300)

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to resume debate. Just before we do that, I recognize there are hon. members who rise each time when we invite questions and comments and I encourage them to keep doing that. That is how they get the eye of the Speaker, and I assure members that if they will keep doing that, we will certainly get to them. Be persistent, and we will make sure that each member who wishes to participate in questions and comments gets an opportunity to do so. It just may not happen in that particular round, but we will eventually get to the member.

The Address

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that I am splitting my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

It is my honour to rise in the House today for my maiden speech. I first want to thank the voters of Saskatoon West for putting their faith and trust in me as their representative in this House of Commons for this, the 43rd Parliament. I am humbled and honoured and grateful that they would trust me with this privilege. My pledge to them is that I will do my very best to represent them here in Ottawa and bring their views to Ottawa.

I want to thank my election team of Sunny, Braden, Alex, Kaitlyn, Donna-Lyn, Josh and Jared. I offer a special shout-out to the University of Saskatchewan Campus Conservatives club, which helped with a lot of door knocking. I offer big thank you to my friend the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek and her husband, Milton Block, for all of their encouragement, and to so many volunteers and donors who made this all possible.

As everybody in here knows, family support is critical to our success, and so I want to thank my parents, Alvin and Irene Redekopp; my sister, Gaylene Molnar, and her family; my two wonderful sons, Kyle and Eric Redekopp; and of course my beautiful wife, Cheryl Redekopp. I could not have done this without them.

It is for these people and for the 75,000 other people who live in Saskatoon West that I am replying to the Speech from the Throne today.

Unfortunately, I cannot and I will not support it.

This throne speech calls for “unity in the pursuit of common goals and aspirations.” The Prime Minister talks about listening and about parliamentarians working together, but the throne speech says almost nothing about the aspirations of people from Saskatoon. Not only that, the Prime Minister brings in policy after policy that targets the people of Saskatoon and our economy.

Let me explain the economy in Saskatchewan. If we think of a three-legged stool, the first leg is agriculture: wheat, canola, barley, oats and things like that. The second leg is mining: potash, uranium, gold and diamonds. The third leg is oil and gas. Last year, in 2018, these three sectors accounted for 36% of our GDP in Saskatchewan. The seat of the stool is manufacturing and construction. We manufacture machinery, industrial equipment and food products, while construction is the infrastructure that supports all of that work and all of the people. In 2018, those two sectors were 14% of our Saskatchewan GDP. Taken together, the legs and the seat of the stool account for 50% of Saskatchewan's GDP.

The other half of our GDP is the services that support our residents: things like stores, restaurants, education, health care and everything else. These things all sit on the stool, but the legs of our stool, the foundation of our GDP, are mining, oil and gas, and agriculture.

We all know that these three sectors are suffering in Saskatchewan.

In terms of the oil and gas leg, the no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69, has restricted capacity to ship our oil to markets. The selling

price of oil is down, investment is down, and therefore there are fewer jobs.

The mining leg is also affected by Bill C-69. It politicizes the impact assessment process and adds significant time and uncertainty to the approval process. Companies no longer see Saskatchewan as the safe, stable place it once was to invest. Therefore, investments are going elsewhere and jobs are disappearing.

On the agricultural leg, the Liberals' continuing relationship failures with China have hurt our canola producers.

What does all this mean to the people of Saskatoon? When the legs of the stool are crippled, everyone suffers. Unemployment is up and people are struggling to pay their bills. During the election, I talked to many households and many families who were struggling to make their monthly payments, and on the campaign I spoke to many of the people we talk about who are short \$200 every month.

I want to provide some vignettes of some real people and how this affects them.

I think of a young man who used to work on an oil drilling rig. He drove seven hours from Saskatoon to work in Drayton Valley, Alberta. He worked a two-week shift of 12-hour days, made really good money and spent that money in Saskatoon on vehicles, restaurants, stereo equipment, etc. I know this because this young man is my son. In 2015, the Liberals came to power. They introduced the no-more-pipelines bill and the no-more-tankers bill, and this drove down the price of our Canadian oil and reduced our investment. As a result, my son lost his job, and there was no more spending in Saskatoon.

Another example is a manufacturer who supplied components to the mining and the oil and gas industries. The manufacturer employed 140 people in Saskatoon. Those were well-paying jobs supporting 140 families in Saskatoon. I know this because my brother-in-law works at that company. Because of Bill C-69, investment in resource projects decreased, and the result was that people were laid off as the company adjusted to decreased business.

● (1305)

Fortunately, Saskatonians are resilient and creative problem-solvers, so they looked elsewhere and found business to keep the company going, but the business is smaller than it would have been had the oil and gas market kept going strong.

The Address

Let us think of an entrepreneur who build new homes for families, directly employed four people, indirectly hired 40 different contractors to complete all the work required and created several million dollars of economic spinoffs in Saskatoon. I know this because this was my business. Because of the Liberals' mortgage stress test, new homebuyers are forced out of the market. Because of changes in building codes, the cost to build a home significantly increased, and as a result, construction activity in Saskatoon has significantly slowed down. In fact, housing starts are at the lowest level in 14 years. Many good people in the construction industry are suffering or have lost their jobs.

What did I expect from the Liberal government throne speech in the spirit of working together? I certainly expected support for western Canadian jobs. After all, two days after the Liberals were reduced to a minority in October, the Prime Minister said he clearly has more to do to earn the trust of people in Saskatchewan. I expected support for oil and gas, mining and farmers.

What did I actually hear?

I heard a vague reference to natural resources and farmers, no mention of the Trans Mountain pipeline, no mention of a national energy corridor, nothing about repealing or even making changes to Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, and certainly no concern for our rapidly growing and dangerous debt. I think Rex Murphy said it best when he said the Speech from the Throne "is a semantic graveyard, where dullness and pretentiousness conspire, successfully, against the life and lift of our two wonderful official languages."

Housing was mentioned in the throne speech, and I hope the government will follow through on that issue. There are many people in my riding for whom good, stable housing is out of reach. As a former home builder, I call upon the government to relax the mortgage stress test, as this has had a significant negative impact on construction in Saskatoon.

One thing barely mentioned in the throne speech was the word "job". The Liberals are quick to offer money to Canadians for this or that and to offer handouts to make up for their lack of action on the economy, but let me tell members something about people from Saskatoon: We are proud, hard-working folks, and we do not want handouts; we want good-paying jobs.

Saskatoon is also filled with entrepreneurs, people willing to take great risks in order to employ others and build our economy. Entrepreneurs do not want handouts; they want a stable playing field with reasonable regulations and the freedom to work hard, succeed and then enjoy the benefits when success does happen.

There were two other words conspicuously absent from the throne speech: "balanced budget". I am gravely concerned that the Liberal government has chosen to spend seemingly unlimited amounts of money on every kind of program, with no concern for the underlying economy that pays for all of this. We are burdening our future generations with debt that will have to be paid back at some point. I call upon the government to at least plan to return to balanced budgets.

Finally, Saskatchewan people care deeply about our environment. All three of the stool legs I spoke of earlier are rooted in our land. No one is a better steward of our land than people from

Saskatchewan. We all understand that healthy land, water and air are critical to our long-term success, but we cannot adopt a zealot-like approach, assuming that the only way to have a healthy planet is to stop human development and to stifle innovation and economic growth. We cannot sacrifice the agriculture, mining, and oil and gas industries of Saskatchewan and Alberta in exchange for a photo op with Greta. We cannot stifle economic growth and continue to increase taxes on our people.

This throne speech made it clear that the government intends to continue to raise the carbon tax. Taxes will rise, with no meaningful impact on carbon. This will hurt ordinary Canadians and business owners.

In conclusion, Canada's Conservatives are focused on the aspirations of everyday Canadians, like the good people of Saskatoon West. We are the party of the middle class, and we will continue to present real and tangible ideas that will allow people to get ahead and get the government off their backs.

As I close, I want to congratulate and thank the leader of my party for his tireless dedication and work over the past 15 years. I also want to wish everyone in this chamber a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope over the break my colleague will reconsider his position on the throne speech. The throne speech is a general document that highlights what is going to be taking place at a very high level. It talks about such things as Canada's middle class, our environment and our relationship with indigenous people, and we should reflect on what has taken place over the last number of years. We are going to continue to move forward. The results have been overwhelmingly positive. We have taken people out of poverty and we have an economy that is moving forward. In excess of a million jobs have been created. There will be highs and lows.

Would the member opposite not agree that when we reflect on the past four years, Canada's middle class has been doing quite well and will continue to do so under this government's agenda?

The Address

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I was struggling a bit with the space-time continuum message in the throne speech. It was, as the member mentioned, at a very high level, and I think far beyond the grasp of most people who listened to it. There was very little content. If we think about what has been happening over the past years, there has been an increase just this last month of 71,000 people who have lost their jobs. This is not good for the people of Canada. It is not helping the middle class.

In fact, the middle class is struggling. When I was on the doorsteps this past election, I kept hearing over and over about how difficult it was to pay the bills and how difficult it was to find a good-paying job. I think there is a lot left to do.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard the previous Liberal speaker talk about how important it is to come together when times are tough and when workers are on the ropes, and to stand together in order to make conditions better. What we saw several weeks ago, with the successful settlement of the CN strike, was what is possible when the government does not prejudice negotiations between an employer and employees when they go to collective bargaining.

Unfortunately, that is not the approach the government took in the case of a rotating strike by Canada Post employees over a year ago. Instead, it prejudiced the negotiations early on by taking sides. It propagated the message, which was often untrue, from Canada Post management, and it legislated those workers back to work. Those workers are still waiting for a deal and there continues to be delays in the process under the Liberals' legislation. The Liberals legislated them back and were responsible for the legislation that governs that process now. Not only that, they are the ones who hired the management at Canada Post and the minister has the opportunity to intervene.

Will the minister get involved and get these workers, who are working in a workplace with an unacceptably high rate of injury, back to work under fair conditions?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, I am quite honoured that the member opposite believes that I am a minister in the government. I cannot speak for the government, but I do agree that we need to allow the businesses of our country to have a stable and fair playing field. We need to stay out of their way so that they can do what they do best.

Businesses flourish when they are given the right regulatory regime, the right financial resources and the right tax structure. We are very smart people in Canada. We can accomplish great things and we can employ a lot of people. Therefore, if we were to form government, that is where we would go: allow businesses to flourish, create jobs and build up our economic activity in Canada.

• (1315)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for his great speech here in the House of Commons and to welcome him to this place as well.

My hon. colleague for Scarborough—Guildwood was talking about the Canada child benefit earlier today. It used to be called the universal child benefit, which was our idea. I think it was a great

idea to put child care dollars right in the hands of parents, rather than bringing a big government bureaucracy to bear on that.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has any suggestions on how we can reduce government bureaucracy and empower Canadians to take care of themselves in their own communities.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I was a former home builder, and that is a place where there is a lot of bureaucracy. There are a lot of regulations and rules that come into play that make it difficult to build houses, and difficult to do it efficiently and in a cost-effective way for consumers.

We could do a lot of things to work together with industry, such as keeping a level playing field and not imposing a lot of rules and regulations to stifle businesses and slow them down.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the first time I rise in the House of Commons. My first duty is to pay my sincere respects to the constituents of Calgary Centre who gave me the privilege and responsibility of representing their concerns in the House.

Calgary Centre is a diverse part of this country that represents the greatness that Canada offers. We are reflective of Canada's storied past, our present and our hopeful future.

The past is celebrated every summer as we gather for our annual Stampede, the greatest outdoor show on earth, the roots of which lie in the skills required of ranchers and the cowboys they employed to get their cattle to market.

The present is the bustling metropolis that includes Calgary's oldest neighbourhoods along with the new Canadians who have found a home here. The bustling downtown has been burdened these past four years with an exodus of talent and opportunities as a result of failed government policies, but we will not find a person who does not think our imposed difficulties cannot be overcome.

The future has brightened as our new provincial government has seen to implement policies that will reverse years of economic stagnation with the growth-oriented, balanced approach to moving us forward.

I chose to serve this riding because of all it represents: vitality and opportunity, diversity and history. I am honoured the voters of Calgary Centre heard my message loud and clear in this past election and returned a Conservative member of Parliament soundly over the incumbent member from the previous government. The message we send could not be more clear. The government's policies are moving Canada in the wrong direction.

The Address

Allow me to wind back the clock and discuss how we arrived here. Almost two years ago on vacation with my wife, I broke the news to her that getting better government in Canada was a necessity. I believe strongly that we are impoverishing the next generation of Canadians with bad fiscal policy, false choices on energy and overtaxation. I asked for her support in bringing this change to Canadians. She agreed. Let me say that without her constant love and support, I would not be here. My thanks to Ruth and I love her very much.

It is no small undertaking to run for public office, but so many friends and supporters joined us along the way. Our message about the need for change in the way Canada is being governed resonated throughout our city. I owe so much to so many for their contribution to our efforts and I will do my best to fulfill their trust.

The message delivered by Calgarians was so clear that the Prime Minister referred to it several times after the election. The Deputy Prime Minister pledged to listen really hard to combat the disunion wrought by the government's agenda.

In that context, I listened to the throne speech attentively. I did not hear any indication of reversal or accommodation. I have reviewed it and I find some relief in statements and potential, like reducing taxes for the middle class, the government pursuing a responsible fiscal plan, understanding that economic growth is the best way to ensure a good quality of life for Canadians, better health care for Canadians and the ethical use of artificial intelligence, getting Canadian resources to market and offering unwavering support to the hard-working men and women in Canada's natural resource sector. These are all ideas for our times.

I also noted reference to the bedrock of our parliamentary system, which heartened me. After years of federal powers drifting to various whims and interest groups, perhaps there would be a change in approach.

Actions speak louder than words, and I am concerned, given the record of the government, that the definition of its objectives differs strongly from objective, tangible outcomes for Canadians. Will all these words have some meaning this time, or will they be empty virtues that show no results? Is the country being asked once again to play Charlie Brown to the government playing Lucy with a football?

However, there are clearly words, and thus direction, missing from the speech. There is no commitment to young Canadians who are now or soon to be entering the labour force that their future taxes will not increasingly rise to meet the needs of the squandered finances of the government. There is no commitment to stem the transfer of wealth from working Canadians to international financial organizations for guarantees borne by Canadians. There is no commitment to right a regulatory system that has been broken beyond recognition by the government, giving Canadians a regime that makes national projects too risky to undertake, thereby further constraining and impoverishing a generation of Canadians, and this is especially true of indigenous Canadians. There is no effort in mending the divisions created in the past four years and during this past election by a Prime Minister openly campaigning against one region of the country. This betrays a true prejudice, and it is not becoming of a government leader.

• (1320)

I note in the Speech from the Throne the iteration of “climate change” eight times. That is prominent, and I note the focus of the government's virtue. The climate is changing. We need to address it and we need to address its effects. We should acknowledge that we are not an island and accept that all our efforts would be for naught without efforts from significant contributors to the increase in greenhouse gases in the world.

Let us examine clearly the cost of our virtuous approach versus the negligible contribution we provide to the outcome. Our world leadership on this file should be one that binds the country and actually helps solve the problem, not rip us apart with an approach that accomplishes next to nothing. This is our role to fulfill in this global problem. Let us lead Canadians to our solutions, but first let us free ourselves of the bias and hyperbole that simply inflame reactions and stoke divisions.

Our words and our approach matter. We have a problem to solve, and today's decision-makers need to find the solutions that lead to our outcomes. However, we need to understand that our use of language in this matter has led to a hysteria among a generation that believes the future is bleak.

[*Translation*]

On the contrary, I believe the best is yet to come for Canada.

[*English*]

I work with energy professionals and technologists, who are all parents. Everyone strives in their field to make their lives and this country a better place for their children. All are dismayed by the half-truths and false choices the government is thrusting upon them.

Follow the outcomes proposed, and on a full-cycle basis, they represent a worse outcome for the world, for Canada, for our environment and for families. We know there are no free environmental solutions to producing energy. Coal, oil, natural gas, hydro, solar, wind and nuclear energy all have an environmental footprint and CO2 footprint.

Canada's oil production represents part of the best, most environmentally friendly 8% of the world's oil production. Let me add that production in Canada, to these standards, is not inexpensive. Is this the resource we do not want the world to produce?

The Address

[Translation]

All governments need to be wary of solutions that end up causing bigger problems. Yes, Canada does need an effective approach to tackling climate change, and we can find solutions.

[English]

False solutions will lead to problems in addition to economic dislocation, with increased world poverty and decreased lifespans, increased emissions from other more primitive power sources, increased human dislocation and a threat to world peace.

Let me get granular on Canada's world-renowned energy industry. Let us talk about the 175,000 workers who are no longer employed. Let us talk about the world-leading technologies and service providers that have been forced to work in competitive jurisdictions, like the United States, a country that has more than doubled its oil production to 12 million barrels per day over the past decade, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions to the levels in the 1950s.

Let us talk about the reversal of fortune of our oil and gas companies, whose only drawback is their jurisdiction. Let us talk about the economic disadvantage that has been played upon Canadians by a non-constructive regulatory regime manipulated by foreign lobbyists. Let us talk about the transfer of wealth of tens of millions of dollars per day from Canada to the United States where our exported oil is uniquely bound. From a Canadian taxpayer's perspective, let us talk about the taxes not being paid as a result of this wealth and jobs transfer. We can talk about taxes that would pay for schools and hospitals, and doctors and teachers, yes, those social outcomes for Canadians.

Let us collect our thoughts and find a way to rationally address the causes and effects of our changing climate. Let us look at solutions put forth by Canadian champions. The very definition of that is the companies in our energy industry. As an analogy, when in a tight game, put the best players on the ice.

To address the effects of climate change, Canada's best players are in the energy industry. Oil sands operations have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 20% to 30% since 2000. Conventional oil and gas producers have brought their environmental footprint down substantially in the same period. We should not forget that environmental solutions stretch beyond addressing climate change.

Canada's energy sector is the best in the world at minimizing its environmental footprint. We have a role to play in the world and climate change is a world issue. We will not begin to address its impact with a parochial approach.

● (1325)

We have homegrown solutions developed here because of the Canadian public's insistence on building a clean oil and gas sector. We owe a great deal to the Canadians of today. We owe significantly more to the future, and the course the government is leading will leave tomorrow's Canadians with fewer options and a debt legacy that will constrain their options in dealing with the problems that will emerge in their lifetimes.

We need to do better. I urge the government to focus on real solutions that do not pit regions of this country against each other and

that do not divide Canadians by their status or where they live. I urge the government to bring understanding to the breadth of Canadian solutions and show leadership to bind this whole country. There is much at stake.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member to the House. I congratulate him on his victory and the obligations and honour that it carries.

I listened to the speech with great interest, in particular because the member comes from Calgary, in a province that has decided to lay off 6,000 public service workers. These were jobs that were keeping some families afloat, especially if their partners had lost jobs in the energy sector.

I would like to ask the member about the cuts to the homeless services. We know that Calgary is struggling and that Calgary has a significant homeless population, but as a city, it has made remarkable progress in comparison to others across the country. Regarding the \$3.2-million cut to homelessness, I am curious whether the member opposite supports this and supports making the most vulnerable people in that province carry the load, when it comes to the cuts that the provincial government there is making.

Is that something the member supports? Is that something he thinks is going to build a stronger Calgary, but more importantly help the most vulnerable in that city?

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, 175,000 to 180,000 people have been laid off in Calgary. They lost their jobs in the energy industry. Some of those people find their way into homeless shelters.

The policies of the federal government have driven those people out of work. The people of Calgary are not going to say, "Will the government come up with a solution here, after having driven us out of work?" The government's policies are affecting the homeless situation in Calgary. We continue to deal with our homeless people as best we can. We also have a provincial budget we have to manage. We are doing our utmost, given the situation that has been thrust upon us by a government whose policies were misdirected against this industry.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome the member for Calgary Centre to the House.

I would like to ask him about some parts of the throne speech he did not really talk about. Two of those things are the need for a universal, single-payer pharmacare system and what the throne speech described as a willingness to look at dental care.

The Address

During the campaign, I ran into many people, especially seniors, who were very concerned about their inability to afford prescription drugs. One day while canvassing, a woman came out of her house to talk to me about the importance of dental care to her family. She said that her husband had to spend \$700 on dental work, which meant their kids would not see the dentist for the next year.

The member for Calgary Centre is a Conservative. He comes from a province where the provincial government appears less than fully committed to the universal public health care system. It has said it is not interested in a pharmacare system and has said nothing about a dental care system.

I wonder if the member believes we need a universal, single-payer pharmacare system, and whether that member also believes dental care is something that would help people in his riding.

● (1330)

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, the health care outcomes in Calgary and in Alberta are less than they should be, but we do spend more per capita on health care in Alberta than we should. It is among the highest in Canada. The results that we need to achieve from the amount we are spending in that portion of the provincial government's purview do need to improve, and the provincial government has recognized that.

A lot of health care providers as well have recognized that changes are required in that system in order to get better outcomes. In the end, it is about health outcomes. On pharmacare, most people in Calgary, most people in Alberta, most people in Canada are covered by some kind of pharmacare system. We need to find the people who are falling through the cracks and make sure they get the critical pharmacare solutions that they need. I do not think that requires a national pharmacare program, but we do need to find those people and give them a solution that provides their health care needs for them.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the tax situation he mentioned because, in fact, in our last mandate we cut taxes for nine million Canadians and now we are cutting taxes for 20 million Canadians. The only ones for whom taxes have gone up are those making over \$200,000 a year. I ask my hon. colleague to clarify.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, as the government can tell us, there are ins and outs along the way with taxes. There are many ways in which the government collected more taxes from so many Canadians in the past four years, and there are some ways in which it gave back to those people it considered to require it more than the people it took taxes from. The nature of the tax system is that there are some payers and there are some payees.

Many Canadians, beyond the \$200,000 that the member spoke about, have been paying more taxes. These are primarily small business people, families and people who have struggled to make ends meet. More people have lost their jobs in my province under the Liberal government's mandate in the last several years, which leads to fewer people paying tax in my province than were paying tax before. We need to come to a solution very quickly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—T miscouata—Les Basques.

Now that I have more time than I did on the first few occasions I rose in the House, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to voters in my magnificent riding, Shefford, for putting their trust in me on October 21. I am deeply humbled to accept my new role as a member of Parliament.

I will work very hard and look for opportunities to collaborate so that I can properly represent the people of my riding, whose entrepreneurial spirit is strong. My riding has lakes, rivers and mountains that we want to protect and a unique agrifood industry.

I would also like to thank some people, because nobody runs an election campaign alone. I am a proper Quebecker and a hockey fan, so I see the similarities between a campaign and a game, and everyone knows I am by no means a puck hog.

I would like to thank the people on my offensive line: my campaign director, Carole Ducharme; my communications director, Marthe Lapierre; my official agent, Fran ois Par ; my adviser, Maxime Leclerc; and my scheduling officer, Estelle C t . I would also like to thank all my other volunteers and supporters.

I also want to thank the members of my defence team. I thank my family, who has always been there for me: my father, Andr , my mother, Rachel, my sister, Catherine, my brothers, Samuel and Vincent, my father's spouse, Carole, and my mother's spouse, Fran ois. They were sometimes called upon to assist my offensive team. They even put up some of my election signs.

I also want to thank the people who helped me keep my cool and stay grounded. When my niece Leia would jump into my arms, when my nephew Tyler would give me a smile or when my god-child Thomas would greet me, I was reminded that they are the reason I am in politics. I want to give them a better future. I did not get into politics to have a career. I got into politics out of conviction.

I also want to thank my goalie, my spouse, Richard Leclerc, who was prepared to stop everything. He supported me non-stop. Behind every great woman is a great man. He made a number of key saves to help me win the game. He was the difference-maker.

Now that I have been elected, I am fortunate to be part of the incredible Bloc Qu b cois team, composed of 32 members and all of our staff, and to have been appointed the Bloc Qu b cois critic for the status of women, gender equality and seniors. Those issues are particularly important to me, as I had the opportunity to work in those fields in recent years in various community organizations. I paid very close attention to the throne speech, looking to find commitments in those areas, but there was nothing to be found.

The Address

As for status of women, I support the government's willingness to work on tightening the rules around firearms, but words are not enough. The House has the ability to take real action. We can introduce stronger gun controls, especially for assault weapons and handguns. We can tighten border controls for firearms, to try and get them off the black market. We can ensure that buyers of firearms do not pose a threat to anyone's life.

We need to take action against daily violence against women, the slaps across the face and the horrible violence committed against women simply because they are women. We need to take action to remove the stigma and combat misogyny.

Therefore, I will be carefully monitoring the government's commitment to the gender-based violence strategy and to the development of a national action plan in concert with its partners. This should include help for mental health. I imagine that we will have the opportunity to talk about this again in committee.

With respect to seniors, we will have to ensure that there are not two classes of seniors and that pensions be increased starting at age 65. The spiral of poverty does not wait for an individual to turn 75, it all too often starts upon retirement. When I asked a question about this, the Minister of Seniors even said that it was an excellent idea.

Seniors, families and those living alone are also asking for more social housing. Monies should be transferred to Quebec with no strings attached. As protesters stated this week, having a decent roof over one's head should not have a price tag.

● (1335)

We also need to consider health transfers, which need to be increased to 5.2%. We know that health is the number one issue and it is no doubt our most precious asset. We will wish many people good health during the holiday season.

Seniors also want to be seen as a grey-haired source of strength, not as a burden. We therefore need to let them remain on the labour market, if they so desire, which would help alleviate the labour shortage. We therefore need to create tax incentives for people over the age of 65 and ensure that they are no longer penalized if they want to remain active and continue to contribute to our economy.

I come from a riding where there are many agricultural entrepreneurs and so I want to support them. That is why I believe that there should be no more breaches in supply management and that the system should be protected by legislation. I spent my childhood on a farm so I am all the more concerned about this sector, which just had such a hard year.

In closing, I can only hope for better representation in Parliament, which is currently only 29% women. We have still not achieved gender parity. We will need to look into that.

When it comes to defending Quebec's interests, I am not worried. My colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and I will keep standing up for Quebeckers. That is why I am disappointed that our party's sub-amendment was not adopted by all the opposition parties.

By way of a reminder, items found in the subamendment include: respecting provincial jurisdiction, in particular by not authorizing

any project that does not comply with provincial and Quebec laws relating to environmental protection and land use planning; underfunding of the health care system, which requires an increase in transfers; an unprecedented crisis facing media and creators, who must be supported through the imposition of royalties on web giants; and loopholes in the supply management system that must be protected by legislation. We will be back at it in 2020. We will not give up fighting for Quebeckers.

In a few minutes we will be leaving the House for the holidays. I wish everyone some quiet time with their loved ones. As we see it, the challenges of this minority government are great, and we must all get to work as quickly as possible. I will remember those who voted for me, my cherished constituents.

● (1340)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my Bloc Québécois colleague to the House.

[English]

The member opposite raised the issue of gun control, and handguns and assault weapons in particular. We know that these have different impacts on different populations, and we know different cities are struggling with different forms of gun violence.

I would be curious to know, from the member's perspective, when we talk about handguns and the impact they have on our communities, what the circumstance is in her community. What would benefit most from having structured rules and regulations around this, to make handguns harder to get?

Could she tell us whether her party and her leader have had any conversations with the province to see if it is open to supporting the initiatives as we produce them? It will take a combination of provincial and municipal action on this file to achieve success.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, our party already mentioned at news conferences that it is interested in PolySeSouvient's proposals on handguns, specifically that we should stop manufacturing and importing them here. That would have a direct impact on the number of handguns circulating in our communities.

I know that discussions are happening in government and that certain cities would like more power in this area. We will see what kind of tools the government gives them. Then we will see if we can find common ground.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to working with my colleague and all parties in this minority Parliament.

My question is with respect to a poll that just came out the other day. Sixty-five per cent of Quebecers suggested they supported using Canadian energy, specifically from western Canada, over that of energy imported from elsewhere in the world.

Does my hon. colleague have any comments on that and can we count on her support to ensure that Canadian energy can access markets across the country, including from Alberta to Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, as we said in our reply to the Speech from the Throne, we will see if more powers are given to Quebec and to each province to allow them to determine what is best when it comes to land use and what they need in terms of environmental protection.

We sincerely believe in respecting provincial jurisdiction. Projects should not be implemented if they fail to comply with provincial or Quebec laws.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Winnipeg Centre, we have an increasing issue with homelessness. People are calling for affordable housing. We need to push for more affordable, accessible social housing.

Could my colleague across the way comment on some of her party's plans with respect to major investments in affordable, accessible social housing?

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we believe it is vital that funds be transferred for social housing in the various provinces. This is critical. The needs are there. We need to enable the provinces and Quebec to build more social housing.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are farmers, hunters and sports shooters. They are law-abiding gun owners, licensed and already heavily vetted. In the throne speech, the government chose to crack down on gun crime not by targeting criminals but by penalizing lawful gun owners. Even worse, the Liberals have reduced the penalty for gang crimes to as little as a fine.

The Conservatives listened to the experts and proposed increasing resources to the Canada Border Services Agency and targeting known members of gangs.

Will the hon. member opposite join me and my Conservative colleagues to stop the penalizing of law-abiding gun owners and instead put the emphasis where it belongs: on the gangs, drug traffickers and illegal gun traffickers?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I myself come from a family of avid hunters. The Larouche family travelled from Chicoutimi to hunt all over Quebec. I have immense respect for hunters. I still have cousins who hunt.

The Address

However, I would like to bring the debate back to the subject of handguns and assault weapons, which are not the same as hunting weapons. That is what I was saying in my speech. I also want to mention tighter gun control at the borders. We talked about that, because we believe it could prevent guns from reaching the black market.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—T miscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak for the first time in the House, I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in Rimouski-Neigette—T miscouata—Les Basques who placed their trust in me and gave me the privilege of representing them in the recent election. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of my team, who made this whole adventure possible. I also want to thank my family, my mother, my father, my brother and all my loved ones.

The decision to get into politics is never made in just a few seconds, a few minutes or a few hours. It takes days, months or even years to make that call. In my case, it was the result of many days, if not months or even years of reflection. After trying to stay in school as long as I could after high school, I finally decided to enter the workforce to learn more about everyday realities and contribute to society.

After more than 10 years in the workforce, I decided to go back to school. Embarking on that adventure was a sacrifice, but I have no regrets. I learned more about myself and also learned to tackle life's challenges. All this has made me the man I am today.

I also want to mention that I am very happy to see a lot of young representatives carving out their place in politics. As a Bloc Qu b cois critic, I took on some major files and I am very proud of that. I am the critic for public accounts, the St. Lawrence Seaway and tourism.

Speaking of the St. Lawrence Seaway, some colleagues and I had the privilege of visiting the pride of all Quebecers, Davie shipyard, two weeks ago. This shipyard did not receive its fair share of contracts under the national shipbuilding strategy. The government gave Davie a small share of the contracts. More specifically, the government allocated \$2 billion in contracts to Davie, but it allocated \$75 billion in contracts to Irving Shipbuilding and nearly \$25 billion in contracts to Seaspan Shipyards in Vancouver. The Bloc Qu b cois certainly plans on promoting the Davie shipyard to ensure that it gets its fair share.

Tourism is vital to the regions of Quebec and to Quebec as a whole. More than 400,000 workers benefit from the tourism industry, which accounts for nearly 10% of Quebec's economy.

The Address

Now it is time for a deep dive into some takeaways from the last election campaign. The campaign taught me a lot about myself and gave me a chance to meet some amazing people: moms and dads, seniors and students. They all had something in common: they wanted me to know how proud they are of the place they call home, and they were eager to introduce me to it.

During the last election campaign, we discussed a number of issues. One of the hot-button issues in my riding is the labour shortage. Many businesses in my region and Quebec in general have a very hard time recruiting and attracting workers. Specifically, one-quarter of the population in the Lower St. Lawrence region is 65 or older. Fifteen years from now, one-third of our population will be 65 or older. I met people over 65 who would have liked to keep working but would have been penalized for doing so. The government needs to intervene and make it attractive for people who want to contribute to our society to stay in the labour force.

We also talked about issues related to keeping young people in the region because our population is dwindling and our regions are in decline. Urgent intervention is needed to ensure that these people can live and even age comfortably and with dignity. During the last election campaign, I was surprised to learn that one of the RCMs in my riding, Témiscouata, does not have access to a cell network.

• (1350)

Cell coverage is limited or non-existent in 11 out of 19 municipalities, even though it is vital to the development of our regions, to bringing in families and to the establishment of businesses that can be competitive in the region. The government needs to act and allocate the necessary funding for the infrastructure required to provide cell coverage, which the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, now deems essential.

I also noticed that high-speed Internet access is problematic. Again in the Témiscouata RCM, nearly 41% of residents do not have access to high-speed Internet. The federal Connect to Innovate program introduced in the previous Parliament aimed to provide five megabits per second by 2021, while the CRTC is calling for a minimum speed of 50 megabits per second. I sincerely hope that the federal government will follow the example of the Government of Quebec and ensure that all homes in Quebec have access to high-speed Internet much sooner.

The guaranteed income supplement is another urgent need in my riding and in the regions of Quebec. Where I am from, in the Lower St. Lawrence, half of all seniors need the guaranteed income supplement and a quarter of them live on a low income nearing the poverty line. The government must take action and intervene by providing tangible measures to fight poverty. These are urgent needs.

In my riding, the economy is very diversified and has businesses in the manufacturing, agricultural, forestry and services sectors, among others. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business ranked Rimouski fourth in its entrepreneurial communities report. The city is growing, attracting flourishing businesses and contributing to the development of our region of Quebec.

Our region also needs port infrastructure improvements. In eastern Quebec, the ports of Gros-Cacouna, Rimouski, Matane and

Gaspé did not receive from the federal government the support needed for the full development and growth of our region.

I would also like to talk about the forest, a term that is only mentioned once in the throne speech, yet the forest represents almost 10% of the total area of Canada. In Quebec it is almost 50%. In recent years, British Columbia has received a lot of investments and subsidies from the federal government to combat the pine shoot moth. The Maritimes received almost \$70 million to combat spruce budworm. Quebec received nothing.

I sincerely hope that the government will take the necessary steps to protect our forests, air, water and our lakes and rivers.

In the coming weeks and months, I look forward to seeing the concrete measures that the government will introduce to provide the help and support our regions in Quebec need to continue their development.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to ask some of the member's colleagues about the issue of pharmacare and the many different types of contributions and expectations that Canadians have. The province of Quebec is a good example of one jurisdiction that has come a long way in making the affordability of pharmaceuticals, or prescribed medicines, quite accessible.

A significant percentage of the population would like to see a Canada-wide national pharmacare program, and that means working with stakeholders. This government is prepared to continue to work with stakeholders.

I am interested in the member's personal thoughts, and possibly even the party's perspective, on a national pharmacare program. I believe the majority of people from all regions of our country would support this.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague opposite for his question.

With regard to health, of course, no one would oppose a greater contribution from the government to promote Canadians' access to health care. In our comments in the House this week, particularly in question period, we mentioned that the Premier of Quebec and all the provincial premiers are calling on the government to increase health transfers to the provinces by 5.2%, so that is something that we are following very closely.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Address

I was pleased to hear my colleague mention that the throne speech does not include many solutions for the regions of Quebec or for access to cellphone service. That is why we, on this side of the House, were very surprised to see that the Bloc is so keen to support the throne speech.

Despite that support, does my colleague not believe that the Liberal government should be doing a lot more to help the regions of Quebec like his and mine?

This government obviously has a lot of trouble freeing up funding for projects that will change things in the regions of Quebec. We certainly need that funding in Mégantic—L'Érable.

• (1400)

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his question.

He can count on my full co-operation on developing our regions and ensuring that the government understands the realities these regions face and that it invests the money they need to fully develop. The regions have specific pressing needs, in particular with respect to cell coverage, and these needs are completely different from those of major centres. My colleague can count on the Bloc Québécois to speak up for the regions of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to a labour shortage. Does the member support a fair, orderly and compassionate immigration system? Does he support a focus on economic immigration?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

The labour shortage is something that concerns me greatly. The regions of Quebec are in dire need of workers, especially in my riding, in the Lower St. Lawrence.

The Bloc Québécois proposed concrete measures during the election campaign. We wanted to focus on attracting immigrants to the regions by offering them additional tax credits. We also wanted to attract young people and get them to stay in the regions by also proposing tax credits to new graduates who accepted jobs in the regions of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by expressing my thanks, first and foremost, to my wife and my partner, Nicole. This was her first campaign as the spouse of a parliamentarian. Many may not know, but I was married in the middle of the last term. She had nothing but joy to express for the fun of canvassing and meeting people, listening to their needs and also watching us talk about how to build strong communities, cities and a better Canada. The election was made that much more enjoyable having a partner like her along to provide that support. To see an election through new eyes is always a real pleasure for any politician who has been through countless elections.

I also want to thank the residents, voters and the folks who make up Spadina—Fort York, which is a riding that dances along the waterfront in the inner harbour of Lake Ontario in Toronto. It is one of the most diverse ridings, as many in Toronto are. It also has pockets of extreme creativity and vibrancy with respect to its economic clout. However, it also has pockets of some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Canada. That combination of affluence and poverty cheek by jowl creates good, strong social networks of mutual support between the two. It also explains the challenges we have as a city, as a country, to ensure that we build an economy where prosperity is shared more generously, fairly and productively. I certainly heard from my residents that this was one of the mandates they sent me back to Ottawa to advocate on their behalf.

Of course, climate change was another issue for us as a waterfront community. With the flooding we experienced last spring, 600 residents on Toronto islands were at risk of losing their homes. We lost extraordinary and very delicate ecological infrastructure. We have to turn our eyes to ensure that not only do we fight climate change with good, strong policies that limit greenhouse gas emissions, but also that we protect those communities that are in harm's way right now as water levels change and become more chaotic. We also need to ensure the natural habitat is restored.

Those are the priorities that residents sent me back here to talk about, among others. Therefore, I look to the throne speech as a way of starting to fulfill those responsibilities and assuring the residents who sent me here, and my colleagues who I will be sharing time with in the House, that my focus on those issues will be unrelenting.

One of the things I commented on earlier during members' statements was the issue of housing and homelessness across the country. It is why I left city council and ran federally back in 2014. It is why I am so proud to be reappointed as the parliamentary secretary, with a specific focus and responsibility for housing. As I have often said, and members who were here before may recall, while housing is often defined as the crisis that needs to be solved, to me housing remains the best tool we have to address the issues raised by members from all parties, as they have explained the mandates they have received from their residents.

The Address

When it comes to things like unemployment in places like Alberta, when we build social housing, we create jobs. We know that the construction trades are a large part of the downturn in the energy economy, with the lack of work for highly skilled labour in that province. Building a gas plant requires many of the same skill sets as building a house. We can start to solve some of the poverty issues in Alberta by putting to work the unemployed construction workers who had been working on oil projects. As we wait for world oil prices to return, as we wait for new markets to be established and as we wait for the investments we have made to strengthen the oil and gas sector, one of the things we can do in the interim is build the infrastructure that people on the lower end of the economic scale so desperately need.

It is why I was so disheartened to see the Alberta government cut funding for homelessness and front-line services in Calgary and Edmonton. It is why I have been talking so closely with the mayors in those cities to ensure our housing programs reach the provinces. Even if a provincial government is walking away from those programs, it is good to know the national program will be there to provide assistance and, hopefully, good, strong jobs, as well as the social support that housing provides.

Therefore, housing is an economic tool, an economic driver and is a critically important part of what the mandate talked about. It is a critically important part of what the national housing strategy hopes to achieve. However, when it is seen as economic development and not just a social service, it seems much more dynamic than I think some members give credit for. I hope members opposite can support a stronger, growing and more vibrant housing policy. I know our government is committed to doing that. Also, reference to that in the throne speech is perhaps more appropriately identified as housing as a tool to get toward reconciliation.

• (1405)

When I did work on the homelessness file in the previous Parliament, an indigenous housing provider from Regina, Saskatchewan, said that we cannot have reconciliation without housing policy, cannot have reconciliation without a place to call home.

In many indigenous nations across the country, the notion of having a home is not the issue; it is shelter that is the challenge. They are home when they are on their ground, when they are on their territory, and when we can provide a house with the territory, we have achieved full reconciliation, because both the land and the shelter and the capacity to provide housing have been returned to programs that are self-directed, self-managed and self-realized by indigenous communities.

I took those words to heart, and I have been a strong advocate for indigenous housing providers and have worked very closely with them right across the country from coast to coast, particularly in the Northwest Territories. I am thrilled to see the mandate letters that were produced today and the reference in the Speech from the Throne to the need for an urban indigenous housing program in this country that is designed, delivered, managed and run by indigenous housing providers right across the country. That is in addition to the commitments we have made through the indigenous infrastructure programs to make sure that the three programs for housing through the NIOs, the ITK and the Métis foundation con-

tinue to grow to provide a place to call home that is safe, secure and affordable. These programs are also addressing some of the challenges about murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people, as well as providing economic liberation and dealing with some of the poverty that colonialism imposed upon indigenous people across the country for far too long.

Housing becomes one of the strong tools we can use as the federal government to realize our commitment and our promise to fully realize the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as the key recommendations inside the missing and murdered and missing indigenous women and girls and two-spirited report. We can use housing as a tool to solve those problems.

The other thing we can use housing to do is address climate change. Studies have identified that urban centres are the greatest source of our greenhouse gas emissions, providing 62% or 69%, depending on the studies one looks at, and it is largely from built form. That means our houses need to be more energy-efficient. When we create more energy-efficient housing, not only do we create more affordable housing, but we create housing that actually contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gases and makes the planet safer for all of us to live in.

Again, housing creates economic capacity and creates jobs, but shelter also provides social stability, and it provides environmental payoffs if we do it correctly. We had a very strong commitment in our campaign, and the throne speech as well refers to environmental policies and to providing Canadians with interest-free loans to retrofit their homes so they can make their contribution to climate change real and also do it affordably. They can actually save money by making a contribution to help us fight climate change. It is a win-win-win proposition, and it is one that I look forward to realizing in this Parliament. I look forward to members on the benches opposite who have similar programs making their contributions to make this program as strong as possible.

We have heard about pharmacare. We have heard that Canadians need access to health care on a universal and more national basis. We know that we have to work with provinces and territories, indigenous governments and municipalities to get pharmacare right, to make sure it dovetails with existing programs and that it grows and extends to different medical devices. Those issues are also critically important, but every single study on the issue of health care tells us that housing is a key determinant to better health care outcomes.

The Address

In fact, a very interesting study that was done by an AIDS foundation in the United States showed that viral suppression is only possible if housing is included with the drug program. In other words, drugs alone will not create the health we seek for our neighbours and fellow Canadians. We need places to treat people. We need stable places for many of the drug programs to work effectively, including pharmaceuticals, and Housing is a critical part of that as well.

Our commitment to increasing funding for mental health services and addiction services will not be effective and will not achieve positive results in people's lives if supportive housing is not built to create places to treat and care for people and allow them to thrive, heal and move forward. Those investments that are often talked about as health care investments will be realized through supportive housing investments. When we can get that piece of the health care budget right and use it in concert with our housing policies, we will also see much stronger, aggressive and more successful campaigns to end homelessness in this country.

Again, housing is not the crisis: Housing is the solution to so many of the problems that we face.

• (1410)

One issue that will also be seen as part of the program to solve a challenge that is beyond heartbreaking in our communities is the issue of gun violence.

Gun violence is an issue in my community, the communities that I represent and the neighbourhoods my family walks through on the way to school and the way home from work. I have been to more funerals for children in my riding than for family members in my lifetime. Stop and think about that. I have stood with more families in extreme trauma, as they buried young people in my riding, than I have with members of my own family. That is an unacceptable situation in this country.

There are all sorts of reasons why a long gun is an important tool, and why hunting and the protection of families in rural parts of the country are important. In urban centres, the more bullets that fly, the more people that die. We have to find a way to curtail that.

Of course it requires strong border controls, investments in security at the borders and breaking down the way guns are smuggled into this country by both legal and illegal gun owners. We have to make sure that we step up criminal charges against dangerous people who have reached for a gun too often and let them go off in our cities, and we have to make sure that they do not do harm to more people in our communities. We need to get handguns off the streets in urban centres. It is just fundamental to the health and welfare of our communities.

It is not just the atrocious number of people who are shot or killed. The families that live in neighbourhoods where gun play is all too prevalent live in an intense and sustained circumstance, an environment of stress and disorder. For young children who have to sleep at night in the basement of their housing units because the ground floor is not seen to be safe, or for families that have guns going off, making kids who are five or six years old jump, leads to all sorts of other challenges in our communities. It becomes a mental health issue, quite frankly. It is a form of PTSD for so many

young people, particularly racialized youth in our cities. That has to stop.

Families that have buried their children, that have had to stay by their bedside in emergency wards at hospitals, that have scared kids day in and day out, have asked us to act on gun control. They have asked us to deal with handguns. We have to do it because they have lost confidence in the government to listen. They have lost confidence in society to listen. They have lost confidence in Canada to listen to the trauma they are being asked to endure.

They have asked us to act on this, even though they know it is only one part of the solution. They need to see that communities around this country support them as they seek to build healthy and wonderful children, and they cannot do it fearing guns in our cities. That is why it is so critically important to act on this.

Examining what causes a young person to reach for a gun as a solution also needs to be part of the program if we are going to eliminate this behaviour. We cannot police homicides out of existence. Passing laws has never worked. We have had homicides since time immemorial, long before laws existed, and no country on this planet has eliminated death by handgun simply by outlawing it. Laws are not a deterrent. If people are so scared or so intent on exercising power with a gun, it does not matter how many laws we have. The problem is that the person has already reached for a gun.

We have to get to where young people are making better choices and have the opportunity to make better choices. Again, this is where housing comes into play. When young people are housed properly, cared for properly, nurtured properly, when they are invested in and when they are seen as true citizens worthy of our care and our compassion, our investments and our support, they make better choices.

In every community where better choices are put in front of young people who are at risk, young people will make those better choices. It is a rational, humane thing to do. When those choices are not there for young people, unfortunately far too many of them reach for a gun, whether it is smuggled across the border, stolen from a home down the road, broken out of a gun shop, stolen from a range or simply rented from a legal gun owner.

A person in my riding had 11 legal guns. That individual never did anything with them except rent them out to hoodlums. Two people died as a result of that. When the police went to get the 11 legal guns, they could not find them. He was a legal gun owner until he was not. The reality of this is that he was renting the guns out to pay to go through university. It is a true story, and it killed two people.

• (1415)

That person was smart enough to make better choices, but he did not have those choices in front of him and as a result, made the mistakes that cost people their lives. It also meant that there were 11 handguns floating around the neighbourhood for years and everybody knew, but nobody said anything because they were afraid.

The Address

We have to change the social circumstances and constructs in order to make these outcomes stronger. One of the best ways to do that is to make housing more affordable and support families in terms of good, strong social infrastructure, good programs that support their educational opportunities. We need to make sure that the programs that provide jobs start to hire people in communities where high unemployment rates have been tolerated, despite some of the success we have had over the last two to four years.

Again, housing becomes part of the solution to gun violence. If those on the other side are really serious about making sure that the rules and regulations do not hurt law-abiding owners who need to hunt for food, protect their farms, or what have you, then they will stand up and support our government's initiatives to put into play those social investments in our cities and those investments in housing, to make sure educational opportunities are sustained and to make sure that we give young people the tools they need to survive; not guns but education, jobs, hopes and opportunities.

The final issue is culture and heritage and the need for strong investments in the arts and digital media sectors. One of the fastest growing parts of my riding is the digital media sector. In fact, it has outpaced, in terms of job growth, Silicon Valley for the last two years. One of the reasons it has done that is because our immigration policies get people with talent into our country quickly, who cannot get into the United States. Tech firms from the United States are moving to Toronto so they can get access to the global pool of talent. More importantly, they are understanding that Canada's pool of talent is extraordinarily high, rich and diverse. When those tech firms come to Toronto, they realize that what they were looking for was in Toronto all along.

Supporting open policies around immigration, progressive policies driven by economic need, and also making sure that we are good, strong humanitarians on the global stage has created the context for a good, strong economy in our communities. We need to make sure that we keep those doors open, so that we keep people coming to this country with talents and contributions that they want to make. We also have to make sure that new arrivals are allowed to make those contributions.

One of the worrying statistics in Toronto is that immigrants and refugees are doing less well after five years in Canada now than they have at any other time in the country's history. What are the supports that are missing, preventing that successful integration?

Once again, it is housing. When housing costs are so high that they cannot afford the courses to requalify their credentials, when housing costs are so high or the houses are so far away from jobs that transportation costs become a barrier to participation in the workforce, when housing costs are so high that people spend all their time looking for affordable places to rent instead of better jobs, they fall further and further behind. Their health and mental health start to suffer and their capacity to make the contributions they are ready to make to this country is hurt.

Making sure that we pay attention to those issues is one of the ways we can support the arts and culture sector, which, as I said, is the fourth-largest employer in Toronto and the largest employer in my riding. Moving our funding and support to the cultural sector is one way to develop the economy in our country. Artists need places

to create and quite often an artist will live, work and produce in the same space. We need to make sure our housing programs support that and the arts industries that gather around that.

I will conclude by re-emphasizing the point I want to make most clearly about the throne speech and the mandate letters supported today. We will not succeed as a country without an urban indigenous housing strategy. We will not reconcile the past without a strong urban indigenous housing strategy. That strategy must be indigenous led, designed and delivered. Our government, this Parliament, our country has to find ways to support that to get it off the ground and into a position where it is self-driving, self-determining and self-realizing. I give my absolute commitment to residents, to colleagues in the House on this side and to Parliament that I will not rest until that policy is put in place.

The throne speech has set the stage for that; the mandate letters have given us the authority to get it done. What we need now is Parliament to stand together and realize this, so that we have four forms of housing for indigenous communities, with the NIOs, and with the indigenous urban housing piece finally and totally delivered during this Parliament. If we do that, we will not be talking about how much we cut homelessness; we will be celebrating how we have ended homelessness. That end to homelessness is within reach if we focus on it. The reason to do it is for all of the reasons I have listed, but the way to do it is to start by solving the indigenous urban housing crisis we have in this country and addressing that issue with our partners from those communities, leading us to a solutions-based mandate in this Parliament.

That is why I am going to be supporting the throne speech, it is why I am proud to be the parliamentary secretary in charge of housing and it is why I am absolutely thrilled to get to work in this Parliament.

● (1420)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time rising in the House, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for electing me to represent them here in Parliament. I would also like to take a quick opportunity thank all of my volunteers and my family, who have supported me throughout this journey. I am proud to represent everybody from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex here in the House.

My colleague is talking about guns and restricted weapons. I come from a rural community. I do sympathize with the crimes that happen in our cities. A lot of these weapons have been smuggled into Canada. It is not our law-abiding gun owners who are the ones committing the crimes. I would ask that the government stop treating our law-abiding gun owners and sport shooters and hunters as though they are the criminals.

The Address

When will the government start focusing on criminals? When will it make tougher penalties for the criminals who are actually committing the crimes and keep them behind bars? When will the government stop treating our gun owners who respect the law and are law-abiding citizens as criminals?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the program that I just described and the plans we have pursued are not simply about tightening the rules around handguns or military assault weapons. They also include a massive reinvestment after the Harper government cut support for border security, to make sure that we stop the guns coming across the border that are being smuggled illegally. It also includes making sure that judges have the capacity to sentence people properly when they have committed crimes. However, by the time someone has committed a crime it is too late.

The reality is that the measures we are taking are not aimed at law-abiding gun owners. They are aimed at guns. The reality is that military assault weapons do not belong in civilian hands. Nobody goes hunting with an AK-47. As the member of Parliament remarked during the campaign, if people are going hunting with an AK-47, they might want to think about getting a new hobby because they are not very good hunters. The reality as well is that nobody goes hunting with a handgun, and certainly one does not need a handgun to kill a moose.

The issue is this. Handguns and assault weapons are designed to kill people. They do not belong in civilian hands. We have to strengthen the border and we have to tighten the regulations, but we also have to make sure we get to the prevention strategies because I am tired of burying children in Toronto.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to hear my colleague's commitment to investing in housing for urban indigenous populations. In Winnipeg Centre, as the third-poorest riding in the country, we are currently experiencing a very severe housing crisis, which is exacerbated even further with the kind of harsh climatic conditions in our community.

Recently in our community, unfortunately we saw huge cutbacks to settlement services. Many people who immigrate to Canada, immigrants and refugees, come to Winnipeg Centre and call it their home.

What kind of commitments has the government made to housing geared specifically for individuals in the newcomer and immigrant populations right now in the community?

• (1425)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, a strong social housing program that creates housing at different price points and in different models is the best way to address the specific needs of immigrant and refugee communities. As well, the Canada housing benefit, which is set to unroll in a few months, is another way to support individuals by supporting their income needs as they adjust to life in Canada.

I share the concern in wholehearted solidarity with the statements that I have heard the member opposite make even in her short time here in the House regarding the challenges in Winnipeg. The biggest challenge for me in Manitoba and in Winnipeg is the rate of child apprehension over the last decade. Ninety-three per

cent of the homeless population is tied back to that system. A large reason that indigenous children are apprehended is a very aggressive social service sector that was put in place by the previous NDP government that was very strong on intersecting people in harm's way. However, the reason they were in harm's way is that there was not enough housing. Housing is the source of much of the child apprehension dynamic.

The biggest challenge we have in terms of solving the crisis of homelessness and the crisis of economic inequality in Winnipeg is to make sure that kids aging out of care are housed, to make sure that apprehension of kids is stopped because housing needs are met, and to make sure that the indigenous communities of Winnipeg lead the way in showing us a better way to house people and care for families.

I look forward to partnering with my colleague opposite to make sure those things are realized as real housing projects in her city.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone, my colleagues on both sides of the House and the constituents of Winnipeg North a very happy holiday season and a very merry Christmas.

I would like to pose a very straightforward question to my friend and colleague. I know he is very passionate about housing. Could he share his thoughts on the importance of co-operative housing to society as a whole?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, co-operative housing is the best form of social housing this country has ever produced. Previous governments walked away from the file, including a previous Liberal government and a Conservative government that allowed the subsidies to disappear, which caused people to be kicked to the curbside. In Alberta, seniors housing is almost entirely co-op housing. A lot of seniors lost their rent subsidies. We need to revisit parts of the national housing strategy to strengthen some of the capital blends and loan blends to get more co-op housing built.

The good news is the operating agreements have been restored and renewed and will not expire anymore. The better news is regarding access to dollars to fix and repair housing that is now in its 40th and 50th years. Those dollars are now open and accessible to co-op housing projects right across the country. Repairing housing is as critical as building it. In fact, we should be repairing as much as we build on a day-by-day and year-by-year basis.

The Address

Finally, we have to get the co-op sector into a build position. That includes indigenous co-op housing. We sent money to the Province of Ontario to subsidize co-op housing in the indigenous community and indigenous-led housing providers. Even though the Ford government took the money, it cut the subsidies and then told them to go back to Ottawa and try to double-dip and get a second cheque. This is unacceptable. It is particularly unacceptable to use indigenous housing providers as pawns in some sort of bizarre political game when we know the money has been delivered. We have to make sure that provinces honour the agreements they sign with us. That includes the provinces of Manitoba and Ontario.

We have to make sure that co-op housing is at the front of the line as we reach for success in the national housing strategy.

• (1430)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal government is able to disarm Canadian citizens, it is going to find that it will not have done anything to reduce major violent crimes in this country. My sister worked in Saskatoon as an emergency service nurse. She is able to confirm that gun violence was never the issue, as there are always other means of creating those major acts of violence against people.

My question is this: What are the government's plans to stop major violent crimes after it has disarmed all Canadian citizens?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I stand up and deliver a 20-minute speech on housing and the Conservatives only want to talk about guns. I find that absolutely amazing.

On that issue, we cannot solve all problems with any single act of Parliament. Violence in our communities is a complex issue and requires a just as complex set of solutions.

I will tell the member this. The gun that was used on the Danforth as the person walked down the street and opened fire on people right through my city was stolen from a gun shop in Saskatchewan. All the person had to do was crack a piece of glass, cut a cable and walk off with a bundle of guns.

One of the ways to solve the problem is to not make those guns so easy to find for people intent on doing harm. That is why this government will act on gun control. That is why handguns are a problem. If we can get those handguns off the street, we can get to work on the other issues the member just listed.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the adjournment, I will just reiterate the words of our Speaker earlier today and wish everyone a wonderful holiday.

[*Translation*]

I hope that all members enjoy time with their family and friends over the next six weeks.

[*English*]

On behalf of all of the Chair occupants and our Speaker, I hope that over the next six weeks all members will take time with their families, be safe in their travels and take care over this holiday period.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, January 27, 2020, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, December 13, 2019

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Resumption of debate on Address in Reply

Mr. McKay	385
Mrs. Jansen	387
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	387
Mrs. Gill	387
Mr. Fergus	388
Mr. Généreux	388
Mr. Fergus	389
Mr. Ste-Marie	390
Mr. Steinley	390

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Winnipeg Blue Bombers

Mr. Lamoureux	392
---------------------	-----

Bay of Quinte Water Levels

Mr. Sloan	392
-----------------	-----

Kevin Fournier

Mr. Vaughan	392
-------------------	-----

Community Needs

Ms. Gazan	392
-----------------	-----

Climate Change

Ms. Zann	392
----------------	-----

Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

Mr. Barrett	393
-------------------	-----

Vaudreuil—Soulanges

Mr. Schiefke	393
--------------------	-----

The Environment

Ms. Vandenbeld	393
----------------------	-----

Hong Kong Election

Mr. Chiu	393
----------------	-----

Nepean

Mr. Arya	394
----------------	-----

Carleton

Mr. Poilievre	394
---------------------	-----

United Kingdom Election Results

Mr. Schmale	394
-------------------	-----

North American Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Blaikie	394
-------------------	-----

Denis Villeneuve

Mr. Blanchet	394
--------------------	-----

Christmas

Mr. Reid	395
----------------	-----

Poland

Mr. Kusmierczyk	395
-----------------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Economy

Ms. Alleslev	395
Mrs. Fortier	395
Ms. Alleslev	395
Mrs. Fortier	395
Ms. Alleslev	396
Mrs. Fortier	396
Mr. Deltell	396
Mrs. Fortier	396
Mr. Deltell	396
Mrs. Fortier	396

International Trade

Mr. Simard	396
Ms. Joly	396
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	396
Mr. Alghabra	397

Government Priorities

Mr. Singh	397
Mr. Fisher	397

Ethics

Mr. Singh	397
Mr. Bains	397

International Trade

Mr. Martel	397
Ms. Joly	397

The Economy

Mr. Poilievre	398
Mrs. Fortier	398
Mr. Poilievre	398
Mrs. Fortier	398
Mr. Poilievre	398
Mrs. Fortier	398

Regional Economic Development

Mr. d'Entremont	398
Ms. Joly	398

Employment

Mr. d'Entremont	399
Ms. Joly	399

Official Languages

Ms. Chabot	399
Ms. Joly	399

Canada Revenue Agency

Mr. Bergeron	399
--------------------	-----

Mrs. Lebouthillier	399	International Trade	
Foreign Investment		Mr. Seeback	404
Ms. Rempel Garner	399	Ms. Bibeau	404
Mr. Bains	399	Public Safety	
Ms. Rempel Garner	400	Mr. Sloan	404
Mr. Bains	400	Mr. Blair	404
Veterans Affairs		Infrastructure	
Mrs. Wagantall	400	Mr. Spengemann	404
Mr. MacAulay	400	Ms. McKenna	404
Ethics		Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Barrett	400	Mr. Green	404
Mr. Lamoureux	400	Mr. van Koeverden	405
Health		Privilege	
Mr. Harris	400	First Nations Child Welfare	
Mr. Fisher	400	Mr. Julian	405
Veterans Affairs			
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	401		
Mr. MacAulay	401		
Indigenous Affairs			
Mr. McKinnon	401		
Ms. Bennett	401		
Natural Resources			
Mr. Shields	401		
Mr. Lefebvre	401		
Mr. Kram	401		
Mr. Lefebvre	401		
Mr. Uppal	401		
Mr. Bains	402		
Mr. McLean	402		
Mr. Lefebvre	402		
The Environment			
Ms. Michaud	402		
Mr. Schiefke	402		
Intergovernmental Relations			
Mr. Ste-Marie	402		
Ms. Joly	402		
Carbon Pricing			
Mr. Lewis	402		
Mr. Schiefke	403		
Agriculture and Agri-food			
Mr. Mazier	403		
Ms. Bibeau	403		
Carbon Pricing			
Mr. Redekopp	403		
Mr. Schiefke	403		
Natural Resources			
Mr. Maloney	403		
Mr. Lefebvre	403		
National Defence			
Mr. Dowdall	403		
Mr. Sajjan	403		

		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
		Petitions	
		Human Organ Trafficking	
		Mr. Genuis	406
		Post-Secondary Education	
		Mr. Manly	406
		Human Organ Trafficking	
		Mr. Viersen	406
		Public Safety	
		Ms. Zann	407
		Questions on the Order Paper	
		Mr. Lamoureux	407

		SPEECH FROM THE THRONE	
		Resumption of debate on Address in Reply	
		Mr. Lamoureux	407
		Mr. Steinley	407
		Mr. Manly	407
		Mr. Julian	407
		Mr. Samson	408
		Mr. Morantz	410
		Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	410
		Ms. Normandin	411
		Mr. Simms	411
		Mr. Redekopp	412
		Mr. Lamoureux	413
		Mr. Blaikie	414
		Mr. Viersen	414
		Mr. McLean	414
		Mr. Vaughan	416
		Mr. Garrison	416
		Ms. Vandenbeld	417
		Ms. Larouche	417
		Mr. Vaughan	418

Mr. Kurek	418	Mrs. Gray	421
Ms. Gazan	419	Mr. Vaughan	421
Mr. Lewis	419	Ms. Rood	424
Mr. Blanchette-Joncas	419	Ms. Gazan	425
Mr. Lamoureux	420	Mr. Lamoureux	425
Mr. Berthold	420	Mr. Patzer	426

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