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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

CANADA—JORDAN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-23, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

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

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA-PANAMA ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Panama, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Panama and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Panama.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

[English]

In accordance with its order of reference on Friday, November 4, the committee has considered Bill C-16, An Act to amend the

National Defence Act (military judges), and agreed on Tuesday, November 15, to report it without amendment.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-345, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (special benefits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that would amend the Employment Insurance Act to extend the maximum period for which special benefits for catastrophic illness, injury or quarantine may be paid from 15 to 52 weeks.

This bill was inspired by Natalie Thomas, a cancer survivor from Coquitlam, whose story touched me personally and made me realize the importance and necessity of changing the Employment Insurance Act. Another cancer survivor, Marie-Hélène Dubé from Montreal, has gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures for a petition that calls for these changes.

Canadians who are struck with a catastrophic illness should be focusing on recovery, not on how they survive financially. For families throughout the country who have been touched with illnesses, such as cancer, that is difficult enough to cope with without worrying about their medical benefits expiring. This is why I am introducing this bill today and I encourage all members of the House to support it.

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

* * *

• (1005)

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 161, 162 and 163 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 161—Mr. Mike Sullivan:

With regard to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada funding in the riding of York South—Weston for the last five fiscal years: (a) what is the total amount of spending by (i) year, (ii) program; and (b) what is the amount of each spending item by (i) Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP), (ii) Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, (iii) Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund, (iv) Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program, (v) Apprenticeship Completion Grant, (vi) Apprenticeship Incentive Grant, (vii) Career Development Services Research (Employment Programs), (viii) Canada—European Union Program for Cooperation in Higher Education, Training and Youth (International Academic Mobility Program), (ix) Canada Summer Jobs (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (x) Career Focus (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xi) Children and Families (Social Development Partnerships Program), (xii) Contributions for Consultation and Partnership-Building and Canadian-Based Cooperative Activities (International Trade and Labour Program), (xiii) Disability Component (Social Development Partnerships Program), (xiv) Employment Programs—Career Development Services Research, (xv) Enabling Accessibility Fund, (xvi) Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, (xvii) Federal Public Service Youth Internship Program (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xviii) Fire Prevention Grants, (xix) Fire Safety Organizations, (xx) Foreign Credential Recognition Program, (xxi) Homelessness Partnering Strategy, (xxii) International Academic Mobility—Canada—European Union Program for Cooperation in Higher Education, Training and Youth, (xxiii) International Academic Mobility—North American Mobility in Higher Education, (xxiv) International Labour Institutions in which Canada Participates Grants (International Trade and Labour Program), (xxv) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) Contributions for Consultation and Partnership-Building and Canadian-Based Cooperative Activities, (xxvi) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) Grants for Technical Assistance and Foreign-Based Cooperative Activities, (xxvii) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) International Labour Institutions in which Canada Participates Grants, (xxviii) Labour-Management Partnership Program, (xxix) Labour Market Agreements, (xxx) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, (xxxi) Labour Market Development Agreements, (xxxii) Labour Mobility, (xxxiii) New Horizons for Seniors Program, (xxxiv) Occupational Health and Safety, (xxxv) Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, (xxxvi) Organizations that Write Occupational Health and Safety Standards, (xxxvii) Sector Council Program, (xxxviii) Skills and Partnership Fund—Aboriginal, (xxxix) Skills Link (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xl) Small Project Component (Enabling Accessibility Fund), (xli) Social Development Partnerships Program—Children and Families, (xlii) Social Development Partnerships Program—Disability Component, (xliii) Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative, (xliv) Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, (xlv) Technical Assistance and Foreign-Based Cooperative Activities Grants (International Trade and Labour Program), (xlvi) Work-Sharing, (xlvii) Youth Awareness, (xlviii) Youth Employment Strategy—Canada Summer Jobs, (xlix) Youth Employment Strategy—Career Focus, (l) Youth Employment Strategy—Federal Public Service Youth Internship Program, (li) Youth Employment Strategy—Skills Link?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 162—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With respect to Employment Insurance (EI) processing centres and EI call centres: (a) how many EI processing centres were there at the beginning of fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, and where were they located; (b) what was the volume of EI applications processed at each EI processing centre for fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (c) what was the average EI applications processing time for each processing centre for fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (d) broken down by permanent and term, how many positions were there at each EI processing centre at the beginning of fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011; (e) how many employees in temporary term positions were hired at each EI processing centre to manage the anticipated increase in EI applications resulting from job losses during the 2008-2009 recession and the resulting Economic Action Plan; (f) how many permanent position and term positions will be eliminated at each EI processing site between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2014; (g) what was the staff turnover rate per EI processing centre for fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (h) what was the cost to train an EI processing agent at the end of fiscal year 2011; (i) what was the per foot leasing cost per EI processing centre at the end of fiscal year 2011; (j) which EI processing sites have dedicated staff recruiters; (k) what is the cost per EI processing location of staff recruitment; (l) how many EI call centres were there at the beginning of fiscal

years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, and where were they located; (m) what was the volume of calls at each EI call centre for fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (n) how many positions, broken down by permanent and term, were there at each EI call centre at the beginning of fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011; (o) how many temporary term positions at each EI call centre were hired to manage the anticipated increase in EI inquiries resulting from job losses during the 2008-2009 recession and the resulting Economic Action Plan; (p) how many permanent positions and term positions will be eliminated at each EI call site between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2014; (q) what was the staff turnover per EI call centre for fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (r) what was the cost to train an EI call agent at the end of fiscal year 2011; (s) what was the per foot leasing costs per EI call centre at the end of fiscal year 2011; (t) which EI call centre sites have dedicated staff recruiters; (u) what is the cost per location of staff recruitment; (v) what were the national Service Level standards for calls answered by an agent for EI call centres for fiscal years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (w) what was the actual Service Level for calls answered by an agent, achieved nationally and per EI call centre site, for fiscal years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2008, 2010, and 2011, to date; (x) what was the annual percentage of EI calls made to EI call centres that received a high volume message for fiscal years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, to date; (y) what is the percentage of EI benefit payment notifications issued within 28 days of filing; (z) what are age breakdowns of each EI applicant at each EI processing site during fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011?

(Return tabled)

*Points of Order*Question No. 163—**Mrs. Carol Hughes:**

With regard to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada funding in the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing for the last five fiscal years: (a) what is the total amount of spending by (i) year, (ii) program; and (b) what is the amount of each spending item by (i) Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP), (ii) Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, (iii) Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund, (iv) Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program, (v) Apprenticeship Completion Grant, (vi) Apprenticeship Incentive Grant, (vii) Career Development Services Research (Employment Programs), (viii) Canada—European Union Program for Cooperation in Higher Education, Training and Youth (International Academic Mobility Program), (ix) Canada Summer Jobs (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (x) Career Focus (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xi) Children and Families (Social Development Partnerships Program), (xii) Contributions for Consultation and Partnership-Building and Canadian-Based Cooperative Activities (International Trade and Labour Program), (xiii) Disability Component (Social Development Partnerships Program), (xiv) Employment Programs—Career Development Services Research, (xv) Enabling Accessibility Fund, (xvi) Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities, (xvii) Federal Public Service Youth Internship Program (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xviii) Fire Prevention Grants, (xix) Fire Safety Organizations, (xx) Foreign Credential Recognition Program, (xxi) Homelessness Partnering Strategy, (xxii) International Academic Mobility—Canada—European Union Program for Cooperation in Higher Education, Training and Youth, (xxiii) International Academic Mobility—North American Mobility in Higher Education, (xxiv) International Labour Institutions in which Canada Participates Grants (International Trade and Labour Program), (xxv) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) Contributions for Consultation and Partnership-Building and Canadian-Based Cooperative Activities, (xxvi) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) Grants for Technical Assistance and Foreign-Based Cooperative Activities, (xxvii) International Trade and Labour Program (ITLP) International Labour Institutions in which Canada Participates Grants, (xxviii) Labour-Management Partnership Program, (xxix) Labour Market Agreements, (xxx) Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, (xxxi) Labour Market Development Agreements, (xxxii) Labour Mobility, (xxxiii) New Horizons for Seniors Program, (xxxiv) Occupational Health and Safety, (xxxv) Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, (xxxvi) Organizations that Write Occupational Health and Safety Standards, (xxxvii) Sector Council Program, (xxxviii) Skills and Partnership Fund—Aboriginal, (xxxix) Skills Link (Youth Employment Strategy Program), (xl) Small Project Component (Enabling Accessibility Fund), (xli) Social Development Partnerships Program—Children and Families, (xlii) Social Development Partnerships Program—Disability Component, (xliii) Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative, (xliv) Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, (xlv) Technical Assistance and Foreign-Based Cooperative Activities Grants (International Trade and Labour Program), (xlvi) Work-Sharing, (xlvii) Youth Awareness, (xlviii) Youth Employment Strategy—Canada Summer Jobs, (xlix) Youth Employment Strategy—Career Focus, (l) Youth Employment Strategy—Federal Public Service Youth Internship Program, (li) Youth Employment Strategy—Skills Link?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today further to the comments of the hon. Chief Government Whip in response to the point of order raised yesterday by the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh respecting proceedings in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, as well as the comments

added by the hon. members for Winnipeg North and Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of his very lengthy submissions, the official opposition House leader asked you to declare proceedings on the ethics committee study in respect to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to be, if I might summarize, null and void. In the alternative, he asked you to direct that the study be suspended for the time being.

From the outset, the core of my arguments will be that the request from the hon. member is premature. It is well established in the House that our committees are “masters of their own proceedings”. Following from that premise is the equally well established principle that the Speaker does not ordinarily intervene in committee proceedings.

The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh referred to page 1048 of O'Brien and Bosc which refers to committees as having the freedom to organize their work as they see fit and that these freedoms are not total or absolute. While I would agree that in certain situations the Speaker ought to intervene, the member did not present any argument that would meet that standard in this particular case.

That standard of intervening in the absence of the committee report might be gleaned, for instance, from the decision of Mr. Speaker Parent on November 7, 1996, at page 6225 of *Debates*. In that decision, a bona fide substitute member had sought to give notice of a motion at a committee meeting but had been ruled out of order because he was not a regular member of the committee. When satisfaction could not be reached at committee, a point of order was raised in the House. The Chair found that there was an evident breach of the Standing Orders in respect of the rights of substitute members.

It might also be worth noting that Mr. Parent's self-styled clarification and “statement” was made when the Standing Orders respecting associate membership in standing committees were only a couple of years old, so it was as much an effort to add clarity to what was then a relatively novel area of the House procedures than it was a decision to set aside a committee's place as the master of its own proceedings.

The bulk of the arguments made in the point of order centred on a letter from the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel, Robert Walsh, to the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay. While that letter delves into the *sub judice* convention, it largely speaks to questions of law about potential consequences of hypothetical scenarios that are not presently before us.

I would note that page four of Mr. Walsh's letter observes that:

Subject to my comments in response to your 4th point below, if the documents are considered by ETHI at in camera meetings, the *sub judice* convention would not be offended.

Points of Order

In his arguments, the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh premised much of his concern around the notion that the ethics committee would not be successful in keeping its proceedings in camera. I would like to give all hon. members from all parties on the ethics committee more credit than that.

The NDP House leader cited a ruling by Mr. Speaker Fraser on March 26, 1990, which is found at pages 9756-58 of *Debates* and he quoted from part of it. I would also quote the following passage from that ruling:

If I am cautious in not acting now it is simply because the Chair does not supervise the standing committee chairmen. That function belongs to the members of each committee and they have obvious avenues to pursue other than invoking privilege in the House.

With respect to the facts of this particular case, the ethics committee, acting as master of its own proceedings, has passed a motion seeking production of certain documents from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation further to a study it has commenced in relation to access to information.

I understand that the CBC has complied in part with the committee's motion. Whether the CBC's response is satisfactory to the committee will be a matter for the committee to decide, again, acting as the master of its own proceedings.

Committees of the House possess the power to send for papers and records but they do not have the power to enforce an order for production.

Paragraph 848(2) of the sixth edition of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* tidily articulates the process here:

The procedure for obtaining papers is for the committee to adopt a motion ordering the required person or organization to produce them. If this Order is not complied with, the committee may report the matter to the House, stating its difficulties in obtaining the requested documents. It is then for the House to decide what action is to be taken.

● (1010)

I will revert briefly to my comment a moment ago about the ethics committee's place to decide whether the CBC's production, a voluntary response, I would add, is satisfactory to the committee.

Should the committee decide that the documents do not sufficiently answer the request, it can make a decision to report these facts to the House or it could decide just to move on and drop it. That would be yet another instance of the committee acting as master of its own proceedings.

I do not mention all these incidents of the committee acting as master of its own proceedings just for the sake of being repetitive. It is actually key to the point that I want to make.

Should the situation with respect to the ethics committee's motion for production of documents not be resolved to the committee's satisfaction through the corporation's productions to date, the only way to, for lack of a better word, escalate the matter further is through a report to be tabled to this House. To put it another way: in the absence of a report from the committee, there would effectively be a continuation of the status quo.

A report advising of the refusal to honour an order of the committee, a contempt, in other words, would undoubtedly be accompanied by submissions to you, Mr. Speaker, seeking a finding

of a prima facie contempt of Parliament and for permission to move an appropriate motion.

Alternatively, someone opposed to the proceeding might then challenge the committee report and the acceptability of a concurrence motion tabled in the ordinary course.

Therefore, I would submit that the appropriate time to be raising points about the proceedings of the ethics committee and how they may intersect with the sub judice convention would be at that time, that is to say, after any report from the ethics committee is presented.

Accordingly, I would defer making further submissions on behalf of the government respecting the *sub judice* convention and how it would and would not apply in the circumstances until a report from the ethics committee is presented on the circumstances, if one is even forthcoming.

To reiterate my earlier line of argument, such a report coming forward would be, I suggest, a matter for the ethics committee to decide acting as the master of its own proceedings. Whether a report will or will not be presented is not for me to say. After all, it could be possible, again, for the committee to find itself satisfied with the voluntary disclosures provided by the CBC in response to the motion.

The comments of your immediate predecessor, Mr. Speaker Milliken, in his March 14, 2008, ruling, at page 4181 of *Debates*, might offer some perspective here:

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary goes on to caution against presuming on the direction that the committee's study might take and jumping to conclusions about the nature of any report it might present.

I must acknowledge the validity of that argument.

There is one additional thought I would like to add from the 1990 decision of Mr. Speaker Fraser, which both the official opposition House leader and I quoted. The passage I cited earlier made reference to the committee as the most appropriate venue respecting proceedings in committees.

Later in his ruling, Mr. Speaker Fraser added:

I remind hon. members that endless points of privilege on what goes on in committee, when they fall short of that extreme situation where a Speaker might have to intervene, take up a great deal of time in this House.

That point is instructive in that it should put a caution on the NDP House leader's invitation to the Chair to find such an "extreme situation" here.

In the circumstances, for the reasons I have just outlined, this argument is premature because the Chair could have more relevant timing down the road to entertain these issues if and when this matter evolves through a report from the ethics committee.

To borrow from a common cliché, the toothpaste is not out of the tube here yet, Mr. Speaker.

To intervene at this stage would, I suggest, move the so-called line to eliminate what are the extraordinary circumstances when committees may not be masters of their own proceedings and, in turn, possibly lead to a series of other points of order striving to seek greater definition to where that line lies, in future cases, where the majority of a committee disagrees with the studies chosen by the majority for a standing committee's focus.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude by asking that you find the point of order raised by the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh is not well taken. Given that the chair of the ethics committee has cancelled meetings on this matter until such time as you give a ruling, I would ask that you come back to the House at your earliest opportunity so that the ethics committee may take up consideration of the documents submitted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

However, should the Chair wish to make a ruling on the applicability of the *sub judice* convention in the current circumstances and prior to the House receiving any report from the ethics committee on point, I would ask for you to indulge me or one of my colleagues in the government an opportunity to make further submissions on those aspects.

• (1015)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. government House leader for his comments on the issue currently before the Chair.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are four motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-13. The motions will be grouped for debate as follows: Group No. 1, Motion No. 1; Group No. 2, Motions Nos. 2 to 4.

[Translation]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-13 be amended by deleting Clause 162.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the issue of amendments to Bill C-13.

It must be said that, by proposing an amendment today to eliminate clause 162, we want to hold the government to the promise it made during the last election.

As hon. members know, in the May 2011 election, the government made a number of promises. Then, the Canadian public saw the government break its promises on a number of occasions. Here, on this side of the House, we think it is important for the government to keep the promises it made to the Canadian public. That is why we made this first amendment to Bill C-13.

Government Orders

What does clause 162 contain? As my colleagues know, this provision establishes a Canadian securities transition office. In fact, it ensures that the funding is granted to the securities transition office to begin its operations.

Given that the government promised exactly the opposite during the last election, it is our responsibility as the official opposition to remind the government what it clearly told the public prior to the May 2 election. I would like to quote the promise that the Conservatives made in their election platform—the same platform where they said that they would be moderate, that they would take care of the economy and that they would create jobs. They then broke every one of these promises.

In its election platform, the Conservative Party said the following about the establishment of a Canadian securities transition office: “We will not proceed unless the Supreme Court rules that this matter is within our jurisdiction.”

This was a very clear election promise. The government said that it did not want to proceed and that it would not proceed because it had to wait for the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on this issue.

As the hon. members know, a number of provinces reacted to the government's desire to impose something on the provinces that comes under provincial jurisdiction. And this reaction comes not only from the Quebec nation, but also from the majority of Canadian provinces, which said that this comes under their jurisdiction and that it should go no further.

The Conservative Party, when campaigning to become the federal government, clearly said that it would go no further with this plan. Now what is happening? This brick of a bill, which was drafted after the election, states the opposite: the Conservative government is ready to move forward, no matter how Quebec feels about it, no matter how the majority of Canadian provinces feel about it and no matter what promises it made to the Canadian people. It wants to go ahead. It wants to impose this transition office and it wants taxpayers across the country, from coast to coast, to pay for it.

The government made clear, unambiguous promises, saying that it would not go ahead with the plan. The Canadian people voted: 62% of Canadians said that they did not believe the Conservatives, and a tiny minority, 38% of Canadians, voted for the Conservative Party.

Despite these promises, the Conservative government wants to use this bill to go ahead with the plan. So today we want this clause to be withdrawn.

• (1020)

It is a bit odd that the official opposition, the 102 NDP members, has to force the government to keep its word. Normally, ethically speaking, when a political party runs in an election, it has to keep its word. Since the government very clearly told Canadians that it would not proceed with this, it should show them a little respect and honour the promise that it made, specifically, that it would not proceed with this and that it would allow the Supreme Court to rule on this matter and decide whether this falls under federal jurisdiction. The government did not do that.

Government Orders

It decided to impose this brick of a bill, which contains some things that we support, such as the tax credit for volunteer firefighters. We support certain parts of this bill. We will be talking more about them later today and over the next few days. There are other things that we do not support, such as clause 162, which creates a glaring contradiction between the Conservative Party promises and the reality of the Conservative government, which is not keeping its word. That is why we are proposing that the clause be deleted.

The report stage is an important one. Even the Conservative members would have to agree with me on that. During the last election, they campaigned on that very claim—that they would not go ahead with this. Since they promised not to act on this, why put these clauses in Bill C-13, clauses that go against what they promised in the last election campaign?

When we talk about Bill C-13 and those aspects that go against the Conservative government's promises, it becomes clear that the government was so concerned about ways to break its promises and to play shell games—on so many levels—that serve the Conservative Party, it forgot that its responsibility is the Canadian economy. We can see this in the numbers that have been released over the past few weeks regarding job losses. Canada lost 62,000 full-time jobs in October. That works out to just over 2,000 jobs a day, roughly. Every day in October, the Conservative government lost over 2,000 jobs.

At that rate, it being November 15, we may have lost another 30,000 jobs in the first half of the month alone, but we will not get the figures until the end of the month. We do not know because the figures the Conservatives bring to this House are inaccurate and do not reflect the reality on the street in terms of job losses. Those could have been avoided if this Bill C-13 had done what we proposed. It could have included investments for job creation, to help the middle class and the poorest Canadian families. If this government had taken action, we would not have lost so many jobs in October and we would not be in the process of losing even more in November.

Instead of taking action to create employment, which we still advocate, the government inserted clauses like clause 162 and thereby broke the solemn promises it made to the Canadian public during the last election campaign. For that reason, we want to get rid of clause 162.

• (1025)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is new to the Standing Committee on Finance, for his remarks. I would like to start by saying that everything he just said is not true. He repeated two or three times that, in the Conservative platform, we promised to proceed with the permission and pursuant to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court is currently studying the matter mentioned by my colleague and we are waiting for its decision. The Conservatives continue to keep their promises and protect Canadians. I wonder if the true intent of my colleague and his party is to prevent the problems with the securities system from being resolved.

Why is he not willing to protect Canadians who are negatively affected by the absence of such an office?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance for her question. She hurt my feelings somewhat when she said that we were not telling the truth.

I will have to quote from the Conservative platform. Unfortunately, we often see—I am speaking in general terms and not about the member in particular—that the Conservatives in the House do not do their homework and do not read the bills. It seems that they did not even read their election platform.

To help them out in this debate, I will refer to the Conservative election platform, which states, on page 20 of the English version: “We will not proceed unless the Supreme Court rules that this matter is within our jurisdiction.” In the French version, the quote is found on page 23. The Conservative platform could not be any clearer. What surprises me is that the Conservative candidates did not read their election platform.

• (1030)

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for his eloquent and fact-filled speech. We can continue to talk about fact and fiction. Last week I heard our Prime Minister say on CBC radio that job losses in Canada were a direct result of the economic situation in Europe. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord. He does a very good job in the House, which I admire a lot. He has done a lot of work, even though he has only been in the House for a few months. He does an excellent job. I wanted to make sure that I complimented him.

Canada has seen massive job losses. We cannot deny that. October was a catastrophic month for Canadian families. We lost 62,000 full-time jobs because of this government, which does not even want to take action. The Conservatives are so caught up in talking up Conservative policies that they did not even notice the job losses and the fact that the Canadian public is suffering because of the government's inaction.

We must recognize that we are influenced by global trends. We cannot deny that. However, the reality is that this government and its inaction have created a climate that, in October alone, led to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs across the country.

I must point out that, since May 2008, the Conservative government has created only 200,000 jobs, while the labour force in Canada increased by 450,000 job seekers. This means that we need a quarter of a million jobs just to maintain a stable job market in Canada.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise to support Bill C-13.

[*English*]

This is a wonderful opportunity for me to speak to Bill C-13, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. I was happy to support the bill when it was referred to the finance committee for study earlier this month and I am pleased to speak to it once again.

Our government has introduced the next phase of our economic action plan, which keeps us on track to return to balanced budgets in the medium term.

This legislation builds on the success of our stimulus plan by creating the right conditions for business to create jobs and grow our economy through low taxes and a clear plan for sustainable economic prosperity.

As we know, these are troubled financial times. Mark Carney, the Bank of Canada governor and newly appointed chairman of the Financial Stability Board, warns us that Europe is headed for a second recession. Sovereign debt and the undercapitalization of European banks threaten economic stability.

While Canada's strong regulation and prudent fiscal policy keep us strong in the face of crisis, we are not an island. We are not immune. Global events demand sound decision-making to be certain that we do not succumb to the mistakes of others.

The best way to ensure that our economy remains productive is with a fair, efficient and competitive tax system.

Lower taxes support Canadian business by providing entrepreneurs with the freedom to grow. Reductions in corporate taxes increase incentives for firms to invest in new equipment, undertake innovative research and create high-quality jobs. That is why I am pleased to support Bill C-13, because it gives employers the advantage they need to keep our economy strong.

I am proud that this legislation continues to build on the success of Canada's economic action plan, especially through the support it provides for small business.

Local enterprise is the engine of our economy, creating opportunity not just for owners, but for those that they employ.

The government agrees with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business when it says that small businesses are indispensable in their role as job creators and innovators all across Canada.

To hedge against resurgence and global economic uncertainty, it is important that small businesses are able to hire new workers so they can take advantage of emerging opportunities.

That is just one reason Bill C-13 includes a temporary, one-time hiring credit for small business which provides up to \$1,000 against an employer's increase in its 2011 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2010. This temporary credit will be available to approximately 525,000 employers, reducing their 2011 payroll costs by about \$165 million.

Again, I would like to quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business which told us:

This credit will be a major help to small firms in growing their workforce.... This credit will exempt some small employers from having to pay premiums on an increase in their payroll in 2011 over 2010 levels. As an example, this credit will allow a [new] firm with less than \$413,000 in payroll to create one new \$40,000 per year job without paying any EI on that new position.

These businesses may be small but their impact on the Canadian economy is anything but. They represent almost half of Canada's

Government Orders

economic output, and we are grateful for their resilience in supporting our economic recovery.

Our government's support for the job-creating power of business extends beyond main street to a growing number of international markets.

Canadian business owners need the ability to compete not just next door, but with partners all around the world. We are opening these markets through an ambitious trade agenda, including mutually beneficial deals with the European Union and India.

To maximize the benefits of these agreements, we are improving our trade policies and regulations.

By simplifying and streamlining the Customs Tariff Act, we are lowering the administrative burden for business and government. Less red tape will result in lower customs processing costs for Canadian businesses, ensuring that they are more competitive both at home and in the global marketplace. Our government understands that Canada is a trading nation. This measure recognizes the importance of remaining globally competitive in order to sustain a fragile economic recovery.

● (1035)

While we have made great strides in improving our open and efficient trading system, we know that global competitiveness demands highly skilled workers. That is why the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act invests in education and training by making occupational, trade and professional examination fees eligible for the tuition tax credits. It is estimated that more than 30,000 individuals will benefit each year from this measure. This includes foreign trained workers who are often required to complete additional examinations in order to obtain their professional status here in Canada.

This tax relief builds on the support provided to apprentices through the apprenticeship incentive grant provided in budget 2006, and the apprenticeship completion grant, which was introduced in budget 2009.

Furthermore, this legislation makes important enhancements to the Canada student loans program to ensure that large numbers of full- and part-time students have access to financial assistance. We are expanding eligibility for Canada student loans and grants by allowing students to earn more money without impacting their loans, allowing part-time students to have higher family income without affecting their eligibility for support, and reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time students to 0%. These measures will save part-time students approximately \$5.6 million per year, making part-time study more affordable for more Canadians. Not only that, they will ensure that Canada's workforce remains highly skilled and internationally competitive, helping to lay the foundation for sustainable economic growth.

Government Orders

In keeping with our investments to strengthen our global competitiveness in uncertain economic times, this legislation offers targeted tax reductions to further encourage business to drive our economy forward. We are expanding tax support for clean energy generation to encourage green investments. We know that clean energy technology and innovation are essential to realizing economic opportunities, creating employment and enhancing the Canadian economic advantage.

We are extending the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors by one year to support Canada's mining sector. We understand the importance of promoting the exploration and development of Canada's rich mineral resources.

We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing equipment for two years. We realize that our manufacturing sector needs our support, now more than ever, in adapting to the demands of the recovery.

As recent world events demonstrate, there remains considerable risk and uncertainty in the global economy and too many Canadians remain out of work. For these reasons, the government is building on the achievements of Canada's economic action plan with Bill C-13, designed to secure the recovery, create jobs and preserve Canada's fiscal advantage.

The government knows that this is the right action to take. I urge members of the House, and all Canadians, to remember that the alternative, which is the NDP's massive tax hikes, would kill jobs, stall our recovery and set Canadian families back.

I will take a moment to address something that my colleague said earlier, something that was misleading to Canadians. When it comes to this Conservative government, we have made a promise to make sure that jobs are protected. We have made a promise to protect Canadians and we have said that, to protect Canadians, an office for a securities regulator is important to prevent things like the Earl Jones tragedy in Quebec. I would implore the Quebec MPs on that side of the House, who were elected by Quebecers who want this to happen, to support that decision, if that in fact is the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, to allow the jurisdiction to be recognized by the Government of Canada.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier, my colleague pointed out one contradiction in the Conservative budget, and I would like to point out a second. Lately, we have talked a lot about public safety. Just last week, in my riding office, I met with RCMP officers who are involved in a border pilot project. My riding borders the United States.

We are talking about creating jobs that, among other things, enhance public safety. My riding has been concerned about the closure of the Franklin border crossing for several months, if not years, now. The RCMP officer said that the closure of the border crossing is having a negative impact on the RCMP's police operations. There is also a portion of the riding that is not covered at all by the RCMP. As a result, contraband is on the rise and organized crime has moved into the area. Not only have jobs been

lost, but violence is increasing and there is a lack of security in this area.

What can the members opposite say to defend themselves? They talk about how good the budget is but they are doing nothing at all for the people in my riding.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question. She is new here in the House of Commons. Those of us on the government side of the House recognize that police across the country truly trust our Conservative government. How do we know this? Because we have introduced a number of bills. For years, we have been introducing bills that aim to give police officers new tools and that also aim to help them do their work of protecting Canadians. Each time we have introduced a bill to protect Canadians and help the police, the NDP has voted against our measures.

I recognize—and I invite Canadians to recognize this as well—that there are Conservative members here, in the House of Commons, who are police officers. Eleven members of the Conservative caucus are police officers. They are here to provide information so that we can introduce bills that will help the police. The NDP has no police officers in its ranks. We will not be taking lessons from the NDP. We will listen to the police officers across Canada and those in our caucus.

• (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for a quick question.

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is clear, once again, that the hon. member for Saint Boniface is living in la-la land. She does not understand the Canadian economy. She is essentially talking to us about things that do not exist. She is talking about job creation, but since 2008, fewer than 200,000 jobs have been created in Canada. We are no longer creating 650,000 jobs. From the moment the recession began, we can say that not even 200,000 jobs have been created and many of those are part time. When we talk about unemployment and underemployment, we are talking about 1.8 million Canadians. When we talk about employment, at some point, someone has to “deliver the goods”.

You are not “delivering the goods”. You and your budgets are causing unemployment.

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

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I am a bit shocked by the reaction of the hon. member opposite. I can assure you he does not react that way in committee. I hope this was a momentary lapse. I hope it will not happen again in this House of Commons.

When we talk about the economy and the jobs that have been created, we have to look at the facts: since July 2009, 600,000 net new jobs have been created in our economy. Why? Because our government has created an environment that supports businesses and employers in Canada.

Government Orders

What does the NDP want to do? It wants to increase taxes on businesses across the board, which represents \$10 billion. It wants to double Canadian pensions, which will again affect our businesses with taxes that will be much higher, perhaps 70%, as the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has said.

Let us talk about what the hon. member said. He said we did not have full-time jobs, but 90% of the jobs are full time.

[*English*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to Bill C-13, the budget implementation bill.

Traditionally, in this House, budget implementation bills are introduced to legislatively implement budget initiatives and, at times, include some of the failures of past budgets. Usually they are only technical failures, nothing major, but that is why we end up with these 600-page documents that contain everything but the kitchen sink. However, I think that is normal.

Usually there are two budget implementations a year and after seven budgets that would be about 14 budget implementation bills. However, the government, to date, is not willing to concede that amendments are an acceptable way in which Parliament can do business. The finance minister, even before appearing at committee, made statements saying that there would be no changes, no amendments, the budget bill would go ahead with what is in it.

The finance committee, usually responsible for reviewing the bill, hears from witnesses both good and bad things, and members decide whether a budget bill requires an amendment. They weigh the positives and negatives. Often there are discussions between government and opposition members and there would be some agreement that changes need to be made. However, once we come into the House and the proposed amendments are put forward, we see that government members no longer want to make any amendments. I think that is very sad because we just saw one particular amendment which I think is very positive.

[*Translation*]

With this bill, once again, the Conservatives are deliberately excluding low-income Canadians. Ever since the budget was tabled in May, the Liberal Party has been asking for certain amendments. The Conservatives are proposing measures like the family caregiver tax credit, the volunteer firefighters tax credit and the children's arts tax credit. How can low-income families and individuals benefit from a non-refundable tax credit when, quite often, they do not have enough income to be taxed? Why did the Conservatives decide to exclude the most vulnerable among us, at a time when the economy is so precarious?

The current economic situation is not the same as it was a few years ago or even a few months ago. I do not understand why this government will not be a little more flexible and make these tax credits refundable. For instance, if someone leaves their job to care for a loved one at home, how can they benefit from a tax credit when they no longer have an income? If they have left their job, it means they no longer have an income. That is just one example, among many others, of how these proposed measures will not benefit those who need them most. If someone is not working full time and does

not earn enough money to be taxed, how can they benefit from these tax credits?

Some members from western and eastern Canada have many volunteer firefighters in their ridings, especially in rural areas where most firefighters are volunteers. Some of them are retired.

• (1050)

[*English*]

While I was on the finance committee, many volunteer firefighters came before it. They said that they became volunteer firefighters to contribute to their community. It was not for pay because they were not getting paid. They spent time in training and ensuring that everything was functional in case there would be a fire. All they wanted was a credit to put back in their pockets a little bit of the money that they spent getting to the fire station and on these inspections.

Here we have a great initiative that the government introduced. Some of these volunteer firemen have given up their time, they may be retired or low income, but we cannot even get money back in their pockets to pay them for some of the gas expenses they incurred in getting to do their volunteer work. It would be appropriate for the government to reconsider and make these credits refundable instead of non-refundable. However, again, the Conservatives are playing politics.

[*Translation*]

They have decided to play petty politics by not making these tax credits refundable, which would enable low-income Canadians to benefit as well, as we have suggested a number of times. This shows once again that the Conservative government is ignoring Canadians in need.

The Liberal Party would like to work with the government to improve this bill. However, it realizes that the Conservatives never listen to the advice of this House or the Canadian public in general. This government must start tackling the problems faced by Canadians rather than trying to pit the people against one another. A responsible government would not choose the winners and the losers, as it is currently doing. It would not choose to ignore a large part of the population. It would not choose ideology over facts and reason.

[*English*]

There are some good measures in the budget such as the mining and exploration tax credit. However, it has only been extended for one year and it is temporary. Therefore, mining companies that need to make decisions over a five to ten year period are not sure how long they can rely on this tax credit.

Government Orders

There is the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance. It is a great initiative and something that has been done for the last couple of years. However, the government has extended it for only two years. The productivity of companies in Canada is one of the lowest in the world because they cannot plan for the future. As a member of the finance committee for many years, we kept hearing that companies not only need the accelerated capital cost allowance but also need to know how long it will be effective for because if they are to invest in capital equipment, the investment into this heavy equipment would take a period of five to ten years to pay off. Therefore, it is a good initiative but not good on the follow through.

We talked about the amendment from the NDP. It no longer wants to authorize or provide the government with the \$30-odd million for a transitional office for the national securities regulator. All members in the House agreed to wait for the Supreme Court ruling. Instead, the government decided to give \$33-odd million to a transitory office rather than wait for the ruling from the Supreme Court on whether the national securities regulator will be accepted or not. We are throwing away money, which we could use for other purposes, on friends of the Prime Minister, when all these professionals are sitting there waiting for a ruling from the Supreme Court.

There is the hiring credit for small businesses. On the one hand, the government is increasing EI premiums. If we add that up over the next year, it will be bringing over \$1 billion into the government coffers and over the next couple of years it will be in the billions of dollars. Meanwhile, it is providing credits worth \$135 million to small businesses if they hire an extra person. However, to get this credit they can only hire an extra person if they have less than 10 people whereas the majority of small and medium-size businesses have more than 10 employees. Therefore, this credit will only be made available to a small portion of employers.

Another problem is that the credit is only worth \$1,000 and businesses can only apply for the credit at the end of the year, after they have paid the increased EI premiums on a monthly basis. I find that unacceptable.

Again, we are looking to see if the government is willing to accept some amendments and increase the hiring tax credit for small businesses to include some medium-size businesses that have between 20 to 50 employees.

I will end here with the gas tax which was introduced by the previous Liberal government. It was based on a percentage of the GST. Again, the government is capping it instead of putting a minimum. If the amount of the GST collected increases, why would the municipalities not be entitled to receive their fair share? We do not understand why there should be a ceiling instead of it continuing to be a percentage of the gas tax collected.

I look forward to any questions.

•(1055)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Madam Speaker, first I will take this opportunity to thank my constituents in Pickering—Scarborough East for the trust bestowed on me to represent them here in the House.

The particularity of this riding is that it encompasses two cities united by diversity and the 416 and 905 phone codes. One is the largest in Canada, Toronto, and the other, the city of Pickering, is much smaller.

Dividing and at the same time uniting the communities in my riding is the magnificent Rouge River, with its unique park containing unique biodiversity, such as the remnants of the Carolinian boreal forest. The Rouge Park will soon become the first urban national park in North America with 20% of the Canadian population in its immediate proximity.

My riding also has the Pickering nuclear power plant and several strongly research-oriented establishments such as the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, Centennial College and companies such as Purdue Pharmaceuticals and others on the high technology end.

Certainly we need more in the future. In this context, I am delighted on behalf of my constituents to speak in support of Bill C-13. The bill provides the means to continue the recovery and the stability phase of our economy in these complicated world circumstances. It is very important for my constituents in Pickering—Scarborough East. Availability of jobs, economic stability and growth are important for the families in my riding.

Our responsible Conservative government continues to be focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic stability and growth. Canada is recognized to have the strongest job growth record in the G7, with nearly 600,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, and the International Monetary Fund projects that we will have among the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the next two years. However, we are not immune to global economic turbulence. That is why we need to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Bill C-13 supports Canada's economic recovery and outlines a vision for the future by proposing action on the following pillars of good governance and stability: promoting job creation and economic growth, supporting communities, helping families, investing in education and training and respecting taxpayers.

To promote job creation and economic growth, the bill would provide a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring, expand tax support for clean energy generation to encourage green investments, extend the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors by one year to support Canada's mining sector, simplify customs tariffs in order to facilitate trade and lower the administrative burden for businesses, extend the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment for two years to support the manufacturing and processing sector and eliminate the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees in order to give older workers wishing to work the option of remaining in the workforce.

Being an engineer with extensive Canadian and international experience in both public and private service, I know well that the creation of a safe, secure and inviting environment for business is paramount for economic development.

To support communities, the bill would legislate permanent gas tax funding for municipalities, putting into law the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns to support infrastructure priorities.

This provision is of utmost importance for our infrastructure. It provides for payments to be made to provinces, territories, municipalities, first nations and other entities for municipal infrastructure improvements on a continuous basis, and it is predictable.

The bill would enhance the wage earner protection program to cover more workers affected by employer bankruptcy or receivership.

It would increase the ability of Canadians to give more confidently to legitimate charities by introducing a package of integrity measures designed to help combat fraud and other forms of abuse.

To help families, the bill introduces a new family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives. It would remove the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers can claim under the medical expense tax credit in respect of financially dependent relatives. It introduces a new children's arts tax credit for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

● (1100)

It introduces a volunteer firefighters tax credit to allow eligible volunteer firefighters to claim 15% of non-refundable tax credits based on an amount of \$3,000.

To invest in education and training, the bill would forgive loans for new doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote areas. It would help apprentices in the skilled trades and workers in regulated professions by making operational, trade and professional examination fees eligible for the tuition tax credit. As a member of the regulated profession of engineering myself, I know the cost of annual fees and certification examinations.

I take this opportunity to cite some of the remarks from my professional bodies.

Engineers Canada states:

Making professional examination fees eligible for the Tuition Tax Credit... demonstrates a real commitment to fostering the highly-skilled and qualified talent the country needs to compete....

It further states:

It will help in the pursuit of a strong, diverse, and modern economy.

Polytechnics Canada says that it:

...welcomes the 2011 federal budget for its recognition of the role our members play in advancing innovation through applied research and commercialization activities.

It further states:

Government Orders

These budget measures demonstrate ways to use existing programs with modest new investment to encourage Canadian SMEs to generate smart, long-lasting jobs.

The bill would improve federal financial assistance for students. It would make it easier to allocate registered education savings plan assets among siblings without incurring tax penalties or forfeiting Canada education savings grants.

Finally, the bill respects taxpayers. It would phase out the direct subsidy of political parties. It would close numerous tax loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax. My constituents especially like this provision.

In conclusion, I encourage my colleagues from the opposition to support this bill. It is good for our country in our common quest to keep Canada as the best place in the world to live.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Madam Speaker, this fall I met with other mayors in my riding, including the mayor of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, who spoke to me about a problem in his municipality: the lack of federal investment in infrastructure for small municipalities. The needs of this municipality are great.

This mayor talked about the problem of his municipality's waste water which, at present, is dumped into the fjord—into the Saguenay marine park. The marine park is a federal organization that protects these waters. The mayor asked me to voice his concerns in Ottawa and to ask the federal government to invest in infrastructure for his municipality. I was disappointed to find that this bill does not provide for infrastructure investments. We know that the government's borrowing costs are at a historic low. This is an opportune time to invest in small municipalities that have major infrastructure needs.

Will the government finally invest in infrastructure for small municipalities?

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent question.

We would make the tax credit for the gas fund permanent so that municipalities can plan for their priorities. The provinces are also involved. Basically, the federal government would provide the funding but would not manage the projects. It is up to the municipalities to ask for the projects and to see what their priorities are.

I understand that the infrastructure problem is a great problem. However, this \$2 billion has been allocated; before, it was nothing, so it is still great progress.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. To begin, I heard a comment earlier that I did not think was very fair. I am also new in the House and I was fortunate enough not to be caught up in corruption. I think that is something that works in our favour.

Government Orders

In the Haute-Côte-Nord region, in my riding, the unemployment rate is over 10%. Measures were cut, but there was nothing to make up for the cuts. What is being done for the silviculture, forestry and fishery industries? What is being done to take into account the realities in the regions? Not much.

If the government wants to give power to the regions, it will have to work with them, because right now, that is not one of its strengths. There is also talk of the oil pipeline right now. There were refinery closures in Quebec. It would be nice to keep jobs here. I have to wonder where the Conservative Party's interests are. I get the impression that they are in the pockets of their party supporters.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I will answer in English.

[English]

This is a complicated issue and I cannot resolve it for the member today.

However, our government is providing more of the tools for resolving the issues of the country. As for the member's situation, I do not know many details, but I think our government is on its way to caring for all Canadians, not only those in Conservative ridings. We are here to govern and to govern in a responsible way.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my first comment about Bill C-13 pertains to its omnibus nature.

Parts of this bill would have been worth examining separately and in more depth. The creation of a Canadian securities commission is one of them. The creation of such an institution deserved a higher level of debate, a more heartfelt, thorough and better documented debate. The government killed debate on this issue by introducing a resolution on the funding of this institution as part of an omnibus bill that contained so many elements and so many chapters that it was impossible to figure out. This issue was addressed in just one of over 150 chapters. That is unacceptable. This is important legislation that will play a key role in Canada's economic future and constitution, and the government excluded it from debate by quietly slipping it into an omnibus bill. This is clearly yet another democratic deficit.

We could say the same about the reform of financing for political parties. Was it truly the Standing Committee on Finance that should have considered this key element of the bill? There are committees that deal exclusively with the Canada Elections Act. The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics could have identified this as an essential element of the bill and discussed only this reform. However, such was not the case.

Once again, the Conservative government is misusing omnibus bills. We find ourselves with elements buried in a mountain of tax measures that are detailed and difficult to understand. Yet, that particular element would have been worth debating on its own, because it concerns the future of democracy in this country, the future of political party funding and the possibility of creating new political parties. There is no talk of that; it is all about money, not democracy. Is there anything more fundamental to democracy than a country's election legislation?

That is the whole problem with this government that does not want debate, that does not want to discuss key issues and that keeps on introducing omnibus bills to deny Canadians their right to discuss things that are essential to their everyday lives.

There is another difficult element in this bill. The Conservatives are once again making use of non-refundable tax credits. That is a problem for people who do not have enough income, who do not pay income tax because they are very poor or because they are retired. For a variety of reasons, these people will never be able to access these tax credits. That is a major tax inequity. These people are unable to access existing credits that could be refundable. But the government is not taking that step and it is indicating that these tax credits will be non-refundable.

Since the Conservatives came to power, we have noticed a growing gap between the rich and the poor in Canada. This is one of the things that is exacerbating this poverty. They are not considering the people who earn less than \$15,000 a year, and there are many such people. These people are entitled to a great number of things as well.

We could also talk about the people with ailing children or spouses. Illness in the family has a major impact on the family income. We see tax credits for family caregivers that do not do enough to support those who take leave to care for their loved ones. It is not adequate income. It is not enough. The government has come up with a fine and noble measure with no income and no impact.

• (1115)

We do not see what this measure will achieve. You do things for media attention only. They look good, but they lack substance. They only look good on paper. The best example is the non-refundable tax credits. You are not giving enough. You are not proposing a structured and organized national policy to allow people to stay at home to take care of their ailing loved ones. You are only making a speech and throwing a bit of money around, saying how wonderful it is that you are helping family caregivers. That is not what it means to help people.

There is absolutely nothing to help people in one of the first clauses of Part 1, which deals with family caregivers. First of all, caregivers will receive a credit provided they earn income. Second, it is not enough and does not meet their needs. You say that you will give them something for looking after their family members, but it is not enough money to allow them to live with dignity and not in poverty. Clearly, you accept that some Canadians are poor. You accept the unacceptable. That is the major difference between the Conservative Party and the NDP. That shows that we will govern on behalf of Canadians and that you will govern on behalf of your big business friends.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member to direct his comments to the Chair.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, of course. Thank you for the reminder.

Government Orders

As for the 85,000 volunteer firefighters, the government announced that the budget envelope to support them was about \$15 million. The conditions are that they must work more than 200 hours as volunteer firefighters and they cannot be on the municipality's payroll. This reduces the number of firefighters eligible for the credit by 35% to 65%. The \$15 million shared by 50,000 volunteer firefighters amounts to \$300 each.

Does anyone here actually think that volunteer firefighters work for \$300? Their motivation is not that \$300. Their motivation is supporting and serving the public. They want to help and be recognized. The fire chiefs said that it was a step in the right direction, but this is just classic Conservative speak. The Conservatives say that they are in favour of volunteer firefighters and will support them, they sing their praises, but then they give them \$300. Wonderful. What big spenders. What a great recovery plan. The government did not look into whether these people have the equipment, training and support they need. It says, "hurray for volunteer firefighters", and then expects them to fend for themselves. It expects the municipalities that do not have the means to operate a permanent firefighting service to just keep going. Municipal services that do not have the necessary equipment will not get any. Yet more empty rhetoric from the Conservatives. Behind this paper there is no coherent policy.

We could also talk about children's access to culture. A \$500 tax credit is attractive, but, once again, it is not a refundable tax credit. The second important point is that the culture deficit is greatest among people who have the most financial problems. Unfortunately, as long as we do not address that deficit, those who need it most will not be able to access this tax credit. This is nothing new with the Conservative Party. It makes a big speech to say that it supports culture, but the people who need it still do not have access to it. This is the proof that the Conservative Party is all talk when it comes to Bill C-13.

We could talk about what this bill is missing. Canada is in an economic slump and that is not addressed. All of the economic stakeholders have mentioned that. We have \$500 billion tied up and only 200,000 jobs have been created since the economic recession.

• (1120)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is often somewhat hard for people to really understand what refundable and non-refundable tax credits are, because they do not necessarily complete their own tax returns. As a result, they do not really understand the difference. I wonder if my colleague could explain the difference, perhaps with an example. Say, for example, I earn \$25,000 a year and I want to enrol my daughter in a dance class in January that costs \$250 and I do not have the money to pay for it now. Is there anything in the budget that would allow me to enrol my daughter in the dance class now?

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. This gives me a chance to explain the difference between a refundable and a non-refundable tax credit. People who file their tax returns often owe the government money. They have to pay taxes to the government and the tax credit reduces the amount they have to pay.

Instead of paying \$2,000 in taxes, you would pay \$1,500 and you would get back \$500 for the \$500 you spent on your daughter's dance class. There it is.

Let us suppose that the tax credit is refundable. You enrol your daughter in the dance class right away and, even if you do not pay any taxes, you receive a cheque for \$500 for the expense. That is the main advantage of a refundable tax credit: you are reimbursed for the expense right away.

However, at present, you would have to wait until you file your tax return to receive the refund, and you can only hope that you have to pay enough taxes to get the refund.

[*English*]

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am at a loss in trying to follow the philosophy of the NDP. Yesterday in question period I heard one of the members on the front bench of the NDP ask about what they called a deficit that was too big. We actually agree with that, which is why we are taking measures to make sure we bring our books into balance. Today, in speaking about the budget a member said at every line item that it was not enough.

On the weekend, I spoke with firefighters who are very happy to get a tax credit which they have never had before. Parents have talked to me about a tax credit for the arts which they have never had before. Yet, the NDP members say it is not enough. However, when it comes to the needs of their own political party, those members say they want to keep the nest egg that they already have which is costing taxpayers \$30 million. They do not want to reduce that.

I am trying to figure out the philosophy of the NDP. Are those members just out for themselves, or do they want Canadians to benefit from a thriving economy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Madam Speaker, that is a good question and I have a very simple answer. The NDP cares about the finances of Canadians, not the finances of people who do not pay any taxes despite the fact that they have \$500 billion in liquid assets in their bank accounts. That is an important factor. We are talking about the economy. We want a major action plan to revitalize employment. There are 1.7 million unemployed and underemployed workers. These are people who could pay taxes and help us.

Some 350,000 jobs have been lost in the industrial sector and the government acts as if it is no big deal. I am sorry, but we are going to fight for the people. We do not want any more charades. We want more than just a speech about supporting volunteer firefighters because, when we really look at what this tax credit gives them, it is actually nothing.

You are merely giving a speech. There must be an action plan, funding, structure and a goal to back up that speech. There is nothing but an election speech that sings your own praises and says that the government supports volunteer firefighters. The government must not only say these things, it must do them. That is the difference.

Government Orders

• (1125)

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, better known as the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

Canada has come out of the global economic downturn with the strongest growth record in the G7. Our government has created nearly 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

Our government is standing up for Canadians and fulfilling the strong mandate they gave us to focus on the economy and to create jobs. That is certainly what I heard at the door. Everyone wanted us to focus on the economy and create jobs for our communities and our neighbours.

One such job creation measure present in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is the hiring credit for small businesses. This one-time credit of up to \$1,000 is aimed at encouraging hiring by Canadian small and medium-sized businesses. It is a wonderful measure to help stimulate the Canadian economy and it is mutually beneficial to both our strong small business sector as well as hard-working Canadians who are seeking a job.

Do not just take my word for it, let us hear from Dan Kelly, senior vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is what he had to say about the small business tax credit. "Since the 2011 budget announcement, many members have called about the credit and reported it will make it easier for them to hire". I think that is what everybody across the country wants. He went on to stress that this was a particularly important initiative as the government had declared 2011 as the year of the entrepreneur.

It is not just the CFIB that is pleased with our hiring credit. It is also the Toronto Board of Trade, which had this to say:

[We] welcomed new initiatives to spur small-business productivity and hiring, such as the Hiring Credit for Small Business.

SMEs are the engines of job growth...Spurring productivity and employment growth among SMEs, as this Budget does, should help Canada's economic recovery.

The hiring credit for small business is getting high praise from such respected institutions as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and from the Toronto Board of Trade. It is no surprise to me since I have been getting excellent feedback from small businesses in my community of Mississauga—Brampton South.

I am honoured to be speaking today on the great initiatives for small business and job creation that will be implemented as part of the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

I also want to highlight that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan has a strong focus on helping Canadian families as well.

As a mom to a wonderful six-year-old boy named Jeffrey, there is nothing that is more important to me than my family. I am proud to be a part of a government that stands up for hard-working Canadian families, like those that are the bedrock of my community in Mississauga—Brampton South.

Any mom who has ever signed up their child for music, sport or dance lessons knows how quickly those fees add up. That is why our government already has provided for the very popular fitness tax credit for children that has helped with the cost of sports and has helped to keep our kids fit. I am proud to stand and vote in favour of a budget that will provide tax relief for moms and dads who would like to sign their children up for music or art lessons.

One way our government is standing for families is through the new children's arts tax credit for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and development activities, as I have just mentioned. This would allow Canadian families to claim a 15% non-refundable tax credit on up to \$500 in fees for eligible programs. The tax credit would not only help both our children, who would benefit from some of the best programming available, but it would also help encourage Canadians from a very young age to make the best use of the world-class artistic community available to all Canadians.

Another measure introduced as part of budget 2011, aimed at helping Canadian families, is the new family caregiver tax credit. This 15% non-refundable tax credit, on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types of infirm, dependent relatives, including for the first time spouses, common-law partners and minor children, would help Canadian families receive all of the support they may require. This initiative has been welcomed as a huge step by important groups like the Canadian Caregiver Coalition that has the following comments:

• (1130)

—the Canadian Caregiver Coalition...applauds the Federal Budget. The measures announced in the budget are an important acknowledgement of the vital role of family caregivers. The announcement of a Family Caregiver Tax Credit demonstrates the federal government's commitment to families and the caregiving responsibilities that they assume.

Financial support for those who must take time off work is a critical component of effective policy for family caregivers...We are pleased to see the federal government recognizing and furthering the support for family caregivers by mitigating their financial burden through this program.

The final initiative from the next phase of Canada's economic action plan that I would like to speak about today is legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund.

I have already had the pleasure to speak about how implementing the bill would help our small businesses, our children, our families, but all of these things need a strong community in order to thrive and reach their full potential.

Government Orders

Our government has made, and will continue to make, significant commitments to cities and communities through the gas tax fund. In fact, we recently tabled legislation to make the gas tax fund permanent, at \$2 billion per year, so municipalities would now be able to count on this stable funding for their infrastructure needs well into the future.

Our government also recognizes the need for future infrastructure support beyond 2014. That is why budget 2011 included a commitment that our government would work with provinces, territories, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other stakeholders to develop a long-term plan for public infrastructure that extended well beyond the expiry of the building Canada plan.

I am very proud of the unprecedented investments in public infrastructure that our Conservative government has made since taking office in 2006. We will continue to build on this momentum by working with provinces, territories and municipalities to address Canada's infrastructure priorities and challenges.

As a former city councillor, the gas tax investment that was provided by this federal government to municipalities across the country provided for massive investment in transit. For instance, in Mississauga the gas tax funding allowed for us to have our largest expansion in Mississauga transit history. That meant more routes, more buses, more often. It also allowed for us to have the first wheelchair accessible buses throughout our community.

I have risen in the House today and spoken about how the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act will help our economy, our families and our communities. I would like to thank all members who have taken the time to listen today and hope they will join with me and support this vital legislation and help to implement the key elements of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I would implore the opposition parties to support our budget and help all Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a daughter named Pera who is seven years old, like the member across who has a boy similar in age. Our salaries are quite large and therefore enrolling our children in activities is not a problem for us, although lacking the time might be.

What would the member say to a single mother who is earning perhaps \$20,000 a year who cannot afford to enrol her child in these activities? How would this bill help that mother enrol her child in activities?

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, there are many hard-working families across our communities. I can certainly speak to Mississauga—Brampton South. I am sure the good people in Vaudreuil-Soulanges would also concur that when they start signing their children up for hockey or music lessons, whether they have one, two or three kids, it does add up terribly quickly. Hockey is about \$1,000 for children. Those parents can now avail themselves of this tax credit. This is an important step.

I would be very surprised if the member opposite voted against this type of support for families in his riding. I certainly would be embarrassed to vote against something like this.

I am proud to stand in support of this budget. I am proud to stand in support of Canadian families. It is our duty to help all Canadian families.

• (1135)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with regard to registering youth in organized sport, I will share some statistics with my colleague across the way, and I know the government has an aversion to actual facts and statistics. However, if we look at participation rates in our country over the last 12 years, there was absolutely no discernible increase in participation rates after the tax credit came forward for registering our sons and daughters in sport programs. After 2008-09, the increases were pretty much the same. The one year in the last 12 years that we had an increase in participation rates was in 2003 and that was because our men and women's hockey teams won gold medals at Salt Lake City. The increase in female participation in sport spiked because of that.

We on the opposition benches are trying to say that if we look at targeted investments in our athletes, our facilities, coaching and create some heroes and role models for young people, then we would get increased participation numbers and more people involved.

When I sat down with my wife and we decided to put our boys in hockey, we did not say that we would do this but there was no tax credit, so to heck with it. It does not enter into the whole thought process, but targeted investments work and that is where the government misses when it comes to encouraging more youth to get involved in sport.

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, while I certainly concur that role models are important, our government has made unprecedented investments in sports across the country. Two weeks ago I was at the Skate Canada event in Mississauga and announced some funding for it and provided gold medals. It was the first time a gold medal had been won by a Canadian. Up until now it had always been won by Russians or others. The gold and the silver medals went to Canadians and then the bronze went to the Italians. I am all in favour of wonderful sports.

The member is correct when he says that Canadian families will enrol their children in sports or fitness classes or arts classes. Every mom and dad will sacrifice to ensure that their children can avail themselves of music or hockey lessons. What the budget does is recognize the high cost for families. We believe in providing more money into the pockets of hard-working moms and dads. It is simple. I would hope the Liberal and NDP opposition members would want to join us in helping young moms and dads.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-13, the second budget implementation act for the budget 2011.

Government Orders

While I agree that some of the topics covered in Bill C-13 are also subjects that we on this side of the House feel are important, I feel that this bill misses the mark widely and would not deliver what Canadians need, and I think my colleagues would agree. The topics are important but the content is weak.

While the government has entitled the bill, “keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act”, I feel, and we feel on this side of the House, that it would do little to grow jobs or the economy and suffice it to say that I support the title but, unfortunately, not the content.

While I will return to the specifics of the bill in a moment, I feel that it is important to discuss the context in which the bill has been tabled and to talk about what I see are a few very alarming trends, both with our own economy and internationally.

As both sides of this House will recognize, the world economy has become increasingly unpredictable and, due to the now globalized trading network, it is very hard for governments to insulate themselves from shocks, such as we are seeing in Greece, Italy and other European countries.

The mood of this uncertainty is often reflected in the moods shown by members opposite during these unpredictable times. On one day we see the members of the government thumping their desks and on the next day they almost seem to be in a panic about current events. The global waves seem to be washing over on the government. One day it is boasting and the next day it is not sure what to do and it is wringing its hands.

What is most perplexing to me is that, while the government often wants the public to believe we are helpless in the face of these global forces, we hear over and over again that while there is really nothing we can do, these are economic shocks coming from elsewhere that we have no control over and, in the same breath, the government has single-handedly created hundreds of thousands of jobs within the economy. I think this is very inconsistent and it is something that the government has to remedy.

The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot say on the one hand that it absolves itself from any responsibility for our current economic woes while, at the same time, taking the entire credit saying that the government itself creates these jobs, when it is clearly not true.

To be fair, this practice of double standards is a very bad habit, which most governments undertake, but, it is much better to be honest with Canadians and to really own up to what is going on within our economy and internationally. The government needs to tell Canadians the truth about what lies ahead for Canada and how the government plans to help Canadians maximize their potential in these uncertain economic times.

The government, for example, made a good start, or a small start, when the finance minister warned Canadians about reducing their personal debt loads. This is something that I think was honest and from the heart. It was not rhetoric. It was a genuine concern that I think we all share in this House, that Canadians are massively over-leveraged with their own budgets and they need to do something to reduce them. The government made a good start when it admitted this and it tried to warn Canadians about what is coming and what needs to happen in the future.

However, after that slight warning, the government seemed to go back to the rhetoric and now all we hear is that the world economy is in flux and that there is nothing the government can do about it. However, when there is any kind of report of job creation, the government takes credit for it.

The government needs to be honest, stick with being honest with Canadians and acknowledge the extent to which the global economy is shifting. European and North American economic dominance is being replaced with an Asian dominance. This is a trend that all Canadians see and it is something that the government needs to recognize and adapt to.

If we just look at GDP growth rates, that is what says it all. World Bank data shows that Canada's GDP growth rate was around 3% in 2010, where China's was around 10%. In 2009, we actually had a negative GDP growth rate of -2.5%, where China's economy continued to grow at a rate of 9%. While we went through a huge shock in 2008, China's growth was business as usual.

As one of my colleagues at Simon Fraser University, noted economist, John Richards, once said to me, “We've had our run. Now it's Asia's turn to dominate”. This is something that we need to recognize in this House and adapt to it.

It does look like times will increasingly get tough. The IMF has slashed our growth projections to 2.1% this year and just 1.7% next year. We can compare that again with China, which will be at a projected rate of about 9% or 10%. We can see that this is not a one-time, one-off event. This is a consistent happening where the GDP growth rate in Canada is shrinking while China's is growing.

• (1140)

We need to be honest with Canadians about where we are headed and what we can do to weather these economic times.

Bill C-13 and other measures taken by the government indicate to me that the government does not have much of a plan for the Canadian economy. It seems the government is content to encourage massive foreign investment in our resource industry, ram pipelines through to ship unconventional crude from the Alberta oil sands to Asian markets, roll back regulation in the north and mine it for all its worth, and then continue to ship unrefined products to foreign markets.

The problem is, that is yesterday's approach to managing the Canadian economy and it really lacks vision. The government needs to stop relying on yesterday's flawed solutions to Canada's economic problems or Canada will be swamped by the global economy. It needs to recognize where we stand in relation to the rest of the world and plan accordingly.

Government Orders

Now that the major portion of this so-called budget bill centres on removing a relatively small amount of money from political parties does not show me that the government is serious about the major challenges that lie ahead for Canada, but rather that it is immersed in petty politics. This shines through in the rhetoric that we cannot do anything, that it is an international crisis and yet the government still takes credit for any kind of job creation in Canada.

Bill C-13 should include a vision for Canada that does not rely on hoping foreign companies and governments will pillage our natural resources, ship them to their shores, add value and then ship them back to us. This is yesterday's way of running the Canadian economy and we do not need that any more. In fact, we will not grow or flourish if we continue with this approach.

Bill C-13 would instill much more confidence in Canadians if it contained real measures to grow a secondary industry in this country. For example, in recent meetings I have had with petroleum producers in this country, with individual industries and their associations, they have revealed to me that the number of refineries in Canada has dramatically declined from almost 50 to under 20, with others under serious threat of closure. The bill has no plan to maintain this valuable refinery industry. It appears that the Conservatives would be happy to fade it away, and these refineries will fade away. We have seen them closed in Quebec, as has been mentioned here today in the House.

However, to put this in context, the largest refinery in Canada produces 300,000 barrels per day, which was a massive refinery when it was built many decades ago. India has recently built a complex that refines 1.2 million barrels per day. That number is sometimes hard to get one's head around but that is a massive refinery and more of these are on the horizon both in China and India.

We need to take stock of where we stand, not just in this industry but in other industries as well, in relation to our secondary production. We need to come up with a real plan to save these industries and ensure we think about how to grow them, if we can. We need a closely targeted investment to help these industries survive and thrive. Other countries have done it and we need to follow their lead. To simply throw up one's hands and say that the market will do this or that foreign investment will come in and save us is not the way forward.

The challenge for the government is to be honest with Canadians and provide an economic vision for the country that does more than rely on shipping raw resources to foreign countries. The bill does nothing to reassure me that the government has such a vision and I doubt that it does much to convince Canadians of this either.

It is worth reviewing a few facts and figures in my remaining minute or so to show where we stand.

Official unemployment in the country shows 1.4 million people out of work. However, if we include all of those who are discouraged and unemployed, it pushes that number to two million unemployed. This number may be structural. I have asked the government in the House to reveal what it thinks the natural rate of unemployment is. The U.S. tells us every month what its natural rate of unemployment is. The Conservative government will not do this. In fact, sometimes

I wonder if it even knows what that statistic means. Is their plan to maintain our unemployment rate at 7% or to move forward and try to reduce that rate?

We need a vision but we do not have one.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Madam Speaker, this fall, my colleague from Jonquière—Alma and I went to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area to meet with seniors' groups. They shared many of their concerns with us and told us what issues they want us to fight for in the House of Commons, in Ottawa.

One concern is the protection of their pension funds, which are threatened whenever a company declares bankruptcy. I was disappointed to see that the Conservatives refused to include in their bill the suggestion—from seniors across Canada—that workers' funds should take precedence because these people have spent their whole lives investing in the company's pension fund and they want to be able to count on their pension.

What does my NDP colleague think about the fact that this bill does not really respond to what seniors want when it comes to protecting their pension funds?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, that is a reflection of what is lacking in the bill. It is filled with petty or small measures, some targeted at scoring points against the opposition. It contains no answers for Canadians. These are not just numbers on a sheet. These are real people who are facing uncertain times. It is especially tough for seniors who have planned for their retirement but who see it under threat because of the government's push for them to rely on markets for their pension rather than protecting or strengthening our good Canadian pension plan system.

We on this side of the House are disappointed with the measures in the bill and urge the government to do more.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of small measures, I would like to ask my colleague how it can be that they want to encourage small business and rural economies, yet there are no measures to encourage environmental projects. There is no investment in the environment, which is everyone's future. There are no measures to stimulate projects in research and development or in practical projects on the ground. There are no development measures. Those types of projects could create a lot of jobs and many ideas come from people in the regions. But there are no measures to stimulate growth in the environmental sector.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, I was talking about refineries. The vision of the NDP is for a green and sustainable future, which is where we need to be. It seems like the government has missed the boat on that. It has abandoned these types of investments.

For example, China and the U.S. are leading the way on solar and wind power investments. We seem to have thrown that away. We did have an opportunity. We were in it early. In the 1970s we were investing in solar power. The government decided not to continue and to leave it to other markets. It just extracts and sends out raw resources hoping that will be enough to keep our economy going. I do not think that is much of a plan and I do not think Canadians will find that much of a vision either. I much prefer the vision that my colleague outlined.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Madam Speaker, mentioning the government's lack of vision is very apt.

Currently, we are trying to get increased funding for public transit projects. We are trying to make the economic argument that they help innovation and productivity. These projects would make the economy run smoothly. Sometimes it feels like we are running up against a brick wall because of the government's lack of vision. It does not see the economic benefits of these elements that we in the official opposition have been proposing.

Could the hon. member speak more to innovation and improvements with respect to Canada's economic productivity?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, what officials in Nordic countries have been doing is investing in clusters. They find areas of the country where private sector businesses are already thriving, whether it is with regard to sustainable resources or other types of industries, and then they help those industries grow. They do not create an industry from scratch. They invest in what is already there.

That is the kind of initiative we need to consider in the House, which we do not see coming from that side, and that is disappointing.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak on this matter that is most important to Canadians, Bill C-13, the Canadian economic action plan.

First, I would like to express my gratitude and humble honour to the constituents of Elmwood—Transcona for placing their trust in me to represent them here in Ottawa. It is a job that I take most seriously. It is also why I am very happy to speak to this next phase of Canada's economic action plan, something that I heard so much positive feedback about while speaking with my constituents in Elmwood—Transcona.

Canada can be proud that under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Conservative government we have accomplished seven straight quarters of economic growth. In a time where in so many places across the globe people are suffering because of the weakness of their economy, here in Canada we can take pride and confidence in the fact that we are seeing movement in the right direction.

Canada is in one of the strongest fiscal positions of the world's top performing advanced economies. This is not an accident. With our continued focus on the strength of our economy, we can ensure that we will continue to see strong economic growth. In a time where so many places in the developed world are seeing serious job losses, we can be proud of the fact that since July 2009 Canada has created almost 600,000 net new jobs and over 80% of these being full-time.

With the Conservative government's continued focus on the Canadian economy and the things that are important to all Canadians, this next phase of the Canadian economic action plan offers a solid amount of strong initiatives that will aid all Canadians. With a focus on the people and groups of citizens that are important to Canadian society, such as families, seniors, small businesses, job creators, volunteer firefighters, manufacturers, students, farmers, and so many more, we can acknowledge that the primary concern of the government is to strengthen the ability of all Canadians. With initiatives that will keep taxes low and keep us on track to balance the budget, Canadians can be confident that we will continue to be a leading force in global economic recovery.

Families are integral to the strength of Canadian society, so it is important that as part of our economic strategy we offer programs and initiatives to help the families of Canada. In my riding of Elmwood—Transcona, I have spoken with many families, asking them for their thoughts on what is important to them. Many were able to remind me of their excitement regarding the tax credits promised during the federal election.

Today, I can proudly say that the Conservative government is ready to deliver on that front. With a new children's tax credit of a 15% non-refundable tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational, and developmental activities, the government is taking Canadian families seriously. We understand that it is important for children to be involved in positive activities. We also recognize that we can aid families in having their children participate in these types of activities with a tax credit that will help families keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets.

Often families have shared their concerns with the limit that was placed on claimable medical expenses of a dependent relative. With the next phase of the Canadian economic action plan, our government will be removing the \$10,000 limit for these eligible medical expenses.

I am happy to share with members and all Canadians the facts regarding the new family caregiver tax credit. This is a 15% non-refundable tax credit on the amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types of dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common law partners, and minor children. Along with the other incentives offered for families, I can attest that the concerns of families in Canada are recognized.

We take to heart the concerns that have been brought forward by Canadian families. It is due to our strong record of tax relief that the total tax saving for a typical family in Canada is over \$3,000. That is taking to heart the concerns of Canadian families. That is a testament to this government's strong commitment to deliver on the promises it made to Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets.

Along with families, we recognize the growing needs of our seniors. Our Conservative government understands that Canada's seniors helped build and make our country great. That is why it is important to us to enhance the guaranteed income supplement, enhance the new horizons program for seniors, eliminate the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees, and extend the targeted initiative for older workers by \$50 million.

● (1155)

By enhancing the GIS, where eligible low income seniors will receive additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, we will be helping more than 680,000 seniors across our great country.

One elderly gentleman has stopped by my office multiple times, occasionally for other issues, but each time he comes in he is sure to tell me about how this increase to the annual GIS will make the difference for him and his wife between living very tight and being relieved of their financial concerns.

I am happy to speak today to our government delivering what is more than deserved by our Canadian seniors and to say to all the seniors in my riding of Elmwood—Transcona that another election promise is being delivered.

In my riding of Elmwood—Transcona I have had the pleasure of conversing with many of our small businesses. These men and women are happy to hear and see the incentives offered by the government to help them offer employment, start up their businesses, and run successfully in the Canadian marketplace.

With the new hiring credit for small business, a temporary one-time credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increased employment insurance premiums, this credit helps up to 525,000 employers defray the cost of additional hiring.

The Conservative government is excited to offer support also to youth entrepreneurs with \$20 million to support the Canadian Youth Business Foundation's activities. This program has helped young entrepreneurs become the business leaders of tomorrow, through mentorship, learning resources and start up financing.

We have increased the small business limit to \$500,000, referring to the amount of income earned by a small business eligible for the reduced federal tax rate. We have reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, along with other incentives on which I do not have time to go into details.

These incentives show our government's commitment to helping Canadian small businesses continue to be successful. We recognize the importance of small business to the Canadian economy.

Before I wrap up, there are a few other key parts of this phase of Canada's economic action plan that I would like to touch on.

Government Orders

In the continued efforts of the Conservative government to strengthen the integrity and accountability in government, as well as political activities, I would like to draw attention to the fact that in this stage of the economic action plan, we will continue to take taxpayers' dollars seriously. That is why, in this stage of Canada's economic action plan, we are following through on our government's campaign commitment to phase-out per vote subsidies for political parties.

The government will introduce legislation to gradually reduce the per-year, per-vote subsidy in increments, starting from April 1, 2012 until it is completely eliminated in 2015-16. This will generate savings of up to \$30 million.

Our government has always opposed direct taxpayer subsidies to political parties and believes that political parties should rely primarily on their supporters for financing.

One other area I would like to touch on is the recognition of Canadian charities. We understand the important role that charity plays in Canadian society and we are committed to supporting that. That is why in budget 2006 we eliminated the capital gains tax associated with the donation of publicly listed securities to public charities. That is why budget 2010 reformed the disbursement quota to reduce administrative complexity.

In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will build on our support for charities by cracking down on the few individuals who abuse the charitable system by enhancing transparency and strengthening compliance requirements, and providing the CRA with the necessary tools to deal with the charitable status of organizations where individuals involved have a history of abusing the system.

The Canadian government, with this next phase of the Canadian economic development plan, continues to show it puts all Canadians first. The Conservative government proves in this phase to continue to deliver on the election promises made to concerned Canadians. Our government will not lose focus of what is most important to Canadians, our economy. Rather, we will continue to implement good and transparent use of tax dollars that will be used to enhance our economy and allow us to remain the economic envy of the world.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in debating Bill C-13, we can talk about how little the Conservative Party is proposing. We can also talk about what the Conservative Party is not doing. We can also talk about the promises the Conservative Party has broken during this Parliament and previous Parliaments. I will focus on only one aspect.

Government Orders

We have to remember the date of May 7, 2007. Hon. members might not remember that date. Although I am new, I certainly remember it. Following a promise in the previous budget to fight tax evasion, the current Minister of Finance made an about-face at the time and said that he was not able to fight tax evasion after all.

Where do the Conservative government's interests lie? Do they lie in defending all Canadians or the interests of Conservative taxpayers?

• (1205)

[English]

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, the citizens of my riding of Elmwood—Transcona have rightly acknowledged that we are doing much for Canadian citizens across the spectrum. My riding has a different spectrum of citizens and they all see the benefits of this budget for them.

They have a desire to see us go ahead with what we have brought forward. We have lived up to our commitments and brought forward what we promised during the election campaign. I am hearing thanks from the citizens in my riding for us going forward with what we committed to.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona a question focusing on the elimination of what is generally referred to as the per-vote subsidy. It has been less than \$28 million per year over time and actually represents a very small portion of the total amount of tax dollars that go to federal political parties.

In an effort to cut federal tax dollars going to political parties, is the government considering cutting tax credits to its donors, which in 2009 came to over \$10 million to the Conservative Party alone, or to electoral expense reimbursements, which in 2009 came to over \$21 million to the Conservative Party alone?

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, as I expressed before, we made a commitment to our electorate on the per-vote subsidy and we are continuing down that path. We promised the citizens of Canada that we would eliminate the per-vote subsidy. The feedback I get in my riding is very supportive of us continuing down this path. Constituents want Canadian political parties to stand on their own feet and not rely on subsidies from the federal government.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent speech today on the second half of the budget bill in terms of ensuring it is law before the end of the year. I appreciate his constituents voting for him and sending him here. He is doing a great job in the House and we appreciate that.

Of the number of items in today's bill, whether it is promotion of job creation through the temporary hiring credit, support for communities through the gas fund, the family caregiver tax credit, is there one or two that the member would like to particularly highlight that are really important to his riding in Winnipeg?

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of items I want to highlight that I touched on in my speech. One is the work we are doing to help small businesses with their hiring credits and the extension of \$500,000 to them. They see this as a great help. When I meet with small business owners, they say this is a fantastic opportunity for them to grow and expand their businesses. They

want to do it on their own and be contributing members to the growth of the Canadian economy. They see great opportunity in that.

The other issue I touched on in my speech was seniors. They are very thankful for the GIS supplement. They see it as an acknowledgement of what they have done for our country and appreciate that we are recognizing what they have done to build Canada.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona. His predecessor, Mr. Jim Maloway, was my seatmate at the far end of the House. He was elected again as an MLA in the New Democratic government in Manitoba. I congratulate Mr. Maloway on that. I do miss him as a seatmate, but nonetheless he is back in the Manitoba legislature and we are happy for him.

My colleague from Elmwood—Transcona said something and I had to write it down because I was slightly taken aback. In referring to the Conservative government, he said, "We put all Canadians first". I would challenge my friend from Elmwood—Transcona on that one.

Regarding the tax credits laid out by the Conservatives, for all the things for children which they talked about, one might say it is admirable and that we want young people to get into the arts, sports and different clubs and to find a way to help parents make that happen financially. However, the difficulty is that it is supposed to help all Canadian families according to what my friend said. The reality, of course, is that this is not true. A tax credit cannot help all Canadian families because people who live in poverty do not pay tax. They cannot get the tax credit if they do not pay tax.

How does the government intend to help those families get their children into the arts and sports and join clubs and participate with other children, as this bill purports to do, when those families who can least afford to have their children join in the first place get the proverbial goose egg, nada, nothing, zero, not a penny, no financial help whatsoever? They will not receive one solitary red cent. Why? Because it is a tax credit. Tax credits are for people who have a certain amount of taxable income and remit taxes to the government and they get some form of credit back. It is elementary. Who does that credit really help? It helps people in the top income brackets, the folks who can actually afford to pay for all the things their young children may want to do.

Government Orders

As a parent of kids who are not so young now, when they were young my wife and I wanted them to participate in various activities. We had two well-paying jobs. I worked in the manufacturing sector and my spouse worked in the health care field. We were fortunate to be able to afford to have our three kids in the programs that they wanted to join. We had well-paying, full-time jobs, both of which were unionized. We had good pay, good benefits and good pensions. That is the type of workforce we want to create. That is the type of workforce that could benefit from tax credits, if that is the direction in which the government wants to go. It is not for those that are underemployed or unemployed, or for those who are in dire need, in fact in poverty, who still have children who will not be able to participate.

We have heard numbers being bandied back and forth. We have heard about the 600,000 net new jobs. There is an old saying which I will not repeat here because the language might be unparliamentary. It is about figures and figurers. We will leave aside as to who figures and who is the figurer trying to figure out what the figures are.

The bottom line is the real number. In July 2008 there were 17,084,200 people employed in the labour force in this country. In July 2011, a mere few months ago, there were 17,344,200 people employed in the labour force. I will be the figurer on this one. I think I can do the arithmetic; it does not seem too complicated. That is actually an increase of 260,000 jobs.

I am not sure where the government gets the figure of some 600,000 net new jobs. Net of course is the difference between what one had and what one has now, as most folks would see it. What we have is less than half that amount. If that be the case, who am I to quibble with Statistics Canada? I know the government did when it wanted to get rid of the long form census but that is a debate for another day.

• (1210)

Nonetheless, we can clearly see that the number of jobs purported to be created is significantly lower than what the government purports it to be.

My riding of Welland is a glorious place. I invite my colleagues to visit Welland. It is a wonderful place to be, but it suffers a huge amount of unemployment, because the manufacturing sector that was not supported by the government simply took off. It went to Mexico, Illinois, and Indiana. It packed up and went to China.

We watched Henniges Automotive dry up last month and send 300 workers and their families in Welland to the unemployment line. What is their future under the Conservative government? Less than 40% of Ontarians who are unemployed actually qualify for EI. That is the future for those folks who have been in and out of work over the last year and a half because of the downturn in that sector. The sector did not dry up. Henniges makes rubber mouldings for automobiles. It is headed to the United States. It is going to a state where it will get tax advantages because the government pours money into new firms and expands existing ones.

It is not a question of a business going out of business. It is a question of a company leaving this country and leaving our folks high and dry. We have seen this throughout Welland's history, especially in the last number of years. John Deere did exactly the

same thing and the government washed its hands of the situation and said that is the way it goes. That is not good enough and it should not be the way it goes for Canadians.

I would like to pick up on the remarks of my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas. I am a little bit older than he is and when I was in high school, in grade nine, teachers talked about how we had to diversify the economy. At the time we were good at digging stuff out of the ground and cutting logs. We are still good at it today. In fact the mining sector is seen as one of the best in the world, which is a good thing. Except when I was in high school the idea was to take that stuff we dug out of the ground or the raw logs we cut down and do something with them. Manufacturing is what it is called. Manufacturing seems to be an ugly word these days. We seem not to want to manufacture; we let others do it because they are good at it somewhere else.

We have gone back 40 years. It is 40 years since I have been in high school. We have gone back four decades, back to the same old, same old, when clearly what economists and teachers in my high school and other schools were saying to young people like me as we looked forward to potential jobs, was to diversify the economy, make manufacturing jobs. It would give us an opportunity to work in good-paying full-time jobs with pensions and benefits, unionized jobs if that is the case. The economy would grow and so would our country. Lo and behold, what did we have during the 1970s? Someone who was my age at the time and lived in the heartland of this country, Ontario, could literally walk up the street and get a job the next day after quitting a job the day before.

Today we have young people who are still in school, not necessarily because they want to be there, but because they cannot find a job. They cannot start a career because there are no jobs in which to start careers, because of the limited opportunities over the last five to seven years. Yet the government presents a budget and all of those aspects are absent. All of those pieces that we would want to see and did see in the 1970s when we diversified the economy, when we actually made sure there were businesses where we could get a full-time job with good pay and benefits and pensions. We have eliminated them and now we have temps and people working on contract. We have itinerant workers.

It reminds me of the dirty thirties when men would stand outside the gate and wait for the boss to pick them one at a time and send the rest of them home to come back the next day and try again. That is what we are doing to our young people and it is criminal. We are wasting the potential of young folks who are our future by not making sure that we have the investments set up so they have a sustainable future, good paying full-time jobs with benefits and pensions. That is a crime. That is what is absent in the budget.

Government Orders

• (1215)

I suggest the government put it in the budget to make sure we look after not only those who are at retirement age, but those who are at the beginning stages of their lives, ready to walk into the new economy, so that they can participate in that new economy.

• (1220)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think what we are seeing here is the inability of the government to make the transition from being a minority government to a majority government, in the sense that it does not have a long-term vision for the future. It is still going on with flashy little things here and there, trying to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians with its programs, saying that it is taking care of Canadians' tax dollars.

With respect to the infrastructure program, making the gas tax permanent is great. However, the federal government takes 10¢ out of the pockets of the people when they pay for gas and gives them 5¢ back. What happens to the other 5¢? Why is that 5¢ not going to our municipalities which are currently so burdened?

The way the program is run is more about taking credit for doing things than actually taking concrete action on the ground. The bill does not have anything substantial to build the future we need to build.

Could my hon. colleague speak to that point?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true. As someone who spent five years as a municipal councillor, I know exactly what the member is talking about when it comes to the gas tax. I was on council the first time the gas tax money came down. Yes, it was decent money, but even in small communities it was not meeting the infrastructure needs. What greater way to invest in our infrastructure than to continue to do it now.

Let me quote Sherry Cooper. I do not think Sherry Cooper is a New Democrat. I will have to check with our party to make sure that she does not hold a card, but there is a leadership race on, and maybe she signed up for one. Sherry Cooper said:

The misplaced belief that the road to economic prosperity is paved by near-term fiscal tightening, as espoused by our own Prime Minister Stephen Harper and British Prime Minister David Cameron last week, shows we have learned nothing from Herbert Hoover's response to the Great Depression.

If we invest in communities today, we will do two things. We will set communities up on a future path for prosperity, and we will put people who are not working back to work. What a grand notion that would be. We would increase employment levels and make our communities a better place through infrastructure. The bridges and tunnels in Montreal would be safe. Going into the future, communities could build on that prosperity and help young folks get a job.

What an amazing and novel idea that would be. Maybe the government should take that up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Just a reminder to hon. members that the use of other hon. members' names, even if it is in the context of a quotation, is not permitted. It is something to keep an eye on.

Questions and comments.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada indicated to us a few weeks ago that the gap between the rich and members of the middle class is growing rapidly in this country.

In studying this bill, I see many tax benefits for the rich and even for the upper middle class, but I see very little for the poor or the lower middle class. I would like my NDP colleague's opinion on the value of this bill for Canadians.

The NDP is known as the party that stands up for families and workers and I see very little for them. I would like my NDP colleague to confirm whether he is seeing what I am seeing, or not seeing, in this bill.

[English]

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. There is nothing in this bill that addresses that issue.

That income gap is growing. By all measures every major economist not only in this country but worldwide has said the same thing. When Warren Buffett says that the gap is way too large and it is time for rich folks to pay some more, that is an indicator that the rich folks have too much. When a rich person says he has too much, people should believe him.

It is now time for those who have more to look at those who have less, not through charity, not by handing out charitable vouchers to folks, but by making sure that they get a fair piece of the economy, making sure that they get what they are entitled to through their hard work. Of course, they must go back to work first. That is the piece that must happen.

That is why we look to the government and ask: Where is the jobs plan? Why is the government not creating jobs for our folks, the young and the not so young? In my riding the vast majority of folks who are unemployed look like me. They are my age. They had jobs at one point in time, but now they do not, because of the trade agreements the government and the previous government put together that let all those jobs disappear.

My region, Welland, used to be the fourth highest paying region in the country, but it is not any more.

• (1225)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak once again in favour of budget 2011, or Bill C-13.

Our government has been working hard to keep our promises. We are continuing to focus on the economy, which is our top priority.

The current fragile stage of the global economy is apparent in the current situation facing Greece, Italy and our neighbours to the south. Canada's economy will no doubt feel the effect of what is happening in Europe and the United States; our government realizes that Canada's economic recovery is still fragile, and we are focused on creating jobs and economic growth for Canadians.

Government Orders

Budget 2011 includes many important initiatives designed to help strengthen our economy and provides support for our communities, our families, our farmers, our businesses and our small towns and rural communities.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will invest in the key drivers of economic growth: innovation, investment, education and training.

Canada's economic performance during the recovery stands out among advanced countries, showing seven straight quarters of economic growth. Nearly 540,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009, with over 80% of them being full-time positions. Job creation and economic growth are important to the residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and certainly to all Canadians.

Our economic action plan is working. Our government's investments have been effective in shielding hard-working Canadians from the worst of our global recession, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to foster long-term growth and job creation.

Today I would like to highlight a number of initiatives included in budget 2011 that would benefit my riding and many communities across Canada.

The first is Canada's retirement income system. Our government understands the importance of a secure and dignified retirement for Canadians who have spent their lives contributing to our society. We continue to be committed to improving the financial literacy of Canadians, particularly by helping those who are saving for retirement to make informed decisions. Budget 2011 proposes to provide \$3 million per year to undertake financial literacy initiatives.

Another initiative is the children's art tax credit. Since 2007, Canadians with children have been able to take advantage of the children's fitness tax credit, which promotes physical activity among children and recognizes the costs associated with extracurricular sports such as hockey, soccer and swimming.

As can be the case with participation in fitness activities, a child's participation in artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities can be difficult for parents to afford. Budget 2011 introduces a 15% non-refundable tax credit that would be available for a wide range of activities that contribute to a child's development and that are currently not available under the children's fitness tax credit. This credit will be provided on up to \$500 of eligible fees per child. The introduction of this tax credit would promote the participation of young children in my riding and across Canada in extracurricular activities and would ease the financial burden on their parents.

With respect to seniors, budget 2011 would invest more than \$300 million per year to enhance the GIS, or guaranteed income supplement, for seniors. This measure would provide a new top-up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This benefit would improve the financial security of seniors in my riding and of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

We also have the family caregiver tax credit. Our government recognizes the personal sacrifice that many Canadians make to care for their family members with serious illnesses such as MS or ALS, just to mention a couple. We are proposing a family caregiver tax

credit that would provide a 15% non-refundable credit on an amount of \$2,000. This credit would help many families in my riding and an estimated 500,000 caregivers across Canada.

I have a sister who suffers from MS and I understand the toll that this disease and many other diseases can have on the victim and certainly on families. This tax credit can help ease the financial burden of individuals who provide care for family members who are combatting serious illnesses.

There is also the enhanced medical expense tax credit. Our government is also committed to helping ease the financial burden on Canadians who care for a dependent relative with extraordinary medical and disability-related expenses. Budget 2011 removes the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially dependent family member. This measure will apply for 2011 and subsequent tax years. This initiative is welcome news to the many constituents in my riding who care for a very ill or disabled family member.

● (1230)

Next is palliative and end-of-life care.

For Canadians living with life-threatening illnesses, no matter how old they are, appropriate palliative and end-of-life care helps maximize their quality of life and ensures respect for the patients and their families as they approach death. This government continues to support various programs and initiatives related to palliative and end-of-life care. This budget would provide one-time funding of \$3 million to support the development of new community-integrated palliative care models.

Another very welcome and appreciated item in this budget is the volunteer firefighter tax credit.

My riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, with the exception of the City of Owen Sound, relies solely on the services of volunteer firefighters. Our government is proud of the nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters who keep our communities safe across this country.

In recognition of their brave service, the budget introduced a 15% non-refundable volunteer firefighter tax credit on an amount of \$3,000 for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their community each year.

Agriculture is the number one industry my riding. It is an important part of Canada's economy and is, as I said, the biggest industry in my riding. One of our government's priorities is to continue to promote long-term profitability and global competitiveness of Canadian farmers and agribusinesses. We have announced a two-year, \$50 million agriculture innovation initiative to help Canada's farmers remain on the cutting edge of agriculture innovations. This is an investment we must make.

Government Orders

In early 2011 the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food had the opportunity to travel across Canada during our biotechnology study. One key theme that was top of mind with producers and industry stakeholders was the importance of research to the competitiveness and profitability of Canadian farmers and agribusinesses.

Another important initiative to our government is strengthening food safety. Food safety from field to fork is fundamental to the health and wellness of all Canadians. In the 2011 budget, our government has taken steps to improve Canada's food safety system by providing an additional \$100 million over five years, on a cash basis, to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to enhance our food inspection capacity.

Without a doubt, investing in research and innovation and food safety initiatives would strengthen the foundation of Canada's agricultural sector and improve the ability of Canadian farmers and agribusinesses to compete in the domestic and global marketplace.

Another initiative is enhancing environmental protection of the Great Lakes. This measure is near and dear to my heart, as my riding is bordered on three sides by Georgian Bay and Lake Huron.

Protecting the water quality and the health of the Great Lakes is vital to ensuring that Canadians can depend on this rich ecosystem for drinking water, for recreation and for jobs. The Great Lakes are an important resource to the residents of my riding and to many other Canadians.

Building on the existing Great Lakes action plan and action plan for clean water, budget 2011 announces an additional \$5 million over two years to improve near-shore water and ecosystem health and to better address the presence of phosphorus in the Great Lakes.

I have to mention that early in the new year, I intend to table a bill that would ban the sale or diversion of our fresh water in this country. It is something that is, as I said, near and dear to my heart.

In closing, I will mention that local small businesses are going to benefit. Our government recognizes that they are job creators and help to stimulate our economy, making them a crucial part of economic recovery. For these reasons, we have created the new hiring credit for small business, which would provide a temporary one-time credit of up \$1,000 against any potential increases in 2011 EI premiums over 2010. This new credit would help over 525,000 employers to pay the cost of additional hiring.

Mr. Speaker, I know I am running out time. I look forward to answering any questions.

•(1235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will focus in particular on the tax credit for family caregivers. I have been a nurse and I am familiar with the family caregiver situation. When they become caregivers, people often have no choice but to cut down on their hours of work. As a result, they do not earn enough money to benefit from this tax credit. Of the households with a caregiver, 65% declare a combined income of less than \$45,000 and 23% declare an income of less than \$20,000. The majority of family caregivers cannot even take advantage of these

tax credits. During the holidays, I will work shifts as a nurse at my hospital. I would like to know what to tell the families of patients and the patients who, unfortunately, will become sick in January 2012. They must wait until March or April 2013 before, maybe, getting a tax credit after they file their taxes. What can I tell these patients who ask me what they can do to survive in the meantime?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the floor for her great question, welcome her to the House of Commons and congratulate her. The profession of nursing is a very elegant career and it is not something everybody can do. I appreciate her work in that profession.

I am glad to hear that she supports our caregiver tax credit. As we know, there was never anything in place. I give our government a lot of credit for establishing it. Enough is never enough, but, as she pointed out, this is a well-deserved plan in our budget, and maybe in the future we can build on it. However, it is a great start, and I have had a lot of positive feedback about it.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most egregious things in this bill and budget is that tax credits are not refundable. It means that people who can already afford these activities would get an additional gift from the government, but those who cannot afford them would get no help at all, whether it is children in sports or arts or whatever the case may be.

I would like to ask the member this question: in his community, are there any people volunteering to fight fires who are between jobs, whose jobs have been phased out or who do not have a taxable level of earnings? Are any people like that volunteering to fight fires, and do they not also deserve a small part of taxpayer-funded credits for their work in the community?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the exact answer as to whether people who are between jobs are currently volunteer firefighters, but I think that point is irrelevant. Whether volunteers are between jobs or are working full time while being volunteer firefighters, they will qualify for the firefighter tax credit. I take it the member supports this measure; I know I have had positive feedback in my riding on it.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this being the year of the entrepreneur and a week to celebrate entrepreneurship, I wonder if the hon. member could speak a little more about the hiring tax credit. Coming from a business background, I understand clearly that incentives help to create greater impetus and stimulation in business. Specifically, this \$1,000 hiring credit is a very important element. Could the hon. member talk a bit about how important it is to his area and to all Canadians?

Government Orders

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I come from the business side and I believe my colleague does. A number of small business owners in my riding have told me that this credit just might make the difference between hiring one employee and hiring two employees. It is the right direction. Our goal in this budget and in Bill C-13 is to create jobs and economic activity, and that is exactly what it will do.

• (1240)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-15. I would call the title of the bill “the bill with no real plan to create jobs”. Why do I say that? It has been extremely disappointing to see the tremendous disconnect between the Conservative government's policies and the tough realities that people face in urban and rural communities alike.

Given the global economic uncertainty and the fact that 1.4 million Canadians are out of work, one would have thought that when the government introduced its budget implementation bill, it would have had one priority focus economically, and that being to create jobs. This is not the case. Unfortunately, there is no plan to create jobs in the bill.

Today we have over 500,000 fewer net full-time jobs than we had before the recession. The government's continual crowing about having created jobs is false. It measured from the trough of the recession to today. However, we have to look at where we were in August 2008. Today we have 525,000 fewer net full-time jobs than we had before. That is a crisis. It is a real human crisis for the constituencies of many of my colleagues across the aisle. For example, Nanaimo has an unemployment rate of 16%. For youth, unemployment is far too high.

On top of this net loss of jobs, we have a million new Canadians in our country since that time. Therefore, there are a far greater number of people looking for work with no plan to recover those jobs.

Instead of helping to create jobs, the government's budget is helping to kill jobs. I am referring to the increased EI payroll taxes that have increased by \$600 million in 2011 and will increase by another \$600 million in 2012. Everyone knows these taxes placed on both the employees and the employers kill job creation. Yet that is what the government is doing, despite repeated requests from the Liberal caucus to hold off on that EI payroll tax increase.

The Conservatives know payroll tax increases kill jobs. In January 2009 the Minister of Finance said, “For many businesses, an increase in payroll taxes would make it harder to sustain existing jobs”.

In May 2009 the current Minister of Foreign Affairs said, “That is what Canadians do not want, a job-killing payroll tax increase. Those of us on this side of the House will not...raise taxes”.

The last quote is from the Conservative government's 2008 election policy declaration, which states, “unnecessarily high payroll taxes are a tax on job creation. Lower payroll taxes encourage hiring and business expansion”.

Why is the Conservative government and its members ignoring their own wisdom? Let us think about it.

The Liberals and the economists have both said that this is not the time to raise EI payroll taxes. The government has claimed that it has

no control over the EI tax increases. Therefore, one would assume it recognizes that is a negative factor for which it has claimed to have no control.

Recently the government actually appeared to have control over this and it reduced the proposed increase by 50% for 2012. That is a good thing. However, if it can reduce it by 50%, why not by 100% and just hold off on EI payroll tax increases? Why does it claim it has no control over something that it does have control over? It speaks to the heart of citizens' trust in what their government has to say. This is a government that has been repeatedly undermining that trust.

The members opposite have been crowing about the hiring credit for small businesses worth \$165 million, which in fact is small change when the increases are costing \$1.2 billion. That is an insult, not a policy.

• (1245)

Canada has about one million small businesses, but over 600,000 would not qualify for this credit. Therefore, I hope the government would continue to make the reductions in the EI payroll tax increase that we have asked for and bring it down to a zero increase.

Also, there is nothing in the budget that reflects the concerns of female business owners. Here is some information from the Taskforce for Women's Business Growth.

In 2007 women retained ownership in almost half of Canada's small and medium-sized enterprises. In 16% of our SMEs, women were majority owners. That is a major force in the small business landscape. However, 37% of the majority female-owned businesses are considered high growth, while 63% of majority male-owned small businesses are considered high growth. Why that discrepancy?

There are some historical and structural factors that make it tougher for women to grow their businesses. Therefore, the task force and its members have asked for some very reasonable support from the government to facilitate the job growth in small and medium-sized businesses owned by women. They are not asking for a handout. They are asking for some assistance in coordinating, consolidating and communicating.

The task force wants the government to: consolidate existing small business program information and target it to women; improve financial and technology literacy for women business owners; increase access to growth capital, grants and other resources, which women historically have found more difficult to access; and, report on the economic contributions of women to the Canadian economy.

Government Orders

These are very reasonable requests, but I do not see them anywhere in the government's budget. These individuals are struggling where they could be contributing \$2 billion a year to the Canadian economy simply through a 20% increase in total revenues in majority female-owned enterprises. That is doable. The government should provide some framework for assistance.

Speaking of individuals, a huge concern that Liberals have is the deliberate exclusion of low-income Canadians in the budget. By that I am referring to the non-refundable tax credits, and there are several of them such as the family caregiver, volunteer firefighter and children's art tax credit. Since these are non-refundable tax credits, it means they would only apply to taxes owing. Therefore, those families and children who are in households without a taxable income, the very people who need assistance the most, are cut out. These programs would not increase the number of people engaged in these good and worthwhile activities because it is targeted at families that already have the means to do that.

In fact, this kind of program increases inequality in our country. We know that income inequality leads to many decreases in social well-being. A lot of evidence has proven that. Increased income inequality leads to higher crime rates, worse health and mental health outcomes, greater child mortality and a whole host of social ills.

We need to work toward income equality. However, this is not the direction Canada is going in and the gap in income is increasing. These non-refundable tax credits are simply unbelievable and will increase income inequality.

I had a meeting with small businesses in Vancouver Quadra. A number of measures were requested, but they are nowhere to be seen in the government's budget. I consider it a failure and I will vote against Bill C-13. The government has no real plan to create jobs.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was here when I asked a question of the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and I talked to him about the tax credit for family caregivers. He told me that he was aware there were needs and that maybe in the future they can build on it.

When I try to tackle a problem in a difficult situation, I start by talking to those who are most affected. So I start with people with the lowest incomes. I start by giving them refundable tax credits. I start with the people who are most affected.

I would like to hear what she has to say about that. Who does she think should logically be the first to benefit from tax credits or measures affecting certain people?

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the insights of my colleague from the New Democratic Party. I congratulate her on her quick grasp of the essence of what government should be about, which is reducing some of these inequalities while stimulating a healthy economy and productivity in Canada.

With the previous Liberal platform, we had a billion dollars to support home caregivers and it was refundable. Therefore, those with

low non-taxable income would also benefit from that small amount of assistance. The Conservative government's program is far more measly and it cuts out those who need the assistance most.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about tax credits. Just six years ago, when the Liberal Party was in government, it never offered those. It never offered tax credits for the arts. It never offered a tax credit for physical fitness. It never offered a tax credit to firefighters. Just this past weekend in Hamilton I was at an announcement with firefighters and they were overjoyed that they finally would get this. They had been asking for it for years and years, even dating back to Liberal times.

I would like to ask the member if she is really concerned about the Canadian economy and jobs. The Canadian Steel Producers Association, the Canadian Welding Bureau and the United Steelworkers were here this morning. They all asked that we pass this budget and get the capital cost allowance reduction in place so they could invest and create jobs. Is she going to vote against this?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, first, support for volunteer firefighters was a platform of the Liberal Party, which we were pleased to see the members opposite steal and put into their budget. I thank them for that. However, they did it wrong. They did it in such a way as to undermine income inequality in their own communities. Those volunteer firefighters who need it the most are watching the bus drive by, bringing taxpayer funding to those volunteer firefighters who already have a good, decent income. This is emblematic of the Conservative government's approach.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments and emphasis on job creation. There are a couple of specific initiatives in my province related to job creation that I would like to raise, specifically as it relates to the discontinuance of the various infrastructure funding programs.

In the Charlottetown harbour of my province, the oyster fishery has been decimated because only the city and the province are prepared to cost share in a solution. The federal government is not. We are missing opportunities with respect to green energy and the diversity of our economy because successive campaign promises have been made by all parties, except the Conservatives, to share in the funding of a cable to the mainland for green energy.

Would my colleague comment on the discontinuance of infrastructure funds and their impact on the ability to create jobs in our country?

•(1255)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, in my economic listening tour across rural southeast British Columbia, people said that the federal Conservative government was missing in action in the vital partnerships, especially for our rural areas. I want to confirm that this kind of infrastructure is about productivity for the future. It is about jobs for the future. It has long term benefits, not just immediate shovels in the ground for whatever project in Muskoka can bend the ear of the minister.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House, representing the people of Brampton West, especially to talk about today's subject.

The bill is a low tax plan for jobs and economic growth. It is the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, that will support Canada's economic recovery and promote job creation.

As we have all heard many times in the House, Canada's economic performance has won praise around the world. The World Economic Forum has declared Canada's financial system the soundest in the world for the fourth year in a row. We have also had the strongest job growth in the G7, creating nearly 600,000 jobs since July 2009.

We will have, according to the International Monetary Fund, the strongest economic growth of the G7 over the next two years. *Forbes*, the influential business magazine, has ranked Canada as the best country in the world for business.

While this is positive news, we must remain aware of the fragile economic conditions that exist in Europe and the United States. We are not isolated from the economic challenges outside our borders. That is why we must stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan so that we can maintain economic growth and job creation.

I would like to speak to a few of the many important features contained in the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, and discuss how they will benefit my constituents in Brampton West.

As everybody in the House knows, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving more money where it belongs: in the pockets of hard-working Canadians and in the hands of businesses, like those in my riding.

I am proud to say that we have cut taxes in every way that government collects them. We have cut personal taxes. We have cut consumption taxes. We have cut business taxes, excise taxes and much more. We have cut taxes over 120 times since 2006, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in this country in over 50 years.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on our government's low tax record and contains even more initiatives to promote job creation and economic growth. For example, the bill proposes to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment.

I have heard first-hand from my constituents over and over again how important this will be to our local businesses. It is allowing

Government Orders

Canadian businesses to invest in machinery and equipment that will allow them to be more competitive in the global economy.

There is also the temporary hiring credit for small businesses, which will allow small business owners to hire additional employees, creating more jobs and strengthening the economy of the country and the local economy of Brampton West.

The bill contains more support for my community. Bramptonians have already seen the benefits of our government's economic action plan. The City of Brampton has received millions of dollars through this plan for a number of infrastructure and transit projects.

For example, the government invested in the AcceleRide bus rapid transit system, which over time will help reduce traffic congestion, strengthen the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout the greater Toronto area. These initiatives have also created numerous jobs in Brampton, of further benefit to our local economy.

Included in the bill is the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable, long-term financing for cities and towns. The mayor of Brampton has welcomed this initiative. She has said:

This budget reaffirms the federal government's belief that the best way to deliver high-quality infrastructure projects at the local level is to partner directly with municipalities. Like other cities across the country, the City of Brampton has seen first-hand how successful this approach can be.

Thanks to the gas tax fund, the City of Brampton has been able to undertake major infrastructure projects. The continuation of this fund will allow more necessary projects to get under way.

In addition, the bill includes the youth crime prevention initiative: \$20 million will be dedicated to promote programs that will help youth resist or exit gangs. Community safety is a top priority in my riding, and this initiative will help make our streets safer.

•(1300)

This bill also contains continued support for our seniors. Our government recognizes that our seniors helped to build this great country and no other government has taken larger steps toward supporting our seniors than this government. This bill includes initiatives such as enhancing the GIS, where eligible low-income seniors would receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This would help more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

Moreover, this bill includes improved financial assistance for students, with initiatives such as the extension on tax relief for skills certification exams. This would make all occupational, trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief through the tuition tax credit. These initiatives would allow more people from my riding to attend and graduate from post-secondary education.

Government Orders

The last specific feature I would like to discuss is the phase-out of the per-vote subsidy for political parties. Governments have a duty to use taxpayer dollars wisely and only in the public interest, especially in a time of fiscal restraint when families are struggling to make ends meet. Our government has always opposed the direct taxpayer subsidies that are paid to political parties and believes that the parties should rely primarily on their supporters for their financing. The vast majority of people I have talked to in Brampton West agree. Our government is following through on our campaign to gradually reduce the per-vote subsidy until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16, which would save \$30 million. Phasing out this subsidy would allow the parties to adjust to their loss of income by stepping up their fundraising efforts. As such, they would find themselves in more contact with Canadians.

A number of colleagues have pointed out that this bill has been debated for a long time. Initially tabled in the House in March, we are now dealing with the implementation of the second phase of the bill. We are in the last part of the process that deals with the budget that was presented. Both the NDP and the Liberals turned that down in the spring and decided it was time for an election. During that election, Canadians decided it was time to get things done and they gave our government a strong mandate so that we could move the budget process forward. It is important to get this bill passed without delay.

Despite the challenges we face in the global economy, our government is successfully implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Our government continues to be focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs, promoting economic growth and lowering taxes. This bill, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, does just that.

As the member of Parliament for Brampton West, I am pleased to support this bill that provides continuous tax relief and support to my riding's businesses, seniors and families. This plan is working. We must continue to stay the course, as our Conservative government delivers on its strong mandate to help Canadian families and our economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my Conservative colleague.

Bill C-13 is called Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act. For months now, the NDP has been talking about a significant measure to stimulate job creation and give some tax relief to the job creators that create more than half of new jobs in Canada—small and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs.

Will the Conservative government commit to lowering the small and medium-sized business tax rate from 11% to 9%, as the NDP has been calling for? It is a very simple question. I want to see if the Conservative government can show some leadership and support our entrepreneurs who work so hard and if it can support our SMEs and create more jobs in the regions.

• (1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, here on this side of the House we certainly do not need to be given lectures on lowering taxes by

members on that side of the House, who have repeatedly indicated in campaign after campaign that they would raise taxes. They have talked about increasing the GST. They have talked about increasing personal income taxes. We on this side of the House have cut taxes, as I said in my speech, over 120 times since 2006. It is a record we are proud of and that we are going to continue as long as we are the government in this country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think I caught the quote, but forgive me if this is incorrect because we do not have *Hansard*. The hon. member for Brampton West said that governments have a duty to use funds wisely and that is why they oppose tax dollars going to political parties.

The bulk of tax dollars going to political parties is for matters not related to the \$2 per vote, which is the fairest and most democratic system that we have for public campaign financing.

Is the government now planning to at least reduce the subsidy in the form of credits for donations? Charitable institutions in this country would love to get 75% back on donations of up to \$400.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, reducing the subsidies for political parties is important, number one. I hear over and over again that Canadians do not want their taxpayer dollars being given to parties to support their activities. They think that parties should be able to raise the funds necessary to run their election campaigns.

I do take interest in my friend's suggestion that we should look at whether people making donations to charitable organizations should receive a better tax credit. Perhaps that is something she should speak to members on this side of the House about. I am certainly in favour of supporting charities with a system like that.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member for Brampton West is number one or number two when it comes to the size of his riding, but it is one of the largest ridings in the country. I thank the member for the work he has done.

What amazes me is that the opposition is talking about voting against this budget bill that helps to create jobs in terms of the credit for small businesses, supporting communities through the gas tax funding, the family caregiver tax credit. There are a number of things we are doing in this bill that they will be voting against.

When the member was back in his riding, as we all were in our ridings last week, did he hear from his constituents about how important these items are to the families and to the communities which he represents?

Government Orders

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to spend a lot of time in my riding last week. I did hear, over and over again, how important these initiatives that are contained in the budget are.

I can specifically recall meeting with several people in the manufacturing community. They think the accelerated capital cost allowance in this budget is critical for them. It gives them the opportunity to reinvest in new equipment and machinery to make them more competitive in the global economy, and that is critical these days.

The economy is difficult. The global economy is very competitive. It is an important measure. I know it is supported in my constituency.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is very important to rise today in the House to speak out against Bill C-13, which combines a myriad of proposals. If we could take the time to analyze them one by one, we would have the opportunity to debate a number of important issues. But these proposals are wrapped up in a single bill, which means we cannot debate them. That is an affront to democracy. We are not able to take the time needed to explain the details of each proposal in this bill to the Canadian people.

This bill is an empty shell. As my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin said earlier, the Conservatives make a great many extravagant announcements. They say they will be investing in a number of areas, but if we look at the details, we see these investments are superficial. There is no real, concrete, strategic plan for stimulating the economy and creating local, sustainable jobs. Jobs that do not pay enough and that keep people living below the poverty line are not helpful.

I would like to suggest some concrete ways to really help Canadian families. Consider the health care system. As we all know, thousands of families do not have access to family doctors and nurses at this time. There is a personnel shortage in the health care system. It is a problem everywhere, in all provinces and territories. Hospitals and clinics do not have enough human resources. The public health care system is particularly short-staffed. The Conservatives have not done much to prevent private services from taking a larger share of health care. The bigger the private sector becomes, the bigger the gap between the poor and the wealthy when it comes to access to health care, even though poorer people are the ones who need health care the most.

Earlier, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue explained, as have many others, that family caregivers need a great deal of help. The Conservatives are always telling us over and over about the tax credit for family caregivers; however, that tax credit can only benefit people who make enough money. Most family caregivers do not have enough income to benefit from tax credits. Why would the government not grant direct tax benefits instead, which would really help these people? That would put money directly into the pockets of people who help families who are in need because of health problems and other concerns. This would be a concrete, positive, constructive measure for family caregivers.

Still in the area of health, we have to invest in home care to allow people to maintain their independence and remain active. I am on the Standing Committee on Health and I am our deputy health critic. Every week since October, witnesses have been coming to the committee to tell us that, as far as chronic illnesses are concerned, the government must invest in creating a strategic plan for healthy eating and urban planning in order to allow people to have an active lifestyle. Simply improving the public's eating habits would help unburden the health care system. It would also create jobs.

● (1310)

There are already a number of farmers, growers and fresh food producers in our regions, in Canada, who could supply food to seniors living on very low incomes who do not have the means to buy fruit and vegetables. Fruit and vegetables should be a staple in our diet. A number of health experts who have come to testify at the Standing Committee on Health have said that seniors cannot afford to buy fruit and vegetables. That is appalling. There are plenty of farmers who want nothing more than to offer their products at local markets and grocery stores at affordable prices. This is basic nutrition. We could make use of it in schools and hospitals, but the government lacks leadership on the issue.

Another aspect of health is physical activity. The provinces are trying to promote physical activity and healthy living, but problems related to obesity and diabetes are on the rise. The federal government should invest more in helping the provinces and territories in their promotion and prevention efforts.

A number of people and organizations such as those that support seniors have managed to implement projects in more than 500 cities in Canada, including over 300 in Quebec. The purpose of these projects is to configure cities differently and adapt them to more active living. This may involve ensuring that sidewalks are safe for seniors and the children of young families and having more green space in neighbourhoods, which in turn encourages people to use local services, drive less, walk more and get together. In addition to making neighbourhoods livelier, it would encourage people to be physically active.

We have many suggestions just in the area of health. The Conservatives often say that the opposition makes few suggestions. I just provided five in the area of health. We can provide more. With regard to public safety, we could create more jobs, except that the Conservatives are once again being very contradictory.

They say that they want to promote local employment. I will repeat that, in my riding, an entire section of the border is not protected. RCMP officers told me last week that closing the Franklin border crossing has been and continues to be a nuisance for them. There has been a resurgence of smuggling and crime, and people can cross the border between official crossings because of the decrease in surveillance. The customs officers who worked at the former Franklin border crossing also provided security and surveillance. Now there is none, because of the Conservatives' decision.

Government Orders

I see my time is nearly up and I will move on to another matter. There is not much in the budget, Bill C-13, in terms of the environment. In my riding, the budget for the St. Francis Lake National Wildlife Area was cut by 56% even though it attracts more than 5,000 tourists every year. It is located in Dundee, a point of access to the United States and to the Akwesasne Mohawk Reserve.

We keep hearing that Canada is trying to encourage ties with first nations communities. Instead, the government is cutting funding and many people are losing their jobs. To make matters worse, the jobs that are being lost are green, sustainable and local. There are many small measures like this that are negatively affecting our local and national economy. In Quebec alone, the budgets of four other wildlife areas have been cut. Canada has a total of 51 national wildlife areas. Why does the government have to cut funding to a profitable area?

Bill C-13 does not promote the local economy and does even less for the national economy. I am asking the Conservatives to be open and accommodating and to include our proposals in their budget.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague indicated that she is the health critic for her party, and I applaud her in that role.

One of the challenges that all of us, as members of Parliament from all across Canada, are aware of is the challenge of trying to have medical doctors and nurse practitioners settle into remote and rural areas. I know of many communities that have set up formal committees to recruit medical personnel into their underserved areas.

I wonder if the member is aware that this budget would provide student loan forgiveness for medical doctors and nurses who work in rural and remote areas. Practising physicians would be eligible for a federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000, and nurse practitioners would be eligible for federal student loan forgiveness up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000. It seems to me that this is a great initiative to encourage medical doctors and nurse practitioners to settle in rural and remote areas.

Will the member stand in this place and vote in support of a measure that would improve health care for rural Canadians?

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for raising this issue.

It allows me to say that this measure does encourage doctors and nurses to move to the regions. However, if more health care professionals do not enter the system, how will it become more effective? If health care professionals simply move from urban to rural areas, there will be a problem in the urban areas. More money must therefore be invested in training, and not just in loans. Bursaries must also be given because, once people get into debt, that heavy financial burden does not help.

We must increase the number of doctors and nurses and we must improve infrastructure to encourage them to move to the regions.

There is no national public transit system. Improvements must be made in this regard in order to attract people to the regions and keep them there. We must not just give out loans. A comprehensive approach is needed and, in order for it to be effective, it must be incorporated in such a way that it brings together all these components. All these things must be done in conjunction with one another.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for her wonderful display of humanity and sense of community.

I would like my colleague to explain to the House why we need to invest in public services for youth to ensure that they are strong and healthy and prepared to help our country grow, and, therefore, why we need to create an environment that promotes economic growth. I am talking, in particular, about youth dropout rates and health. The government could introduce measures that would create a lot of jobs for this next generation. Why does my colleague think we should invest in the community?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague.

It is important to invest in the community and in young people because they are the people who will build and continue to build our country. If we want to get people involved, we must first give them the opportunity to do so, to make a commitment and to find themselves. It would be a positive measure to give young people more opportunities and see where they can get involved.

Prevention is one aspect of health: if we are more active, we are healthier and more productive. Being healthy helps the economy. All of that is related, just like the economy and the environment. If we want to enjoy our environment, we must first take care of it. So we must invest in all areas, without leaving a single one out. Together they make a complete package.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Kitchener—Conestoga in favour of Bill C-13, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. I rise today proud of our government's record, the best fiscal record in the industrialized world.

I rise today recognizing the accomplishment as even more significant when we examine the state of our largest market to the south and I rise today in recognition that these challenges confront us still, that the global economic uncertainty which inspired Canada's economic action plan remains with us today.

Government does not create jobs, but government can create and foster an environment in which jobs are created. We cannot force businesses to conduct research or invest in their own competitiveness, but we can encourage innovation. Canada's federal government cannot fix the world's economy, but we can ensure that we are poised to seize on the best opportunities as the world recovers.

Government Orders

However, we also have responsibilities beyond today's economy. Members of the House must ensure that a stronger country is left for our children, not only a stronger economy. It is with these thoughts in mind that I stand in favour of the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

Before budget 2011, this Conservative government had already cut taxes over 120 times. Over one million lower income Canadians were removed from the tax rolls altogether by this government, 85,000 of them seniors. We introduced tax free savings accounts which offer lower and moderate income earners the ability to save their hard-earned money without the disincentive of taxation.

Last week in Waterloo region we celebrated entrepreneur week. This week-long festival dedicated to the entrepreneurial spirit reminds me that it was this government that declared 2011 to be the year of the entrepreneur. We all know the numbers. We understand that the vast majority of jobs created in Canada are created by entrepreneurs running small or medium-sized businesses.

Last week, Communitech inducted several business people into the Waterloo region entrepreneur hall of fame. One of the recipients, Carol Leaman of PostRank compared starting a business with another profession entirely. An entrepreneur, she said, is like a skydiver. They both jump out of planes from great heights, but only entrepreneurs are expected to make their parachutes as they fall toward the ground. The metaphor is clear. Our entrepreneurs are willing to risk their time, their savings and their available credit, everything they have, in the dream of building a business.

Iain Klugman, Communitech president and CEO, put the challenge for us as policy-makers even more clearly. He stated, "If you don't have people who bet the farm you don't have a strong economy. Entrepreneurs drive the economy".

This government has worked hard since our first minority mandate to unshackle our entrepreneurs. I am pleased this work has continued in budget 2011. We have instituted a new hiring credit for small business that will provide up to \$1,000 against a small firm's EI premiums for new hires. We have offered new and increased support to young entrepreneurs to build the next generation of global business leaders. We are focused on building a stronger Canada, better able to withstand global challenges.

Under this Prime Minister and this finance minister, Canada withstood the recession better than any other country. Thanks to this Prime Minister and this finance minister, Canada will emerge stronger from this period of global uncertainty. The measures in this budget build upon work done in previous budgets, an economic action plan that kept Canada leading the world, an economic action plan that opposition parties consistently failed to support.

Over the past six years, our government has lowered personal income taxes, corporate income taxes and the small business tax rate. We have increased the amount that Canadians can earn before being taxed. We made it easier for seniors by instituting pension splitting. We have introduced choice in child care through the universal child care benefit and passed the children's fitness credit. All of these positions were supported by Canadians and none of them were supported by the opposition.

While we have worked hard to keep Canadians working, we have also put in place measures to protect families. In years past, we overcame opposition objections to help Canadians through new items like the registered disability savings plan, the first time home buyers' plan, the public transit tax credit and an expanded home buyers' tax credit.

• (1325)

Today we are asking for support on new measures to help Canadians: measures to help students afford the costs of post-secondary education such as allowing them to earn more without having their loans clawed back; measures to help Canadians pay for the health care they need such as removing the limit on medical expenses they can claim on their taxes, or to take time to care for their loved ones through the family caregiver tax credit; and measures to make homes more energy efficient by extending the eco-energy retrofit program.

Budget 2011 will provide low income seniors with some much needed relief by increasing the guaranteed income supplement payments they will receive by as much as \$600 for single seniors and as much as \$840 for couples. There are no surprises in this budget. We stand clearly in favour of lower taxes and balanced books. We stand for long-term sustainable growth and we stand for the family.

These times are unprecedented for the modern Canadian family. While the experts seem to agree that Canada has emerged from the recession, our major trading partners remain mired in doubt and uncertainty. I am grateful to the finance minister for extending vital programs in times like these, programs like work sharing which allows viable employers to retain critical talent during lean times and which allows employees to work reduced hours until times improve.

Several companies in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga have unfortunately been in the position to use the work share program. Ontario Drive & Gear was one of those companies. Thanks to support from this government, ODG remains one of Wilmot Township's largest employers. ODG President Joerg Stieber was also named to the Waterloo region entrepreneur hall of fame last week. He said, "The foundation of our success is really in the hard work and dedication of the good people who work at ODG."

The people are what is important. Work share allowed ODG to keep the staff in whose skills it had invested so much and it allowed the employees to remain gainfully employed rather than left out of work.

Government Orders

Kuntz Electroplating, one of the largest employers in the city of Kitchener, would tell a very similar story. Work share, to put it simply, keeps Canadian employers and employees working. But there are Canadians who are more vulnerable in an economic downturn than the average worker. I speak in this case of young Canadians who may not have had the experience or the networks that they need to find that first job and older Canadians who have trouble finding that new career when laid off during the end of their working lives.

To help new entrants to the job market, budget 2011 will make all trade, occupational and professional exam fees tax deductible. It will allow students pursuing a degree or diploma to earn twice as much money before their loans are clawed back. It ends discrimination against part-time students by reducing the interest they must pay on their Canada student loans.

This government recognizes that education is a provincial responsibility, but that our global economic competitiveness is an issue of federal importance and we are willing to act.

Canada's seniors will benefit from budget 2011. This government has already done so much for seniors. After 13 years of empty Liberal promises, this Conservative government introduced pension income splitting and removed 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls altogether. In fact, this government has delivered to Canada's seniors over \$2.3 billion in tax relief since taking office.

Budget 2011 builds on that solid foundation promising to enhance the GIS payments made to low income seniors, but just as importantly, budget 2011 will also extend the targeted initiative for older workers.

I stand firmly in favour of passing Bill C-13, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. It puts us on a path to surplus while investing in Canada's most critical assets, our people.

● (1330)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government seems to have difficulty distinguishing between spending investment and infrastructure. It often likes to talk about how we in the NDP love taxes or other such rhetoric, but let us look at how much the government is wasting taxpayers' dollars in terms of its spending in its infrastructure program.

The government talks about cutting waste, but let us talk about waste. Some 26 million taxpayers' dollars were spent on advertising for the economic action plan in the three months running up to the 2011 election; \$3 million on signs put across the country; and tracking weekly the signs of 18 different departments and agencies.

On this bill, how much is the government planning to spend on advertising, signs and useless, wasteful spending of taxpayers' dollars?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, how very much like the NDP to pull numbers out of a hat and throw them around as if they are, in fact, facts, which I very much question.

The important facts to keep on the table today are that the average Canadian families today are paying \$3,000 less in income tax than they were when this government took office, that over 600,000 people are working today, and that more than 600,000 net new jobs

have been created since the downturn of 2009. Those are facts that are verifiable. We get the records regularly.

I would really encourage the NDP to get its facts straight and then ensure it gives the Canadians we are here to represent the actual truth in the matter.

● (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to pick up on that point and look to the member to acknowledge that there are a half million fewer full-time jobs today in the Canadian economy than there were in 2008.

One of the things that I think is really lacking is the government's will to recognize the valuable contributions that we could be making, in terms of housing, investing in our housing stock, and providing incentives for inner city-type housing renewal programs and all sorts of programs that would ultimately improve the quality of our housing stock while at the same time creating thousands of jobs.

Would the member indicate where, within the documents that he has at his fingertips, does it elaborate on just how the government is dealing with Canada's aging housing stock?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the actual figures at my fingertips and I am not going to make them up like so often happens in this place.

What I can say is that there is no government in recent history that has invested more in Canada's social housing stock than this government. In fact, in the Waterloo region, my own region, there have been incredible investments. We work with community partners that come to the table with a great objective, a great idea, and they partner with the Canadian government, the Ontario government, and, in our case, the Waterloo regional government to create amazing projects.

More importantly, there are other more foundational changes that this document, Bill C-13, would implement that all of our members should be supporting when it comes to allowing students to earn money. Students do not just want handouts. They want to be able to earn money and not have it clawed back off of their student loans.

This budget would implement that. I cannot understand why members on that side stand and vote against these great initiatives.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his fine speech and the excellent work he does on the Hill, including being a leader at committee with regard to palliative and compassionate care, with which he is heavily involved.

Part of the budget has a family caregiver tax credit, which I know is an issue, and he talked about seniors in his speech. Why is it important for these to be included in the bill?

Government Orders

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for highlighting the work of the palliative care committee. We hope to release our report later this week.

Certainly, compassion extended to those who are vulnerable in our society has to be one of our primary objectives as members of Parliament. I am thrilled to see that our government recognized that in this budget, including removing the limit on medical expenses and also introducing the new family caregiver tax credit. This \$2,000 credit would be for caregivers who are helping those who face a debilitating illness.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the chamber to speak to Bill C-13 and participate in the debate.

I will start with the caregivers tax credit and point out some of the problems with this overall government agenda and strategy. The government often announces programs. That was done well by the Mike Harris Ontario government when it had one dump truck full of \$1 million in cash and would literally move that from community to community announcing program after program and service after service. However, nobody could really access it. Nobody could really get the necessary support that the government was promoting in the programs.

We have seen that with the current government and with previous governments where there would be billions of dollars in slippage or money that never actually went out the door because the mandates and the criteria for those incentives did not work well with either the taxpayers, citizens in general or with the businesses the government was trying to support in terms of new programs and services.

This tax credit for caregivers is another one. It is something I am fairly familiar with. I worked for the Association for Persons with Physical Disabilities for five years and with Community Living Mississauga for about three years helping people who needed assistance and caregiving. These people did not qualify for unemployment, did not have proper medical support and would not be able to take advantage of a tax credit. That is an important issue that we need to acknowledge. The tax credit that is being proposed would literally be dangled in front of some Canadians but would not be available for others. It is building inequality.

We have a middle-class that is shrinking. All of the evidence supports that, especially given what we have gone through with the recent economic recession and what is happening in the global economy. This would create a separate class of people who have access to caregivers, leaving the rest behind because they are too poor. How is that fair? How does that stand in a budget for a country that is supposed to be known for social justice, humanity and not leaving people behind? How does it even get to the point where the Conservatives are getting up here proudly celebrating the fact that some Canadians will get the support they need?

I can the House that support is critical. We are talking about people being able to have a bath, have their homes cleaned and live in better and humane conditions. These are critical elements. I have done that work myself. We are talking about people who need assistance right now to improve their quality of life but will not get it because they do not have enough money, are not rich enough or do not make enough.

How is it possible that members can stand in the chamber to support a program like that? I do not understand that logic. I cannot see through it. I cannot see how the Conservatives can brag about segregating people who have physical and mental impairments or disabilities into classes of those who will get that service and those who will not.

I thought we were supposed to be helping the people who are worse off in this country. I think about the people I served who, at that time, were put into institutions. After being institutionalized, they were released between the ages of 30 and 40 and were left to the wind because there was not enough support. They had never worked before and never had the opportunity to be part of the community. If they were lucky, they got into programs like mine and, if we were lucky, we would be able to get them a job and train them. We would go on site.

A lot of measures are required to ensure that people who have physical or psychological impairments can re-enter or enter the workforce. A lot of training has to happen. There are front-line support workers. It took a lot of effort. It would often require a government program with significant resources but at the end of the day it was worth it. We proved that for every dollar the government put into our program we saved it \$3 in welfare.

When those people came through the door, we did not look at their income bracket to determine whether they could get support. We did not tell them that they were too impoverished and that, although they needed the service, we would give it to someone else who could afford it because he or she could get a tax break.

● (1340)

How is that fair? What some of these caregivers can do is prevent people from going to a hospital. They can help people get structure around their life so they can work part-time. It is all important and it is all related.

How can people go for an interview or be involved in their community if basic hygiene is a problem for them. They may have a problem physically or they have a problem doing that work in their house? Their apartment or house or wherever they live can create an impediment for them going out into the community.

What we are saying with this tax credit is that those Canadians who have the biggest insurmountable elements in their life will be left behind. They will not get that assistance. Their neighbour might, if their neighbour has enough money or makes enough money. We know from the evidence that most people in Canadian society will not be able to take advantage of this tax credit.

I have a hard time understanding the logic in this. How can anyone actually get up and proudly say that this will be separated to ensure Canadians have two options: one, nothing; and two, others will get their tax credit back and they will get assistance.

I think the philosophy that the government has adopted about winners and losers has really turned Canada upside down. It is picking winners and losers right now. That is what it is doing with the Wheat Board and with other issues. It is very divisive, which is unfortunate.

Government Orders

We need to start looking at why we cannot afford this tax credit for all Canadians. The government is making some poor choices, between prisons and planes. It is important to talk about some of the choices with regard to tax cuts that are taking place right now.

Since we are in a fiscal deficit, we have been borrowing money from ourselves to pay interest on tax cuts largely for profitable corporations. It is not for the ones that are value-added and have been struggling during this process, like the manufacturing sector in my home town. It has been struggling but it does not benefit from a tax cut because it is not making a profit.

What ends up happening is that the oil and gas industry benefits and the pharmaceutical companies benefit. All the companies, ironically, that are doing extremely well right now are also getting massive subsidies. Those companies get them for fossil fuels. They get fuel subsidies and they will continue to get them.

The interesting thing is that we are not even talking corporate tax reductions. We are talking about some of what the oil and gas industry gets in terms of subsidies. I would ask members to listen to a few of these: the flow-through share subsidy, the Canadian exploration expense subsidy, the Canadian developmental expense subsidy and the Canadian oil and gas property expense subsidy. All those together add up to \$1.256 billion in lost tax revenue since 2008 alone.

We are still paying for those subsidies because we actually borrowed money. It is just like the HST. To bring in the HST, the government had to borrow \$6 billion and now it has a debacle going on with British Columbia in this regard. We had Library of Parliament analyze the borrowing costs of the HST. The HST will cost the government, if it pays it over a 10 year cycle at the average interest rate, anywhere between \$6 billion to \$8 billion. We will pay those costs.

I again want to emphasize that a budget does not need to be about winners and losers, which is what this is right here. Some people will do really well and others will not. That is not the Canada I want.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the idea of winners and losers.

When I look at the government in terms of one of its many failings, it is in its dealing with seniors. There are many seniors who are experiencing very difficult times. They do not have the necessary funds to purchase the items they need. We are talking about some of the fundamentals, pharmaceuticals and food. It is a quality of life issue.

Would the member give us his personal thoughts in regard to what more he believes the government could have done in terms of being able to better enhance the lifestyle of our seniors from coast to coast?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is a critical issue. I travelled this country a number of years ago pushing for a seniors charter of rights, which actually passed in this House of Commons and which the government has yet to implement.

I would argue that one of the simple things we could do is deal with pensions. Seniors' pensions are a critical issue for so many people. If people enter into a private arrangement with their

employer and it is a deferred wage, they earn that wage for the future so as not to rely as much on the public. However, if the company is going bankrupt, why would they be last in line as a creditor? It is unacceptable and unconscionable. That is one of the things the Conservatives could have done. It would not have cost any money and would have been a fair thing to do. It also would save the public purse later on as the senior would have a functioning pension.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note the things that my colleague ignores about what this bill would do for seniors. There is no question that we would all like to do more for everybody. However, the reality is that we have done a lot for seniors. We have removed 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. We have introduced pension income splitting. This budget introduces an enhancement to the guaranteed income supplement of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, of those who are in the very lowest income tax brackets, those whom my colleague was targeting earlier.

How can they stand and oppose initiatives like this that would make it easier for our most vulnerable seniors?

• (1350)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have more money allocated in the future for prisons and planes than they do for seniors. It is as simple as that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are told that the budget measures in Bill C-13 will make life better for families.

I would like to know what my hon. colleague thinks of the cuts affecting children that have been made by the Conservative government over the past few weeks. Social services and community organizations are sounding the alarm because the government is taking child tax benefits away from the most vulnerable families. To verify whether these measures are justified, they are being asked to fill out a six-page questionnaire. Then it takes time to assess the questionnaire, while families are being deprived of money to pay the rent. This is cruel. What should we be doing instead to help them?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is a very pertinent question. That is why I was referring to the surpluses that the government sometimes gets and the slippages where it was often referred in terms of departmental money that is never spent. The government creates so many obstacles and so much difficulty that it requires so much assistance, or it does not even bother doing it itself.

We have seen that with the disability tax credit, for example, or the GIS where people need to apply for it instead of just getting it. These are things that the government could have changed that would have actually helped Canadians, especially those on the fringe.

Government Orders

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the tax cuts and that they are not helping industry in his riding. I have heard directly from the head of automotive manufacturers in this country about the need to continue along with the tax cut process that we put in place.

Is the member saying that those people, those who create seven to eight jobs for every job they have in their plant, are wrong about our tax cuts?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House at this time to speak in support of Bill C-13, Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act.

Canada has weathered the global recession better than most other industrialized countries. We are the only G7 country to have more than recovered all of the output and all of the jobs lost during the recession. In fact, Canada has posted by far the strongest growth in employment among G7 countries during the recovery. This is in no small measure due to the stellar and diligent work of our Minister of Finance and the extraordinary measures in Canada's economic action plan, which is a road map to improve the well-being of all Canadians over the long run by securing the recovery, eliminating the deficit, and investing in the drivers of long-term economic growth.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and this government have made protecting Canadian jobs and the economy the top priority. In fact, 600,000 more Canadians are working today than when the recession ended, and nine out of ten of those jobs are full-time positions.

Our government's plan is to strengthen and secure Canada's economic and financial fundamentals. That is why the government has responded to critical situations with flexibility and pragmatism. Its response is designed to keep our economy secure and resilient.

The government, unlike the official opposition, is not bound by ideological dogma, and unlike the third party, by political expediency and opportunism. That is why Canada is held up as a shining example of stability and prudence in an ocean of instability. Doug Porter, deputy chief economist at BMO, said during his appearance at the finance committee in August:

I would say that compared to policy-making in the rest of the world, Canada's economic policy-making has been exemplary. I don't think there's been a significant misstep in recent years.

That is why the global leadership that Canada has displayed since day one of the economic crisis has earned Canada the praise of a number of the world's respected organizations and institutions.

For instance, Canada's banking system has been deemed the world's best for four years running now by the World Economic Forum. The World Bank also said that Canada is the easiest place to start a business in the G7. *Forbes* magazine recently ranked Canada as the best country to do business in. The international credit rating agencies, such as Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's, have all renewed Canada's AAA credit rating. The G20 young entrepreneur summit recently said that Canada is a start-up paradise, an entrepreneurial hotbed of business confidence. The IMF has also praised Canada's deficit reduction plan and has said that Canada is

one of two countries that will have the fastest economic growth in the G7 this year and next.

It does not stop there. There is more. The Economic Intelligence Unit says Canada is the best country among the G7 to do business in and will continue to be over the next five years.

The finance committee, of which I am a member, recently concluded its pre-budget consultations. We met with dozens of individuals, associations, businesses, and organizations, both here in Ottawa and around the country. We also received over 600 written submissions.

The overwhelming consensus from our hearings was support for our government's plan. For instance, the Canadian Home Builders' Association stated that:

Today's budget provides a responsible transition from stimulus spending towards creating the conditions that will renew private sector demand and job creation.

Regarding the budget, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants stated that:

...it strikes the right balance by keeping Canada competitive and demonstrating prudent fiscal management.

All these results do not just fall from the sky. As the Minister of Finance recently stated:

Countries, just like individuals, do not stumble into prosperity. They set out a plan and stick to it, so that they are fully capable of seizing opportunity when misfortune hits, instead of merely being overwhelmed by it.

The government has followed a low-tax plan that has successfully branded Canada as a low-business-tax jurisdiction. Our government paid down substantial amounts of debt before the economic crisis even arrived. By doing so, our government has been successful in keeping net debt to GDP ratio well below G7 counterparts at 34%, while at the same time other countries were piling vast amounts of additional debt onto existing debt.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Canada chose not to go down the road of ruin by recklessly taxing and spending, the path the opposition would have us take. Our government chose rather to support Canadian families by creating jobs, and the average family has over \$3,000 in tax reductions.

Our government's top priority is the economy. Although Canada's economy is outperforming other advanced industrialized countries, Canada is not immune from the impact of events that originate beyond our shores. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have always been very clear about this fact.

● (1355)

Therefore, with the global economy still fragile due to the European sovereign debt and banking crisis, the Minister of Finance announced last week that the government will be reducing the maximum potential increase in next year's EI premium from 10¢ to 5¢ per \$100 of insurable earnings. This measure will leave over \$600 million in the hands of Canadian businesses and workers and their families.

In response to this measure, Dan Kelly, senior vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said:

It is clear Finance Minister Flaherty has heard the concerns of Canada's entrepreneurs by taking action to lower the planned EI hike.

Statements by Members

The CFIB press release also stated:

This move will reduce the burden of business and leave more money in the pockets of their employees.

To continue to support jobs and growth, the Minister of Finance also announced an additional extension of the successful work-sharing program, which has already benefited some 300,000 workers.

Other measures designed to create jobs and growth included rebuilding the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Coast Guard, which will create long-term jobs and generate significant economic benefits in shipbuilding and related industries across Canada.

Also announced was the investment of additional funds to modernize and expand the capacity of priority border facilities across Canada.

The Minister of Finance also announced that our government is on track to eliminate the deficit in a balanced and responsible way. We will balance in 2015. This is due to the ongoing financial crisis in Europe and the uncertainty in the United States.

The Minister of Finance once again demonstrated that our government's top priority is the economy. We will do this through our low-tax plan to create jobs and growth in a way that is both flexible and pragmatic.

In support of this move, the Honourable Perrin Beatty, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said:

While we understand that the slower economic growth will delay Canada's ability to return to balanced budgets, we agree with the Minister that the government should not be adding to the deficit by increasing spending at this time.

Budget 2011 will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy. It will strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers. It will give more income security to seniors and families and will provide stability during a fragile and uncertain global recovery.

• (1400)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member will have three minutes for his speech and five minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on the motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CYBER COP PROGRAM

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian children are facing a new challenge. The issue of cyber bullying has increased the intensity and frequency of abuse children can face on a daily basis. This means that parents, teachers, lawmakers, and all adults have a duty to step up and put things in place to protect our children.

In my riding, the Truro Police Service has done just that by initiating the Cyber Cop program. Cyber Cop is an innovative

program that provides children with the tools they need to combat cyber bullying and practice safe Internet usage.

Coordinator Barry Mingo, Constable Jon Keddy, Constable Todd Taylor and Chief Dave MacNeil all deserve an incredible amount of credit for initiating this program.

Kudos also to Mayor Bill Mills and the Truro Town Council for standing behind the Truro Police Service, supporting the cyber cop program and stepping up to protect our children.

* * *

NAVY LEAGUE OF CANADA

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great day in Canada today, because the Navy League of Canada is in Ottawa to talk about various issues affecting the Navy League throughout the country.

This organization, one of the finest organizations in the country, has been around for 116 years. It is in over 260 Canadian communities helping out 15,000 young Canadians on issues of maritime affairs, the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets and the Navy League Cadets.

The Navy League of Canada is incorporated with many ex-military personnel from admirals all the way down to chief petty officers. It is truly a wonderful organization. I encourage every member here today to attend the reception, because the Navy League of Canada is one of the finest organizations this country has ever seen.

* * *

ALEX THOMSON ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to tell the House about the Alex Thomson Royal Canadian Legion Branch 82, which has been part of the landscape of Mississauga South in Port Credit for more than 80 years, the past 40 on the banks of the scenic Credit River.

The branch is dedicated to the memory of Colonel Alex Thomson, a former Port Credit resident, who was decorated for bravery and killed in action in France during World War I.

Branch 82 is still a wonderful place to meet old friends and new ones, and that is what hundreds of veterans and members of the community of Mississauga South did on Remembrance Day last Friday.

As a new member of the legion, I meet new comrades each time I go. On Friday, it was Phil and George from the Queen's Own Rifles; parade marshal Norm; RCMP officer Ben, who laid the wreath with me and taught me how to march in parade; feisty World War II veteran Vic Morrow, and many others.

I owe special thanks to legion president Kim Reinhart, the ladies' auxiliary—whose shepherd's pie was a huge hit—and the entire team that helped make Branch 82's Remembrance Day ceremonies such a fitting tribute to our local heroes.

Lest we forget.

*Statements by Members***AIRLINE INDUSTRY**

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous passage by the House of Commons of my motion concerning airline passenger rights, every Canadian expected the government to enhance protection for the millions of paying customers who travel on airlines each and every year in this country.

The entire Conservative cabinet stood along with every government backbencher to vote for a Canadian airline passenger bill of rights, but before they had time to sit back down in their seats, the Conservatives had already changed their minds on the whole affair. No legislation was ever produced.

Since that time, the European Union has enacted strong legislation to protect airline passengers. In the United States, just weeks ago, the U.S. Congress ratified into law tough new regulations that protect airline passengers from extended waits while on board an aircraft, ensure mandatory compensation for passengers who are bumped due to overbooking and set out compensation for baggage delays and losses.

When will the government enact proper airline passenger protection legislation?

* * *

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there are still many places where people do not enjoy the freedoms that Canadians have.

Lately violence has flared in Egypt at the expense of the Coptic minority, who have been attacked and killed in their places of worship. Our Subcommittee on International Human Rights has just heard testimony about this situation.

Clearly, more has to be done to protect minority rights.

First the extremists who plan and carry out these violent attacks need to be brought to justice, and the Government of Egypt must act to physically protect minorities as they go about their daily lives.

As Egypt heads into elections, the transitional government must ensure that these elections are both free and fair, a process that would include inviting international observers to monitor the vote.

When the new Egyptian parliament convenes, the new constitution it writes must ensure that the religious freedoms of all Egyptians are fully protected in law.

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•(1405)

[Translation]

QUEBEC STUDENT FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 12, 2011, I had the pleasure of attending the 36th annual Bol d'or, a major high school and college football event that was held in Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for the very first time.

First of all, congratulations to the winners of the championship: the Collège Notre-Dame Cactus, the Collège François-Xavier Garneau Élans, the Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy Notre-Dames—winning the first Bol d'or in the school's history—and the Collège André-Grasset Phénix. You are all true champions and should be proud of your achievements.

This major football event was organized by the Cégep Limoilou, the Collège Saint-Jean-Eudes and the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec.

I would like to sincerely thank the event organizers and volunteers and all the young athletes who helped make this day a true success, to the delight of football fans across the Quebec City region.

* * *

[English]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I got to take in the opening of the annual deer hunt. I hunted with two of my sons, my father, as well as some of my brothers, nephews and friends. One of my brothers who lives in England even flew home for the annual ritual. That is how much hunting means to my family and to a lot of people in my riding.

My mom's four brothers, some in their eighties, along with some of their sons and grandsons, made the annual trek up the Bruce Peninsula to hunt deer near their childhood home. Just days before, my 12-year-old cousin, Hunter Unger of Millarville, Alberta, bagged his first deer, a buck. He trained to hunt safely under the watchful eye of his father Dave, just as my sons and nephews did.

In the 1990s the Liberals tried to make criminals out of us and tried to make us feel guilty because we loved to hunt. They tried to destroy our heritage right to hunt. What the Liberals taketh away, the Conservatives giveth back.

The best Christmas present hunters, sport shooters and farmers could receive this year is the abolishment of the long run registry. Merry Christmas, Allan Rock.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to express my support for a women's group in my riding. Today I am wearing purple along with members from both sides of the House in support of the London Abused Women's Centre's Shine the Light on Woman Abuse Campaign.

Since its inception in November 2010, the goal of this campaign has been to raise awareness around the issue of woman abuse and its effect on society. Organizations, schools, neighbourhoods and places of worship across London will be asked to participate by wearing purple today.

Statements by Members

As parliamentary secretary for Status of Women Canada, I am proud that our government has increased funding for women to its highest level ever. We are working hard with women across the country to end violence against women and girls.

Since 2007, Status of Women Canada has approved more than \$30.4 million in funding for projects to end violence against women and girls. Further, the Government of Canada contributed \$1 million to provide women escaping violence with better access to higher quality services at women's shelters.

I would like to congratulate the London Abused Women's Centre, especially executive director, Megan Walker, for shining the light on woman abuse.

* * *

[Translation]

LOUIS TAILLEFER

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking in the House today to congratulate one of my constituents, who has received a great honour.

Louis Taillefer, a world-renowned specialist in quantum materials and superconductors, was recently awarded the Order of Canada.

A physics professor at the Université de Sherbrooke, Mr. Taillefer describes himself first and foremost as a passionate researcher. His work and discoveries in this field have been highlighted more than once, notably in the most prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*.

Louis Taillefer has received many other honours, including the Marie-Victorin award from the Quebec government and the Premier's Research Excellence Award from the Ontario government. In addition, the Canadian Association of Physicists awarded him the Brockhouse and Herzberg medals.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Taillefer on his investiture and his excellent work. On behalf of the people of Sherbrooke, I want to thank him for his tremendous contribution to research and innovation in Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government followed through on a commitment made in the June 2011 Speech from the Throne by introducing the Canada-Jordan Economic growth and prosperity act and the Canada-Panama economic growth and prosperity act.

These pieces of legislation, on which our former colleague Stock Day worked so hard, are a key part of Canada's ambitious pro-trade plan that is opening new markets and creating opportunities for Canadian business and jobs for Canadian workers.

We will eliminate tariffs on the vast majority of Canadian exports to Jordan, directly benefiting Canadian exporters and workers. We

will also eliminate tariffs to Panama on over 99% of Canadian non-agricultural exports through duty-free access to that market.

Our Conservative government will continue to implement our job-creating, pro-trade plan because we know that through deepened trade we are strengthening the financial security of Canadians by creating new jobs and promoting economic growth.

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CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS LOCAL 195

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the 75th anniversary of CAW Local 195. This local is a pioneer of the union movement in Canada as the first chartered auto worker union. Today 195 includes over 70 different bargaining units and approximately 7,000 members.

Since its inception, local 195 has been at the forefront of the struggle for unity, progress and justice for workers in Canada. Its history is one of securing meaningful victories on pensions, wages, health and safety in the workplace, issues that still represent central aspects of its continuing work.

Local 195 is also a tremendous community partner supporting important local charities and service organizations like the United Way, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Unemployed Help Centre. Local 195's legacy of giving back is impressive.

I want to commend Gerry Farnham, president, for his extraordinary leadership and thank every member of local 195 for their ongoing commitment to improving our community. Local 195 is first and foremost.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two NDP MPs are in Washington, DC, today, undermining the Canadian economy and attacking good jobs in Canada. That is just wrong.

Canadians gave our Conservative government a strong mandate to stay focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs and economic growth. As we have consistently said, the Keystone XL pipeline will create thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic growth on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border.

The NDP opposes creating jobs and is attacking Canada abroad. New Democrats chose to side with a small group of radical environmental activists protesting against our energy resources. They are too willing to abandon Canada's interests and sacrifice over 622,000 jobs in the process across Canada.

The oil sands are a proven strategic resource for Canada that create jobs and economic opportunity for Canadians in all provinces and regions of our great country. Undermining the economy and attacking Canadian jobs are yet more worrying examples that the ineffective and disunited NDP is unfit to govern Canada.

CAPE BRETON ISLAND

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House and most Canadians know that Cape Breton Island is a special place. Now the wonderful island has been chosen number one in North America and number three in the world by *Travel & Leisure* magazine. The island has won this prestigious award because of its beauty, culture and hospitality.

Celtic Colours is one event that showcases these qualities. It attracts over 20,000 visitors from 21 countries around the world. Celtic Colours International Festival is a nine-day event that presents the finest of local and international Celtic artists.

One of our most famous visitors, the late Alexander Graham Bell, stated:

I have travelled the globe. I have seen the Canadian and American Rockies, the Andes and the Alps and the highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty, Cape Breton outrivals them all.

I rise today to recognize all the attendees and volunteers who have made this year's Celtic Colours and the island such a special place.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the NDP is in Washington attacking Canadian jobs and undermining the economy. This is on the heels of NDP president and leadership contestant Brian Topp reaffirming his call for a moratorium on oil sands development. It is clear where New Democrats stand. They actively oppose creating jobs and are happy to attack Canada when they travel abroad.

The Keystone XL pipeline will create thousands of jobs and billions in economic growth on both sides of the border. The NDP chooses to side with a small group of anti-Canadian radical protestors and is willing to sacrifice over 622,000 jobs across Canada.

Our government will continue to promote Canada and the oil sands as a stable, secure, reliable and ethical source of energy for the world. Undermining the economy and attacking Canadian jobs are yet more worrying examples that the ineffective, disunited NDP is unfit to govern.

* * *

• (1415)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the number one priority for Canadian families is jobs and that out-of-touch government is failing these families badly. Last month we learned that in a single month 72,000 full-time jobs vanished under Conservative mismanagement, meaning 72,000 families lost a breadwinner.

What is the finance minister's only plan? On January 1, he will give more corporate tax cuts to his friends in the banks and oil companies. That is not something Canadian families can take to the bank. The government does not understand why time and time again New Democrats have voted against the Conservatives blindly handing over billions to already profitable banks, big polluters and

Oral Questions

large corporations, with no guarantee that a single job will be created.

Let me tell the Conservatives why. It is because for another 72,000 families last month it is a failed plan by an out-of-touch government. The NDP has its priorities right, and we will continue to press for real action on jobs and other economic measures that will help middle class and poorer Canadian families, because we stand with ordinary Canadian families.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Wheat Board Chairman Allen Oberg has brought his travelling road show to Ottawa in an effort to silence and deny marketing freedom to western grain farmers.

Mr. Oberg and his directors, aided by opposition MPs, gathered on Parliament Hill today to steamroll those farmers who want freedom. He is doing a great disservice to the farmers he claims to represent by wasting farmers' money on breakfast for the NDP caucus and an unnecessary expensive survey. This is in addition to the \$1.4 million being spent on baseless, self-serving ad campaigns and \$100,000 wasted on a reckless lawsuit in an attempt to keep their outdated monopoly.

How much more of farmers' money are they willing to risk by wasting time and refusing to work with us in the best interests of farmers? Not only does Parliament have the right to change legislation, our government has the responsibility to deliver on the promises we made to Canadians.

Mr. Oberg and the opposition parties are choosing to punish farmers based on their province of residence. It is time they stop steamrolling farmers and let them market their own grain.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's about-face on the trans-Pacific partnership took many by surprise. Yesterday, the government said that it was entering these trade negotiations with the intention of protecting our interests, including the supply management system. We now know that Canada was not welcome at the talks precisely because of our supply management system. Something is not quite right.

What changed?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's position is always that we will protect and promote all our sectors—including our supply management system—in free trade negotiations throughout the world. However, this government's position and our interests are always better protected when Canada is sitting at the table. The other partners have now indicated that they wish to have Canada participate, and we intend to do so.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do not have anything against the idea of developing new markets and we understand the importance of the Asia-Pacific zone. That is not the issue. Dairy, egg and poultry farmers are worried. They have seen the Conservatives' contempt for their colleagues in western Canada and the Canadian Wheat Board.

What guarantees is the Prime Minister willing to give that the supply management system will not, under any circumstances, and I mean any circumstances, be sacrificed for the sake of the trans-Pacific partnership?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this government's position in favour of supply management is well known. However, what the Leader of the Opposition said is completely untrue. She said that she was in favour of free trade agreements when the NDP opposed every free trade measure, whatever it happened to be. The NDP is even opposed to our free trade agreement with the United States. This government is the only party that promotes increasing our international trade.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should simply say that supply management is off the table. That is what he should say, but supply management is on the table. That is why Canada was allowed in, is it not?

No wonder dairy and poultry farmers are worried. First, the government attacked wheat farmers. Next, dairy and poultry farmers will be out of luck.

Is supply management on the table, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government's position in favour of supply management is very well known by producers. It is always our intention when we go to the table to ensure we produce, we protect and we promote the interests of all Canadian sectors, including supply management. That is the position we have taken in all negotiations so far, including negotiations with the European Union, that the provinces, including Quebec, are a party to. We will continue to advance Canadian interests in spite of the knee-jerk opposition of the NDP to any free trade agreement, even to trade with the United States.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, prairie farmers trusted the government when it promised it would not dismantle the Wheat Board without a democratic vote of farmers. The Conservatives have turned their backs on prairie farmers and denied them the right to vote.

Now the government is asking dairy and poultry farmers to put all their eggs in the Conservatives' basket and just trust them in trade negotiations.

How can farmers possibly trust the government to stand up for supply management after it sold out prairie farmers?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to defend and promote Canada's interests in every sector of our economy, including our supply management system.

It is obvious the member has not been following recent developments. On Saturday, the current TPP members issued the long-awaited framework agreement under which negotiations will take place. After a review, we determined that Canada can meet and even exceed the level of ambition called for without in any way compromising Canada's ability to stand up for the supply managed sector.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's dairy farmers and poultry farmers know full well that a number of participants in the trans-Pacific partnership forum, including the United States, want to see our supply management system disappear. Just last week, the minister responsible said that it was not in Canada's interest to take part in these negotiations and now, all of a sudden, he is changing his tune.

How can we trust a government that prefers to listen to the demands of lobbyists—instead of defending the interests of Canadian farmers—and turns a deaf ear to the demands of Quebec?

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this past Saturday the partners of the TPP issued their framework agreement. We reviewed it carefully and determined that it is in Canada's best interests to join those negotiations. I can assure the member that we will continue to stand up for the interests of farmers and that we will defend Canada's system of supply management.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, facing a steamroller of Conservative abuse, prairie grain farmers stood on Parliament Hill today to plead for democratic producer control over the Canadian Wheat Board. One strong reason for such control is to ensure that farmers properly get the money that their grain earns in the marketplace. Will the government confirm that at least \$100 million of Wheat Board money that should be distributed to farmers instead is being diverted to force farmers to pay for the destruction of the single desk? Will the government confirm that misappropriation of funds?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only misappropriation is by the Wheat Board itself in taking farmers' money to run a campaign against farmers' own expressed views. Western Canadian farmers have been very clear that they want dual marketing, that they want the voluntary option of the Canadian Wheat Board. That is why this government was elected by prairie farmers, and that is how we are proceeding.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one accepts the premise of that answer.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives told the United States and other Pacific countries that Canada is prepared to give up its supply management system in agriculture. Nonetheless, in this House, the Conservatives maintain precisely the opposite. Both statements cannot be true.

Is the government not telling the truth to our trade partners, or is it not telling the truth to our farmers? Which is it?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway has already answered that question. The reality is that we have seen the terms of the negotiations for the trans-Pacific partnership and they allow us to defend and promote all of our interests, including supply management.

This government is always seeking to increase our international trade by promoting all our sectors in international free trade negotiations.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that answer simply means he is getting ready to slash the tariffs.

Trade failures abound with the government. It wants so badly to surrender control of Canada's perimeter to the Americans, but it is getting nothing back: no pipeline, no relief from buy America rules, U.S. entry fees imposed, marine taxes threatened, Canadian taxpayers attacked by the U.S. IRS, country of origin labelling still a problem, softwood lumber still a problem, nothing back for killing the Canadian Wheat Board, no market access guarantees.

Are the Conservatives going to concede a perimeter deal with all this aggravation continuing?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept much of the premise of that question including, for instance, the buy America provisions. They have gone nowhere in the U.S. Congress. The fact of the matter is the Liberal Party, when it is in opposition, always opposes our relationship with the United States. That is not in the interests of this country. We have important negotiations going on with the United States on perimeter security and regulatory co-operation. Of course, we will not get everything we want, but that does not mean we will not continue to dialogue with our American friends and ensure we protect and advance Canadian interests.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the F-35 procurement process has become a real joke. That aircraft is so expensive and so full of flaws that, except for Canada, no one wants to buy it. The U.S. Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, even said yesterday that the Americans might withdraw from the program. Only one person still believes in the future of that aircraft: the Minister of National Defence.

When will he finally open his eyes and realize that Canada is being ripped off?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government and our closest military allies understand the importance of this program to the protection of our sovereignty.

Canada is not the only country among our closest allies warning critics of the damage their reckless plans would cause to the military and aerospace workers. I am pleased that Defense Secretary Panetta is taking similar action to warn Congress of the reckless shortsighted implications such proposals would incur.

If the opposition had its way, it would cancel the equipment our air force needs and would put some 80,000 Canadians out of work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): We know that our CF-18s need to be replaced by 2018 or 2019. Last week, the Associate Minister of National Defence said that Canada was part of the crusade for the F-35s. Why is the minister stubbornly pursuing his crusade for a program that has been bound to fail from the beginning? Why is the minister stubbornly pursuing this crusade when all the other countries, including the United States, are backing out? Why will the minister listen only to Lockheed Martin's promises and why does he not have a plan B?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only crusade is the crusade to malign a very important asset for our young men and women who actually use the equipment, and also to maintain our Canadian sovereignty, as well as to create jobs.

The member opposite is stuck in a time warp of useless rhetoric, misinformation and misrepresentation about the benefits to Canada of the F-35 program.

Oral Questions

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. defense secretary now says that because of ballooning costs, it may be time for the U.S. to hit the eject button on the F-35 deal. Israel, Australia, Turkey and Norway are still reconsidering their purchases. So much for the minister's repeated claim that our allies are united and with us on the F-35s.

The government is out of touch. The minister is out of the loop. Canadians are out of patience. Will the government finally put this contract out to public tender?

•(1430)

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong.

F-35s are coming off the production line. Pilots are flying the jets. Sixty-five Canadian industries are benefiting from the program. Jobs are being created. Our men and women will eventually get the equipment they need to do the job that we require them to do.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear to everyone that the Conservatives have blown this file totally.

The F-35 price tag balloons every time another country drops its order. With the Americans now talking about also pulling the plug, the death knell is ringing louder and louder for the F-35s.

When will the minister finally admit the F-35s are an untendered procurement boondoggle in the making? I ask the minister again, when will the government put this contract out to tender?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a tendering process. It may not be something the hon. member across would accept.

I am pleased to remind the member opposite that the acquisition of the F-35 represents our government's commitment to ensuring Canadian sovereignty while producing the kind of equipment that our men and women need to do their jobs effectively and to achieve mission success.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, police chiefs across the country want to keep the gun registry data for reasons of public safety. Victims of crime want to keep the gun registry to protect public safety.

Now we hear the Conservatives have buried their own report that says abolishing the registry will weaken border controls and facilitate gun trafficking throughout Canada.

Why is the government endangering public safety by opening the floodgates for arms smuggling and proliferation of weapons across Canada?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is rich coming from a member who voted against increasing penalties for those who imported firearms into this country illegally.

In respect of the analysis presented by the officials, it is misleading. It is flawed. Contrary to the suggestion made in the

analysis, neither Bill C-19 nor the previous Bill C-391 removes any controls on the import of firearms.

Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we actually voted for that bill.

Just yesterday the Minister of Public Safety invited New Democrats to "work together and actually help police officers". We New Democrats think that is a great idea. Police chiefs have said they want to keep the gun registry data, and they want to keep firearms from flowing across the country.

Will the minister stop dividing Canadians and work alongside New Democrats to actually help police officers fix the gun registry and keep this valuable data?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced legislation to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all.

Our legislation will destroy the records, which are inaccurate and unreliable and becoming increasingly so over time. If given the chance, the opposition would once again use the data in order to target law-abiding citizens, when in fact what it should be doing is helping us target criminals.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we do not understand is why a senior official in the public safety department is saying that abolishing the firearms registry could lead to increased smuggling of illegal weapons across the Canadian border. This specialist is also saying that eliminating the registry will dangerously hinder the work of police officers when it comes to tracing firearms.

The government says it wants to fight serious crime, but considering the action it is taking, anyone can quickly see that it is not walking the talk. The Conservatives' approach is completely illogical.

Will this government listen to the provinces, police chiefs, victims and, now, its own advisers for once?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated at committee earlier this morning, the analysis presented by this official is misleading. It is flawed. Contrary to the suggestion made in the analysis, neither Bill C-19 nor the prior bill removed any controls on the import of firearms.

The member is deliberately trying to paint a different picture than is actually true.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a confidential inspection report from 2010 shows that a number of sections of the Champlain Bridge are in mediocre condition, are deteriorating rapidly or must be replaced right away. Entire structures need to be rebuilt in 2012-13. The more time goes by, the more urgent the repairs become in order to ensure the safety of motorists.

Can the government tell us if it has an action plan to ensure the safety of the people using the bridge?

● (1435)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, our government is working based on plans, analyses and results. The hon. member is asking us about our plan for the Champlain Bridge. We have invested \$380 million in this infrastructure. Does he think that we would have done that without a plan? Come on.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is all very well and good to repair the bridge but, at this rate, it will be entirely rebuilt instead of a new one being built.

[English]

The government kept secret a report indicating that there are real risks that the bridge may collapse. Workers and their families who use the bridge every day should not have to worry whether it will collapse right under them.

If we need to close the bridge, will the minister tell Montrealers what they are supposed to do until the new bridge is built?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, playing politics at the expense of the people of the greater Montreal area is not really our style. Just yesterday at lunchtime, I was working with the mayors of Montreal, Longueuil and Brossard. Together, we are continuing to work to ensure that the Champlain Bridge is safe and that traffic is flowing smoothly.

While this member wants to scare the public, we are doing the work and making sure things get done. Not only are we making sure that the existing bridge is safe, we are also going to build a new one.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that this government is often surprised by the decisions made by the American government, so I would like to inform the government that the American Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, just spoke with American Senator McCain to inform him that the F-35 program is at risk, meaning that the price of the F-35s will be increasing yet again.

I want to ask the government if there is a plan B. Is this government ready to launch a tendering process and a competition that would allow us to save money?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a competition between the F-35 and another aircraft. The F-35 won the bid and as I understand it directly from the U.S. authorities, there is no intention at this point in time to pull out from anything. The F-35s are coming off the production line. Pilots are flying them. They are being delivered through the international partners and our program is on track.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was neither competition nor bids. U.S. Secretary of Defence Panetta told Senators McCain and Graham that the F-35 program is too rich for the Pentagon's budget and may be either cancelled or reduced severely.

The U.S. Secretary of Defence gets it. The U.S. Navy gets it. The Australian military gets it.

What is it about this minister that does not get it? When the program is cancelled, what is plan B?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are confident that the F-35 program is exactly the kind of resource Canada needs today and well into the future. We are committed to ensuring that our men and women receive the best equipment they need to do their work and do it safely.

At the very same time, we are concerned as well about the rhetoric we hear that is misinformation, miscommunication and misinterpretation of what Mr. Panetta said.

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WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's drinking water report card says the government is failing in almost every aspect of water protection.

Only marginal improvements have been made to municipal water treatment since the government was first elected, an area where we should be investing to help cash-strapped municipalities.

The report card also gave the government an F for its management of water within its jurisdiction, including first nations reserves and national parks.

Does the lack of a national water strategy explain the government's dismal failure in water management? If not, then what does?

● (1440)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with first nations in respect of water and waste water, building on our water action plan.

We released the results of the national assessment of water and waste water systems in first nations communities in July. We are working with first nations to improve and expand operator and manager training and compliance.

Oral Questions

We will be reintroducing first nations water legislation soon to create endorsable standards and guide investments. We are getting the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the parliamentary law clerk, the member for Peterborough broke the law by asking for documents from the CBC. That same week, the Conservatives pleaded guilty to the in and out scandal.

Does this member's interference in the legal process not prove that the member does as he pleases, or is this a more general abuse of procedure on the part of the Conservatives?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): It is neither, Mr. Speaker. The member for Peterborough was mandated by his constituents to ensure that the CBC is accountable.

[English]

We on this side of the House applaud the member for Peterborough for his hard work on behalf of taxpayers.

He was elected, re-elected, and elected again to stand up for taxpayers and to ensure that money is being spent appropriately by the CBC. He is doing his work, and we applaud him for doing so.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not seem to mind being a mascot on Captain Peterborough's ship of fools, but this is not about applauding someone who is undermining the public broadcaster. This is about a member whose behaviour, according to legal experts, is invalid, unenforceable and unlawful. The law clerk's message is really clear.

Is the government about carrying out a kangaroo attack against the CBC or does it respect the independence of the courts, and will it respect the letter from the parliamentary legal counsel?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the integrity of the member for Peterborough on this issue and standing up for taxpayers cannot be challenged by the member opposite, who campaigned time and again to vote against the long gun registry, stood in his place and betrayed his constituents.

The member for Peterborough campaigned on and asked for a mandate to come to Ottawa and fight for taxpayers. He kept his word.

This member asked for a mandate to come to Ottawa and defeat the long gun registry, and he betrayed his constituents.

I will stand by the member for Peterborough every single day of the week.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Keystone XL will send thousands of Canadian jobs across the U.S.

border and substantially increase oil sands emissions. It will lock us into the export of bitumen for decades, yet the government only listens to its oil lobbyist friends.

President Obama decided this pipeline needs more public input and study. When will the Conservatives stop blindly backing risky pipelines and instead commit to an energy strategy that puts Canadian jobs and the environment first?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was appalled to hear that NDP members are actually going to the U.S. to advocate against Keystone. They are flying to our largest trading partner to denigrate a project that employs hundreds of thousands of Canadians, generates billions of dollars of economic activity, and funds social services like education for our children and health care for our elderly. It is a disgrace.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. State Department has good cause to delay the decision on the Keystone XL project. There are concerns about climate change. It is obvious that the rest of the world gives little credence to this government's public relations efforts concerning the oil sands. Without regulations, our environment is being polluted and our trade relations are suffering.

When will this government realize that it takes more than an ethical oil label to hide its failure to protect our environment?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since being appointed as Minister of Natural Resources, I have travelled to Europe, Asia and the United States to defend our interests and to support Canada's jobs and economy.

When the NDP travels abroad, its agenda is to campaign against Canadian industry, which employs hundreds of thousands of Canadians. It is probably the most bizarre international relations strategy I have ever seen, and it proves that the NDP is not fit to govern the country.

* * *

●(1445)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of International Trade tabled both the Canada-Jordan economic growth and prosperity act, as well as the Canada-Panama economic growth and prosperity act. These pieces of legislation are a key part of our government's ambitious pro-trade plan that is opening new markets for Canadian products and services.

More importantly, it would create opportunities for Canadian businesses and create jobs for Canadian workers. Quick passage of this legislation means more jobs in London, Ontario and more jobs across Canada.

Would the minister please explain to the House why these pieces of legislation are critical to creating economic growth and prosperity in Canada?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member. He works very hard for the businesses—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, free trade agreements with Jordan and Panama are a key part of our job-creating, pro-trade plan. I was proud to table this important legislation this morning.

Despite the NDP's ideological opposition to trade, our government will continue to pursue our pro-trade plan because open markets create new opportunities for our farmers and small businesses—

The Speaker: Order. I am afraid all that applause ate up quite a bit of the minister's time.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

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SERVICE CANADA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government finally found a way to improve service scores: it changed the rules. The government is directing employees to not even mention the Service Canada hotline to clients.

The fact is that Canadians contacting Service Canada are facing unacceptable delays and the government is refusing to address the problem.

When will the Conservatives reverse their plan to cut more employees at Service Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are exactly the opposite to what the hon. member has just said. We are working to improve our services to Canadians at Service Canada.

We are automating both the call systems and the EI processing systems, so that Canadians can access the benefits that they need more efficiently, more effectively and in a more affordable manner. We are automating things so that will happen.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has simply automated her talking points.

The reality is that service automation is already happening and it is clearly not the answer. The minister should face reality and acknowledge that Canadians deserve better service.

A new report by Roy Romanow recommends increasing accessibility and standardizing eligibility for EI programs. For too many, after paying for years, help is not there when they need it. The government is failing on access to employment insurance.

Will it commit today to fix it?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the recent global recession we took significant steps to help the unemployed. We brought in an extra five weeks of benefits for all. We made it possible for people to access more training so they could get new jobs. We brought in a whole range of initiatives to help the unemployed get back to work. We also brought in extra people to

make sure that their applications were processed quickly and efficiently.

Sadly, despite the protestations to try to help the unemployed, the NDP voted against every single one of those initiatives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, time is passing, but the Minister's words never change. Since July, she has been feeding us the same lines, even though reality tells us the opposite of what she says. The NDP has already disclosed figures that the government wants to keep hidden: thousands of Canadians hang up without speaking to an agent. By eliminating further positions, the government is asking Service Canada to do more with less.

Why is the government abandoning working people and their families?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are trying to help the unemployed get back into the labour market. We have offered them training to prepare them for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Unfortunately, all the NDP does is try to make it easier for them to get employment insurance, not to access the labour market. It wants to have a 45-day work year, but that is not possible. We want to help the unemployed get back to work.

● (1450)

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister can keep saying the same thing all she wants, but the system is not working any more, and the public are the ones penalized by the government's failure to act. Service Canada does not answer all its calls. It already takes too long to receive benefits. What will it be like if more employees lose their jobs at Service Canada?

Why is the government refusing to see reality? Why are families going to pay the price of the cuts at Service Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to help people get employment insurance benefits. The best way to help them is to give them training to prepare them for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Then they will be able to support their families. That is the best way to help them.

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[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy predicts that climate change will cost Canadians up to \$43 billion by 2050. The government's own advisory panel found that catastrophic climate change could wipe out up to 25% of Canada's GDP.

Oral Questions

Right now, the government has no plan to meet 75% of its greenhouse gas reduction targets. As we lead up to the world conference in Durban, when will Canadians get a real plan?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is indeed balancing the need for a cleaner and healthier environment with protecting jobs and economic growth.

The Kyoto protocol does not include major emitters such as China, India or even the United States and therefore does not work. Canada will not sign on to any new agreement that does not include all major emitters.

We remain committed to reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels and we are achieving that goal.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the international community has been working for 15 years to find practical solutions to combat climate change, which is the greatest challenge of our day. Protecting forests, green technologies, financial mechanisms for the less wealthy countries and accountability for outcomes are central to the UN process.

Why is this government going to sabotage 15 years of work by egotistically refusing to live up to its responsibilities?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is, our Canadian delegation has been preparing for the 17th conference of the parties in Durban all year.

In pre-Durban meetings in Mexico City, Washington and Cape Town, I have assured other national delegations that, despite some significant challenges, I believe we can move our common climate change cause forward in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

At the same time, I have reiterated our government's decision to not make a second Kyoto protocol commitment but to work to create a new post-Kyoto agreement—

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence said that the matter of sexual harassment in the RCMP would have to wait until a new commissioner is named. For the brave women who devoted decades of service to the Mounties and were sexually harassed by their peers and superiors, being told “Now, now, have patience” is an intolerable insult.

Will the government pledge to end this systemic violence not in months, not in years, but now?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely concerned about these troubling reports. We expect all members of the RCMP to carry out their duties with integrity and professionalism. Our government is committed to providing all men and women in the RCMP with a workplace free of harassment.

I will be raising this issue with the new commissioner very shortly.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can we believe that the Conservatives take this important issue seriously when they are asking these women to wait?

They did not ask for more time before they attacked the firearms registry, the Canadian Wheat Board or pay equity.

This government says it is tough on crime, but when the time comes to act it says to be patient.

Can the minister give us assurances that he will not wait for a new commissioner to be appointed before taking the action that is needed to help these women?

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is concerned about not only the women in the RCMP but also about the men who serve in the RCMP.

I am glad to hear that the member opposite has developed a new-found interest in the RCMP, given that the member's party has consistently voted against giving the RCMP, indeed all police officers, the tools they need to do their job.

I want to call on the NDP not only to speak out against harassment, but also to speak out in favour of tools that will ensure that we target criminals.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about crime and they gave us a strong mandate to keep our streets and communities safe.

One key promise during the election was to establish new lawful access proposals. This is an important measure to ensure the police have the tools they need to do their job.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on the progress of keeping that commitment?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his hard work on this matter.

We are proposing measures to bring laws into the 21st century and give police the tools they need to do their job. In fact, even Mark Holland, the former Liberal public safety critic, said he supported these important measures. However, the new third party has shown it is so out of touch that it now opposes new tools for police.

I would call on the Liberals to finally stop putting the rights of child pornographers and organized crime ahead of the rights of law-abiding citizens.

*Oral Questions***SENIORS**

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our seniors saw millions in hard-earned savings wiped out when the Conservatives broke their word and taxed income trusts several years ago. Now the government is sticking it to them again.

Seniors born in 1940 must convert their RRSPs into RRIFs this year, but the bottom has fallen out of the market, so their RRSPs have lost value and some have incurred substantial losses.

Will the minister allow them to wait to convert their RRSPs so they can at least try to rebuild their value?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to hear that the opposition actually understands some of the challenges that our seniors face.

We did extend that deadline for seniors during the recession, but if I recall, all of the opposition voted against that at the time. It matters not what we put forward to help seniors, because the opposition tends to vote against it.

We have actually done a great amount to help seniors prepare for their retirement. We encourage the opposition to support some of those measures.

* * *

CANADIAN NORTHERN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Comptroller General found that 21 out of 47 contracts awarded by CanNor were sole-sourced and that 17 of the 21 were awarded without justification.

The Comptroller General also found evidence of contract splitting to avoid competition.

The questions are clear. How much was spent when CanNor broke the rules? Who received the money? Who is going to take responsibility for this mishandling?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated many times, we accept the recommendations coming from the auditor. We are addressing those recommendations. This was the process audit.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proposing responsible measures to protect families and individuals. The safe streets and communities act would impose tougher sentences on pedophiles, drug dealers and the most violent young offenders. Meanwhile, the opposition wants to treat honest farmers and duck hunters like fugitives, but it opposes tougher sentences for dangerous criminals.

The justice committee has held eight meetings on Bill C-10 and has heard from over 50 witnesses, yet the opposition parties have begun to filibuster to further delay these important measures.

Can the minister please inform the House about our government's efforts to strengthen Canada's justice system?

● (1500)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at committee, opposition members are back to their basic philosophy and ideology. They are opposing jail time for serious sexual offenders who prey on our children, drug dealers who set up dangerous meth labs in residential neighbourhoods and arsonists who burn people's homes but are eligible to serve their sentences in their own houses.

However, they are going further. They are upset that criminals bringing cocaine and heroin into this country will be facing mandatory sentences. We disagree with them. They are completely wrong. When are they going to start standing up for victims for a change?

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems the budget cuts at the Department of Veterans Affairs are going to be deeper than the minister had given us to believe.

The veterans' hospital at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, the last one managed by the federal government, is to be transferred to the Government of Quebec. That will be 1,300 fewer employees in the department, in addition to the 500 positions being eliminated as announced last week.

How can we hope that our veterans will receive the same quality of service if the department no longer has any employees to deliver it?

Is this how the Conservatives thank the veterans who have served Canada? Is this how they listen to them?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have one priority, and that is to serve veterans, and in particular the veterans at St. Anne's Hospital, who receive exceptional care. That is why we have initiated talks with the Government of Quebec to ensure that our veterans continue to be provided with exceptional services. I have visited that hospital on two occasions—I was there on Saturday—and I observed the professionalism of the staff and their dedication to our veterans.

We are going to ensure that our veterans in St. Anne's Hospital and our 10,000 beds across the country receive first-class care.

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's supplementary estimates propose ideological cuts of more than \$160 million in a dozen departments and agencies. The Parliamentary Budget Officer himself admitted that he is unable to identify all the cuts that have been made and are to come, including \$60 million in the Department of Human Resources and \$7 million in the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec.

Government Orders

Can the Prime Minister tell us where he is going to slash and guarantee, particularly to the unemployed and businesses in Quebec, that they will not be the ones who suffer from these secret cuts?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are obviously seeking to ensure that every dollar of taxpayer money is spent wisely. We think it is tremendously important that we return to balanced budgets so that we do not get into the same situation that Greece, Italy and Spain find themselves in. Step by step, we will get it done and protect the core competencies that people depend on, whether it is health care, education or supports for our seniors.

that many countries around the world today consider a precious and rare commodity, stability.

I call on the opposition to do the right thing for Canada and support this budget.

• (1505)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the negative nabob caucus, I will ask a question, and God forbid I delve into the world of negativism.

I want to ask about the tax credits that the member has been talking about. When the Conservatives talk about these non-refundable tax credits, they talk about them in the sense that they will benefit all Canadians, when, as our leader, the member for Toronto Centre, the one who the member picked on, quite rightly pointed out that many of the vulnerable members of our society will not be able to benefit from this credit because it will be non-refundable.

Why can the government not make these non-refundable tax credits to caregivers, firefighters and so forth, refundable? It is a specific question. It is just about that.

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, I am on the finance committee and we had just finished pre-budget consultations and we travelled across the country. From firefighters to child care providers to business groups, they all supported our government's economic action plan to create jobs with a low tax plan.

It is clear that the member's party is totally out of touch. The speech that his leader gave last week would clearly taking us back to the future. The people of Ontario have the dreaded experience of living under that kind of leadership once and he wants to bring to Canada what he brought to Ontario.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was also on the finance committee with the member and it is not true that everyone agreed that the way the government was going forward was the right way. The proposed tax credits would not benefit everyone. They would not benefit people who do not have enough money to actually benefit from a tax credit. Many people and many organizations ask that the tax credits be made refundable.

Would my hon. colleague just confirm whether he believes that everyone really agrees with what was proposed?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend has done an absolutely fine job as vice-chair of the finance committee.

On May 2, the people of Canada gave us a very strong mandate. We ran on a plan and the people of Canada accepted that plan and gave us a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government to implement it. Tax credits were part of that whole plan. The people of Canada spoke and gave us the opportunity implement that plan.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, as reported without amendment from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP calls for increased stimulus spending and yet it voted against the stimulus package when it was introduced. It is clear what the opposition plan is for Canada. We only need look at Ontario from 1990 to 1995 for a sneak preview. The NDP's failed tax and spend philosophy continues today with demands for more freewheeling deficit spending and higher taxes that would kill jobs.

Budget 2011 is the right plan for the right time. This government has taken all the right steps and we must build on that advantage, the Canadian advantage. While our plan is working, the opposition suggests that we need to raise taxes and increase spending.

I listened with great interest recently to the member for Toronto Centre when he addressed the Economic Club of Canada. I can tell members that we have seen this movie before and it does not end pretty. The member for Toronto Centre wants to take us back to the future. As we all know, when that member became premier of Ontario, he inherited a \$20 billion deficit. When he left office it was \$60 billion. His first budget had a \$670 million shortfall, his second \$1 billion and his third \$1.6 billion. From his time as the NDP premier of Ontario, Canadians know about his government's dreadful economic record: higher debt, higher taxes and higher unemployment. By the time he left office, he had raised taxes for every income bracket. People making more than \$67,000 faced the highest marginal tax rates in North America and the rating agencies had downgraded Ontario's credit worthiness.

This is exactly what we could expect from an NDP government. Clearly, it is not fit to govern. We cannot afford to listen to the opposition, the "nattering nabobs of negativism". We would rather listen to those who have some experience with such matters, such as the IMF, *Forbes*, the World Economic Forum, the OECD, the Economic Intelligence Unit and the G20 Young Entrepreneurs' Alliance, all of whom recognize that Canada possesses something

Government Orders

• (1510)

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a question because we have had so many questions on these tax credits.

We have the workers' tax benefit, often called WITB, introduced by the Minister of Finance. We have also raised the personal exemption multiple times to ensure that lower income people do not pay any tax. We have tried to do the best we can to target those initiatives to lower income people.

There was never a tax credit in previous governments for physical fitness or for the arts and now we are offering that.

Combined with these other benefits, would the member not agree that these cover the whole gamut and that all of our initiatives, collectively, are moving forward, not only to address issues of middle-class families but also of lower income families, with different programs?

Mr. Mark Adler: Mr. Speaker, yes, my hon. friend is absolutely right. We looked at the whole budget in its totality and people. We stand with average Canadian families who have kids or who have grandparents they need to look after and these tax credits would help in that effort.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures.

This bill does not give us what we need. When the Standing Committee on Finance travelled and heard from witnesses, we saw that this bill is out of touch with reality.

For example, last month, we lost 72,000 jobs. The government continues to say that everything is fine.

This bill came out a long time ago. It does not take into account everything that is going on now. It does not take into account that 1,400,000 people are currently unemployed. If we include people who are discouraged and who have stopped looking for work, that number is nearly 2 million. That is huge.

Yet the government says that everything is fine, that it is carrying on as planned and that it will not make any changes to what it put forward, even though some economists have suggested investing in infrastructure and helping seniors by increasing their pensions. The government is still doing none of that.

Last summer the youth unemployment rate was 17.2%. That is much higher than before the recession, when it was 14%.

Once again, the government is not really looking at the numbers or at reality. It is completely out of touch with reality and with the people. And that is what we are seeing with those who are outraged as well as with the Occupy Montreal and Occupy Ottawa movements. People do not understand why this government is not listening to them. They protest, yet the government is still not listening.

And when it comes to household debt, for every dollar earned, a person owes \$1.49. That is a ratio of 150%. How can the average family find a way out?

And what is the government's solution? It lowers taxes on big business. We have seen that lowering taxes on big business does not help those without an income.

Instead of moving in that direction, the government should listen to certain economists and even the Conference Board of Canada, who are saying that the gap between rich and poor is growing. And we have seen it.

Quebec's consumer protection bureau is also saying that lowering taxes on big business is contributing to this wealth gap. The government is sticking its head in the sand and refusing to budge.

If we look at the OECD figures, economic growth over the past 20 years has benefited the rich more than the poor. Bill C-13 is inadequate.

We want leadership and a vision for the economy. Why not invest in a green economy that is geared toward the future?

We can offer projects and research and development programs that could help Canada get ready for the future, for an economy that will not only bring us wealth and economic growth, but also provide wealth for our children and protect the environment.

The government has nothing for that.

We want concrete results.

To get back to the bill and the amendments we are proposing, the government tends not to want to debate or discuss the issues. We see that in the case of Bill C-10, and as far as Bill C-13 is concerned, everything is mixed together. All sorts of things are combined and we are told to just deal with it.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Finance, and we got an explanation for Bill C-13 while we were on a pre-budget tour. This illustrates the government's bad faith.

• (1515)

In this bill, one part addresses the \$2 per vote subsidy.

[*English*]

Part 18 of the bill would amend the Canada Elections Act to phase out quarterly allowances to registered parties.

[*Translation*]

At a time when the government is completely out of touch with reality and people no longer trust certain politicians—especially on the other side of the House—the government is now eliminating a tool linked to the fact that people vote. It is an important tool. The reason why we are in the House today is because people voted for us. If we do not belong to a big political party, or if we have ideas but not the financial backing, things can be very difficult. We know that those on the other side of the House who stand for election already have a great deal of money because they are in government. They have their friends. There is a lot of payback.

Government Orders

The reason for the \$2 per vote allowance was to prevent big business from funding election campaigns. It was to create a separation and give a voice to the people. This government is doing the opposite.

[*English*]

The \$2 per vote allowance is an important equalizer that gives all parties, regardless of their presence in Parliament, a fair chance at equal participation in a general election and campaign. It is also a tool that rolls back the power of big money in influencing the outcome of elections and the policy agenda. It reflects also the support of voters and increases their motivation to vote. What we are doing right now is going against that. It rewards parties for convincing people to vote for them, therefore ensuring that parties have a message that is meaningful to all voters. It is also a way of facilitating a campaign donation.

The government says that if people have money and believe in the party, then give money to that party. Not everyone has money, but everyone has a right to vote and their vote should count. If people are poor or unable to pay their bills at the end of the month, they do not think of sending contributions to a political party. However, if they go out and vote and they know their vote helps the party, even though it does not win, even though it is not in government or even not sitting in the House, at least people feel it is something they have done and it helps someone else, without having to take the money out of their wallet, if they do not have any, and having to help the party.

Again, the Conservatives are successful in raising money because they are in government, so it is helping their friends and their friends helping them. That is why there is a policy right now. With this budget, the Conservatives are helping the big corporations, which are already profitable, by giving big corporate tax cuts.

There is a lack of understanding of what is happening with the population. There is a disconnect between the government and the population. For people who want their voice to be heard, the government is shutting them down and telling them their vote does not really count.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

One thing is really disturbing. I stood for election in 2008. People told me that they voted for me. It was important to them that their vote count. It was also important to them that this advance democracy in some way. Now, this government is making us take a step backward.

With the votes that I garnered I was able to continue. It helped my party and moved things forward. This bill is anti-democratic for people with new ideas who do not yet have a party. This government's bill is a setback for democracy. For that reason, I will be voting against the bill.

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and regrettably he has it wrong. When it comes to the economy, Canada is doing better relative to other nations.

What I found particularly interesting were his comments on the per vote subsidy. People are forced to make this subsidy. The government is getting rid of that subsidy because people should voluntarily choose which party they want to support financially.

The member does not seem to understand that the taxpayers pay for the subsidy, and the taxpayers are all Canadians. Canadians are forced to support parties they do not want to support.

The fact is the Conservative Party will be hit the hardest, because we get the most votes of any party, but we are doing it on principle.

Will the member realize that people should not be paid or go to the ballot box for money reasons? The member has suggested that people vote to get money for a party? People should vote because it is the right thing to do. They should vote because people have made tremendous sacrifice, including with their own lives, so that we have the right to vote. People should vote because they believe in policy issues.

Will the member change his opinion on the per vote subsidy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his question. I disagree with his position that Canada must pay and that, here, this is unfair.

Tax credits for donations to political parties are another way to subsidize.

[*English*]

It is a subsidy. If the government gives a tax credit for donations, it is the same thing. Canadians are also paying for that.

We are saying it is important for people who do not have money, for the poor, who actually want to contribute and who know that their vote will help the party and the person for whom they vote. That is worth defending. We are saying it is democratic. This helps democracy move forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie, whom I would like to thank for his very interesting speech. I also found the \$2 per vote issue very interesting. I think that perhaps the minister of state does not understand the system. In fact, as the member for Brossard—La Prairie said, corporate donations were replaced by a simple public process with funding allocated based on the number of votes at the polls.

[*English*]

This system is exactly based on the voter choosing where the \$2 goes, whereas the larger amount of tax dollars that the government does not seem to want to touch come from all of us. Whether we like or not, if someone donates \$400 to a political party, we as taxpayers will give them back \$300.

I would like the hon. member's thoughts on how we can persuade the government that it is removing the exact part of the system that works best and is keeping tax dollars going to political parties that are far less democratic.

Government Orders

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

[English]

We are trying to convince the government. We have pushed for an amendment to the bill. We have explained to the government why it is important.

I totally agree with my hon. colleague in terms of the \$2 per vote subsidy helping the party. It is more democratic, it helps in terms of money and it costs less than all the tax credits.

Basically, it is very important for our democracy. It is very important for us who are here and who are elected that the votes we get are translated into something that makes Canada move forward.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss Bill C-13 and point out that it clearly illustrates how the government is keeping its promise to Canadians.

As we all know, Canadians have weathered some difficult economic times over the last several years. The government has taken unprecedented action to help them through this challenging world environment. Indeed, we are seeing reassuring signs throughout the economy, though the international economy is still fragile.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the government's record by announcing new measures for families and additional support for communities. This includes encouraging hiring by providing a temporary hiring credit for small business of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2011 EI premiums, or those paid in 2010. The plan also includes an extension of active or recently terminated work-sharing agreements by up to 16 weeks so companies can avoid layoffs by offering EI benefits to workers willing to work a reduced work week while their company recovers.

Our government is focused on supporting Canadian families with a range of targeted measures that will help Canadians find and hold on to good, high paying jobs, while improving the quality of the lives of Canadians in big and small communities across the country.

Other areas that we are working on include assistance for remote communities that often lack the same level of services as larger centres. Our government is taking measures to address this unfortunate reality. For example, we propose to strengthen the health care in rural communities by supporting family physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses who make the choice to practise in underserved or remote communities. Today's bill proposes to forgive a portion of the federal share of the Canada student loans for new family physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses who practise in underserved rural or remote communities, including communities that provide health services to first nations and Inuit populations.

Starting in 2012-13, practising family physicians will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000. By bringing doctors and nurses

into our rural communities, we are helping all Canadians access essential health services no matter where they live.

The other part of the action plan deals with firefighters. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan recognizes the invaluable contribution that volunteer firefighters make every day to the safety and security of their communities. Specifically, Bill C-13 proposes a volunteer firefighter tax credit, a non-refundable tax credit on an amount of \$3,000, for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities during the year. This credit will provide up to \$450 in tax relief to eligible firefighters who volunteer in this often thankless task. Eligible volunteer firefighters who currently receive honorariums in respect to their duties as a firefighter will be able to choose between the new tax credit or existing tax exemptions of up to \$1,000 for the honorarium.

The president of the Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association, Martin Bell, called the tax credit "wonderful news" and said that the tax credit would contribute significantly to the capacity of volunteer fire departments to protect lives and property.

Budget 2011 also keeps our commitments for the future of the gas tax fund.

• (1530)

In 2007 we extended the gas tax fund by four years, delivering \$11.8 billion in gas tax funding from 2007 to 2014 for infrastructure in cities and communities.

In 2008 we committed to making the gas tax fund permanent.

In 2009 we doubled the gas tax fund to \$2 billion a year.

In 2010, despite challenging economic circumstances, we pledged to protect the gas tax fund.

In 2011, this legislation, Bill C-13, contains a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in municipal infrastructure through the gas tax fund.

The gas tax fund provides predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities, allowing them to better protect their future infrastructure investments.

Given the current environment, the number one issue for this government is to get people back to work which will help grow our economy.

Temporary measures in support of the economic recovery were included in the economic action plan to reinforce the substantial support the government already provides to job creators. The measures in this bill will build on that momentum, laying the foundation for long-term prosperity by encouraging business investments that are necessary to sustain economic growth. This includes extending the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments, manufacturing, and processing machinery and equipment for two years to support the manufacturing and processing sector.

Government Orders

As members are aware, providing support for families and communities helps to ensure Canadians benefit from the opportunities and wealth that long-term growth creates no matter where they live.

The government is showing its commitment to help families and communities. It has stood up for all Canadians to help ensure that their needs are addressed through a wide variety of tax reliefs and targeted investments.

Canadians should be proud of how the government has responded to these challenges today. We are far better off today than we were even a few years ago, and we are well-positioned to deal with the issues that are ahead.

Canadians need the skills to participate fully in society and to secure Canada's position as a leader in the global economy. Further action is required and we are taking that action.

Canada is the best country in the world to live. We are living at the best time in human history. We are doing far better than most in the world. The government will ensure that in the future we remain the best country to live. A strong economy is key to that and to the quality of life for Canadians to ensure that every Canadian can reach their full potential as human beings.

May God keep our land glorious and free.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government member a question.

He keeps telling us that tax credits are important and that there are a number of them. I would like to know what he thinks about the fact that the poorest people in the country will not have access to these tax credits. I would like to know what he would say to them. In fact, they are the ones who need the most help and they are the ones who are unable to take advantage of these tax credits.

What is the government's exact position? Is the government thinking of changing its position? It is quite important to allow these people to have access to tax credits. They would be very useful to these people who really need them.

• (1535)

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this is an area that the NDP has had historic challenges understanding. When we reduce the tax burden on middle-class Canadians, job creators and corporations, that helps grow the economy. It empowers individuals financially and allows them to make the best decisions for themselves.

The less tax that people pay to the government, the more the economy will grow. The faster the economy grows, the strength of that growth helps people in low income situations. It helps the government invest in priority social programs that benefit all Canadians, including those with low incomes. It helps Canadians deal with the socio-economic challenges the member alluded to.

It is important to have a strong economy to protect Canadians and our environment. That is what tax credits do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue with that question.

The Conservatives have, for a while now, talked about how much they care about firefighters. One of the things they wanted to do was to provide this tax credit.

The problem as we see it with the tax credit is that they are being very selective in terms of the volunteer firefighters they are helping. The equipment and the energies, along with the resources that our volunteer firefighters put in is quite significant.

The question is, why would we not be providing some benefit for low income firefighters? The government is doing it for the higher income, why not the lower income? By having a tax credit, the government is not allowing them to have any benefit.

Why is there different treatment for those who are more well off than others?

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, the tax credit has been described by members of the firefighters association as wonderful. They have been very complimentary. It is what volunteer firefighters have asked for.

The previous Liberal government had that opportunity, to bring forward some sort of financial recognition to firefighters. It chose not to. This Conservative government chose to recognize the contribution volunteer firefighters make in our communities.

I would also point out that if the member was serious about the financial recognition for firefighters, he would support this budget instead of voting against it.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to compliment our minister on his response to that hypocritical question by a member of the Liberal Party.

We met, several times, with volunteer firefighters and with chiefs of fire departments across this country who stated very clearly that they were begging the former Liberal government when it was in power for 13 long years to do something to help them. What did the former Liberal government do? Nothing.

I want to compliment the minister, and I want him to explain how the new family caregiver tax credit will benefit people regardless of whether the Liberal Party or the NDP vote for it.

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I accept with humility the comments from the parliamentary secretary.

It is really the parliamentary secretary who should be praised for her excellent work in pre-budget consultations, and her work as a police officer. This parliamentary secretary knows very well the needs of Canadians right across the board, particularly firefighters and police officers, the very people who keep our communities safe.

I appreciate the question regarding the caregiver tax credit. Caregivers help make our society better, and certainly help individuals and their families. Some financial recognition of that will go a long way to helping families.

Again, I just want to say that the parliamentary secretary has done an outstanding job in pre-budget consultations, and that is why—

Government Orders

• (1540)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-13, particularly because it affects low income Canadians and fails to address health problems, including chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency and rare disorders.

Specifically, Bill C-13 deliberately excludes low income Canadians from programs such as the family caregiver tax credit. If people quit their job to take care of a sick loved one at home, they likely would not qualify for any benefits as the Conservatives have put in place a minimum threshold to qualify. I think it is unconscionable to deliberately exclude the very people who are most in need of help. It important to remember that one of Canadians' most deeply held values is fairness.

How then can Canada be one of the few developed countries without a national student nutrition program? Sadly, one in five Canadian children lives below the poverty line which may lead to poor nutritional status and poor child health outcomes. Canadian children from all income brackets are vulnerable to inadequate nutrition. Many children go to class hungry as 40% of elementary students and 62% of secondary school students do not eat a nutritious breakfast.

Hungry children cannot learn. Their learning capabilities are affected by how recently they have eaten. Malnutrition in early life can limit long-term intellectual development. Moreover, Canadian children and youth experience unprecedented rates of type 2 diabetes and obesity because they do not have the knowledge to make healthy food choices and do not have access to the healthy food they need for health and learning.

The Toronto Foundation for Student Success has more than 600 schools in Toronto, 142,000 children and youth, and 3,000 community volunteers with a total of 20,350,000 meals served annually. Toronto research has found that student nutrition programs reduce absenteeism, suspensions and expulsions by 50%; improve performance on standardized literacy and numeracy tests; dramatically impact credit accumulation in secondary school, which is a key indicator of graduation; create a sense of belonging and improve the morale of schools. Toronto research showed that the health impacts include: increased consumption of fruit, vegetables, whole grain foods, and healthy eating habits which prevents diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

Student nutrition programs are needed in aboriginal, remote and rural communities, and the same behavioural learning and health impacts are found in all communities.

Feeding Our Future showed that 78% of grade 10 students, who reported eating morning meals most days, were on track to complete their diploma, meaning they earned 15 or more credits versus 61% who went without food.

The Boston Consulting Group, BCG, has shown that on average each high school graduate contributes an extra \$75,000 annually to the economy. If providing food at school increases graduation rates by just 3%, based on the BCG figures, a national school meal program implemented in Canada's high schools at a cost of just

\$1.25 a day would result in a net payback of more than \$500 million annually.

Outside Canada school meals are viewed as an investment rather than a cost. Improving child and youth nutrition, health and social development feeds regional economic development.

For example, in Brazil food is a constitutional right. A massive national program feeds 47 million students at 190,000 schools each day. Access to nutritionally adequate and safe food is a right of every individual. Therefore, I think it is incumbent upon each of us to fight for a national school nutrition program for all of our children.

• (1545)

I would like to address a second item missing from the budget: funding for clinical trials for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI.

After much resistance, the federal government announced this summer that it would fund clinical trials for CCSVI. This was welcome news for Canadians with MS and for their families. However, this decision took far too long to arrive at, and, since the announcement, no plan has been provided describing how the government plans to establish these trials.

I want to be very clear: right now, all we have is announcements; what we need is action. Canadians with MS cannot afford to wait, as any delay possibly means more damage.

Mr. Speaker, 30%-50% of MS patients who are untreated worsen by one EDSS score in one year, and 50% with relapsing-remitting MS later develop a progressive form of the disease for which there are no drugs. The reality is that one month can mean the difference between walking and not walking, or between living independently and living in care.

CIHR has recommended a phase I/II clinical trial, which is usually undertaken to assess safety. However, angioplasty is an accepted standard of care practice and routinely used for many conditions. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has accepted the basic safety information for angioplasty, since it has already approved three double-blind phase II clinical trials, which are already being conducted in the United States. There is no need for a phase I trial in Canada. It will waste time and money and would provide nothing beyond what is already known worldwide about this procedure.

Government Orders

What is needed is an adaptive phase II/III trial, which would permit a rapid and seamless transition from the phase II trial—subject, of course, to interim assessments of safety and efficacy—to a full phase III trial. This approach would still address all the regulatory requirements and answer all the key safety and efficacy questions, but it would also save time and cost.

Moreover, we need experts who are actively engaged in diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI on the CIHR's expert working group.

I would like to address a third omission from the budget.

Some 2.7 million Canadians are affected by rare disorders such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease and thalassemia. Most rare disorders are difficult to diagnose and are chronic, degenerative, progressive and life-threatening.

Families who face rare disorders lack access to scientific knowledge of their disease and to quality health care. They face difficulties and inequities in accessing treatment and care.

Canada is one of the only developed countries without a policy for rare disorders. As a result, Canadian patients are frequently excluded from many clinical trials and often have delayed access to treatment. Moreover, Canadian patients cannot always access drugs available to patients elsewhere. Only a fraction of the drugs approved in Europe and the U.S. are brought to Canada. Going forward, let us all commit to working together to develop a national policy for rare disorders.

I wish there were more time. I wish there were time to address the cuts that have decimated Environment Canada, particularly its adaptation group. Eight were fired in June, and twelve of 17 have received workforce adjustment letters. Many of these scientists share part of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for climate change.

Adaptation science is the bridge between climate predictions and practical applications. Why, then, would the minister cut climate impact and adaptation scientists? Does he really think an investment of \$149 million will truly counter the problem? When will the Minister of the Environment restore activities in the Environment Canada adaptation group so that the economic well-being, health and safety of Canadians will be protected?

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke a lot about medical issues, and I know those are close to her heart.

I met recently with officials of the MS Society in my office here in Ottawa. They thanked the government for the family caregiver tax credit and said it was a step in the right direction.

I want to ask my colleague specifically about the enhanced medical expense tax credit, which would remove the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that may be claimed on behalf of a financially dependent relative. As a result of her concerns about the medical system, will she vote in favour of the bill, since it would provide an excellent enhanced medical expense tax credit that would benefit thousands of Canadians?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, at first the hon. member mentioned the family caregiver tax credit, and I will pick up on that.

I represent one of the most diverse ridings in the country. We rank about fifth. Many of my families are newcomers. They face many challenges in coming to Canada. They face the challenge of learning a new language, of adapting to a new culture and particularly of finding a job.

My families often work two to three jobs just to put food on the table for their children. If the choice is between buying a \$5 litre of orange juice and a \$2 double litre of orange pop, the choice is clear to a family trying to stretch each dollar.

The reality is that many of these families will never meet the requirement that the government has put in place to receive that caregiver tax credit.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member for Etobicoke North. She has a fine brain and a warm heart and she is always worth listening to, so I thank her for her excellent speech.

She talked about two things, children and medicine, things she cares about and knows about, and there is a sense of urgency. She mentioned that time is running out; it is not the eleventh hour, it is the hour.

I wonder if the hon. member is aware of the book *The Spirit Level*, by Wilkinson and Pickett, which uses scientific data to show why the Scandinavian countries and Japan are far ahead of us in health and welfare for children and adults, why the United States is the worst of the developed countries and why we are sliding toward that model. If she has not read it, I recommend it to her, to every Canadian and to every member in the House.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, for whom I also have great respect.

To bring in the international perspective, and I will do it regarding food, in Sweden children between the ages of six and 16 receive a hot meal each day under laws set by the national food administration. Pupils choose from three entrees, a vegetarian dish and a salad bar with at least five fresh choices. Milk and bread are also served.

In Japan children aged six to 15 receive school meals. A government initiative aims to ensure 50% of the meals are made with local ingredients. The UN world food program and school feeding programs encourage hungry children to attend school.

Feeding these children helps them concentrate on their studies. Food attracts hungry children to school, and an education broadens their options, helping lift them out of poverty.

Government Orders

Canada has provided \$25 million a year since 2003 in support of the world food program. We need to fight for a national nutrition program here.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her very interesting speech on health, among other things.

Five million Canadians do not have access to a family doctor and 73% of Canadians without a family doctor depend on emergency rooms or walk-in clinics for front-line health care. Canada is ranked 26th out of 30 industrialized countries when it comes to the number of doctors per capita. Could the hon. member tell us about their plan to address this situation?

•(1555)

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, health care has to be an absolute priority. Going forward, I would like to see a vision for health care in this country coming from the government. In the last few years, government members have hardly uttered the word “health”.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill:

[*English*]

Bill S-3, A third Act to harmonize federal law with the civil law of Quebec and to amend certain Acts in order to ensure that each language version takes into account the common law and the civil law.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

* * *

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and honour for me to stand to speak about the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. When I was preparing my notes for these comments, I could not help but realize that many things have already been done prior to part two of this action plan, and I want to touch on them as I move through my comments.

It is not unknown to anyone in Canada that our government believes in lowering taxes. It believes that leaving more money in the pockets of people who work, raise families, and create and live in and participate in communities is better than having the government take it from them and reinvest it in their communities. Often when governments do that, they tend not to hear or understand the needs of

the communities, and therefore, although the investment was well intentioned, the money is quite often misspent.

It is interesting to note that since 2006 our government has cut taxes 120 times. If it is not a record, it is a darn good average. Canadians are recognizing that and are benefiting from the removal of the tax burdens that were in place before. We have removed over one million low-income families, individuals and seniors, from the tax rolls. These are the same low-income people we hear members opposite talking about and being concerned about. By changing thresholds for offering tax benefits, we have removed that many people from the tax rolls. That is something everyone in Canada should be very proud of.

We have cut personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes and excise taxes, and the list goes on. We have reduced personal income tax, we have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free, we have introduced the landmark tax-free savings account—one of the most important personal savings vehicles since the RRSP—and we continue to reduce the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. Due to our government's low-tax plan, the average typical Canadian family's tax saving is now over \$3,000.

Where do we go from here? What is the next step, and what are we presenting to Canadians to provide the security they need to continue to invest in their homes, families and communities? We have introduced a new family caregiver tax credit and a new hiring credit for small businesses.

I want to mention one measure in particular, because it has a huge impact on job creation and on opportunities for the future.

We have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance that allows businesses to invest in new technology and industrial benefits for their businesses and create efficiencies not only in production but on the environmental side. Since they will be able to write that off at a faster pace, they will be more interested in making that investment and writing it down as quickly as possible.

In my previous life, those types of investments would sometimes take 20 years to write off, so businesses were always carrying them. Whether they were using it or whether it was obsolete, they still had to show it. This is one area of support that business communities and manufacturers have told us has been tremendous.

We talk about supporting families. This is probably one of the most important issues we deal with. We have introduced a family caregiver tax credit that caregivers of all types of infirm, dependent relatives—including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children—can utilize. We have introduced an enhanced medical expense tax credit, removing the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of financially dependent relatives.

We are continuing the eco-energy retrofit program, one of the most successful programs we introduced in previous budgets, and I hope the opposition recognizes it as a milestone. It allows people with lower incomes to find ways to create more efficiencies in their homes by reducing their electricity and heating bills, thus making their homes more efficient and allowing them to have more money in their pockets.

Government Orders

•(1600)

Another part of the budget that is very important to me and to many of the members is the support that we are offering for seniors. Since 2006 when we became government, we have offered \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners. That equates to removing over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. We have introduced pension income splitting so people can split their incomes and pay lower taxes and have more money in their pockets to do the things they want to do, to do the things they saved for and worked all their lives for.

We have increased the age credit by \$2,000. We have doubled the pension income credit to \$2,000. We have increased the amount that guaranteed income supplement recipients can earn through employment without a reduction of their GIS benefits. Where does the next step take us? Where does phase two of this action plan go?

We recognize that Canada's seniors not only helped build and make our country great, but they continue to do so. Part of our new plan is going to enhance the GIS for eligible low income seniors who will receive additional benefits up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. That will have an impact for over 680,000 seniors across Canada. These are important numbers because they reflect the number of people who will benefit from this directly. We are doing things to help people move forward.

We have enhanced the new horizons for seniors program. The uptake in this program in my constituency of Brandon—Souris has been phenomenal. Seniors are reaching out to other seniors to create opportunities and learning environments. They are doing things together to create a better and healthier lifestyle. We certainly support that.

I mentioned previously about helping families. Extending the eco-energy retrofit program definitely will help seniors particularly those with a low income. That I have no trouble supporting and I would hope that members opposite would support it too.

One of the great things that has been accomplished by this government is that we established the tax-free savings account. That has been a tremendous benefit to seniors.

We talked about volunteer firefighters. I have heard some of the debate today. Volunteer firefighters play a huge role in our rural communities. They are the people who work in our communities, but at the sound of a bell, they leave their work to go and help a neighbour, friend, relative, anyone in the community. They often put themselves at great risk. They do it for one reason. They do it because of their neighbours and families and the communities in which they live. Nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters provide their services to protect our lives and property in Canada's urban and rural communities, but rural communities in particular rely on volunteer firefighters and their professionalism.

There are many things I want to touch on, but I will finish by touching on the government's support for farmers. Farmers are the backbone of the country. They have fed the world for many years. In this budget we are introducing a new agricultural innovation initiative of \$50 million to keep us on the cutting edge of agricultural innovations. We talk about strengthening the food safety system which is very important. We have invested \$100 million for new

training and additional science capacity. We are helping producers by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance.

There are many reasons in the budget for everyone to support it. I would ask members to do so. I will be supporting it.

•(1605)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the eco-energy retrofit program for homes which my hon. colleague brought up twice in his remarks. There is a problem with it. Let us look at the program from the point of view of small businesses which are in the business of retrofitting homes. These are businesses that are hiring people and there are many of them in my riding. A one-year program is not something that businesses can use for planning, hiring and training.

We put forward a proposal that this program go for five years so that small businesses could take advantage of the supposed stability of the majority government to actually grow their businesses. At the end of five years we could have a viable industry doing energy retrofits for homes and helping people save energy and money.

Is the hon. member disappointed that in this budget bill no thought has been given to having a longer period, say five years, for the eco-energy retrofit program so that small businesses could count on that kind of stability?

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, if I understand it correctly, the program has been around since 2007. It was introduced by the government at that time in a budget. We have seen the benefits of it. It has worked tremendously well in many parts of the country. Therefore, we thought it was desirable to continue with the program.

Many people benefited from this. Not only did people have the work done, but there was training and job creation in the last four years as well. Those people, particularly young people, were able to stay in their communities and continue in the profession they chose. They are now prepared to face the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to the question my colleague asked. I do not think his question was answered, because I have heard the same concerns about the eco-energy retrofit program. The problem is not who created it, when it was created or whether it will be renewed. The problem is that contractors and voters in general do not know whether the program will survive for a year, two years, three, four or even five years. The program would be much more effective if people could be certain that it will be around for more years. This way, contractors and the public could plan renovations over a longer period of time.

I would like to know whether the government member could tell us whether he is satisfied or dissatisfied with the fact that these measures are decided on year by year and whether he thinks they would be more effective if they were more long-term to allow people to plan over a longer period of time.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how more clear I can be. This was introduced in 2007. It is now 2011. The program is continuing to operate. The benefits that we have seen in our communities have been tremendous not only for the people who are utilizing the services, but it has helped keep trained people in those new jobs, particularly in the housing industry. It has been a tremendous boon. We now have accredited professionals in our communities carrying on in the jobs of the future and the opportunities that they present.

• (1610)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Brandon—Souris, which is a rural riding. Obviously, it is one of our fine western ridings.

Would the member comment on how this budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, speaks to the needs of rural Canadians and rural Canada?

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, as important as it is when we talk about introducing and implementing programs and policies that would impact Canadians, I think we all would recognize there are differences between the rural and remote parts of Canada and the urban parts of Canada and that we have to always be sensitive to those differences.

Many of the things that we have introduced in the budget have been things which the rural caucus has brought forward to the Minister of Finance and to the government, and they have listened to us. That is the most important part. We get things done by working together, by listening to our constituents and, at the end of the day, producing a product that I hope all members will support.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to stand up for New Democrats' ideals when it comes to the economy. With Bill C-13, the Conservatives have supported the NDP motion calling for immediate economic action. Unfortunately, however, this bill is very simply not enough.

A lot more has to be done to respond to the legitimate concerns that Canadian families have about the economy. The Canadian public wants to see real action taken to stimulate the economy, create jobs and combat the social inequalities we are facing. And today I would like to stress that last point, because, in my opinion, it is crucial to understand the economic benefits that are produced by a more equal society.

Income inequality is an important indicator of fairness in an economy and has repercussions on other areas, such as crime and social exclusion. A study done by the Conference Board of Canada shows that Canada ranks 12th out of 17 comparable countries when it comes to inequality. In other words, the income gap is wider in Canada than in 11 comparable countries. Although Canada's wealth is distributed more equitably than in the United States, Canada's 12th place ranking suggests that it is doing a mediocre job of guaranteeing income equality, according to the Conference Board.

A significant widening of the income gap occurred in Canada between 2000 and 2006. Canada is the only country in the Conference Board study whose relative score fell between the

mid-1990s and the middle of the next decade because of its significant increase in income inequality. Statistics Canada recently released some income figures. Incomes from the 2006 census show an increase in inequality. That study was based on full-time workers' median earnings between 1980 and 2005. The figures show that earnings grew by 16.4% for people with the top incomes, while they stagnated for people in the middle income group and fell by 20.6% for people in the bottom income group.

To summarize, from 1980 to 2005, earnings for the top group rose by 16.4%, while middle-income Canadians saw their incomes stagnate and earnings for the bottom group declined sharply. In the richest group of Canadians, the big winners were the super-rich, the top 1%. That increase is not attributable solely to wise investments; it also stems from the base salaries paid to bank presidents and corporate CEOs, which have exploded in recent years. So we should not be surprised to see that in recent weeks, income inequality has been in the media spotlight.

The Occupy Wall Street movement, for example, and the movements that followed it are a signal that the public is rejecting the income gap between the richest 1% and the other 99%. There is a widespread fear now being felt around the world that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And that fear certainly does not seem to be unfounded. For example, a recent study by a professor at Berkeley found that income inequality in the United States is at an all-time high, even exceeding the levels observed during the Great Depression. The example he gives is that the top 10% of earners in 2007 accounted for nearly 50% of total income in the United States.

In contrast, Denmark and Sweden, which have the lowest levels of poverty among children and the working age population, are also undisputed leaders in terms of income equality. The relationship between social spending and poverty rates has become clearer over time. Thus, it is not surprising that these countries have strong traditions of redistributing wealth. They have been able to keep poverty rates down thanks to a universal welfare policy that has been effectively combined with job creation strategies that support gender equality and accessibility. That is the example the NDP would like to follow, because it appears that the model that this government insists on copying is producing extremely disappointing results.

According to the Conference Board, one reason for the growing inequality in Canada is globalization, which rewards highly qualified workers while leaving everyone else behind. This situation is also largely the result of the interaction between family factors and economic factors. The gap is widening considerably between families with two highly educated spouses and those that have only one breadwinner or those with no one who can work.

Government Orders

•(1615)

In addition, government transfer programs meant to address some of these inequalities are not as effective as they were 20 years ago. For instance, fewer workers are receiving employment insurance benefits, and social assistance rates do not always mimic the cost of living. To date, many of the tax breaks granted by this government have disproportionately benefited the wealthy, because they have not been applied based on income. They have instead centred mainly around lowering the GST and around tax credit programs.

Speaking of inequality, we must also address the issue of poverty in Canada. Once again according to the Conference Board of Canada, more than 12% of adult Canadians live in relative poverty. That is twice as high as the rates found in Denmark and Sweden. Canada ranks 15th out of 17 peer countries in terms of the working age poverty rate. Canada's working-age poverty rate increased from 9.4% in the mid-1990s to 12.2% in the mid-2000s.

While the NDP has been asking this government to rethink its plan to promote employment, a recent OECD report states that poverty rates are directly dependent on the ability of household members to be gainfully employed. The OECD concludes that the failure to tackle the poverty and exclusion facing millions of families and their children is not only socially reprehensible, but it will also weigh heavily on countries' capacity to sustain economic growth in years to come.

The relationship between social spending and poverty rates is striking. Among working-age adults, the relative poverty rate is lower in countries with higher social spending.

Why so much talk about income inequality and poverty? Because there are direct links between inequality and a country's economic growth. It is reasonable for there to be a compromise between equality and effectiveness so that wealth redistribution does not impede productivity. A recent OECD study on income inequality notes:

A society in which income was distributed perfectly equally would not be a desirable place either. People who work harder, or are more talented than others, should have more income. What matters, in fact, is equality of opportunity, not equality of outcomes.

However, the idea that income inequality reduces the potential for growth is real. Income inequality undermines social cohesion, leading to social conflicts. A study done by Michael Forster highlights new research showing that a society should be concerned about income inequality. He says that a number of authors have produced evidence that poor income distribution could ultimately have a negative effect on economic growth through education, health and access to the labour market.

In a letter published in *Le Devoir*, Paul Bernard, a professor at the Université de Montréal, showed that social investment is a key to economic development. To support his position, he cited numerous studies that show that social spending does not operate to slow growth. In fact, it actually operates to provide everyone with the prerequisites that enable them to participate in the labour market in large numbers and on the best terms. This strong participation helps to increase the productivity of the economy and means that the taxes needed for maintaining those services can be raised intelligently.

In other words, economic development can be achieved through social investment, with the bonus of a healthy additional dose of social justice. So we have to look at combating income inequality not just as a matter of principle, but also as a practical contribution, what social development can and must do for economic development. Providing all Canadians with access to adequate health care services, a quality education and social and family services appropriate to their situation is what will ensure the long-term development of our economy. In other words, we have to redistribute wealth in order to create wealth.

So it seems there is an alternative to this government's economic plan, which is an attempt to stimulate the economy by cutting social programs and the services provided to the public under the false pretext of contributing to economic growth and helping Canadians find jobs.

This plan does not do enough for the Canadian economy. We need a government that demonstrates leadership, today even more than in previous years. Canada is not immune to a new recession. That is why we cannot stop there. We have to be proactive and redistribute wealth in order to create wealth.

•(1620)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadian corporations have roughly \$500 billion in cash in their coffers. This does not contribute to investment, economic growth or job creation. What is missing from this bill to ensure that this money can be used for our economy and the Canadian public?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. This bill lacks more serious measures for helping Canadian families. I think that is key. As I was saying, we have to put an end to the Conservatives' erroneous way of talking about social spending, spending for social programs and public services. It is more of a social investment to invest in an education system and a universal health care system. This will then allow us to deal with other potential recessions and to keep our heads above water.

[English]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague across the way for her speech. However, I would like her comments on a very serious situation that occurred in Quebec. In fact, many of the people who probably elected her are familiar with the Earl Jones case.

As Bill C-13 discusses a securities regulator and there are provinces that are on board to try to address this problem, I would like to hear what the member says to the victims of the Earl Jones case when Joey Davis of the Earl Jones victims committee said very clearly, "We support the idea of a single national regulatory body overseeing financial organizations".

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I will talk about my weekend. I watched the documentaries *Meltdown: The Secret History of the Global Financial Collapse* and *Inside Job*. In light of that and the fact that protesters are camping out just a few blocks away from my Quebec City office, I can also say that we really have to take the downturn more seriously. I do not really see a change in strategy in this bill. Unfortunately, I believe that this bill does not contain the tools required to deal with potential recessions or economic difficulties in this country. That is what I have to say. There are solutions. They are found on this side of the House and they can also be found among those participating in Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Quebec City, Occupy Vancouver. The solutions can be found there. We must listen to the people. They have suggestions. I believe that is where we must listen to the people.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what Quebeckers have to say about firearms registration in light of the Polytechnique incident that resulted in the death of 14 women. The Conservative government has eliminated the registration of firearms and has even appropriated the registry. It wants to destroy the registry to ensure that the Province of Quebec will not even be able to have its own gun registry. This is a government that wants to build prisons and put everyone behind bars. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about crime and especially about what happened in Quebec.

• (1625)

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to warmly thank the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for his question. It is official; Quebec is concerned. We are concerned that this government does not seem to have a very strong knowledge of economics since the budget has to be revised constantly. The government is always saying that there will be no deficit when, in the end, there will be one. These are reasons for concern; however, we are also having difficulty recognizing the values of this government, which Quebec does not share. I can tell you that.

In fact, the firearms registry gave the government, the police and organizations that deal with violence against women the power to act. The fact that the government will not even transfer the registry to the provinces is truly appalling. Moreover, some of my Quebec counterparts came to Ottawa to beg the Conservatives, who want to abolish the firearms registry, to transfer the registry to the provinces so that they can carry on the work.

Not only is this government failing to do its duty in terms of public safety but it will not even allow the \$2 billion that was invested in the registry to be recovered. If it would, passing the bill and abolishing the registry would not be a complete waste. It would allow the provinces to do the work.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to Bill C-13, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

Thanks to the policies of our government, Canada continues to be an economic leader during a period of global economic uncertainty. We know that Canada is not immune to the economic storm that continues to rage across the globe. That is why our government is

launching the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We are taking action that will help Canadians through this period of economic uncertainty.

In the bill we are debating today, I will outline how our government is taking measures that will support families and communities, promote job creation and economic growth.

Our Conservative government believes in keeping families strong. We believe hard-working Canadians deserve to keep more of the money they earn. That is why, since 2006, the government has cut taxes over 120 times. As a result, the overall tax burden facing families is at its lowest level in nearly 50 years.

We have removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pocket of an average family.

We introduced the universal child care benefit offering families more choice in child care by providing \$1,200 per year for a child under the age of six. We introduced the child tax credit providing personal income tax relief of up to \$320 in 2011 for each child under the age of 18. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit promoting physical fitness among children through a credit of up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with physical activity.

We brought in the landmark tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP. We eliminated the marriage penalty for one-earner families by increasing the spousal amount to the same level as the basic personal amount. We introduced a registered disability savings plan to help families of children with disabilities save for their child's future care.

For our seniors, we provided more than \$2 billion in annual targeted tax relief through such measures as pension income splitting, increases in the age credit amount and a doubling of the pension credit amount.

In addition, families are benefiting from other new targeted measures like the first-time home buyers tax credit, the expanded home buyers plan and the public transit tax credit. Due to our strong record of tax relief, total savings for a typical Canadian family is over \$3,000 since this government took office.

Bill C-13 includes several new measures that are designed to support families by leaving more money in their pockets. One of those measures is the family caregiver tax credit.

Government Orders

The family caregiver tax credit is a 15% non-refundable tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities, including for the first time spouses, common law partners and minor children. This proposal has received wide support from those who know the challenges faced by families that care for a loved one with a serious illness.

The Canadian Caregiver Coalition said:

—(CCC) applauds the Federal Budget...The announcement of a Family Caregiver Tax Credit demonstrates the federal government's commitment to families and the caregiving responsibilities that they assume...We are pleased to see the federal government recognizing and furthering the support for family caregivers by mitigating their financial burden through this program.

The Canadian Cancer Society said:

A new family caregiver tax credit announced in [Budget 2011]...is a good start in providing more support for all family caregivers.

We welcome the tax credit and other measures in the budget as a step in the right direction.

To further assist caregivers, the bill would remove the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers could claim on behalf of a financially dependent relative. Surely we can all agree in the House that families that care for a loved one are deserving of this tax relief.

In addition to supporting caregivers, we are supporting communities. As part of our economic action plan we partnered with communities and provinces to build the infrastructure needed to ensure long-term economic growth and prosperity.

In Bill C-13 we are legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for our municipalities. On this matter, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities said that budget 2011 “delivered a vital commitment to cities and communities to develop a new, long-term federal infrastructure plan”.

● (1630)

In the next phase of our economic action plan, we will continue our efforts to support our local communities, not just through infrastructure investments but through a number of other initiatives as well.

To help address the issue of a shortage of doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas, Bill C-13 proposes that practising family physicians will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses would be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

I am pleased to report that these proposals have also received broad support. The Canadian Medical Association said:

The initiative to address the shortage of primary care physicians recognizes the particular challenges of providing health care in rural and remote areas of the country.

The Canadian Nurses Association added:

...Canada's nurses are pleased to see nursing and medical student debt relief as well as tax relief for Canadians providing care for family members.

While Bill C-13 addresses the health of rural communities, it also contains important measures to keep our communities safe by recognizing the vital role volunteer firefighters play in serving our

communities, often putting themselves at great risk for the safety of their neighbours. In fact, nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters provide their services to protect the lives and property of Canadians living in urban and rural communities across Canada. In recognition of their brave service, Bill C-13 proposes a new 15% non-refundable volunteer firefighter tax credit on an amount of \$3,000 for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service to their communities during a year. This builds on our government's action to ensure first responders receive the proper training to respond to emergencies involving hazardous materials. Unfortunately, both the Liberals and the NDP voted against this \$1 million initiative that was contained in budget 2007.

I hope that this time opposition members will join with our government to provide the critical support for our volunteer firefighters provided in this bill. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs said:

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) strongly applauds the Conservative government's introduction of a \$3,000 tax credit for volunteer firefighters in Budget 2011. This is a crucial measure to ensure the retention and recruitment of volunteer firefighters which will help keep Canadian communities safe.

Thanks to the policies of this government, Canada has avoided the worst of the global economic downturn. Although there remains a great deal of uncertainty in the global economy, the IMF is maintaining its positive outlook for Canada, thanks to our sound and stable economy along with the positive measures taken in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is yet another example of Canada's global economic leadership, which includes nearly 600,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, the strongest job growth record in the G7; the World Economic Forum, for the fourth consecutive year, ranking Canada's banks as the soundest in the world; *Forbes* magazine ranking Canada as the best place in the world for businesses to grow and create jobs; the IMF and the OECD forecasting Canada's economy will be among the strongest in the G7 this year and next; and Fitch Ratings, Moody's and Standard & Poor's all giving Canada a triple-A credit rating.

Bill C-13 would provide support to Canadians who care for infirm family members. It would support our local communities by providing measures to bring doctors and nurses to rural communities. It would acknowledge the vital role volunteer firefighters play in keeping us safe. It also would support local infrastructure. These measures combined would build on Canada's economic leadership by ensuring more money stays in the pockets of hard-working Canadians and is spent on services that matter most to them.

We campaigned on the issues contained in Bill C-13 and we are keeping our campaign commitments. I am pleased to stand in this House and support this bill and I would encourage all hon. members to do the same.

Government Orders

•(1635)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because of my background, I am very interested in Bill C-13 regarding the partial forgiveness of student loans for doctors and nurses.

I would like to make a comment to the hon. member opposite. I listened closely to his speech. This measure is not sufficient to help doctors and nurses in rural areas. The criteria—including those that may prevent specialists from practising in rural areas—exclude a large number of people who are filling the positions we greatly need filled across the country. This measure does not really solve the problem of the shortage of doctors and nurses. It does not include any initiatives to increase registration in medical schools and nursing programs. It does not solve the current shortage of front-line medical professionals. It simply serves to move health care professionals from urban to rural areas.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would look at the budget, she would see that we have increased spending on health care by 6% per year since taking office, for a total of 36%.

The provinces will make their own decisions on how they allocate their teaching spaces.

However, this government has not taken the route that the former government did by slashing health and social transfers. We have continued to invest in those transfers to the provinces so that they can make their own decisions on how they will provide teaching spaces for people like doctors and nurses. We have broad support for this measure, which will encourage doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners to serve in underserved rural areas.

We think the opposition should support this legislation.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the quote my colleague used was from Dan Demers, who said:

We welcome the tax credit and other measures in the budget as a step in the right direction.

However, the second part of it reads:

But looking forward, we need to continue to work collectively to ensure more is done so that all family caregivers in Canada get the financial support they need and deserve.

Unfortunately, with a non-refundable tax credit not everybody will benefit. Here is what the society said:

The Society also believes that a non-taxable, monthly Family Caregiver tax benefit should be established to help family caregivers with costs.

It also talked about more flexibility and a timeframe for financial benefits.

Obviously, the step in the right direction should be taken a little further according to the Canadian Cancer Society. I wonder when the next step will be taken. Perhaps the member could comment on that.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I am a new member to the House but I was watching very carefully during the 13 years that the Liberal Party was in government. The Liberals did not deliver for Canadians. They did not deliver for volunteer firefighters. They did not deliver

for family caregivers. They had 13 years to deliver. If only they had a little more time, they might have finally managed to bring in things that are supported in this budget.

That member should support the bill.

•(1640)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his impassioned speech with the emphasis on our volunteer firefighters.

In the past, regular force volunteer firefighters had not supported this tax credit initiative but this time they have. I am wondering if the member could explain why it is so important? How will volunteer firefighters benefit? Could he also explain the type of out-of-pocket expenses that our volunteer firefighters endure?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, this provision is well supported in Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon. There is a large rural component in my riding. The majority of the communities in my riding are served by volunteer firefighters. Not only do they give of their time and of their resources but they put their very lives on the line for our communities. This is the least we can do. They have been asking for this for years. Rick Casson, the former member for Lethbridge, was a strong supporter of this initiative. We have delivered where others have failed to do so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-13, Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act, because this may be the last opportunity I have to talk about the 2011 budget. I would like to take this opportunity to speak more broadly about the differences between the Conservative government's approach and the New Democrats' approach to the economy, which is partially addressed by this bill and has also been addressed in other budget implementation bills.

The difference in approach involves macroeconomics. On the Conservative side, in general, they applaud tax cuts, particularly the ones that benefit corporations. We think this approach is ineffective from the standpoint of investment. The reason given by the Conservatives when they promise these tax cuts may be reflected in the mantra they constantly repeat: that the NDP wants to raise taxes by \$10 billion. I think the people at home should know that this simply means going back to the 2009 corporate tax rate. It does amount to nearly \$10 billion. But that money is not being stolen from anyone's pocket and is not just going to sit there and do nothing. It is for investing in infrastructure. That is the big difference between our approach and the Conservatives'.

Government Orders

There is at least one situation where corporate tax cuts are legitimate, and that is when a private enterprise needs cash in order to invest. In that case, a tax cut will, in fact, enable the corporation to free up the cash that is needed so it can invest and thus create jobs. However, we have to be very aware of what the present situation is. In 2001, Canadian corporations were sitting on \$157 billion in cash. That \$157 billion was lying dormant in the banks, in bank accounts, and not being invested.

That \$157 billion, already a sizeable amount in 2001, grew to \$477 billion in 2011. Nearly \$500 billion is currently unused, sitting in accounts, and not being invested. Corporations may have various reasons for not investing. They are understandable. However, a tax cut like the one the Conservative government wants to push ahead with—a tax cut that would lower the tax rate to 15%—hands cash to companies that very often do not need it, because the cash they already have is not even being invested.

So when they say cutting taxes on corporations is going to create the jobs we need today and it is part of a grand economic action plan, that is entirely incorrect.

In the present situation, where the country has a major infrastructure deficit, it is crucial, in a real economic action plan—and I am not claiming that what the government is currently doing is a real economic action plan—that we look at what the needs are. In this case, we have an infrastructure deficit that is often estimated at over \$500 billion. This is a problem we have to start solving before we move on to completely general measures that often miss their mark, precisely because they are general. These measures have to be targeted.

In 2001, the federal corporate tax rate was 28%. That is going to be reduced to 15%. When we went from 28% to 15%, we should note, that cut did not generate any improvement or increase in real investment. That is additional evidence that tax cuts do not necessarily produce an increase in investment or in the number of jobs.

It is worrisome to see the direction the government is choosing to take with its big economic action measure, which is in fact an ideological measure to cut taxes at all costs, because it believes that this is going to magically create jobs, even if it is not invested. It is funny how the government often laughs at the observations and suggestions made by the official opposition, which places more emphasis on infrastructure investments.

I would also like to point out, and this is a crucial point in the debate we are having, that even the Department of Finance, in the 2009-2010 budget, acknowledged the repercussions of various measures and acknowledged that the corporate tax cut was the least effective measure for creating jobs and economic growth.

• (1645)

For every \$1 in corporate tax cuts, about 30¢ in economic growth is generated. However, if we take that same dollar and, instead of giving corporations a tax cut, we decide to invest it directly in infrastructure, we create \$1.50 in economic growth for each dollar invested. If we take that dollar and we decide to help low-income families or the unemployed directly—and again this is the

Department of Finance saying this, we get \$1.60 in economic growth for each dollar invested.

We are talking about measures that are five times more effective than corporate taxes. Nonetheless, the Conservative government is running off in a direction that has us simply giving away \$2 billion or \$3 billion or \$4 billion in tax room to companies that very often do not need that money because they have no opportunities to invest it.

I always find it odd when the government blames the opposition, any opposition party, because it does not vote for some micro-measure, even though it may often be very good for certain people or groups in our society. For example, we often talk about volunteer firefighters. These are interesting initiatives that we could conceivably support. However, we do not vote on a budget on a piecemeal basis, but on the document as a whole. And if we look at the whole budget, at the measures and the direction being taken by the government, we find that we cannot support that direction. This is why we oppose the budget. We do not oppose it because we are against volunteer firefighters—quite the contrary—or caregivers, or research and development initiatives. One must realize that, in the Conservative budget, these measures only account for a very small portion of the money invested and that portion is much less than the tax room given to large corporations which, again, will often not invest that money because they have not found any investment opportunities.

I remind hon. members—and we are not the only ones to think so—that there is a corollary to this. I am referring to the other direction that the government is taking, namely, massive spending cuts at a time of economic uncertainty. The last thing we need right now are measures that will reduce demand. Yet, these spending cuts—which are not necessarily included to improve efficiency but to take aim at what are often artificial targets—will result in lower demand, to the point where stimulus measures will be even less effective, assuming that some were. Currently, BMO Nesbitt Burns, the Conference Board of Canada and even the Bank of Canada are opposed to government spending cuts because of the decrease in demand that will follow. We must support demand in difficult times and we are going through difficult times. Generally speaking, Canada is doing well compared to other G7 members, but it should also behave appropriately when faced with risky situations. We should really look at how we can maximize economic performance in our country.

We are talking about infrastructure and I have one or two local examples. I have talked to voters, to organizations and to the 39 municipalities in my riding. There are glaring infrastructure needs. We have to move in that direction. For example, in Rimouski—Neigette, there are needs in terms of recreation centres and municipal complexes, including the Saint-Narcisse recreation centre. And yet there will be no infrastructure money for them. I am trying to find some right now. I am trying to persuade the government to move in that direction, but that is not the direction it wants to move in. There are roads that need rebuilding, for example in Témiscouata and Pohénégamook, in particular, not to mention upgrading water systems. For the tourism projects that are of crucial importance, upgrading is needed. In particular, the Trois-Pistoles—Les Escoumins ferry is at risk of ending up in permanent dry dock as we speak because there is no infrastructure investment for a major tourism project in one of the poorest RCMs in Quebec.

There are infrastructure projects. It is generally agreed that we have a major infrastructure deficit in Canada and we need to invest in that area. While the government is boasting about investing so much in infrastructure over the last two or three or four years, what must be recognized is that there would not have been so much investment if there had been no crisis. If we will recall, the government thought it was losing its grip on Parliament in 2009 and unilaterally prorogued it. Ultimately, it followed the opposition parties' direction. That is really the direction we have to move in.

• (1650)

We have to stop adopting ineffective measures like overall corporate tax cuts. We have to look at what the economic and industrial needs are and think about fixing the infrastructure deficit. The federal government is in a position to work with the provinces and municipalities to do this.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. He alluded to the worthwhile measures in this bill, for example the one relating to volunteer firefighters, and how our Conservative friends are adept at using a few shiny apples to hide a load of rotten apples that nobody wants, like the unbelievable intention of eliminating funding for political parties.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. We have been discussing a budget for several weeks now. A budget often contains dozens, hundreds, sometimes thousands of measures. There are some that are positive, on which we might agree, and others that we oppose. Among the others, there are the subsidies or the funding given to political parties that my colleague mentioned. This is a fundamental issue, because it directly affects the practice of Canadian democracy. We had very little time to debate this because it was one measure among the many in the budget.

Ideally, if the government wanted to be more effective and have the support of the opposition for this measure, it could present a budget piece by piece. That would provide a better idea of the philosophical differences or similarities between the parties.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like to quote some journalists who have clearly said that

Government Orders

what the Conservative government is doing corresponds to what Quebec wants. The quote is in English.

[*English*]

The *Calgary Herald* editorial said:

The \$2-per-vote subsidy...weighs heavily in terms of its political significance. The measure had a distorted benefit in Quebec for the Bloc Québécois, that only had to campaign in one province. Phasing out the subsidy also forces political parties to do their own fundraising, while asking Canadians to back up their beliefs by putting their hard-earned dollars behind the parties they support.

[*Translation*]

If this measure is supported across Canada, particularly in Quebec, why are this member and his party opposed to what Canadians and Quebecers want?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, in the comments that were made, I did not hear any reference from Quebec, but a reference from an Alberta newspaper about Quebec. That is quite different.

The question she asked has to do with a simple mathematical and budgetary question. But the issue is much more fundamental than that. I am sure that she remembers very well the political party financing measure that was adopted along with some fundamental changes, reforms to the way things operated. This was to provide assistance to the different parties and to allow the expression of a democratic vote.

It is true that this can distort things. The current system can distort things. The Conservative government has a majority with less than 40% of the votes. It would make sense to see some reforms to the parliamentary system. That is just part of it. This could also have the negative effect of preventing the expression of diverse voices, like the voice of our colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, whose presence and party largely depend on these subsidies or financing.

• (1655)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. In terms of government funding for political parties, we are talking about paying \$1.75 for democracy, which is less than the cost of a coffee and a timbit at Tim Hortons. We could talk about the quote from the Alberta newspaper that was mentioned by the hon. member for Saint-Boniface, but even a country like France says not to do that. Canadians should continue contributing to parties through their taxes. They are trying to make us believe that people are paying for political parties they do not want. For each vote, a political party receives an amount that does not even equal the cost of a coffee and a doughnut. What is so wrong about that, for the sake of democracy?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. We need time for a response.

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has 30 seconds.

Government Orders

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that question is excellent. A sense of proportion is also needed. This measure is worth \$27 million. The Conservatives have spent over \$60 million on advertising for the economic action plan. It is not a question of cuts here, but rather the fact that the Conservatives have an excellent fundraising machine that has been put to the test. They do not need a political party financing system. They want to use this to weaken the opposition. If it were simply a budget measure, we would not be having the democratic debate that we are having here today and that we should be having.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Montcalm, Disability Insurance; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Seniors; the hon. member for Western Arctic, Airline Safety.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak to Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to implement our low tax plan to help support job creation and economic growth, and we are doing exactly that.

Forbes ranked Canada number one in the world in its 2011 annual survey of the best countries for business, for our economic and personal freedoms, innovation and relatively low red tape. Canada has the strongest job growth in the G7 and the IMF expects Canada to continue to have the strongest growth in the G7 through the years 2011-12. We have the lowest government net debt to GDP ratio in the G7 by far.

The World Economic Forum rated our financial system as the soundest in the world. For the fourth consecutive year, our triple A credit rating has been renewed because of our economic resiliency, very high government financial strength, and low susceptibility to event risk.

Canada's economic record is admirable; however, we do recognize there is much work to be done to protect the fragile recovery and to help more Canadians return to work. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is so important. We must stay the course to protect Canadians from the turbulent economic uncertainties facing our friends and neighbours around the world.

Before the global recession hit, our Conservative government paid down nearly \$40 billion of the debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years. Our fiscal responsible and aggressive debt reduction placed Canada in the best possible position to weather the global recession. When the global recession hit, we made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs, and all parties in Parliament agreed.

We will continue to be aggressive in our support of job creation. We will enhance or extend programs to help businesses keep workers, renew programs to help unemployed workers, introduce hiring credits for small businesses, support youth entrepreneurs,

reduce red tape, and legislate permanent gas tax funding for municipalities.

Families will benefit from a new family caregiver tax credit, a new children's arts tax credit, and an enhanced medical expense tax credit. This builds on top of the action our government has taken to support families since 2006. Due to our strong record of tax relief, total savings for a typical family are over \$3,000.

Our Conservative government values the contributions made by seniors who have made our country as great as it is. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces new measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for Canadian seniors including extending the eco-energy home retrofit program, eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees, extending the targeted initiative for older workers, enhancing the new horizons for seniors program, and enhancing the GIS for eligible low income seniors who will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

We will keep taxes low for Canadian families. Our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job creating businesses.

We have cut taxes over 120 times since 2006, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years.

We removed over one million low income families, individuals and seniors from the tax rolls.

● (1700)

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan continues with the government's commitment to support Canadian students. We all want students to succeed in the global economy with the help of the best education possible.

We are investing in education in the north, including \$9 million to expand territorial colleges' literacy and numeracy programs, particularly in remote communities.

We are extending tax relief for skills certification exams and doubling the in-study income exemption.

To further support families and students, we are increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada student loans and Canada student grant recipients, bringing the eligibility threshold in line with the threshold for full-time students.

Government Orders

The government will respect taxpayers and phase out the direct subsidy of political parties. We are closing numerous tax loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the economic outlook. The key near-term risk is the sovereign debt and banking crisis in Europe. This government will continue to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan to support jobs and growth. We will continue to closely monitor the global and Canadian economic situation. If the economy weakens significantly, we are prepared to respond as necessary in a flexible and measured manner to support Canadian jobs and growth.

In meeting its commitment to return to budgetary balance, the government will not raise taxes or cut transfers to persons, including those for seniors, children and the unemployed, or transfers to other levels of government in support of health care and social services, equalization and gas tax transfers to municipalities.

Going forward, the government will maintain its focus on the priorities set out in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan by supporting job creation; supporting families and communities; investing in innovation, education and training; and preserving Canada's fiscal advantage.

Productive and sustainable investments in these key areas will continue to help lay the foundation for long-term economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians.

• (1705)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that very fine speech. He talked about a number of the very important measures. I would like the member to reflect on his riding and tell us about some of the things that are going to be of huge benefit to the people of Mississauga East—Cooksville in terms of moving forward with the budget implementation act.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, my riding is a very diverse riding. It has many young families and those families will benefit from measures proposed in this act. The tax credits for arts and culture and physical activities will benefit many young families in my riding.

There are also many businesses in my riding. The measures we are proposing for businesses in this act are very important because many of them will be able to hire new workers and many of them will be able to keep workers who are employed now.

I have had very positive feedback from my constituents regarding the proposed bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the floor mentioned help for families, but I really have to wonder what help for families he is talking about.

Is the member aware or would he agree that the gap between wealthy people and those living in poverty is growing?

What does he really think his bill will do for the families that are most in need of support from this government? The reality is that

these families will receive nothing from the tax credits the member is boasting about.

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that we live in the best country in the world. This is not a third world country. This is a country where people come every year, from around the world, as immigrants. They work hard and they are successful.

Of course, there is always more that needs to be done or that can be done, but this is a part of the process. It is not done in one step. This is done in a gradual process. That is exactly what the bill and its measures would address.

I would like to stress that this is not a third world country. We are the best country in the world and we should all work together to improve it. I hope the hon. member will support the bill.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his past contribution as a leader in the Polish community in this country. He has done a very fabulous job and I want to thank him for that.

The Conservative Party committed to implementing these different things that we have in the budget bill during the election.

My question for the member is this. How important is it to him, representing his riding, that what we said during the election is what we are actually doing here in the House of Commons?

• (1710)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague said, during the election we actually presented our economic program to Canadians. When I was knocking on doors, the issues that were important to the people I talked with were jobs, safe streets, a good future for our children, and good education. That is exactly what the bill addresses. That is why we are working hard on this side of the House and that is why we are asking the members on the opposite side of the House to support us in working for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, the Minister of State for Transport spoke to us about economic recovery and now the hon. member is talking about maintaining the economy. However, under this same government, during its reign from 2008 to 2011, between the two elections, Canada's debt increased by \$10 billion.

The International Monetary Fund predicts that the rate of unemployment will increase in 2012 and, I believe from my reading, Scotiabank recently questioned the rosy economic predictions made by the United States and Canada last year.

How can the hon. member tell us there will be economic growth and job growth?

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks, how can I have confidence?

This government's record speaks for itself. Our economy is the strongest economy among the G7 nations. We are making progress. Our financial system is the best in the world.

Government Orders

Of course, we are in difficult times. We are connected to the world economy and we are affected by turbulence in other parts of the world. However, we are on the right path and we will keep working for the best interests of this country and Canadians.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to Bill C-13, which is part of phase two of our economic action plan that has many important elements in terms of moving our country forward.

It is really important that I first start with a brief history of our low tax plan for jobs and growth.

We presented a budget in March 2011 in the House. At that time, the opposition did not see fit to support that budget and triggered an unnecessary election. During our election campaign, we spoke to Canadians throughout the country and told them that we would reintroduce the same budget. It was part of our election platform.

It is important to recognize that this is a budget that had the support of Canadians across the country. We are following through on our commitment to Canadians, who returned us to the House with a strong, stable majority government.

In June of this year, we reintroduced our bill, Bill C-3, and before the House rose for the summer, we were able to implement very important measures, such as increasing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. Now it is fall, there are many elements left and this is our opportunity to continue that very important work.

Members of the finance committee had the opportunity to look at the bill in great detail. As we all know, it is a very big bill and we went through it paragraph by paragraph, looking at all the different measures. Unfortunately, I do not have time to talk about all the great measures, but I would like to focus on and highlight some of the things that are incredibly important for Canadians.

The first thing I would like to highlight is the rural and remote riding forgiveness for student loans in terms of health care services. It is important to look at a statistic. According to the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada, 31.4% of Canada's population, or roughly nine million people, live in predominantly rural regions. Towns under 10,000 account for 22.2% of the population, but they only have 10% of the physicians. Right there we see a big problem. MPs and people who live in Toronto, Ottawa and larger settings recognize and often speak about the challenges in getting a family doctor and access to care. If we look at what is happening in rural communities, it is absolutely compounded many times over.

There have been historical challenges in terms of recruiting doctors and nurses to small areas. One situation we need to look at is if someone were in an accident in Ottawa, an ambulance would quickly come to take the person to a hospital, where there would be a team of doctors and an operating room waiting. Residents in Princeton, British Columbia, as one example, may receive a notice on Friday saying that there are no doctors available to be on call for emergencies on the weekend and if they have emergencies, they should drive three hours to the nearest hospital because the hospital cannot staff the emergency room. This is happening many times throughout our country and our government recognizes that things need to be done.

The other thing that was happening was the lack of physicians was pitting community against community, with each one sort of upping the ante in terms of enticing physicians to go there. This is an important measure that will level the playing field so a physician or nurse who chooses to go to Pemberton, Lillooet or any small community will have the same advantages. It prevents communities from pitting one against the other.

The Canadian Medical Association indicated that roughly 900 doctors and 1,600 nurses who graduate annually are in debt to the Canada student loans program. It is estimated that the average medical student graduate with a debt load in the order of \$100,000 will be eligible to have \$8,000 per year written off their loans to a maximum of \$40,000, while nurses and nurse practitioners will be eligible for a \$4,000 per year writeoff to a maximum of \$20,000 if they undertake a stint in a remote community.

● (1715)

During the election I had an opportunity to talk to nursing students in our local university and rural physicians. I asked them if this was an important measure. Without hesitation, every one of them said that doctors were enticed to come to their communities. They would love the community, the career, the opportunities and the beauty and believed that they would stay. They were thankful for this important measure.

It is important to note that this is only one of many measures. It really builds on the \$39.5 million in funding to increase the number of residency physicians that we announced in February 2011. Again, I am not saying that one strategy is going to solve the problem, but there are many pieces that we are working on in partnership with the provinces and territories that ultimately have the responsibility.

Another important measure I would like to highlight is the mineral exploration tax credit. Exploration and development of Canada's rich mineral resources offers important investments and employment benefits in many parts of the country, especially in rural or remote regions. The temporary 15% mineral exploration tax credit is a measure designed to assist junior mining companies in raising new equity through the issuance of flow-through shares. This additional financing helps exploration companies to maintain or increase their level of exploration activities.

We invested in the METC through the global economic downturn as a way of supporting innovation and job creation in the mining sector. Following the extensions in Canada's economic action plan in budget 2010, the credit was scheduled to expire on March 31, 2011. In support of the economic recovery, budget 2011 extended the credit for an additional year.

Government Orders

It is important to note that in an average year METC investors collectively provide companies with \$400 million in new financing to spend on grassroots exploration in Canada. This money has to be spent in Canada thereby ensuring that if a mine is discovered, the benefits and jobs associated will come to Canadians directly. Therefore, if even a single mine is discovered, the taxes are paid to all levels of government, and they are significant.

It is also important to note that the Mining Association of Canada reports that \$8.4 billion was paid to the government by mining industries in 2011. Again, this is another important measure in terms of jobs and economic growth.

One thing I have certainly heard very clearly is the importance of the gas tax funding for our municipalities. Infrastructure has been an ongoing challenge for them. They often will have acute care needs in terms of water, sewer and roads, but they have to wait for a program to come available. Now they can count on the permanent \$2 billion gas tax funding. Not only that, instead of just using it as a grant program, they can now leverage the funds. They know it is legislated and so they can count on it and leverage it. This is very important for our municipalities.

In quick summary, there are many measures in this budget. At the end of the day, we have been given a mandate by Canadians to move forward with the budget. It is important to support jobs and economic growth. I encourage the opposition to support the bill. Their constituents want them to support it.

• (1720)

BILL C-13—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, our government has remained steadfastly focused on improving Canada's economy, including our focus in the House this week during jobs and economic growth week. Today we are debating the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. It would implement important measures of our government's low tax plan for jobs and growth, including the job creation tax incentive for small businesses and a tax credit for children's arts and dance lessons.

I must advise that an agreement has not been reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) concerning the proceedings at report stage and third reading of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures.

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

REPORT STAGE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments put on the record by the previous speaker.

The government House leader has just stood up, and this is something we see a great deal of lately, and gave notice of time allocation on this legislation because of the government's inability to

work with the opposition in any way and its tendency to use its majority government to prevent any sort of real debate on legislation.

That member has had the opportunity to speak to the bill, but many members of this chamber will never get that opportunity because her government House leader has now said that the government does not want all members to speak to the bill.

If the bill is so good, why does the government want to limit debate on it? Why will the government not allow other members of its own caucus and members of the opposition the opportunity to participate in the debate on an important bill?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague did not actually hear the start of my comments when I talked about the history of the bill. The bill was introduced many months ago. The debate has been had with Canadians who, in the last election, said that they believed in our plan and they believed it was the route forward. They supported our government in terms of moving forward with phase two of Canada's economic action plan. That was 34 million Canadians from across the country.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue in the same vein.

There is something I do not understand in all this. If their action plan is working so well, then why did 60% of Canadians not support this type of action plan? Why is it that all of us here, the entire opposition, currently want to talk about it, debate it, discuss it and introduce concrete measures? The only thing the government is saying is that it does not want to listen to us, that it will steamroll over anything that happens or anything we say, and that it does not care about those who do not agree with it.

That is the only message I am getting in all this and I find that absolutely offensive.

• (1725)

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, again, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to move forward with this measure. We have talked with Canadians. They have said that the volunteer firefighter tax credit is absolutely important. Parents are asking to share their RESPs with different siblings. Doctors and nurses are waiting for these important measures.

It is time to move forward. Let us get this budget through.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tremendously impressed with and confident in the good work done in the finance committee by that member. Having served on that committee, I know a tremendous amount of consultation has been done with Canadians across the country. Many members of the opposition have been saying that no one has really had a chance to provide input, but that is absolutely absurd.

Could the member tell us what kind of consultations go on across the country and from whom she has heard information in addition to the departmental and government agencies?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question from my hon. colleague because the finance committee is in prebudget consultations right now.

Prebudget consultations means that we travel across the country and we hear from Canadians. We have had over 400 submissions. All of that will go together in preparing our next budget.

It is important to recognize that we have some challenging times ahead because of what is happening in Europe and the United States, but Canada has done exceptionally well.

The consultation process with Canadians on where we are going to go with next year's budget is happening now.

We are talking about something that happened over a year ago. We are talking about measures that Canadians want. These measures were debated across the country for many months.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see some members are not that enthused that I am delivering this speech. I swear that I will not take any offence.

Since I only have a few minutes, I would love to talk about my riding of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor. It is the most beautiful little gem on earth. In fact, a lot of the commercials about Newfoundland and Labrador are shot in my riding, with its beautiful cliffs.

An hon. member: And it has a great MP.

Mr. Scott Simms: Sure, it has great representation. On division, right?

I want to follow up on a comment that was made, because I think there are some misconceptions in the debate. I do not think I ever went against the government because it was not consulting enough. I always thought that the consultation process, which was there prior to this government and others, was always substantial enough. Access to one's member of Parliament has always been substantial enough to affect any budget. The problem is, if we are looking at certain costs, and we want to bring the deficit down to a manageable level, we start cherry picking. We have to face up to the fact that we are not going to invest in other things that Canadians want because we cannot afford it.

For example, we would love the volunteer firefighters tax credit to be a refundable tax credit, but it is a non-refundable tax credit. Yet let us not pretend that all Canadians want it. It is the type of thing where we say that we will do this when the deficit is down to zero.

The other issue occurs when we do not fulfill a promise. We might as well be honest and tell people that we cannot do this at this time. A certain amount of respectability needs to be brought back into the level of debate in the House, and certainly in the way the government is acting upon this particular issue.

There are great things in this budget, but the problem is there are a lot more things that need to be done. That is what we debate in this House.

I assume my time for debate has now expired, Madam Speaker.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have seven minutes left when the bill returns to the House.

[*Translation*]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should help improve financial literacy in Canada by: (a) working to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Financial Literacy; (b) creating, promoting, and continuously upgrade a single source website for financial literacy to increase public awareness and ease access to information for Canadians; (c) requiring federally regulated financial institutions to publicly disclose their contributions to financial literacy initiatives; (d) ensuring the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada works with willing provinces and territories to promote financial literacy to youth through the educational system; and (e) designating November as "Financial Literacy Month".

He said: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the thunderous applause on the very exciting topic of financial literacy.

I am very pleased to rise today to speak to my private member's motion, M-269, on the topic of financial literacy, and I would, for the record, like to read it into the House of Commons *Hansard*:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should help improve financial literacy in Canada by: (a) working to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Financial Literacy; (b) creating, promoting, and continuously upgrade a single source website for financial literacy to increase public awareness and ease access to information for Canadians; (c) requiring federally regulated financial institutions to publicly disclose their contributions to financial literacy initiatives; (d) ensuring the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada works with willing provinces and territories to promote financial literacy to youth through the educational system; and (e) designating November as "Financial Literacy Month".

We live in a world today where technology is constantly changing, as is personal finance. Only a few decades ago, credit cards were a luxury item. Debit cards did not even exist. Online banking and buying could not even be conceived as they happen today. Mortgage products were standard and choice was limited.

Today, technology and personal finance have advanced tremendously. Canadians are among the most avid users of debit and credit cards in the world. Online banking and buying are part of everyday life. Mortgage products are multiple and choices are diverse.

Private Members' Business

Canadians are faced with increasingly complex financial decisions that have greater potential consequences, and at a younger age than ever before. Each financial decision has consequences, for individuals and families and for our economy as a whole. It is imperative that Canadians gain the knowledge to understand personal financial matters and the impact of broader economic issues, the skills required to apply financial knowledge in everyday life and the confidence to make responsible financial decisions in a manner that is appropriate to their own circumstances.

The reality is that Canadians who lack financial skills and financial knowledge are unfortunately more likely to be spending beyond their means, saving less than they need, building up too much debt and ultimately becoming less able to save sufficiently for their retirement.

Canadians are capable of making good financial decisions, but they want and need the tools to make the right choices.

Increased financial literacy, especially for Canada's youth, can help people with major events, such as saving for college or university, buying a new home, getting married or looking after aging parents. It can help ensure that the investment products that we hold in our RRSPs and other retirement savings are the ones that best match our financial goals and needs. It can make us smarter consumers of financial products so that we do not waste our hard-earned money on services and fees that we do not need.

Increased financial literacy can also make us less susceptible to being duped by fraud artists or by unethical or unregulated financial products that can lead to disastrous loss.

I want to recognize the work that has already been done by the Minister of Finance, for the very significant steps he has taken to protect consumers on various initiatives, such as the changes he has made with respect to credit and debit cards.

I also want to commend him for establishing the Task Force on Financial Literacy. In fact, the impetus for my motion comes from the real necessity to improve the lives of Canadians through financial literacy, but it is a natural extension of the work done by the Task Force on Financial Literacy. I want to thank all the members of the task force for their excellent work and their recommendations, in particular, through their chair, Mr. Don Stewart.

This report released by the task force is a culmination of significant stakeholder consultation and expert analysis. The recommendations and priorities act as a foundation for this motion, and I would like to outline them for colleagues in the House.

The task force's comprehensive strategy is defined by five priorities. The first priority is a shared responsibility for the financial literacy of Canadians among families, governments, educators, financial services providers, employers, labour organizations, businesses and voluntary organizations.

The second priority is leadership and collaboration. Leadership must come from the Government of Canada in the form of appointing an individual focused on executing this strategy, including initiating a formal collaborative partnership among stakeholders.

●(1735)

The third priority is lifelong learning. Financial literacy training begins in the home and should extend to the formal education system and beyond. It should include teachable moments during decision points, such as the purchase of financial products or joining a pension plan.

The fourth priority is delivery and promotion. A sustained public awareness campaign must be developed, focusing on relevant and understandable communications to ensure that all citizens are aware of targeted initiatives that are aimed to benefit them.

The fifth priority is government accountability. The task force recommends that the government appoint an individual who is accountable and reports to Parliament on all these actions.

I want to return to my actual motion and outline the points in specifics.

I encourage members of this House and all Canadians to review the 30 recommendations of the task force. I think it is a very comprehensive report and the task force has done an excellent job.

The second part of the motion is creating, promoting and upgrading a single-source website for financial literacy to increase public awareness and ease access to information for Canadians. There should be a special emphasis on establishing this website to consolidate and disseminate financial literacy programs and initiatives. The Government of Canada does this with seniors' benefits, so that a senior can go to a single-source website. We have a former minister for seniors in the House today, who was instrumental in forming this website.

Many people have commented on the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada and its website. Its website is excellent. However, that could be enhanced and broadened through a single-portal website that would provide information on the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the government and other organizations.

For example, Junior Achievement, which does a lot of work even in my riding in the community of Leduc, sends people who work in the financial sector into junior high schools and high schools to talk to the students about financial literacy. There is the Jr. Economic Club of Canada, ABC Life Literacy Canada and the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education. A lot of these groups do excellent work on their own and we need to pull it all together so Canadians can access them through one site.

I would like to commend certain members of the media who do excellent work with respect to financial literacy. Jonathan Chevreau of the *National Post* has recently written a book on financial literacy. I recommend it, and his regular column, to all colleagues in this House. This is one of the priorities in terms of lifelong learning. If people read the *National Post*, the *Globe and Mail* or *The Toronto Sun*, they can understand the concepts that are being discussed.

Private Members' Business

The third item in the motion would require federally regulated financial institutions to publicly disclose their contributions to financial literacy initiatives. This would increase the transparency and public awareness of financial institutions' educational efforts. I know institutions already do a lot of work, whether it is the credit unions that I met with today in my office or the traditional big banks.

I would like to compliment, in particular, one person from a bank, Craig Alexander, who appeared before the finance committee today. He has been a true volunteer in this area. He points out that there are people who believe that financial institutions want to take advantage of people. In fact, good institutions, which we have in Canada, have a strong interest in Canadians' increasing their wealth. These institutions have an interest in reaching more Canadians as consumers. If those consumers increase their wealth, the institution has more wealthy customers, so they both benefit.

The next point is ensuring that the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada works with willing provinces and territories to promote financial literacy to youth through the education system. I would like to compliment the FCAC. Canada is often complimented for its financial regulatory system, for the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, our capital ratios and our leverage ratios. However, one of the real gems we have is the FCAC. It does an excellent job in terms of educating consumers. I encourage all Canadians who may be watching this debate to go to its website and see its excellent initiatives. I would like to expand its role and get it to work with the provinces and territories.

● (1740)

In drafting the motion, some people raised the issue of education being within provincial jurisdiction, especially kindergarten to grade 12, which is a viable concern. However, I am asking that the FCAC, through a curriculum that it has already developed, make it accessible to the provinces and encourage them to adopt it as a formal part of their curriculum, not wait until high school level but actually get it in at the junior high level or even earlier so that Canadians will know from a very early age what kind of decisions they should be making.

The motion that I am presenting here today is in the same spirit that I presented the motion on identity theft two Parliaments ago and the motion on Alzheimer's in the last Parliament. I hope all members will see it in that spirit, read through it and view it as a serious issue that needs to be addressed and something that we can unite around as parliamentarians on both sides of the House. I look forward to their support.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, while the hon. member did talk about some of the initiatives that we as New Democrats would like to see in financial literacy, if we look through the report, something stands out to us on this side of the House. Although there is some mention about supporting financial literacy for low-income individuals, it does not address the day-to-day meat and potato financial literacy that is needed to support low-income families.

I am wondering what the hon. member can speak to in relation to how we can provide better financial literacy to those who might not have the income necessary to look at stocks, for example, or pensions. What they are worrying about right now is getting through

the day and balancing their chequebooks. The financial literacy they do not have relates to debit cards and credit cards. There is not a lot of talk about that in this huge report. If the member could show us where that is and talk about how the government wants to bring that forward, that would be fantastic.

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, my colleague has done a lot of work in raising awareness on issues with respect to credit cards and debit cards. He has had some influence in causing the government to take real action in terms of the voluntary code for credit cards. In fact, it was endorsed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This was a huge step forward, as was the 21-day grace period that was introduced by the Minister of Finance, and the protection of the debit system, as it currently is in Canada, not moving toward a percentage base but keeping it at a flat fee. These were all excellent decisions made by the Minister of Finance and I think the member would certainly applaud them as being good initiatives.

In terms of the actual recommendations in the report, I would point to a couple of them. Recommendation No. 9, in terms of the Government of Canada promoting financial literacy through federal programs to reach Canadians directly such as employment insurance, old age security, CPP, universal child care benefits and that the provincial and territorial governments do the same.

A lot of these programs help very low-income Canadians. This recommendation is specifically saying that we need to get information, not only in terms of how to access the benefits but in terms of how best to use those benefits. These are actual issues that impact Canadians very directly.

I would encourage the member to review the recommendations in full because there are some initiatives that have a direct impact at the bread and butter level.

● (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the FCAC, which is a great agency that does provide a lot of the services regarding financial literacy, which this motion hopes to do. I recognize that right up front.

If we look at how things have changed, in good part because of technology, the Internet and so forth, from the days when I was in grade 12 where we would have had a simple economics course. Nowadays there is so much more, as the member has pointed out.

How does the member envision the motion would accommodate the sharing of information or getting it to the different stakeholders? I am looking specifically at the school boards, the provincial governments, possibly the municipal governments and the banking industry. In the member's mind, does the FCAC have a specific role to help facilitate that? How does the member envision that being facilitated?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, the motion actually builds on the excellent work that the FCAC has already done and, in fact, encourages it to do even more, which the FCAC is very much looking forward to doing.

The member is absolutely right in terms of the impact of technology. It is a great benefit for people to do their banking at home or in their office but the decisions they make are all the more important because a single decision could have much more of an impact.

In terms of working with the school boards, the feeling there would be that the FCAC, which has a curriculum developed, would make that available to the provinces, territories and school boards and ask them to implement it as part of their curriculum. Obviously, we cannot mandate that but, from the FCAC's point of view, the provinces have been willing to adopt it.

As well, schools in my community of Edmonton—Leduc are actually bringing in people who have worked in the financial services as mentors and teachers in the classrooms and teaching the students about some of the practical lessons they have learned during their work experience.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, we in the NDP believe that financial literacy is a vital component of any consumer protection regime in Canada. Certainly this motion contains some changes that would help protect Canadian consumers but these recommendations, if accepted, would still only constitute, in our opinion, a small first step.

It is our opinion that the government is not properly addressing consumer protection in general and financial literacy specifically. I am surprised that this motion is even before the House. If the government had a real interest in pursuing these goals, it would not take a private member's motion from a member of the governing party to call the government to action.

It is clear at this point that the entire process of the Minister of Finance implementing the financial literacy task force is more about spin rather than substance. Since the task force reported back to the minister, we have had two budgets presented to the House and multiple opportunities for stand-alone legislation but instead of focusing on real changes that could help average Canadians, the government has been focused on an agenda that only seems to help well connected insiders.

A clear example of the government's failure to understand the issue of consumer protection is the voluntary code of conduct that the Minister of Finance negotiated with the credit card issuers and the banks behind closed doors. The explicit purpose of the code completely ignores the needs of consumers and vital policies that would have protected consumers are simply non-existent.

An NDP government would ensure that all the rules governing credit cards are mandatory, therefore ensuring that issuers, merchants and consumers all know their rights and responsibilities and ensures that consumers are properly protected.

I will now look at each of the five core pillars of this task force's recommendations in turn. The first pillar is shared responsibility. While consumers certainly have a responsibility toward their own finances, it is important to note that a collective responsibility is not the same as equal responsibility. We can take the global recession that started in 2008. This was commonly blamed on people taking on subprime mortgages. While each individual is responsible for his or her mortgage, it is the framework created by government and

Private Members' Business

industry that allowed this to take place on a huge and destabilizing level.

Government and the wider industry have a greater responsibility because it is they that must maintain the financial system as a whole. That is not to say that consumers should act recklessly, but there needs to be safeguards for the system as a whole.

The second pillar is leadership and collaboration, namely, a national champion who is accountable to the Minister of Finance. It certainly makes sense to have someone who is accountable for these policies but the worry is that this simply adds another layer of bureaucracy to the system. The consumer protection regime in Canada is already spread between multiple agencies and departments, and adding this national champion could simply make the current system even more complex.

As well, this champion needs to be a champion for consumers, not a champion for the banking industry's desires. It would be all too easy to appoint a member of the banking community who then simply bows to the industry. Moreover, the government needs to show leadership. As well, trying to switch Canadians from guaranteed defined benefit pension plans to risky defined contribution plans hardly sends the right message to Canadians. Not only is this a bad message for Canadians, Canadians would be much better served in planning their personal finances if they accurately were able to predict their pension payments.

The third pillar is lifelong learning. With the continuing changes in investment vehicles and payment methods, which, in the industry committee, we are studying mobile payments, e-commerce and the differing requirements for Canadians at different points in their lives, lifelong learning is truly important. However, while the report talks of the foundations of lifelong learning, it misses the most important foundation and one that is missed too often, which is that without adequate numeracy and literacy skills, financial literacy education is often and, unfortunately, wasted.

● (1750)

Any long-term effort to improve financial literacy, lifelong learning needs to focus on improving the basic education of Canadian children, as well as ensuring Canadian adults have access to courses to improve their numeracy and literacy skills throughout their lives, otherwise, specific financial literacy curriculums are wasted. One of the things that we are also speaking to in the industry committee is that we have a need for financial literacy.

Then comes digital literacy. When those two combine, those who are being affected are those who do not necessarily have the education to understand. We need to ensure that both digital literacy and financial literacy come together on this.

The fourth pillar is delivery and promotion, focusing specifically on public awareness and on a single source website, which is echoed in the article (b) of the motion.

Private Members' Business

Of course, ensuring that there is public awareness of financial literacy programs is an idea that we, as New Democrats, support. However, moving to a new emphasis website for financial literacy could well end up being another level of confusion for Canadians. As my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, there is already the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada website that contains a number of useful tools for consumers. The problem is simply that people do not know where to look when they have consumer or financial issues. Sometimes they go to the FCAC website, the Office of Consumer Affairs website or the *Canadian Consumer Handbook*.

Adding a financial literacy website on top of this patchwork may not actually help consumers find information. We need to ensure that consumers have all the information they need in one place, not separated by what can appear to average Canadians as somewhat arbitrary departmental jurisdictions.

The final pillar is accountability, specifically to Parliament through an annual report, as well as requiring financial institutions to make their financial commitments to financial literacy projects public. It, of course, makes sense to monitor the outcomes of such a program but, as always, we need to ensure that the monitoring techniques are objective and rigorous to ensure they are not open to political manipulation.

As we can see from these pillars, there are obviously a number of shortcomings if we accept this report as the final step in achieving financial literacy in Canada. However, the small step is better than doing nothing.

I can assure members that I, as the NDP consumer protection critic, will continue to hold the government to account on the issue of financial literacy. We need to be a world leader in this area. We will continue to push for a complete model of financial literacy, which includes ensuring that the specific needs of low-income Canadians are met, improving basic numeracy and literacy skills of all Canadians and providing a level of CPP to ensure that Canadians can properly plan for their futures.

The motion would not meet all of the requirements for a full financial literacy program but it is a start.

•(1755)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise this evening to speak in support of Motion No. 269, financial literacy, from the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

I commend the member for recognizing the importance of this issue as a priority for the federal government; however, I would say that it is somewhat inconsistent with the Conservatives' decision to, first of all, cancel all the agreements on early learning and child care with the provinces, because one of the most important areas of literacy happens to be establishing a strong foundation for learning at the very earliest stages. Early learning and child care are fundamental in that regard.

It is also inconsistent in some ways with the Conservatives' decision to cut funding for adult literacy programs, which was one of its first decisions as government.

That being the case, I do commend the hon. member for his recognition of the importance of financial literacy. I would note that

he is encouraging a great deal of work in areas that are often considered to be provincial jurisdiction.

I would say that encouraging greater co-operation with the provinces and territories and working together with the provinces and territories in areas of shared interest is a good approach. It in no way, shape or form diminishes our respect for provincial jurisdictions; in fact, I would say to the hon. member that he is demonstrating a level of pragmatism that is atypical of some of his brothers and colleagues when it comes to working co-operatively with the provincial governments.

The report does recommend that:

all provincial and territorial governments integrate financial literacy into the formal education system...

and

that all provincial and territorial governments provide financial literacy professional development opportunities for teachers

and

that the Government of Canada, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments, integrate a financial literacy component into the Canada Student Loans Program...

and

that the federal, provincial and territorial governments help Canadians maximize the financial benefit from government programs for which they are eligible...

I could go on about ensuring greater simplicity and clarity in the way programs are written and structured.

One helpful thing would be for the Conservatives to design their programs so that they would offer help to those Canadians in the greatest need. One constructive suggestion I have for the Conservatives is to look at some of the non-refundable tax credits they are offering for children's activities, for caregivers taking care of loved ones in the home and for volunteer firefighters.

Unfortunately, these tax credits are non-refundable; as such, they do not benefit the low-income Canadians who need the help the most. I would argue that it would be important, as part of financial literacy, for the government itself to have programs that are literate in terms of actually meeting the severe needs in many Canadian families. Clearly, simply understanding that lower-income families need help the most would instruct and hopefully educate the Conservatives as to the importance of making these benefits refundable.

Some of this work is already ongoing. As many members of the House know, the month of November is already financial literacy month. The site is sponsored by the Government of Canada's own financial consumer agency. There is a national calendar of events on the website.

Private Members' Business

For instance, on November 1 in my own riding of Kings—Hants, the workshop called “financially fit for the holidays” was held in Kentville at the Kings Regional Development Agency boardroom. This event was hosted by Credit Counselling Services of Atlantic Canada, a non-profit organization that provides confidential credit and debt repayment counselling services.

There is a growing need for credit counselling services across the country. The reality is that under the Conservative government, we have seen household debt soar to record highs; in fact, a new record was set in the last quarter: the average Canadian now owes \$1.51 for every \$1 of annual income.

● (1800)

A number of factors have contributed to this ballooning of household debt. Unemployment is part of the problem. A lot of Canadians have seen their full-time jobs disappear and be replaced with part-time work. According to Statistics Canada, there are now 578,500 fewer full-time jobs than there were in Canada in August 2008.

At the same time, the cost of living has gone up. Prices have gone up. It costs more for people to feed their families or heat their homes today, so many of them have turned to credit to try to make ends meet. They are worried today about their ability to pay their bills at current interest rates and terrified to think of what will happen to them as rates in the future will inevitably move up.

There is much discussion in Canada about rising housing prices. One of the reasons Canadians have taken on more debt is an overheated housing market in many Canadian cities and markets. One of the first actions taken by the current finance minister was to throw out some of the prudent rules for residential mortgages that were put in place by the previous Liberal government.

The Conservatives actually followed the lead of the Americans and introduced 40-year mortgages with zero down payment. I do not think that sent a very good message to Canadians, and it did not reflect sound principles of financial literacy from the government at that time. They have since done an almost complete reversal on those mortgage rules, and that is a good thing. They have scaled back the amortization period from 40 to 35 and then to 30 years, while reinstating the minimum 5% down payment that the Liberal government had in place.

Some international economic commentary suggests that Canada does have a housing bubble in certain markets. *The Economist* magazine has opined on this, and when Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times* of London was in Ottawa earlier this fall, he said that despite what Canada's finance officials are saying, in fact there is a statistical housing bubble in Canada.

There are issues around retirement. The TD Bank recently published a report entitled “Canada's Aging Household Debt Burden”. The report has some startling revelations. It states:

The bigger surprise is that older Canadians have been growing their debt-loads at a considerably faster rate than their younger counterparts.

In Canada, average debt loads in the past 10 years have increased twice as fast as income, but the rate is three times as fast for older Canadians, and many older Canadians simply cannot afford to retire. That is important.

It is also important to recognize the leadership provided by some international organizations in this area. The World Economic Forum has set up a task force under their YGL, Young Global Leaders, organization entitled “Learn Money”. It is focused on promoting access to financial literacy programs around the world. In fact, I would very much like to speak to the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc about this to see if there are ways that we can potentially incorporate some of those ideas here in Canada and plug in nationally to what the World Economic Forum is doing.

World Economic Forum YGL member John Hope Bryant serves as an adviser on financial literacy to the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council and has also served as vice-chairman of the U.S. President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy. He argues that following the global economic crisis, financial literacy is the new civil rights issue in the United States, and has said that:

To not understand the language of money, financial literacy, and to not have a mainstream bank account (or credit union account) in the 21st century, clearly an economic age, is to be an economic slave.

In fact, he is saying that financial literacy is an issue of rights. Equality of opportunity is something we all take seriously as a rights issue, and clearly financial literacy and access to financial literacy education are fundamental to equality of opportunity. Whether it is helping Canadians to buy a house, manage their debt or save for retirement, there is a clear need for greater financial literacy in Canada.

We also know it is important that Canadians set aside enough to retire on, and there is a real question as to whether Canadians have been and are setting aside enough to retire on.

● (1805)

Even if they make that important step, where do they invest? It is a very complicated and complex investment decision. This is one of the reasons that opening up the CPP to a voluntary supplemental CPP would give Canadians access to a low-cost, well-diversified financial opportunity.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I cannot disagree with my colleague from the Liberal Party more, but what I can agree with is this wonderful motion put forward by the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

I want to congratulate this wonderful member for his work, not only on this motion, but for all of the efforts he has made to promote financial literacy. His leadership on this very important file speaks to the record of Parliament over the last decade that he has been here.

Private Members' Business

Since his election in 2000, he has become one of the most respected of all the parliamentarians here. He is one of the members to whom new members often go to for advice. He has served as the chair of the industry committee and is currently the chair of the finance committee. As chair of these committees, he has guided very important studies on a number of issues, ranging from supporting Canada's manufacturing sector to improving Canada's retirement system to ensuring oversight over the credit and debit system, and there is so much more. He has also been at the forefront, just recently, of a cross-country tour to conduct some pre-budget consultations. He has been very active in helping all committee members to listen to Canadians and to allow them to make sure their voices are being heard.

I know that I speak for all members of the finance committee, some of whom are here, when I extend our thanks to the chair of the finance committee for all that he has done this fall during those pre-budget consultations as we travelled across Canada.

We need not just take my word for it; here is what journalist Don Martin had to say about the member from Edmonton—Leduc: “[He] remains highly respected by all sides and is the best committee chair on the Hill”.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Shelly Glover: I have to agree with journalist Don Martin on that one for sure.

Today the member's motion highlights an increasingly important issue for Canadians, financial literacy. With so many new financial products and choices out there today, including complex mortgage and loan forms, different retirement savings plans, the rise of online banking, online payment systems like PayPal, a growing number of debit and credit card options, and so much more, Canadians must ensure that they have the right tools and knowledge to make the best financial decisions for themselves and for their families. So many new and developing products can make it very difficult for Canadians not only to balance their online chequebooks but also to fully understand the risks, the fees, and the consequences of what is available. That is where strong financial literacy comes in as an important part of the solution.

I would like to share a somewhat lengthy commentary from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that really speaks to the importance of this issue, not only at the individual level, but as part of the economy as a whole. I am going to quote this lengthy commentary:

Financial literacy is an important life skill. Canadians make financial decisions throughout their lives, many of which involve significant risks and rewards. Improving financial literacy helps consumers act knowledgeably and with confidence in managing their personal financial affairs. Informed consumer decision-making, in turn, contributes to the maintenance of a well-functioning and stable financial system and a stronger economy.

Simply put, the better one learns to manage one's own finances the better the economy can work as a whole. When people don't do a good job of managing their own finances it can have dire consequences.

Our Conservative government could not agree more. That is why we are supporting today's motion and its call to continue the work we have done to improve financial literacy here in Canada.

A big part of that work is something we started in 2009 as part of Canada's economic action plan, when we announced the establish-

ment of a task force on financial literacy to make recommendations to create a cohesive national strategy. Over the next few years that task force, headed by Don Stewart, went across Canada to hold open public hearings to hear first-hand from Canadians on this issue.

Thanks to the great feedback the task force received from that consultation, and other research it conducted, it produced a final report called “Canadians and Their Money: Building a brighter financial future”, which was publicly released this past February. That report outlined 30 key recommendations to improve the financial literacy of Canadians, including many referenced in today's motion. I would strongly encourage all Canadians watching at home to visit the website at www.financialliteracyincanada.com to learn more about the work that the task force did and to review the very detailed research it produced, including its report.

● (1810)

The task force report was extremely well received. For example, Social and Enterprise Development Innovations, which is a major Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to helping low income Canadians, applauded the report. It said:

We commend the federal government for recognizing the critical importance of financial literacy. We also commend the diligent and thorough work of the Task Force members, who engaged Canadians in every province and territory in building a much-needed national strategy on financial literacy. There is no better time for government to take the lead in helping Canadians increase their knowledge and skills to manage everyday finances.

As a first step, and as committed to in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will move forward on the first ever financial literacy leader to promote and improve financial literacy in Canada. We are doing even more. We are also providing \$3 million a year in new funding to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada to support financial literacy initiatives to help consumers make the best financial decisions to suit their and their families' particular needs.

I am going to take a moment to echo the comments made by the member for Edmonton—Leduc with regard to the FCAC. Its efforts have been tireless in trying to promote financial literacy, particularly among our youth. I commend the member for disclosing to Canadians how they can reach this information, how they can learn from the FCAC by visiting its website.

Today's motion encourages our government to stay focused on this important issue and implement the recommendations of the task force, and we appreciate that.

Private Members' Business

Only a few weeks ago, the Minister of Finance attended, along with the member for Edmonton—Leduc, a kickoff event for Financial Literacy Month. This is an initiative developed by the Financial Literacy Action Group, a group of seven non-profit organizations all devoted to working to improve financial literacy in communities across Canada. By supporting today's motion, especially by Parliament endorsing Financial Literacy Month, we are showing our appreciation for the group's work and efforts. This is something our American neighbours have already done through a bipartisan resolution unanimously passed in Congress, which hopefully we can replicate here in the House of Commons.

Our Conservative government has been working hard since 2006 to make financial services products more transparent and consumer friendly. We believe Canadians should not need a magnifying glass or a dictionary to read a credit card statement or application. They should not need a lawyer or an economist to understand them.

That is why we have taken measures like protecting consumers with new credit card rules that will require consent for credit limit increases, a minimum 21-day grace period on new purchases, full disclosure for consumers, and that will limit other anti-consumer business practices. We are banning negative option billing for financial products, and of course, shortening the cheque holding period.

In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan we want to build on that record with more consumer friendly measures, such as banning unsolicited credit card checks and moving to protect consumers of prepaid cards.

I thank the member for Edmonton—Leduc for today's motion and his commitment to improving financial literacy.

Other members across the way have stated very clearly how they intend to vote on this matter. I encourage members of the NDP and the Liberal Party to think very hard when they stand to vote, hopefully in favour of this motion.

The member for Edmonton—Leduc has worked hard on this measure for many years. This is a measure that Canadians across the country have asked for and need. As a mother of five, I can assure the House that I want my children to learn from this. I applaud the member for Edmonton—Leduc for moving this motion, for helping me to educate my children, and for helping other Canadians to educate their children. I hope the NDP and Liberal members will support that effort.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking for 10 minutes about a very interesting subject and a person whom I greatly respect. We can have good discussions and clear and differing opinions, but the member for Edmonton—Leduc is one of the people I most enjoy talking to. In terms of his knowledge, he holds a position for which he is eminently qualified.

He has never made a major error of interpretation. He has never put on airs. I watched him speaking with all the witnesses and he always spoke to them with kindness. He has all the personal and intellectual qualities to hold an important financial position. My

opinion of him is the same as that of the member for Saint Boniface. For once we at least have something in common.

As for the member for Edmonton—Leduc's bill, it is a step in the right direction. We have no complaints. We must support his plan to ensure that all consumers and Canadians are better educated and better prepared to deal with all the new financial products, which are numerous and complex. I would remind members of the unfortunate commercial paper crisis. Even the CEO of Scotiabank said that he would not have anything to do with it because he was not familiar with the product. He did not have the qualifications to understand how these speculative instruments were structured. He said that they were so complex that he was ordering his bank not to touch them.

Think of all those who bought commercial paper and were told that the return was strong, that it was the best possible return. All these people suffered major losses. That is what needs to be corrected. We must ensure that people are not totally overwhelmed when they face important economic decisions related to their savings, their future, their pension, the division of matrimonial property, the management of inherited assets, not to mention the choice in comprehensive insurance. Currently, there are too many products available to Canadians, and they are also extremely complex. They are often written in a language that one must already be familiar with. One must be knowledgeable, be quite familiar with this industry and understand the legal terminology that is used.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc tells us that people should be better prepared to face difficulties and complexities and that they should be sure to deal with individuals who will not rob them. Unfortunately, in recent years, we have seen many people put their trust in individuals and businesses that literally made fun of them and took all their savings. We must ensure that such events do not happen again.

While this initiative is a worthwhile first step, we should ensure that it is not the only step. There is a path to follow and that path must be followed to the very end. We must not take only that first step. We must go all the way and ensure that people not only understand what an insurance policy is all about, but also know what recourse they have against an insurance company that does not live up to its undertakings. People must also be able to protect themselves against practices that may be legal and honest but that may cost them much more than anticipated, in the case of credit cards.

Private Members' Business

•(1820)

This is one of the things we should perhaps be aiming for so that people are better able to stand up to big organizations. Two cases in particular come to mind: Nortel and AbitibiBowater. People had put their savings in group pension funds. They thought everything was fine, everything was going well. Still, they did keep watch to some extent, but it was not enough to stop their pension funds from going bankrupt. Those people found themselves with extremely large reductions in their pension plan. When you lose 40% of your main source of income, it means not replacing windows that year or cancelling the little trip south you wanted to go on with the family. You have to give that up. Quite often, it is sad, because time passes and if people cannot do something that year, they will never do it again.

On that point, the member for Edmonton—Leduc does not go far enough. While, with the great honesty he is known for, he says openly and clearly what road we have to take, the motor in his car is not strong enough to get very far. That is our criticism of him and it is on that point that we have reservations.

On the essential points, we are pleased with his speech and we find it interesting. It was given by someone whose intellectual integrity cannot be questioned. But what we can stress, and we will do it constantly and strenuously, and we will not cease to point this out, is the fact that not only do people have to know the products they are dealing with, they also have to be well aware of what remedies they may have. We are asking that financial institutions improve the information about their products. They must also inform people with a certain degree of transparency. They have to tell people that they have had a lot of problems in this regard in the past. They lend to individuals who, too often, because of the risk, are pushed into bankruptcy later.

That information is important. Institutions give out unsolicited credit cards, especially to young people, or press people into getting credit cards. They are offered a credit card at the entrance to a department store. They are told to sign and they will be sent a credit card with a \$2,500 line of credit. That does not enable people to be well informed about all of the obligations they are incurring. There needs to be more oversight of the use of credit and financial planning for the future. People have to be more willing to receive that information, and it must be good information. We have to make sure that this information is accessible to everyone when they need it, that it is not just a matter of urging people to be customers, but also to be informed consumers.

I encourage people, and especially the member for Edmonton—Leduc, to keep going down this very fine road.

•(1825)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to the private member's motion, Motion No. 269, which is sponsored by the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

Before speaking to today's motion, let me recognize the good work that the member has done. I do not think I have any other

quotes from Don Martin, but certainly as a member of Parliament since 2009 and in his current capacity as chair of the finance committee, we all respect the great leadership that he shows.

The motion before us today recommends that the government improve financial literacy in Canada by responding to the recommendations of the task force on financial literacy; creating, promoting and continuously upgrading a single source website for financial literacy to increase public awareness and ease access to information for Canadians; requiring federally regulated financial institutions to publicly disclose their contributions to financial literacy initiatives; ensuring the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada works with willing provinces and territories to promote financial literacy to youth through the educational system; and designating November as financial literacy month.

I have to stop for just a minute to say that when I was in Grade 9, I took an elective course in high school, which I remember to this day. It was optional Terry Toller consumer education. He taught us how to do our tax returns. He taught us about stocks. He taught us many things in that class in Grade 9. I am forever thankful for the advice and the educational program that I received. It is still a really important and valuable tool. So, to the degree that schools pick up this opportunity, it is going to be incredibly important.

Certainly, we live in an increasingly complex financial world of investment and credit products whose characteristics and risks have become much more difficult to comprehend. Financial products available to Canadians continue to rapidly expand and the complexity of such products can make it difficult for most of us to fully comprehend the risks, the fees, and the potential returns.

In Canada's economic action plan, or budget 2009, our Conservative government outlined key steps to protect consumers with regard to financial services and products.

First, the government enhanced consumer protection measures dealing with credit cards and mortgage insurance.

Second, and very important for the purposes of today's discussion, we established the task force on financial literacy to make recommendations to create a cohesive national strategy to improve financial literacy in Canada. The task force delivered its final report on February 9, 2011, entitled "Canadians and Their Money: Building a brighter financial future".

The report, which is available online for public viewing, outlined 30 recommendations to improve the financial literacy of Canadians. The report was very well-received by Canadians. Indeed, here is what the non-profit Canadian organization ABC Life Literacy had to say about the task force's report:

Every Canadian should have the literacy skills they need to live a fully engaged life. The Task Force has strongly encouraged that financial literacy be recognized as an important life skill to help Canadians thrive in workplaces, homes and communities.

The report, like our government, acknowledged that improving financial literacy helps consumers make knowledgeable and confident decisions toward achieving their financial goals.

At the same time, through Canada's economic action plan, our Conservative government has strengthened Canada's financial system and protected Canadians' hard-earned savings.

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member. She will have six minutes when this motion returns on the order paper.

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

DISABILITY INSURANCE

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have tried to get answers from the government on the Canada pension plan disability program many times. The summative evaluation of the program released at the end of the summer revealed some worrisome facts.

According to the report, disabled persons are among the least fortunate in Canada. Compared to the rest of the Canadian population, they are more likely to be unemployed, they are more likely to live below the poverty line and they are often unable to pay for their basic needs such as clothing and food. Canada's food banks have recently reported that a growing number of people who receive disability benefits are using their services. This is truly unacceptable.

I would like to quote one particularly shocking passage:

The study finds that, compared to the 48% of all beneficiaries who started receiving CPPD pension between 1993 and 2004 and whose family income was below the Low Income Cut Off two years after CPPD started, the following subgroups were more likely to be in this situation: those who had mental disorders (55%), those who developed a disability before the age of 34 (68%), those who were separated or divorced (63%), and single parents (73%).

These figures are unacceptable.

The evaluation also gives some troubling statistics. More than half of the applications are denied. Half of the applicants denied still have no employment income after three years. This indicates that these people are truly unable to work because of their disability. They tried unsuccessfully to obtain support from this government and they now live without support, ignored and forgotten. Even worse, the appeal process for the old age security and Canada pension plan programs has become more complex and can take months, even years. The Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals is backlogged because it is receiving more and more review applications while the government continues to cut its budget.

What I find even more insulting is that this government also cancelled the long form census and the participation and activity limitation survey, the only survey that collected information about people living with functional limitations in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

The message that this government is sending to the disabled is clear: no help, no support, no improvement of programs. If it stops counting people living with functional limitations, how can this government create better policies? It is inconceivable that Canada, a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is acting this way.

This report offered the government the opportunity to work at making real improvements to the Canada pension plan disability program. Unfortunately, the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development chose to set the report aside and make empty promises that it would do more research at a later time. We do not need any more studies. The facts laid out in the summative evaluation provide enough information to take action. We need to take action.

When will this government realize that there is a serious lack of support for people with functional limitations? And will it commit to improving the lives of more than 4 million Canadians?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Montcalm for raising this important issue in regard to the Canada pension plan disability benefit.

First, I would like to point out that the province of Quebec has its own pension plan, known in French as Le Régime de rentes du Québec, which is very similar to the Canada pension plan and has a similar disability pension. If one of my colleague's constituents is deemed to be disabled, he or she would be entitled to benefits under the Quebec pension plan, not the Canada pension plan disability benefit.

That being said, let me point out that no government has done more to support Canadians with disabilities than our Conservative government. For example, we signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and we introduced the disability savings plan along with several other measures to help these people and their families.

The opposition parties have a shameful record of consistently voting against these things that help Canadians with disabilities. The NDP has actually voted against every single initiative introduced by our government to help those Canadians with disabilities. More than 300,000 Canadians have received disability benefits from the Canada pension plan.

As the hon. member knows, the CPP disability benefit provides basic earnings replacement to Canadian workers who have made sufficient contributions to the plan and cannot work regularly because of a severe or prolonged disability.

Ensuring that Canadians receive the benefits for which they are eligible is a priority for the Government of Canada. The CPP disability benefit is certainly the largest federal income security program for working age persons with disabilities and Canada's largest public disability insurance program.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, to fully understand what is out there to help Canadians with disabilities, we have to look at the bigger picture. The CPP disability benefit should not be considered in isolation. It is only one element of a broader social safety net that supports working age Canadians with disabilities.

Let me give hon. members a few examples of this broader safety net. EI sickness benefits provide temporary income support to ensure workers who need to take time off to recover from an illness, injury or quarantine before they return to work, but I have to stress that the Government of Canada is not the sole proprietor of Canada's social safety net. It is a shared responsibility with the provinces, territories and municipalities, all playing extremely important roles.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Manon Perreault: Madam Speaker, to begin, I would simply like to mention that I am well aware of the Quebec pension plan disability benefit. It exists in Quebec, but not across Canada.

The government has yet to implement an action plan to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Signing a document is not enough. We need to move forward and make concrete changes for people with disabilities.

My colleague mentioned that CPP disability benefit payments were not meant to be the sole source of income. Yet that is the case for 12% of recipients. I would like to quote from the evaluation: "CPPD accounted for over 80 percent of the income of beneficiaries with less than \$15,000 income in 2006." Let me say that again: \$15,000. Those figures are powerful. Saying that the CPPD is not meant to be the sole source of income does nothing to improve the situation.

Why is the government not focusing on real solutions instead of shirking its responsibilities?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, every province and territory has income support programs to help its residents with disabilities. For example, in Quebec there is the social solidarity program. This program provides financial assistance to people with very limited capacity for employment.

While municipalities do not provide income support, they offer a variety of services and programs to help their citizens with disabilities, programs such as accessibility, assisted housing and other such programs.

I should also mention the disability benefits offered through employer-sponsored group insurance plans and private coverage held by individuals.

We want to ensure that Canadians with disabilities have financial security and the opportunity to maximize their potential. We are happy to collaborate with other governments at all levels to make that possible.

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, as members know, an NDP motion supported by all parties in the House passed unanimously in June of this year. While I am

pleased that our initiative to end seniors' poverty did have support, I have profound concerns because the government has failed to take the NDP motion into account. It seems that the government is only willing to pay lip service to democracy and the seniors struggling to make ends meet.

The government agenda is clear: go full steam ahead and cut \$11 billion from programs and services Canadians rely upon; underfund important programs; and continue to cater to big business with unaffordable corporate tax cuts.

Seniors represent one of the fastest-growing populations in Canada today. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036. With so many more seniors retiring in the years to come, we need to have social safety nets in place now to avoid dramatic increases in the rate of poverty in the future.

The Conservative government is clearly not preparing for the increased number of seniors in 2036 and those who are seniors today will not benefit as they should from the current budget. The government heralds its increase to the guaranteed income supplement, yet that money is nowhere near enough. The most recent budget would provide \$300 million per year for a small increase to the GIS, \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, but this is less than half of what is needed and less than half of what New Democrats asked for it. It will not even come close to pulling every senior out of poverty.

The government's solution to seniors' poverty and access to resources is to offer tax breaks and trumpet the new horizons program. Both fall far short of what we really need, such as investment in home care, investment in pharmacare, increased access to resources, appropriate and affordable housing and investment in geriatric studies. Investments in our communities and in our families are what are needed, not corporate tax breaks.

Most seniors cannot afford to cash in on the promised tax cuts in the budgets because they do not earn enough. The people who are struggling the most, such as seniors, single mothers and those who have lost their jobs, are the people for whom the government should provide help. The government has an obligation to help. Tax credits are of little use to the unemployed, the working poor and seniors struggling on small pensions because they do not have enough income to qualify.

The new horizons program is the only investment the government is making in our seniors. While promotion of community programs is not a bad thing, there are so many more and much smarter ways to invest tax dollars to ensure our seniors are lifted out of poverty, have access to resources available to them and are able to choose to live where they want. Dignity in retirement should be a right, not a privilege.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government should be prepared to act to lift seniors out of poverty, or will it continue to hide its disgraceful inaction behind meaningless tax breaks and small investments in new horizons?

• (1840)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for London—Fanshawe on the issue of seniors' poverty.

Our government is vigilant on this issue and we truly appreciate the contributions of seniors in building our communities across Canada. A key Government of Canada priority is to help Canadians prepare for and achieve financial security in their later years. The most important support for making this happen is through a public pension system.

Let me underline that the Canada pension plan is a stable, well designed plan that is portable from province to province. The chief actuary of Canada has confirmed that the Canada pension plan is fully sustainable for generations to come. This year Canadians will receive an estimated \$72 billion in benefits through the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement.

Canada's strong public pension system has had great success in reducing poverty among seniors from a rate of 21% in 1980 to 5.2% in 2009. Three years ago we increased the GIS earnings exemption to \$3,500 from \$500. This allowed GIS recipients who chose to work to keep up to an additional \$1,500 in GIS benefits annually.

Budget 2011 also announced other measures to improve the financial security of our most vulnerable seniors and expand opportunities for older Canadians.

Beginning in July 2011, seniors with little or no income other than the OAS pension and the GIS have been receiving additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples per year, the most significant increase for the lowest income seniors in over 25 years. More than 680,000 low-income seniors will benefit from this increase.

OAS benefits, including the GIS, are adjusted accordingly in January, April, July and October to reflect changes in the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index. That way seniors' purchasing power is protected.

The Old Age Security Act contains a guarantee that OAS benefits will not be reduced even when there is a decrease in the Consumer Price Index. In other words, the OAS benefits will never be decreased.

The Government of Canada is providing \$2.3 billion annually in tax relief to seniors and pensioners through pension income splitting and increasing the age credit.

Another initiative that is worth mentioning is our government's recognition of the role of informal caregivers as a complement to Canada's health care system. This is why we introduced the new family caregivers tax credit. It will help provide financial relief for caregivers of infirm, dependent relatives, spouses, common-law partners and children. This will benefit over 500,000 Canadians.

This year we increased the new horizons for seniors program by \$10 million over the next two years, bringing this year's budget to \$45 million. We have also provided \$50 million over two years to extend the targeted initiative for older workers until 2013-14.

Since 2006, the Government of Canada has taken action on many issues important to seniors, whether that be providing \$400 million over two years under budget 2009 for the construction of housing units for low-income seniors, or establishing October 1 as National Seniors Day, or creating the National Seniors Council in 2007 to provide advice to the federal government on matters related to the well-being and quality of life for seniors and, finally, the federal elder abuse initiative which was successfully concluded in March 2011.

The Government of Canada has taken concrete steps to help seniors and will continue to help Canadians prepare for and achieve financial security in their later years.

• (1845)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the CPP is a good plan, but it needs to be reformed and we have seen none of that. In fact, the only response from the government is another private pension scheme.

The member opposite clearly did not hear my question or has chosen not to answer. Tax breaks are not enough. On this side of the House, we did not vote for those tax breaks because they would do nothing to actually lift seniors out of poverty.

Seniors are being forced to use food banks and their retirement savings, if any, have been depleted by this economic downturn. We need real action, not lip service, and we can afford to do it. We have the means available now. We can and we must make investments because no one deserves to be left behind.

The Conservatives talk, but they do not do. It is time to do something for the impoverished seniors of our country. There is no time left. We need action now.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned before, the government has made unprecedented gains with respect to helping seniors, whether that be increasing the GIS, the new horizons seniors program by \$10 million over the next two years, providing \$50 million over the next two years to extend the targeted initiative for older workers until 2013-14, \$400 million over two years in budget 2009 for housing for low-income senior and establishing a national seniors day and the federal elder abuse initiative. These are all things that this government has moved forward on to show its appreciation for seniors.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Government of Canada is taking concrete steps to help seniors, unlike the NDP that has voted against all of these initiatives again and again. We will continue to help Canadians prepare for and achieve financial security in their later years.

AIRLINE SAFETY

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak again on the issue of aviation safety.

On October 18, I asked the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities why we had not seen the government follow up on its commitment to bring on line a full complement of operational inspectors for our aviation industry.

The minister said that I was attacking the integrity of the Transport Canada workers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I was attacking the integrity of the bureaucracy in the government, which in May 2010 promised us, at the transport committee, that it would go through the process of hiring some 98 Transport Canada aviation operational inspectors who were missing at that time.

The sad state is it is worse. There are fewer aviation inspectors now than there were in May 2010. We have actually stepped backward a bit from that point.

I certainly did not attack the integrity of the inspectors, who are working flat out without a full staff. However, the government, which promised to do this and knew these problems were developing in aviation safety for small carriers across the country, in November 2009, when it delayed the implementation of SMS for small carriers, admitted we had a problem in safety in Canada among small carriers.

The crashes that have occurred across northern Canada in the past 12 months all appear to be operational in nature and appear to be the kinds of crashes that are associated with the operation of an aircraft, not mechanical in nature. It certainly sheds some light on what is happening inside our aviation system.

I was transport critic for this party in the last term. The transport critic before me put the same effort into aviation safety. We understand the importance of it to Canada and to the people who have to fly in small planes in conditions that are fast-changing across northern Canada, where climate change has made the weather systems very uncertain.

The situation now is we have 595 positions in aviation safety across the country and only 382 are filled. This is especially noted in the Prairies and northern regions and in the Atlantic regions. These are issues that affect people flying.

What has caused this issue? The issue has been exacerbated by the government, first, pushing the small carriers into SMS. Then when the government removed them from the SMS system, it did not really put back in the system of oversight that was used prior to that.

Now we have a situation where small carriers are not bound by SMS, yet they do not have the oversight, the on-the-ground inspections that small aircraft carriers across the country relied on to keep their safety standards to a high extent, and this is a bad situation.

The simple message for the government is to hire the inspectors, put the system back in order and give the Transport Canada workers the manpower they need to do the job for Canadians across the country.

• (1850)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada has one of the safest air transportation systems in the world, a fact recognized by the International Civil Aviation Organization. During the last decade we have seen a continual decline in the accident rate. In fact, we recently saw the total number of accidents decline to the lowest recorded figure in 10 years. Those are numbers we can be proud of.

Make no mistake though, Transport Canada officials take every accident seriously. Our thoughts go out to those affected by the tragic accidents in the north. We are supporting the Transportation Safety Board in getting to the bottom of those incidents.

To date, Transport Canada has taken several steps in response to the accidents. We have appointed a minister's observer to support the investigation and to keep the department informed of its progress. We are conducting a post-accident review to verify compliance with aviation safety regulations. We are evaluating if there are any issues that need immediate attention. We are reviewing data to determine if these accidents represent a trend when compared to past years.

I appreciate that now more than ever northern air carriers are faced with many unique challenges. Their services are crucial to the livelihood of many and they do excellent work every day to support their communities. Transport Canada has a robust safety program in support of these operators and verifies the safety of their operations.

The implication that our oversight program is weak is false. We dedicate more than 80% of civil aviation safety resources to oversight activities like inspections. Since 2007, our inspector position totals and staff have increased. What is more, our oversight model is based on a risk approach that allocates resources to the areas where they provide maximum safety benefit.

Our surveillance procedures include planned and unplanned inspections to verify compliance with aviation regulations. These inspections involve on-site interviews with staff and reviews of companies' safety practices. Today, in addition to traditional surveillance methods, our inspectors evaluate the safety systems within companies. Companies go beyond meeting traditional checks and balances and ensure that they tailor their safety and their risk management strategies to their operations.

This approach is a global standard and our work has put us ahead of the world. I stand proud that our experiences can be used as a model for other authorities around the world to follow as they implement their safety systems.

• (1855)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Madam Speaker, certainly we can talk about Canada's aviation safety record. We can talk about SMS as being leading edge, but in reality, there is no other country that would institute SMS without proper oversight. This is the question that we have for the government. Why has this not happened?

The Conservatives agreed in 2010 that they would replace and fully complement our operations inspectors across this country, but they have not done that. When it comes to the situation right now in terms of the safety of the travelling public, we can divide it into two groups. Statistically, if we take Canadian aviation as a whole, large carriers that have the internal ability to provide good safety systems are generally safe, but with respect to small carriers, the government agreed in 2009 to back off from SMS with small carriers, and that is where we need the oversight. I wish the government would go ahead with this in a good fashion.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, Canada's aviation safety record is one of the best in the world. We recently saw the total number of incidents decline to the lowest recorded figure in 10 years. When an accident does happen we do take it seriously. Transport Canada is looking closely at the recent accidents that have taken

Adjournment Proceedings

place to which the hon. member has alluded to determine if there are any issues that need to be addressed immediately. However, it is inappropriate to attack our aviation safety program when it has received international recognition as a world leader.

As a result, the department has continued to work with stakeholders in order to preserve the security and the safety of our system to protect Canadians and to keep our planes in the sky.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, November 15, 2011

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Canada—Jordan Economic Growth and Prosperity Act

Mr. Fast.....	3059
Bill C-23. Introduction and first reading.....	3059
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	3059

Canada-Panama Economic Growth and Prosperity Act

Mr. Fast.....	3059
Bill C-24. Introduction and first reading.....	3059
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	3059

Committees of the House

National Defence

Mr. Bezan.....	3059
----------------	------

Employment Insurance Act

Mr. Donnelly.....	3059
Bill C-345. Introduction and first reading.....	3059
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	3059

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lukiwski.....	3059
-------------------	------

Points of Order

Committees of the House

Mr. Van Loan.....	3061
-------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act

Bill C-13. Report stage.....	3063
------------------------------	------

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker.....	3063
------------------	------

Motions in Amendment

Mr. Julian.....	3063
Motion No. 1	3063
Mrs. Glover.....	3064
Mr. Tremblay.....	3064
Mrs. Glover.....	3064
Ms. Quach.....	3066
Mr. Giguère.....	3066
Mr. Pacetti.....	3067
Mr. Chisu.....	3068
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord).....	3069
Mr. Tremblay.....	3069
Mr. Giguère.....	3070
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue).....	3071
Mr. Sweet.....	3071
Ms. Adams.....	3072
Mr. Nicholls.....	3073
Mr. Cuzner.....	3073
Mr. Stewart.....	3073
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord).....	3075
Mr. Rousseau.....	3075

Mr. Nicholls.....	3076
Mr. Toet.....	3076
Mr. Tremblay.....	3077
Ms. May.....	3078
Mr. Wallace.....	3078
Mr. Allen (Welland).....	3078
Mr. Nicholls.....	3080
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord).....	3080
Mr. Miller.....	3080
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue).....	3082
Ms. Murray.....	3082
Mr. Carmichael.....	3082
Ms. Murray.....	3083
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue).....	3084
Mr. Sweet.....	3084
Mr. Casey.....	3084
Mr. Seeback.....	3085
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord).....	3086
Ms. May.....	3086
Mr. Wallace.....	3086
Ms. Quach.....	3087
Mr. Albrecht.....	3088
Mr. Rousseau.....	3088
Mr. Albrecht.....	3088
Mr. Nicholls.....	3090
Mr. Lamoureux.....	3090
Mr. Wallace.....	3090
Mr. Masse.....	3091
Mr. Lamoureux.....	3092
Mr. Albrecht.....	3092
Ms. Quach.....	3092
Mr. Wallace.....	3093
Mr. Adler.....	3093

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cyber Cop Program

Mr. Armstrong.....	3094
--------------------	------

Navy League of Canada

Mr. Stoffer.....	3094
------------------	------

Alex Thomson Royal Canadian Legion Branch

Mrs. Ambler.....	3094
------------------	------

Airline Industry

Mr. Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte).....	3095
--	------

Religious Freedom

Mr. Hiebert.....	3095
------------------	------

Quebec Student Football Championship

Mrs. Day.....	3095
---------------	------

Firearms Registry

Mr. Miller.....	3095
-----------------	------

Violence against Women	
Mrs. Truppe	3095
Louis Taillefer	
Mr. Dusseault	3096
International Trade	
Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	3096
Canadian Auto Workers Local 195	
Mr. Masse	3096
Natural Resources	
Mr. Rathgeber	3096
Cape Breton Island	
Mr. Eyking	3097
Natural Resources	
Mrs. Davidson	3097
The Economy	
Mr. Julian	3097
Canadian Wheat Board	
Mr. Richards	3097

ORAL QUESTIONS

International Trade	
Mrs. Turmel	3097
Mr. Harper	3098
Mrs. Turmel	3098
Mr. Harper	3098
Mrs. Turmel	3098
Mr. Harper	3098
Mr. Allen (Welland)	3098
Mr. Fast	3098
Mr. Rousseau	3098
Mr. Fast	3098
Canadian Wheat Board	
Mr. Goodale	3098
Mr. Harper	3099
International Trade	
Mr. Goodale	3099
Mr. Harper	3099
Mr. Goodale	3099
Mr. Harper	3099
National Defence	
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	3099
Mr. Fantino	3099
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	3099
Mr. Fantino	3099
Mr. Christopherson	3100
Mr. Fantino	3100
Mr. Christopherson	3100
Mr. Fantino	3100
Firearms Registry	
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	3100
Mr. Toews	3100
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	3100

Mr. Toews	3100
Ms. Boivin	3100
Mr. Toews	3100
Champlain Bridge	
Mr. Nicholls	3101
Mr. Lebel	3101
Mr. Nicholls	3101
Mr. Lebel	3101
National Defence	
Mr. Garneau	3101
Mr. Fantino	3101
Mr. McKay	3101
Mr. Fantino	3101
Water Management	
Mr. Scarpaleggia	3101
Mr. Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	3101
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister	
Mr. Angus	3102
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	3102
Mr. Angus	3102
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	3102
Natural Resources	
Mr. Stewart	3102
Mr. Oliver	3102
Ms. Liu	3102
Mr. Oliver	3102
International Trade	
Mr. Holder	3102
Mr. Fast	3103
Service Canada	
Ms. Crowder	3103
Ms. Finley	3103
Ms. Crowder	3103
Ms. Finley	3103
Mr. Patry	3103
Ms. Finley	3103
Mr. Patry	3103
Ms. Finley	3103
The Environment	
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	3103
Mr. Kent	3104
Ms. Murray	3104
Mr. Kent	3104
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	
Ms. Mathysen	3104
Mr. Toews	3104
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	3104
Mr. Toews	3104
Public Safety	
Mr. Norlock	3104
Mr. Toews	3104
Seniors	
Mr. Regan	3105

Mr. Menzies	3105
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency	
Mr. Bevington	3105
Mrs. Aglukkaq	3105
Justice	
Mr. Williamson	3105
Mr. Nicholson	3105
Veterans	
Ms. Papillon	3105
Mr. Blaney	3105
Supplementary Estimates	
Mr. Bellavance	3105
Mr. Baird	3106

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act	
Bill C-13. Report Stage	3106
Mr. Adler	3106
Mr. Simms	3106
Mr. Mai	3106
Mr. Sweet	3107
Mr. Mai	3107
Mr. Fletcher	3108
Ms. May	3108
Mr. Fletcher	3109
Mr. Dusseault	3110
Mr. Lamoureux	3110
Mrs. Glover	3110
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	3111
Mr. Strahl	3112
Mr. Hyer	3112
Mrs. Day	3113
Message from the Senate	
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Stanton)	3113
Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act	
Bill C-13. Report stage	3113
Mr. Tweed	3113
Mr. Hsu	3114
Mr. Caron	3114
Mr. Watson	3115
Ms. Papillon	3115
Mr. Hsu	3116
Mrs. Glover	3116
Mr. Godin	3117

Mr. Strahl	3117
Mrs. Sellah	3119
Mr. Simms	3119
Mrs. Gallant	3119
Mr. Caron	3119
Mr. Nantel	3121
Mrs. Glover	3121
Mr. Godin	3121
Mr. Lizon	3122
Mrs. McLeod	3123
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	3123
Mr. Wallace	3123
Mrs. Day	3123
Mrs. McLeod	3124
Bill C-13—Notice of time allocation motion	
Mr. Van Loan	3125
Report Stage	
Mr. Lamoureux	3125
Mrs. McLeod	3125
Ms. Latendresse	3125
Mr. Kramp	3126
Mr. Simms	3126

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Financial Literacy	
Mr. Rajotte	3126
Motion	3126
Mr. Thibeault	3128
Mr. Lamoureux	3128
Mr. Thibeault	3129
Mr. Brison	3130
Mrs. Glover	3131
Mr. Giguère	3133
Mrs. McLeod	3134

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Disability Insurance	
Ms. Perreault	3135
Ms. Leitch	3135
Seniors	
Ms. Mathysen	3136
Ms. Leitch	3137
Airline Safety	
Mr. Bevington	3138
Mr. Poilievre	3138

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