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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2012 report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons, with an addendum on environmental petitions received between July 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011.

[*Translation*]

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

* * *

[*English*]

REPORTS ON PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of 97 departments and agencies, the 2012-2013 reports on plans and priorities.

* * *

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table two petitions today. The first petition is from over 300 people from southwestern Ontario, primarily the Waterloo region. They are calling upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as a human being by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

SUICIDE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from roughly 100 residents of Waterloo region, Barrie, and Nova Scotia, calling upon Parliament to meet the public health challenges posed by suicide by adopting legislation that would recognize suicide as a public health issue, providing guidelines for suicide prevention, promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange regarding suicide, promoting evidence-based solutions to prevent suicide and its aftermath and finding best practices for the prevention of suicide.

PENSIONS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, with respect to the government's decision to move the age of eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67. This petition asks the government to reconsider that decision and not go down this path in light of the impact it will have on those who work in really challenging environments, particularly those who work in fish plants. Working on a hard concrete surface for 40 or 50 years takes its toll on the body.

The petitioners are asking the government to look at the situation and reconsider this decision, which the petitioners think is not compassionate at all but one that would pose undue hardship on many of those who work in that type of environment.

ABORTION

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first petition is from petitioners in my riding of Burlington and the surrounding area. They call upon the House of Commons to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from hundreds of residents in my riding and the surrounding area. They call upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as a human being by amending section 223 of the Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

Routine Proceedings

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I table a petition with respect to the seniors pension issue. Once again, as my colleague from Atlantic Canada has demonstrated, people and seniors across Canada from coast to coast to coast are very upset with the government for increasing the age of eligibility from 65 to 67.

The petitioners are stating that people should continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and that the government should not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major senior programs, the OAS, the GIS and the CPP.

It is with pleasure that I bring forward this petition today.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 536, 537, 538, 540 and 548.

[Text]

Question No. 536—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (DFO) planned modernization of fisheries management: (a) how many jobs will be lost or relocated due to the move to an online web-based license renewal and payment system; (b) what offices will be affected and where are they located; (c) does the government have a plan in place to assure that every fisher in every fishing community, including those who live in rural areas of the country and may not have access to high-speed internet, will enjoy equal service standards; (d) what is the government's policy to provide for those fishers who do not and will not have any access to the internet; (e) how will services be affected for those fishers who do not and will not have access to the internet; and (f) what is the government's policy to provide for last-minute changes that fishers need to make which they were previously able to make by phone?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), it is estimated that 42 positions will be eliminated as a result of the department's modernization from paper-based to electronic-based systems.

With regard to (b), positions affected are located in Vancouver, Nanaimo and Prince Rupert, BC; Whitehorse, YT; Quebec City, Sept-Îles and Gaspé, QC; Charlottetown, PE; St. George, Moncton, Richibucto and Tracadie-Sheila, NB; Yarmouth, Dartmouth, Sydney and Antigonish, NS; and St. John's, Mount Pearl, Grand Bank, Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Grand Falls-Windsor, NL.

With regard to (c), Fisheries and Oceans Canada is developing a web-based system that will have equal service standards and provide consistent services to harvesters across the country. It will be more efficient and effective and will be available on a 24/7 basis.

With regard to (d) and (e), alternate service delivery procedures are being developed for those who do not and will not have access to the Internet. For example, the web-based system will allow harvesters to delegate licensing responsibility to other persons who have access to the Internet. Where the Internet is not available locally, alternate service delivery procedures will be developed for these situations.

With regard to (f), there will be staff available at local fisheries offices to assist licence holders in exceptional circumstances when needed.

Question No. 537—**Mr. Scott Simms:**

With regard to the proposed Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve: (a) what portions or areas of the former Mealy Mountains National Park Feasibility Study Area are not included within the proposed Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve as described in Appendix 1 to the agreement signed by Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador on February 5, 2010; (b) what are the reasons for the exclusion from the proposed Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve of that portion of the former Study Area which lies generally to the west of the border of the proposed National Park Reserve, between the shoreline of Lake Melville at approximate longitude 59 degrees 30 minutes (59°30') west, south to a point near a tributary of the Kenemou River (said point located approximately at latitude 53 degrees 12 minutes (53°12') north and longitude 59 degrees 33 minutes (59°33') west), and which includes a portion of the Mealy Mountains plateau and the Kenemou River valley; and (c) what is the reason for the exclusion of all other portions or areas referred to in subquestion (a)?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the proposed national park reserve in the Mealy Mountains region of Labrador, with regard to (a), of the original feasibility study area, which was approximately 21,000 square kilometres in size, areas totalling 10,300 square kilometres to the north, east, west and south were not included.

With regard to (b), the portion of the former study area—which lies generally to the west of the border of the proposed national park reserve between the shoreline of Lake Melville and south to a point near a tributary of the Kenemou River, and which includes a portion of the Mealy Mountains plateau and the Kenemou River valley—was excluded because the Province requested a park that was smaller in size. Portions of this area are also under consideration for land selection as part of the proposed Innu land claim agreement.

With regard to (c), the additional reasons for exclusion of other areas are that the Province is establishing a provincial waterway park along the Eagle River of approximately 3,000 square kilometres, and there were approximately 600 square kilometres of land excluded because they were Inuit lands as part of the Inuit land claim agreement.

Question No. 538—**Mr. Scott Simms:**

What is the date, time, location, and nature of all government business conducted by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council from May 18, 2011 to March 15, 2012, not including any activity that would be considered a cabinet confidence?

Hon. Peter Penashue (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada participates in a number of public events, information on which can be found at the following Internet addresses: <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/aia/index.asp?lang=eng&page=media> and <http://search-recherche.gc.ca>, where the term "Peter Penashue" may be searched for.

The minister also participates in cabinet meetings, which are subject to cabinet confidence.

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 540—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With respect to the importation and exportation of fish eggs and embryos since 2008: (a) how many fish eggs or embryos were imported into Canada and what countries did these originate from; and (b) how many fish eggs or embryos were exported from Canada and what countries received eggs or embryos from Canada?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there were 159,008,100 eggs imported into Canada up to December 10, 2011. These eggs originated from the U.S.A., Norway and Iceland. Eggs are reported as fertilized eggs or embryos. There is no record for unfertilized eggs being imported into or exported from Canada. As of December 10, 2011, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency assumed the responsibility for the importation or exportation of live fish and their eggs into or from Canada.

With regard to (b), there has been no requirement for certification of exports to other countries by Fisheries and Oceans Canada officials. However, in cases where Fisheries and Oceans Canada provided health testing to facilities under the Fish Health Protection Regulations, upon request a fish health attestation has been provided for exports to other countries. The number of eggs exported with a fish health attestation from Fisheries and Oceans Canada between 2008 and December 10, 2011, was 16,664,500, to the following countries: Austria, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Iran and Slovenia.

Question No. 548—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to funding decreases at the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) detailed in the 2012-13 Main Estimates: (a) since 2008, what is the purpose, cost and timeframe of all current, ongoing, or completed (i) programs, (ii) commitments, (iii) agreements, (iv) expenditures, related to the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games; and (b) what is the CTC's total annual base budget for years 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 (inclusive), excluding targeted funding for programs such as the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Calgary Stampede, additional stimulus funding such as the Economic Action Plan or any other additional program funding not included in the CTC's annual core budgetary expenditures as outlined in the Main Estimates?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the federal government announced \$26 million in funding over a five-year period for the Canadian Tourism Commission, CTC, to leverage the 2010 Winter Games for Canada.

In the commission's 2010 annual report, pages 15, 16 and 17 outline the programs and activities associated with this funding. Page 41 of the report includes a chart of the available Parliamentary appropriations for the fiscal years 2008-09 through to 2011-12, as estimated.

In addition, \$2.7 million of the 2010 Winter Games funding was received in the fiscal year 2007-08.

The CTC's 2010 annual report is available at the following link: http://en-corporate.canada.travel/sites/default/files/pdf/annual_report_2010.pdf.

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, furthermore, if Nos. 541, 545 and 546 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 541—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

For each year since 2006, how many work place harassment claims have been filed with each (i) department, (ii) agency, (iii) crown corporation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 545—**Mr. Philip Toone:**

With respect to maritime rescue centres: (a) how many requests for assistance were handled by the Quebec City Rescue Centre between 2006 and 2011, broken down by (i) year, (ii) language of response requested, (iii) degree of danger (or classification of incident); (b) what is the current annual call capacity of the Rescue Coordination Centre in Trenton; (c) how many requests for assistance were handled by the Trenton Rescue Coordination Centre between 2006 and 2011, broken down by (i) year, (ii) language of response requested, (iii) degree of danger; (d) how many maritime coordinators are located at the Trenton Rescue Coordination Centre and how many of them are bilingual; (e) what is the annual call capacity of the Halifax Joint Rescue Coordination Centre; (f) how many requests for assistance were handled by the Halifax Joint Rescue Coordination Centre between 2006 and 2011, broken down by (i) year, (ii) language of response requested, (iii) degree of danger; (g) how many maritime coordinators are at the Halifax Joint Rescue Coordination Centre and how many of them are bilingual; and (h) what standards and criteria are used to determine the level of bilingualism of maritime/air coordinators at the rescue coordination centres?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*Question No. 546—**Mr. Guy Caron:**

With regard to meeting requests received from official representatives of the Government of Québec: (a) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Industry; (b) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Industry were accepted; (c) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food; (d) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food were accepted; (e) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages; (f) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages were accepted; (g) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism; (h) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism were accepted; (i) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of the Environment; (j) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of the Environment were accepted; (k) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Finance; (l) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Finance were accepted; (m) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans; (n) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans were accepted; (o) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Health; (p) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Health were accepted; (q) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development; (r) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development were accepted; (s) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; (t) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs were accepted; (u) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Justice; (v) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Justice were accepted; (w) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Public Safety; (x) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Public Safety were accepted; (y) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services; (z) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services were accepted; (aa) how many meeting requests were submitted by official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Transport; and (bb) how many meeting requests from official representatives of the government of Québec to the office of the Minister of Transport were accepted?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

• (1010)

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[Translation]***JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT**

The House resumed from May 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I support the 2012 budget.

[English]

I wholeheartedly support the 2012 budget because it is good for Canada and good for southern Alberta.

The budget was not simply handed down from on high. The opposition and left-wing media do not know what to make of our government, diverse in its membership and truly national in its character. They have never seen such a strong, united party. They cannot understand it.

Since they do not believe that a free group of people can willingly co-operate and believe that people must be told what to do, they assume the only way we could be so united is by means of a heavy-handed leadership. However, Conservatives are united because we believe in what we are doing.

We blindly support the budget because together we helped to develop it, and we did this by counselling with the constituents in our respective ridings because we know who put us in our seats. We know who we represent.

The overwhelming message that I received from my constituents throughout the year was, "Keep on keeping on. Your plan is working. Continue to keep taxes low. Continue to reduce redundant red tape. Continue to facilitate trade among the provinces and continue to open up new markets around the world".

They understood the need for the economic stimulus provided in past budgets, but they also understand that the global economic crisis that still rages in the world today is in fact a debt crisis, and that no one can spend their way out of a debt crisis.

They support our commitment to eliminate the deficit and balance the budget over the medium term. They support our commitment to maintain our vital and cherished social programs and government services and they know that we can do this and still cut government spending. When it comes time to make cuts, the overwhelming message I have been hearing is to reduce government waste.

One good thing about the NDP becoming the official opposition is that it more clearly draws the line in the sand and more clearly defines to Canadians their options in getting to where we want to go.

Government Orders

Conservatives trust the people. We believe that Canadians are generally good, kind-hearted, hard-working, industrious and smart, while the socialist NDP believes that people left to their own devices cannot be trusted. NDP members believe people cannot be trusted to do the right thing, to take care of the poor and needy, to figure out a way to make a living, and they believe that people who do figure it out should be punished for their ingenuity and have the fruits of their labour taxed away. They believe the only people who can be trusted are the people who make up a socialist government. These people must go through some supernatural change, because somehow they become magically pure-hearted and unselfish and, of course, smarter than the collective wisdom of the people working together.

The underlying message of the budget is that we trust Canadians. We trust them, so we listen to them. We trust them, so we let them keep their own money and decide for themselves how to spend it. We trust them, so we cut back on unnecessary overregulation, open up trade with other countries around the world and create a business-friendly environment to unleash the power of Canadian entrepreneurs, who will continue to create wealth and opportunities and increase prosperity for all their fellow Canadians.

Of course, some people have criticized some of the spending reductions; every voice matters, but just because a person or group of people speaks loudly or more often does not mean they speak for all Canadians.

A lot of the complaints come from people who expect to be exempt from the government-wide modest budgetary constraints or expect to maintain more than their fair share of the public pie. It would be nice to have a budget that provides everything for everyone. Socialism promises everyone a loaf of bread, but soon no one has any bread, because the bakers are standing in line for their free loaves.

The Conservative government, along with most Canadians, understands the inescapable truth that everything eventually must be paid for. We cannot get something for nothing. It does not matter how hungry we get or how unfair it seems; if we do not plant potatoes, potatoes will not grow.

Let me turn to some third party comments about the budget. In the *National Post*, David Frum said this:

Under Stephen Harper, Canada can fairly claim to be the best-governed country among advanced democracies in the world. [This year's] federal budget locks up Canada's lead.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the hon. member that it is not permitted to name sitting members in the House, even in a quote.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Madam Speaker, referring to our Prime Minister and his budget, he says:

[His] budgeting is impeccable in its caution. By 2015-2016, Canada will have reduced both spending and debt to pre-recession levels. Nobody else on earth will be able to say anything like that.

The key in balancing the budget is, well, balance. When the crisis hit, the task was to provide just the right amount of economic stimulus: enough to keep the economy going, but not so much that the country's economic crisis slipped into the debt crisis that plagues the eurozone. Now the trick is to reduce the deficit, but at a rate that will not plunge the economy back into recession. This second task is

especially tricky because it requires not only sound judgment but something even rarer in politics: discipline.

There is a famous experiment in which kindergarten kids are presented with a marshmallow. They can eat it right away, but if they wait just 10 minutes, they can have two marshmallows. It is amazing how many kindergarten kids are able to recognize the principle of restraint, the principle that making a small sacrifice now for a big payout later makes sense. The opposition does not seem to share that sense of foresight.

There is no avoiding the fact that if difficult decisions are not made now, even more difficult decisions will be unavoidable later, or, more accurately, they will not be decisions but inescapable consequences, and they will not just be difficult, they will be devastating.

During the several pre-budget consultations I held across my riding, the general consensus was support for this disciplined and balanced approach to managing the country's economy. People also believed that the majority of the deficit reduction savings could and should be found by eliminating waste, duplication and inefficiencies in virtually all government programs.

I am happy to say that 70% of the expected savings come from eliminating government waste, and it is not all cuts. My constituents, along with the majority of Canadians, said that we should invest in economic growth and job creation, research and innovation, infrastructure and development, education and skills. Our budget places a strong emphasis on all of these areas.

Some of our opponents criticize us for focusing so much on the economy. They say that all we care about is money, but then they follow up with a demand that we take somebody else's money to fund their favourite project.

Members may ask why the economy is our priority. It is for two main reasons: first, it is the priority of the vast majority of Canadians. It is their priority for the second reason, which is that in this day and age, things cost money.

We all love our health care system. We love our education system and our roads, libraries and parks. We want to support our veterans, seniors and those who stand in need. We want to live in safe communities and in a safe world. That is why, since we were first elected in 2006, our government has been focused on creating jobs and economic growth. That is why ultimately our goal is to ensure long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

As the Minister of Finance said:

We see a Canada, whose wealth, while immense, will be measured ultimately in the greater happiness and security of its people.

Government Orders

This is a good budget. Because of it and because of our budgets that have preceded it, we can see in the distance every reason to hope. We see young Canadians confident in their future, retired Canadians secure in their senior years, aboriginal Canadians realizing their vast potential and new Canadians strengthening our country as they have done in every generation. We see every region of the country more prosperous than ever in our history. We see Canadian businesses and universities coming up with things that no one has thought of before, leading to new opportunities and a better life for Canadians and for people all around the world. We see Canada for what it is and what it can be: a great, good nation on top of the world, the true north strong and free.

• (1015)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, since the member's speech talked about jobs and how the Conservative proposals are creating more jobs and better prosperity, I would like him to tell me why we have a record number of temporary foreign workers in Canada today.

There are over 300,000 people who have been brought to Canada, many of whom are working in very low-wage jobs in the service sector. One-fifth are in the city of Toronto, which has an unemployment rate of over 8%, and now his government is proposing that they can be paid 15% less than other Canadians. How can undermining Canadian jobs and pay levels be good for Canadian workers?

• (1020)

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Madam Speaker, the reason there is a record number of foreign workers coming into the country is because there is a record number of available jobs.

My colleague referred to the 15% below average of what Canadians are receiving. That is not true. Foreign workers can only receive 15% lower than the average if other Canadians are receiving 15% lower than the average. A lot of people who work 20 or 25 years make a lot more throughout those years of work than someone who is starting out. That changes the average salary. As a result of market conditions, if the majority of Canadians are receiving 15% less than the average wages, then immigrants can receive that as well so that they are not paid more than Canadian workers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I take exception to the member's comments in different ways.

The Government of Canada has done nothing to preserve aerospace jobs in Quebec, Manitoba and Ontario. When Air Canada was in clear violation of the act, the government did nothing to protect those important aviation jobs. The Government of Canada had a choice. It could have taken Air Canada to court in order to preserve those jobs, something that it should have done but chose not to do. Thousands of jobs have been lost. That is one issue that I take exception with when the government talks about jobs.

The second issue is in regard to why the government bundled so much legislation in an attempt to sneak it through the back door by using it in a budget debate. You, in essence, have three years—

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

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Madam Speaker, when the Liberals were in government they voted to send those jobs from the member's province to Quebec.

We believe in the free market system. The markets will go where business is best. We will do all we can to generate thriving conditions in all the provinces with the support of the provinces and the Canadian people.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, based on where my colleague's riding is located, could he tell us the importance of Canada's energy supplies as a trading country to the long-term prosperity of Canada?

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Madam Speaker, the energy sector is not just important for Alberta, as important as it is for Alberta, but it is important for all of Canada. We need to do all that we can to support this industry, and not just support it within Canada but support different ways to export our energy to countries that need it. We need to do all that we can to prevent anything from blocking the way in a safe and responsible manner.

Whether or not we like the energy sector, we all need clean air and clean water, and we understand that fact.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that I am pleased to rise in the House this morning to support the motion of the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park, whom I would like to commend for this motion and for the clear-headed manner in which she has faced the challenges we have encountered since the tabling of this budget.

Obviously, the purpose of Bill C-38 is to implement budget 2012; however, it goes much further than the budget itself. The bill contains not only the measures described in the budget but also many changes that were never announced before. Personally, this does not really surprise me.

The biggest problem is that this bill introduces a series of measures that are not part of the election promises made by the current government and that will decrease the transparency and increase the secrecy of the government. This government is not a very good example of transparency. It has demonstrated that much over the past year, and things are only going to get worse over the next three years.

This bill contains measures that decrease the Auditor General's authority. Must I remind the House that the Auditor General is an independent and reliable source of objective, factual and, above all, non-partisan information that Parliament greatly needs to oversee government spending and activities?

Government Orders

Finally, any decrease in the Auditor General's powers will reduce Parliament's ability to provide oversight and hold the government to account, as mandated by all Quebecers and Canadians. In my opinion, this is a very serious attack. The Auditor General ensures that public money is spent properly. We really have a problem with this. I just cannot understand how the government can assume this power. It is completely beyond me.

The 2012 budget makes ill-advised cuts to services on which a large number of Canadians are very dependent. Yes, I am referring to the old age security program, health care, provincial transfers, environmental assessments, and many other matters.

As I was saying earlier, yesterday, my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, seconded by my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, moved an amendment to the motion. The amendment clearly explains why the House cannot support the 2012 budget implementation bill.

The House cannot support the bill at second reading stage for various reasons. First, this bill considerably weakens the confidence Canadians have in the work of Parliament. I think that is very serious. I think that in the past year, that confidence has been undermined, and it will only diminish further. Now we know why people are cynical about politics and why young people no longer vote.

Second, the bill decreases transparency and erodes fundamental democratic institutions by systematically over-concentrating power in the hands of ministers and the government, which is not good.

Third, it shields the government from criticism about extremely controversial non-budgetary issues by bundling all those issues into an omnibus bill masquerading as a budget bill. It is hard to know where this will end.

Fourth, it also undermines the critical role played by such trusted oversight bodies as the Auditor General of Canada, the CSIS Inspector General and the National Energy Board.

Fifth, it silences institutional checks and balances to the government's ideological agenda.

Finally, something we have been talking about at length and must continue talking about in order to keep the public aware of the situation is that this budget raises the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement from 65 to 67. I do not understand this reckless approach to balancing the budget. A number of experts have said that the money is there, and they have the numbers to back their claims. The easy excuse is that the baby boomers are leaving the workforce, which means more people are retiring, but we have known that since the 1980s. We saw that coming and we are prepared for it.

• (1025)

This budget also includes provisions to gut the federal environmental assessment regime and to overhaul fish habitat protection, for instance, in a way that will adversely affect fragile ecosystems and Canada's environmental sustainability for generations to come.

When I hear the Conservatives talking about the future, I do not understand. They are talking about the future, yet they are

jeopardizing the health of Canadians and abandoning environmental measures. This makes no sense. This budget also calls into question Canada's food inspection system and public health regime by removing critical oversight powers of the Auditor General, who works in conjunction with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

This paves the way for opportunities to privatize a number of essential inspection functions. This will mean, on the one hand, that wealthy people will have the means to eat well and have their food inspected in order to avoid illness, while on the other hand, poor people will not be able to afford decent food and have it inspected. This is just one more aspect of this bill that is completely unacceptable.

Nor does this budget include measures to help the growing number of unemployed workers in Canada. The budget talks about job creation, but when I read the bill, I saw nothing about job creation. All I saw was job cuts. There is a disconnect between those cuts and the talk of job creation. The main thrust of this bill was not mentioned in the budget that the government tabled on March 29.

Throughout this 421-page bill, the government is trying to introduce new measures under the guise of budget implementation. Quebecers and Canadians will not stand for that. Bill C-38 proves once again that Quebecers and Canadians cannot trust the government. It proves once again that the government does not care about what Canadians need.

The government knows that its bill is unacceptable. That is why it has invoked closure once again. Unfortunately, this strategy is turning into a tradition in this Parliament. Still, we are starting to get used to it. It undermines the work of the House, where MPs have an important responsibility to debate bills. Once again, it proves that this government lacks transparency.

I could spend an entire day talking about this completely irresponsible bill, but Quebecers and Canadians are much more intelligent than the government seems to think. I will now talk about the effects that this bill will have on my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, a very rural riding located close to Montreal, Quebec.

First, the attacks on the environment affect all ridings, obviously. At least a third of this bill is dedicated to environmental deregulation. The government is implementing all the measures that it announced, but it is also introducing new measures that it did not announce. Clearly, Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol is of great concern to my constituents and to all Canadians since it will result in a great deal of deregulation. I cannot emphasize this enough: this is yet another example of this government's lack of transparency when it comes to environmental assessments.

Government Orders

The executive director and senior counsel at West Coast Environmental Law said that, by gutting Canada's long-standing environmental laws, the budget bill gives oil and gas companies exactly what they have been asking for—fewer environmental safeguards so they can push through resource megaprojects.

•(1030)

I am out of time. Nevertheless, I think I said everything I wanted to say even though, as I said before, I could talk about this bill all day.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member opposite and at one point in her speech she said we were eliminating the environmental assessment program from the federal system.

One of the obligations we have in this House is to be forthright in the information we are giving Canadians. In reality, what we are doing is committing to a one-project-one-review system, which would give a predictable timeline to prospective projects, so people would know within a reasonable amount of time whether that project could proceed. We are not eliminating the federal system of environmental protection.

In reality, the NDP is opposed to the development of our natural resources. The NDP has called for a moratorium on the oil sands, which would kill hundreds of thousands of jobs, and it is opposed to our nuclear sector, which employs more than 30,000 Canadians in high-paying jobs. It is okay for the NDP to stick to its rigid, ideological opposition to development, but it is not okay for NDP members to misinform Canadians. I would ask the member to clarify her statement that we are eliminating the federal system of environmental protection.

•(1035)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He may have misunderstood what I wanted to say. Once again, he could quite easily look up what I said, word for word, in the blues or on tape. I said that environmental assessment as we know it is being replaced by a new environmental assessment regime. I did not necessarily say that the process was being abolished.

However, I am worried because this new environmental assessment regime does not take into consideration the recommendations put forward by environmental groups and experts. Personally, that is what really worries me.

This is a good example of a process that does not provide Canadians with good information. The experts are not being consulted and organizations working to protect Canada's environment are not being heard.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Parkdale—High Park posed a question in regard to working visas, somewhat implying that the NDP has issues related to working visas. I am curious to know what the NDP's

position is with regard to working visas. Are NDP members saying that the federal government is issuing too many working visas? Would they like to see the number of working visas restricted in some way? Canadians are most interested in issues of that nature because it has a fairly significant impact on the economy. What is the NDP's position on working visas?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Madam Speaker, the topic of this morning's debate is the budget and Bill C-38, the 2012 budget implementation bill. We are not discussing work permits or anything else.

I did mention a number of concerns we have with this budget, especially with regard to the environment and seniors, and also job creation and giving people who receive employment insurance a hand up. We know that the Employment Insurance Act has been undermined in recent years. Although there is talk of job creation, I do not see it in this budget. Those are our concerns this morning.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on the government's move to eliminate the Auditor General's oversight from a dozen agencies and bodies within the government, and on what that says about the Conservatives' lack of transparency as a government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Madam Speaker, of these eliminations, the thing that concerns me the most this morning is the cuts that affect food inspection. Many jobs will be lost in my riding and the health of Canadians is in jeopardy.

All the cuts in this budget are harmful either to the health or the well-being of Canadians. That includes all Quebeckers and the people in my riding. That is what concerns me. I will continue to oppose this budget.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act.

I want to begin by saying how proud I am of our government. I am so pleased to represent the people of Portage—Lisgar in the Conservative government and see the way we have reacted and responded over the last several years to a very tough recession that impacted the entire world. Our government responded with sound and responsible fiscal management, stimulus when it was needed and restraint when it was needed. I am very proud to see this next phase of Canada's economic action plan 2012 and to be able to support Bill C-38.

Government Orders

Our government has been clear that the economy and jobs are our top priority and remain the top priority of this government because they are Canadians' top priority. Several of my hon. colleagues have spoken on this legislation and the importance of taking action to support the economy now and over the long term while keeping taxes low and returning to balanced budgets. I would like to spend a bit of my time today discussing the components of Bill C-38, highlighting our government's commitment to small businesses and job creation for sustainable long-term prosperity.

As well, I want to take a few moments to speak on the parts of this bill that pertain to the public safety of Canada. I am sure that all hon. members in the House agree that jobs and the economy are the top priority for Canadians, and that is why it remains the top priority for this government. This is why we are addressing short-term labour market challenges and meeting long-term market needs.

Small businesses are significant job creators in Canada, and our government recognizes the importance of this as well as the challenges they face. That is why economic action plan 2012 proposes \$205 million to extend the small business hiring credit for one year. This means that a temporary credit of up to \$1,000 will be available to approximately 536,000 employers. In my riding of Portage—Lisgar, as well as across the country, small businesses play an important role in creating jobs and keeping our economy growing, and it is very important that our government continues to support small businesses.

This economic action plan will help further unleash the potential of Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate and thrive in the modern economy, benefiting all Canadians for generations to come. Just last month in my riding of Portage—Lisgar, our government gave a \$2.5 million repayable loan for infrastructure development to Canadian Prairie Garden Puree Products Inc., located in Portage—Lisgar.

I am very proud to announce that this investment will benefit not only local growers and producers but the entire region because it will allow producers to use more of their harvested crops. Many times the crops are odd shapes and sizes and cannot always be used for direct sale, and about 40% of produce is not used. Canadian Prairie Garden Puree makes that produce into a puree and it is able to sell it. It uses an excellent patent program, and I am very proud that our government is able to partner with this company to create jobs and support producers. The loan will allow creation of a number of jobs in the region, while ensuring the company operates more economically and leaves a small environmental footprint.

This project is the first project funded by the agricultural innovation program, an excellent program, which was a \$50 million initiative announced as part of Canada's economic action plan. The agricultural innovation program is part of the government's commitment to help Canadian producers benefit from cutting-edge science and technology. This is what our producers have been asking for. They have asked our government to expand trade but also help with research and development because the best produce in the world is grown right here in Canada. I am proud that our government is responding to the needs of Canadian producers. This program boosts the development and commercialization of innovative new products, technologies and processes for the agricultural sector while

aiding in the sector's ability to secure opportunities in domestic and global markets.

I have mentioned a few examples of how our government is helping sustain a business environment that encourages innovation by supporting financing opportunities for businesses with the potential to become globally competitive, while creating a regulatory environment that promotes competition, business investment and economic growth.

• (1040)

In addition to strengthening our economy and building on our government's strong track record of job creation, Bill C-38 contains some very important provisions that would further enhance our ability to keep our streets and communities safer for all Canadians, while also improving the way government operates.

Bill C-38 contains provisions that would help us crack down on organized crime groups, gang members and other thugs who often earn a major portion of their illegal income by smuggling contraband goods, such as guns and drugs, or by smuggling illegal migrants across our border with the United States.

The relevant provisions would implement the Canada-United States framework agreement on integrated cross-border maritime law enforcement operations, and a key feature of those operations would be authorized, specially-trained and designated Canadian and U.S. law enforcement officers to work together to enforce the law on both sides of our shared border.

This is an excellent pilot project. It shows the great co-operation we have had and continue to have with our partners who are guarding the U.S. border. Again, even in my riding of Portage—Lisgar, I have seen firsthand the wonderful work and the great co-operation that is happening with CBSA as well as the U.S. border officials.

Integrated cross-border law enforcement operations move beyond the existing and traditional co-operative partnership approach to conducting border law enforcement activities. They would involve specially-trained and appointed Canadian and United States law enforcement officers working in integrated teams, transiting back and forth across the border to deal with cross-border criminality while still respecting the sovereignty of both Canada and the United States.

In Canadian territory these teams would enforce Canadian law, and in U.S. territory they would enforce U.S. law, while under the direction and control of a designated officer from the host country. What that means is that organized crime would no longer be able to exploit the border to evade arrest and prosecution. Instead, law enforcement would be able to continue to pursue and arrest criminals, regardless of which side of the border they are on.

Government Orders

This is something Canadians have asked us to do. They want to make sure our borders are secure while, at the same time, we have a strong working relationship with our United States partners. We want to make sure legitimate goods, travel and trade can occur across our borders, but we want to eliminate illegal activity. This is just another fantastic initiative that would strengthen the relationship we already have.

In addition to these measures to protect the safety and security of Canadians, Bill C-38 introduces measures to streamline and improve the way several public safety portfolio agencies operate while, thankfully, eliminating duplication and waste and saving taxpayer dollars.

First and foremost, the legislation before us today would consolidate the responsibility for reviewing the activities of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, into a single arm's-length organization: the Security Intelligence Review Committee, or SIRC. Such a move would save taxpayer dollars while ensuring oversight of CSIS continues. The unique responsibilities of the Office of the Inspector General would now be merged into the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which would continue to report to Parliament on the activities of CSIS.

Bill C-38 would also make changes to the process for conducting certain reviews of conditional release decisions. This would include the elimination of mandatory hearings for reviews of cases following a suspension, revocation or termination of parole or statutory release.

Specifically, Bill C-38 would, in most cases, replace these panel hearings with an administrative file review of decisions where there has been a suspension, revocation or termination of an offender's parole or statutory release.

In these cases, offenders would still be allowed to make written submissions to the Parole Board. The Parole Board would continue to be required to conduct this review through a panel hearing for decisions related to cancellation, and the board would continue to have the discretion to conduct in-person hearings, in any case. What we would, therefore, be doing is maintaining current procedural safeguards while, again, streamlining the way reviews are conducted.

I will conclude by saying, once again, that Canadians have asked this government to respond to the economic crisis responsibly. I ask all members to support this important bill.

• (1045)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, many of my colleagues have pointed out the subterfuge associated with Bill C-38. It is an unprecedented bill in that it goes far beyond any budget implementation bill ever presented in the House of Commons. It seeks to repeal, or change and undermine some 60 or 70 pieces of legislation that are far removed from taxation and spending matters normally found within a federal budget.

One of those pieces of legislation, which I would ask my colleague to comment on, is the federal Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. This was put in place to protect the wages and hours of work for non-union construction workers on construction projects. It recognized the vagaries of the construction industry, with a transient workforce, et cetera. Some standardization of wages was beneficial

in order to take wages out of competition so that contractors would win jobs based on their productivity and competitiveness, not on their ability to find cheaper and cheaper wages.

By throwing this particular act out the window, with the budget implementation bill, the government is undermining and destabilizing the entire construction industry, the largest single employment sector in the country. How does she think it benefits anyone to drive construction workers' wages down by virtue of eliminating the minimum wage laws?

• (1050)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Madam Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member on a number of points that he raised.

First, this budget bill is very common in that it is including many things. We can see when we look at the actual document that it is a huge budget. The bill is doing what Canadians have asked us to do, to get on with the business of the country and get the bill passed.

In regard to workers, different provinces are attracting different workers through their taxation measures. For example, in Manitoba, taxes unfortunately are going up under the provincial NDP government. In my riding of Portage—Lisgar, as well as other places in Manitoba, there is still a need for skilled labour, for workers. In other parts of the country, for example Alberta, they cannot get enough construction workers.

I am very pleased that in our immigration policy we are making a new stream for skilled labour and skilled workers to come to Canada. We are still taking advantage of the domestic labour force that we have, but bringing in skilled workers where they are needed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister was a few years younger, when he was in opposition, he took great exception to the Liberal government bringing in a budget of 20 pages, that possibly affected one or two other bills. Apparently he was quite appalled by it. It was even reported on last night. That was then. Today, we are debating a bill of over 400 pages. There is enough legislation within the bill to justify a three year mandate in terms of its impact on the legislative process.

My question is, what has caused the Prime Minister to have this change in attitude? It was not acceptable to have a minor change in the Liberal government. Now, with his majority government, he feels he has the mandate to make huge legislative changes through the back door of a budget. What has changed? Why is the Prime Minister—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary. There is a minute left.

Government Orders

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Madam Speaker, speaking of mandates, Canadians gave our government a mandate by giving us a majority government in order to implement the policies that we have presented.

Canadians have appreciated that when we make a promise, we keep the promise. When we say we are going to do something, we do it. For instance, Canada's economic action plan 2012, focusing on long-term prosperity and growth, is something Canadians have asked for. This budget implementation bill needs to take the budget and actually implement it.

It is interesting that the opposition members, within minutes of us presenting the budget, already decided that they were going to vote against it. The Liberals decided they were going to vote against it before they even read it. When we are talking about mandates from the Canadian people, we can see that Canadians did not even give the Liberals a mandate to be the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget implementation bill.

[*English*]

This budget and the act we are discussing today clearly reveal the government's overall plan and priorities. Today, I would like to highlight some of those priorities of particular relevance to B.C.: jobs and growth, resources, the environment, seniors' concerns, and health and fitness for all Canadians.

The recent budget reiterated that the government is committed to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Our government is committed to expanding avenues of trade while responsibly developing our natural resources. Our government is committed to all Canadians, to aboriginal peoples, families, seniors, youth, immigrants and entrepreneurs, from coast to coast to coast.

When Conservatives formed the government in 2006, the focus turned to the strengthening of the Canadian economy, creating employment opportunities and laying the foundations for sustained growth. As a result, our nation has weathered the storms of recession in the past few years better than virtually any developed, democratic country in the world. Many nations look to Canada as the model for creating and maintaining a high degree of financial security. The stable course was set years ago. The current act reflects our Prime Minister's firm, steady hand on the wheel for the next leg of the journey.

For the people of B.C., this budget means jobs. In the coming 12 months, the budget proposes to invest \$67 million in B.C. for labour market training, part of the continuing commitment the government made to Canadians in 2008 to provide new funding every year.

In the riding I represent, the whole North Shore and hundreds of workers at Seaspan Marine Corporation welcomed the news that the company had won an \$8 billion contract to build non-combat vessels for the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard. This budget supports such forward-thinking programs for continuous growth. Thanks to the act, those hundreds of workers at Seaspan will soon be joined by hundreds of more skilled tradespeople who will

enjoy the guarantee of employment and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution for many years to come.

Jobs do not materialize out of thin air. They come from plans such as those featured in this act, committed, targeted investments in post-secondary education for our youth, improving access to training for those with disabilities or people returning to the workforce, and adapting our immigration system to keep pace with the speed of business.

This budget lays out ways in which our economy may advance, unfettered by labour shortages or narrow business plans.

In the riding I represent, we appreciate innovative approaches such as the international education strategy receiving ongoing support after its introduction in the 2011 and 2012 budgets. This plan will benefit Quest University, Capilano University, Vancouver Island University and other schools to attract more international students and researchers, translating into a broader knowledge base necessary to compete in the world market.

The act reflects the priority of the government to expand Canada's trade potential by pursuing new markets worldwide. Having negotiated several trade agreements in a few short years, our government is committed to pursuing the Canada-Europe trade agreement which presents abundant opportunities to Canadian business.

We are also committed to the Pacific Rim, led by our dynamic Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway. We are increasing the flow of trade and investment traffic across the Pacific. The riding I represent includes a very active group of Canadians of Asian background, some of whom produced an extraordinary celebration of Asian New Year earlier this year. They highlight the importance of our government and our parliamentarians' relationships with Pacific Rim communities.

For British Columbians, one of the most important aspects of this act is the commitment to develop our abundant resources while maintaining a respectful balance between economic aspirations and environmental stewardship. With a proposed \$54 million over two years towards the major projects management office initiative, significant natural resource projects will unfold with greater efficiency, providing the foundation for employment, not only at the primary but also at the secondary and tertiary levels of the economy.

This is good news for the fisheries advisory group in the riding I come from, where Dave Brown and the group work with me to protect and sustain our marvellous fisheries resource.

The act also puts emphasis on sustaining our environment. There is \$35.7 million proposed over the next two years to further improve the safety regimen for oil tankers and pipelines, to support ongoing environmental studies and to better prepare for emergencies.

Government Orders

•(1055)

This act also proposes an additional \$13.5 million over two years to support the work of the National Energy Board that we may further reduce any risk, with more oil and gas pipeline inspections, moving from 100 to 150 per year, and double the number of annual audits designed to discover and resolve potential issues before they become a concern for Canadians.

These unparalleled safety precautions for oil tankers were recently the subject of an excellent series by the *North Shore Outlook*, a community newspaper serving a region of the riding I represent. *Outlook's* in-depth coverage highlights the great importance of secure transportation for such resources, from both an economic perspective and an environmental perspective. This government's investment in safety reflects a sharing of that priority.

The riding I represent in B.C. is not unlike many others across Canada in that our people are aging as a demographic. Though we appreciate the beauty and wisdom of our seniors, our nation is coming to understand how this fact is affecting our economy, our health care system and our social fabric. That is why the budget and the act take a visionary, necessary step in a potentially controversial direction. The very gradual rise in the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 initially to 67 is a plan for long-term security. This slow and steady change to the OAS program takes some of the fear out of the future, because this change would mean we could enjoy financial support for generations to come. Some day our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will thank us.

As the founder of the 2010 parliamentary fitness initiative, it literally does my heart good, as well as the hearts of millions of Canadians, to know that in this budget and act, our government continues to support important programs such as Participaction. In response to the budget, my friend and fitness advocate Rick Hansen said, "The Government of Canada has been a critical partner in my 25 year journey towards a healthier and more inclusive world, and we are extremely grateful for their continued support."

Health and fitness experts from as far abroad as *The New York Times*, like writers Gretchen Reynolds, to *North Shore News* contributor Shaun Karp, all agree that daily physical activity improves our general level of health and reduces our chances of developing chronic or debilitating disease.

Ms. Reynolds in her recent book, *The First 20 Minutes: Surprising Science Reveals How We Can Exercise Better, Train Smarter, Live Longer*, encourages movement as opposed to exercise, any kind of movement, and she did not even know about the 2010 parliamentary fitness initiative. She stresses that the road to good health is not competitive, strenuous exercise. One does not need to run for miles or work out for hours. One simply needs to move, garden, stroll, take the stairs or park further away from the mall entrance.

For parliamentarians, we should take the opportunity to run or walk on Tuesday mornings and swim on Thursday mornings with our colleagues. In keeping with the government's encouragement of healthier living, I have created two special days here on the Hill. The Inaugural Bike Day on Parliament Hill will be held tomorrow, May

9, and National Life Jacket and Swim Day will occur the following Wednesday, May 16.

Beyond the Hill, the first ever National Health and Fitness Day will happen on the first Saturday in June, June 2. All 12 of the local governments in the riding I represent have resolved to mark National Health and Fitness Day by opening their municipal recreation and sports facilities for free or at a reduced cost to introduce first-time users to the opportunities in their midst and to foster healthier habits for long-term benefits.

Our very active Minister of State for Sport stated recently:

National Health and Fitness Day is a perfect opportunity to remind Canadians of all ages about the importance of physical activity and sport. Whether it's riding your bike, running around a track, or playing on a house league soccer team, the options for maintaining an active lifestyle are endless. As Minister of State for Sport, I encourage all Canadians to join in and celebrate this special day that highlights the importance of physical fitness and healthier, happier communities.

In the final analysis, that is what we are all about: a healthy economy, a healthy climate for jobs and growth, healthy international relationships with many free trade agreements under negotiation, and a healthy stewardship of our environment and our economy for this generation and generations to come. That is why I am proud to support this act. I look forward to the questions of my colleagues.

•(1100)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke of good governance.

I do not believe this bill is a matter of good governance. Take, for example, the fact that this bill repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act.

Instead, the bill talks about measures to protect the pipelines and whatever the oil companies propose. The government is taking money out of other envelopes and using it to fund oil companies and corporations, which should be using their own money to do this work themselves.

Can my colleague explain all this?

•(1105)

Mr. John Weston: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to respond and I want to thank the member opposite for her question.

What people need to understand is that when it comes to the environment and the economy, we do not have to choose one over the other. We must develop our environmental stewardship. We must also inform everyone that Canadians have the best research and innovations in the world in this sector.

[*English*]

That is why it is important for us to dovetail our federal and provincial processes. It ought not be ineffective in order to bring them both together to make our extraction of natural resources more efficient while we become the world's leading stewards of the environment.

Government Orders

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have a quaint saying where I come from, which is that fair wages benefit the whole community. This saying is based on the notion that a consuming middle class is one of the greatest strengths on an economic basis.

It is a mystery to me why we find, within this particular budget implementation bill, the repeal of the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. In all federal government building projects there will now be no requirement to pay fair wages. It used to be that the government would set, not a union scale wage but a prevailing wage somewhere close so there would be fair competition and wages would not be driven down in the construction sector. Who benefits from driving down the fair wages of ordinary working people? Only the merit shop and CLAC will benefit because they are trying to bust the unions in the construction sector.

This bill was put in place to protect non-union employees from being exploited by those who would seek to achieve contracts by finding cheaper labour. There goes the Canadian dream—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must give the hon. member time to respond.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. John Weston: Madam Speaker, it is because I respect my colleague opposite that I must respond with questions of my own.

The member represents a party that wants to drive up taxes. Surely the incentive for our wonderful thriving middle-class in Canada is that taxes have been reduced and that there is hope in the future because of the free trade that is being encouraged by this government.

The type of environmental processes that we have been talking about throughout this debate would encourage good stewardship of the environment while we produce jobs. We have created 600,000 going on 700,000 jobs since July 2009 and they all reflect a commitment to the economy and to the hope of future Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague could explain how this budget will help natural resource development in his own province.

Mr. John Weston: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

[*English*]

The minister is one of the hardest working MPs in the House, so I am delighted to go shoulder to shoulder with him. He is aware of how British Columbia depends upon the responsible extraction of natural resources for our economy and, therefore, we are proud stewards of our wonderful environment.

I come from the most beautiful place on earth. We care about our environment but we also want to ensure that the provincial and federal arms are working together so that we do not repeat unnecessary steps in the approval of resource projects. We are ensuring that provincial and federal regulators are working together.

That is a big thrust in the bill. I am proud to believe that hundreds of thousands of new jobs will result.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I will not address the budget's assault on environmental protection, including water monitoring; the weakening of food inspection; the government's puzzling decision, in light of its professed monopoly on loyalty to our military, to reduce the number of medical professionals involved in suicide prevention and PTSD monitoring; and its targeting of the CBC, a vehicle for holding all governments, regardless of political stripe, to account through world-class reporting and for facilitating homegrown cultural expression that reflects and strengthens Canadian values and identity. Rather, I will focus on the budget's impact on younger Canadians.

I would not go so far as to say that the budget is an attack on younger Canadians. I will not use that kind of intemperate language. However, I will say that the budget is neglectful of younger Canadians. It fails to consider their legitimate needs and, as a result, it fails to build for the country's future.

Canada needs to excel as a knowledge economy if we wish to prosper in the world of the 21st century. However, the budget does nothing specific to encourage young people to pursue a post-secondary education or otherwise to reduce the financial barriers that prevent some from pursuing such an education.

There is nothing in this budget, like Paul Martin's highly successful cash grant, for those who invest in a registered education savings plan for their children's post-secondary education. As we know, the federal government today contributes \$2 for every \$10 Canadians invest in their children's RESP. Nor do we see the budget introduce a version of the Canadian learning passport.

The Canadian learning passport was an idea in the 2011 Liberal election platform. It was based on the principle that, "if you gets the grades, you get to go". The idea of the passport was to offer all high school students intending to go on to college or university \$1,000 in trust for each year of anticipated post-secondary education up to a maximum of \$4,000 and \$1,500 per year up to a maximum of \$6,000 for students from low-income families.

Now that is smart public policy that would achieve a triple objective: first, supplying our economy with the skilled labour it needs for the 21st century; second, preparing our youth for the jobs of tomorrow; and third, achieving an important measure of social justice by removing barriers to education for all youth, including those from low-income families.

Government Orders

On another matter of importance to Canada's future, we must not ignore the relationship between university scientific research and the education and career success of today's young people. University research produces concrete benefits for student researchers. It provides students with an important practical avenue of intellectual development so they can later make a meaningful contribution to a science-based economy. I noticed in this regard that the budget eliminates a very financially modest but highly successful program in the area of science and engineering research: the research tools and infrastructure program, known as RTI.

RTI provides funding for the purchase and repair of lab equipment of a value of up to \$150,000. This amount is way below the threshold for CFI funding that targets multi-million dollar multi-applicant projects. It is not an exaggeration to say that the RTI program is the lifeblood of most NSERC-funded university research because it provides researchers with a reasonable chance of obtaining the equipment they need to do their work.

As my colleague from Kingston said last week in a question he asked in this House, for research scientists, eliminating the RTI is like sending a carpenter to work without a hammer. Furthermore, a well-known university researcher in Montreal has written to me to say that by the government nixing the RTI, "We will lose staff, we will lose students, we will lose knowledge". I do not know why the government made such a short-sighted decision.

Speaking of opportunities for young people, we must not forget the brutal cancellation of Katimavik. Katimavik provides a unique experience for young people seeking to discover their strengths, skills and independence at a difficult crossroads in their life.

After the announcement of Katimavik's demise, Katie Wheatley, a constituent of mine and a Katimavik alumni, wrote to me with the following testimonial, "Coming out of the Katimavik program has left me with complete bilingualism, invaluable work experience, an incredible sense of accomplishment and empowerment, and a brighter future". What more is there to say?

• (1110)

What leads us to question the government's objectivity in its decision to terminate Katimavik is the fact that the decision is retroactive. It has left candidates already accepted for next year's edition of the program flat-footed, deeply deflated and scrambling to make new plans. One could even say that the decision is, if not legally then morally, tantamount to a breach of contract. This breach of contract carries an air of vindictiveness. It is an open secret that the government pulled the plug on Katimavik mostly because the program was the brainchild of the Trudeau government.

Finally, the change to OAS eligibility will impact on younger Canadians since the change will apply to anyone born after 1958. The generations that will be hit by this change include those whose members' professional careers often took longer to launch than what was the case for previous generations. Many younger Canadians today are struggling with career and income and this change will exacerbate the challenges they face down the line.

The Liberal opposition is four-square against the budget's change to OAS eligibility for other reasons as well. First, various experts

have argued convincingly that raising the age of eligibility to receive OAS is not necessary to sustain the system.

Second, the Liberals believe that many Canadians who have held physically demanding jobs may find it very difficult to work beyond age 65. Many, in fact, will be forced to retire before age 65. An example is nurses.

A constituent, Anna-Mae Barrett, called my office to remind the government that being a nurse is a physically demanding job, with overtime, staff shortages and increasingly longer shifts and yet the government's decision on OAS eligibility appears to ignore this reality.

Third, the OAS provides much needed financial assistance to many would be low-income seniors who would otherwise find themselves below the poverty line.

Fourth, many women who chose to stay at home may not have other pensions to draw on at 65 years of age. This new delay in receiving OAS will prejudice these Canadians and deny them a measure of economic freedom they were counting on.

I would add that I believe it is vital for a healthy democracy that Canadians be able to trust their government. Many Canadians will consider the decision to change the age of eligibility for OAS a betrayal of that trust, especially in light of the commitments made by the Prime Minister during the recent election campaign that a Conservative government would not change retirement benefits. A Liberal government would reverse the change to OAS eligibility, bringing the age at which all Canadians would be eligible to receive this benefit back to 65.

Another Liberal idea that was promoted during the last election campaign is missing from this budget, the idea of a supplemental Canada pension plan. The Canada pension plan is extremely well-managed. It is recognized internationally as a very low-cost, cheap-to-administer program that brings higher rates of return than other large pension plans. Therefore, why not allow Canadians to invest even more in this high return pension system? Why not commit to working with the provinces to devise a pan-Canadian improvement to the CPP-QPP system that would allow Canadians who might have extra money to save for retirement to invest that money with the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board?

Those are the kinds of constructive suggestions that, if included in the budget, might allow the opposition to see things a little differently.

Government Orders

Since my colleague from Papineau is here, I would like to comment on a video I saw recently of the very first televised question period in the House of Commons. The question was from the hon. Joe Clark and the economic situation was quite similar at the time to today. Mr. Clark asked a respectful question of the government about its plan for economic recovery. The prime minister at the time, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, stood and, instead of slamming the opposition and impugning its motives, he said that the Liberals were hoping that the opposition would provide some constructive ideas that the government could include in its plan for economic recovery. That is the kind of openness we need today in our democracy.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about investing in research. The Conservative government, in its somewhat narrow view, is investing almost exclusively in applied research. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the general importance of investing in basic research.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

Yes, we need to invest in applied research, but pure research—theoretical research—is what moves our society forward in the long term. It is that kind of research that incites the world's top researchers to come and work at our universities here in Canada. In turn, those researchers then motivate students from around the globe to come to study and work with them in Canada, and this all contributes to strengthening the research base we need in order to ensure a prosperous economy for the 21st century.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for noting a way that we can work together. We have asked the government to split the bill and to focus on many of the positives that could be in the budget.

The government has done very little when it comes to pensions. Would the hon. member elaborate a bit more on the supplementary Canada pension plan, which was part of the Liberal policies, and why it is so important for Canadians to have that opportunity?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I know my colleague has been working extremely hard and diligently on developing a policy that would properly protect Canadians in retirement.

Many constituents in my riding worked for Nortel. Also some work for Air Canada. The message I get from them all the time is that they are worried. In the case of Nortel, they have taken a major hit in their pension because of that company's bankruptcy. However, some of my constituents work for big companies that are in financial difficulty and they are worried about the future of their pensions.

These Canadians are not looking for another private pension plan in which to invest. They want to invest in something solid that is risk-diversified and that has low administrative fees. By bringing in a supplemental CPP/QPP, we would be providing those people, my

constituents, with an additional opportunity. We would expand choice, and that is a good thing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Madam Speaker, I just received an official request for support from the Beauport women's resource centre, asking that the Women's Health Contribution Program be maintained. This program has existed for 16 years and provides evidence-based facts and vital information on women's health.

This organization and all women's health organizations are asking that this particular program be renewed. I would like to hear the member's thoughts on this.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, this is an important program that the government should neither neglect nor eliminate.

Our society and our economy are extremely complex. If we want progress, we need sound policies, policies based on research and data collection, so that we have a better understanding of the reality we are dealing with. Programs that support data collection and analysis make a positive contribution to society and, in this case, to the well-being of Canadian women.

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour and a privilege for me to speak to this very important budget bill.

I listened to the speech of the member of the Liberal Party. One of the reasons I did not ask him a question was I thought he completely missed the intent of the budget.

Let me just state what is most important about the budget. The budget has certain key points. One of them is to balance the budget. This is the promise we made to the electorate. We have fulfilled this promise by ensuring that our budget will be balanced by the year 2014-15.

How do we balance the budget? It is very simple. We are cutting inefficiencies in the government. That is why the government tasked the committees for the departments to come out with efficiencies so we could operate efficiently, with a reduction of 10% in their expenditures. At the same time, we are ensuring that the regime of doing business and ensuring our core services are maintained. It is very important that we have a sound, economical management of our economy.

I have many facts from economists who state that this budget looks to the future of Canada by ensuring it is on a path to prosperity.

Government Orders

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, this gives me the very rare privilege to travel overseas on behalf of Canada at international conferences. What did I learn from that? A lot of people were asking this one very simple question. During the turmoil taking place in international markets, in the U.S.A., in Europe, everywhere, the question everybody asked was how we managed not to fall into that severe recession. They were very impressed with what was happening with Canada. Our economy is tied to the U.S.A., which is one of the largest economies going through recession. Europe is going through a recession. Yet Canada did not feel the severe effects of the recession. Why? Because the government took proactive steps to ensure that we were insulated from all the aftershocks that took place around the world.

The credit goes to both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for steering the economy during this critical time since 2008 and for creating over 700,000 jobs. In comparison with all the others, we are sitting in a position where we are not feeling the tremors of the international markets that are taking place.

If we leave that to the anti-trade NDP party, we would feel those tremors. If we leave that to the Liberal Party, we do not know where it is going. We had a debate in the House about giving pensions to self-employed. Guess what? The Liberal Party opposed that.

Clearly we need sound financial management, and this government has provided that.

Let us see what happened this weekend in Europe. The elections in Europe will have a tremendous effect because people have voted for more expenditures. The situation Greece faces today will have a national impact. In case my colleagues on the other side did not bother to watch the report on their favourite television channel, the CBC, because Greece's economy has collapsed, its great Olympic athletes will be unable to attend the Olympics.

That is why it is very important to ensure we never get into that situation taking place in Europe or in Greece. In fact, we are quite concerned with what is going on in France. Hopefully, it will address that issue.

● (1125)

In the *Daily Telegraph*, the finance minister said quite clearly, in talking about the crisis in Europe, that Canada was taking care and looking after its own house. This budget is about that. He said that there should not be an IMF bailout for the Europeans. The Europeans have the same ability as Canada to look after their house. They should be doing that and not asking for money from the International Monetary Fund, or from other countries, to bail them out because they do not have their house in order.

We should take lessons from what has gone on in Europe to ensure that those conditions do not exist in Canada. This budget is about that.

Everyone will be debating the budget. We have heard the opposition. Since we have been in government, we always expect the NDP to oppose us. I am quite happy when it does because it means we have done something right.

As for the Liberal Party, when it tried to balance the budget, it dumped all of its expenditures onto the provinces, creating a severe

problem. Then it suddenly said that it had balanced the budget. This government is not going in that direction.

Our government is taking one of the strongest steps by cutting expenditures by 10%. That impacts everyone. That is the way it should go, cutting expenditures and getting our house in order so we live within our means. That is the most important thing. Then when we live within our means, we are able to fund core policies, policies that are very dear to Canadians, such as health care and the Canada pension plan. All of the policies require sound investments. That is what we will do once we move on this path.

By the year 2014-15, we will balance our budget. We will be living within our means without cutting core principal programs. Sure there have been some job losses. Everyone in the world feels a little pain with cuts. However, the economy will remain strong and everyone will be able to readjust and get those jobs back. That is the key element.

As recently as two weeks ago, when I was with my colleague in Trinidad, I talked to its finance minister. He was quite surprised that we had cut government expenditures by 10%. He told his colleagues that a G8 country was cutting expenditures so it could balance its budget and that was something they should learn. That is what Canada is doing. With sound economic management, we are sending the message to other countries around the world to bring their houses in order so the world economic situation can come back to normal and they will not feel threatened with both the uncertainty in Europe as well as the U.S.A.

It is critically important to understand what the budget will do in the long term. The readjustment is fine. At least inefficiencies are being removed. Does the opposition not think we should bring our house in order? Should we not balance the budget? Should we not live within our means and ensure we maintain that? That is the aim of this budget. I hope the opposition will wake up and see that this is the right budget for our country.

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about a visionary budget.

What does that vision have to say about the 100,000 manufacturing jobs lost since 2008? Over 400,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector, and those were good jobs. Because of those job losses, Canada, which is a petroleum exporter, now has to import refined gasoline. That is what things have come to. What does that vision have to say about giving up on wealth creation? There is nothing in the budget about reviving the manufacturing sector, a wealth-creating sector. What does their economic vision have to say about that?

Government Orders

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I am extremely amazed at the question the gentleman asked. Since 2008, a tremendous amount of money in stimulus packages was given to the manufacturing industries in Ontario and Quebec. He can see that. There were stimulus packages that kept us out of the recession. As a matter of fact, for his information, we created 700,000 jobs. It was not for only one portion of the country; it was for the whole country. His leader just talked about the oil sands resource sector in Alberta as if it will not benefit Canada. We work for all of Canada, not just one area of Canada.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary and I worked together on foreign affairs issues, and he has a long experience in these matters. In fact, I had the privilege to travel to Tanzania years ago with my hon. friend, and we went to the high school in Arusha from which he had graduated not so long ago. He is still a young man. That is why I want to ask him a question that is very important to my constituents and the people who live in rural communities across Atlantic Canada.

The issue of seasonal work is a huge problem in my constituency. People work in fish plants, forestry and agriculture, and they depend on an employment insurance system to give them some income support at times of the year when there is no work. I am very worried about some of the proposed changes in this budget around defining what, for example, the compliance elements would be for somebody receiving employment insurance and perhaps having an obligation to travel a great distance to accept employment in some other part of the country or some other part of the same region.

I suspect this is a very insidious thing that the Conservative government may be doing, and I am wondering if my colleague, who comes from Alberta, may be able to reassure the seasonal workers in New Brunswick that they will not be attacked by his government.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, I can tell him in no uncertain terms that we are not going to be attacking seasonal workers. We know there are four seasons in Canada, and we understand the need for seasonal workers. Therefore, seasonal workers play a very critical, important part of the economy. To ignore seasonal workers would derail our vision of long-term prosperity in this budget completely.

It was a great pleasure travelling with my hon. friend and his father, the late hon. Governor General of Canada, but I want to say that eastern Canadians should be thankful for working in the Alberta oil sands and making our country better. We are looking forward to more people from eastern Canada going to Alberta because we live in one country, Canada, while the leader of the NDP talks only about his region. Therefore, yes, we will look after seasonal workers, but we welcome workers from eastern Canada working in the oil sands, contributing to the wealth not only of Alberta but all of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, it gives me no great pleasure today to talk about Bill C-38, given its content.

Over the past few days, many people have expressed outrage over this bill, which is not only the budget implementation bill, but also

an omnibus bill that the papers have described as “mammoth”. This bill contains an assortment of poison pills. Yesterday I slipped up and used a mixed metaphor when I said, “poisoned snakes”. But actually, the government is trying to force a bunch of snakes down our throats. This bill is riddled with poison pills.

I understand the people who say that they are outraged by Bill C-38, and I sympathize with them. However, we cannot say that we are surprised by the way the Conservatives are acting because this is far from the first time that they have introduced a bill full of poison pills. What is more, they have pulled a stunt like this before with another budget implementation bill. You were a member of Parliament at that time, Madam Speaker, and you will surely remember how the government in power, a minority government, introduced a budget implementation bill that, for example, did away with public servants' right to strike, jeopardized pay equity and abolished public financing of political parties.

At that time, the government thought that none of the opposition parties would dare to force an election on the basis of such issues. Yes, the opposition parties took a stand. The Prime Minister at the time had no choice but to prorogue Parliament. Imagine. To avoid being defeated, he undemocratically prorogued Parliament and shut down the House. Once again, this was a major crisis triggered by this government. Thus, we cannot be surprised by the way this government is acting; however, that does not mean that we should not denounce this type of behaviour.

Yesterday, media representatives asked me what the point was, since the Conservatives have a majority and will do whatever they want. Personally, I think that, if the bill were split, as we and the official opposition have already requested, every committee affected by these measures could examine the bills individually. Thus, each committee would not be required to consider a huge bill that is over 400 pages long and affects approximately 70 existing laws, and to push it through as quickly as possible. If we took the time to examine each of the measures, we would have the opportunity to discuss them and to have people testify in committee, which would change things. Canadians and some activist groups can, from time to time, find a way to counter the government's regressive attitude.

As I was saying earlier, there are a number of measures in the implementation bill that have nothing to do with the budget. Some of these measures were a complete surprise, such as the increase in the retirement age from 65 to 67 and changes to the famous Bank Act, on page 340 of Bill C-38, a measure that once again is compelling Quebec to intervene.

Government Orders

Quebec's justice minister, Jean-Marc Fournier, wrote a letter on April 19 to Canada's Minister of Finance, stating that the minister was once again opening the door to a legal battle between Quebec and Ottawa. The budget implementation bill contains a section on banks, which would no longer be subject to Quebec's consumer protection law. Once again, Ottawa knows best, and Quebec's consumer protection law, which is tougher than the federal law, will no longer apply.

I would like to quote part of Minister Fournier's letter in order to show the extent to which the federal government is interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions. This is what Mr. Fournier wrote to the finance minister:

...we wish to inform you of our concerns with respect to your proposal. The federal Parliament cannot decide in a peremptory manner that provincial laws do not apply to a given sector.

That is clear, quite clear, thank you. It slipped under the radar. The Bloc Québécois rose in the House to ask this question when its members finished scouring through this thick bill. The Bloc got its hands on Minister Fournier's letter to the Minister of Finance. It is completely unacceptable that Quebec may be forced to go to court again, as it did recently on bills such as the Senate reform bill and the bill to end the long gun registry. It has come to this.

• (1140)

That is how relations between Ottawa and Quebec, and probably between Ottawa and other provinces, are run. The dispute with Aveos, for example, affects Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec and those provinces have decided to turn to the courts to make the federal government listen to reason. This is no way to manage things. I would like Quebec to become a country so that we can manage our affairs the way we see fit. We would not have this type of problem with this Canadian government that does not listen to reason and always wears blinkers when it comes to the rights and jurisdictions of the provinces, including those of Quebec.

If, like Minister Fournier, who is a federalist Liberal in Quebec City, we are saying that we do not see ourselves reflected in this Canada, then there is a problem. I think that the government has to realize that.

This bill amends the Bank Act. That should be a whole bill unto itself that we could discuss at length ahead of time. Instead this bill is getting lost among a hodgepodge of other measures that have nothing to do with the budget implementation bill.

We are also going to run into problems with regard to food inspection. I was privileged to be a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for a number of years, including during the crisis that was triggered by an incident at an Ontario company where the food inspection process had failed. Unfortunately, 22 people died of listeriosis. We all remember when that happened in 2008. It sent shock waves across Canada and even around the world, because Canada had always had an excellent reputation when it comes to food inspection. We were affected by this type of problem as well.

At the time, the government wanted the companies to handle food inspection themselves. It was not enough for this government to disregard the recommendations in Ms. Weatherill's report; now it has

decided to use this budget implementation bill to reduce the number of inspectors. I think that public health is far more important than any savings that might result from cutting the number of inspectors.

To our great surprise, this has been included in a budget implementation bill. It should be up to the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to examine these issues if the government wants to make any changes to food inspection. It has no business hiding them in Bill C-38.

The bill also includes ridiculous things concerning the Governor General, for instance. The Bloc Québécois strongly believes that the Governor General should pay income tax, just like everyone else in Canada. The government simply replied that, from now on, the Governor General would pay taxes. Then it doubled his salary. This has been included in Bill C-38. His salary is being increased from \$137,500 tax free to \$270,602 and, in the end, the Governor General is going to make more money than he did before. This behaviour is insulting.

This bill also talks about the oil sands. Furthermore, it officially buries the Kyoto protocol. Regarding the oil sands, the budget confirms—as though it needed to—the Conservatives' desire to accelerate the development of the oil sands. For instance, division 1 of part 3 enacts a whole new piece of legislation on environmental protection, whose purpose is to expedite the approval of large projects, particularly those involving oil sands exploitation. Why is this in a budget bill? One has to wonder. It is up to Environment Canada and the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to examine these issues.

There are many other measures like that. It is clear that we formally and strongly oppose Bill C-38, as so many people do. This bill needs to be split so these issues can be examined separately.

• (1145)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member. I have a question regarding environmental assessment. The bill before us is completely and absolutely new.

[*English*]

We have the repeal of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. It was brought in in the early 1990s. It replaced a federal guidelines order that was brought in in 1984. It replaced the federal custom of doing environmental reviews where federal money was involved in a review. Therefore, going back to the 1970s, the federal government has always done an environmental assessment whenever federal money was involved.

As I read this new law, that provision is removed for good. Has my hon. colleague noted that as a deficiency in the so-called new environmental assessment law?

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the leader of the Green Party, for her question.

Government Orders

Indeed, one of the most disgraceful parts of the budget implementation bill is the one that speeds up environmental assessments and allows the federal government to abdicate its responsibilities. This is not only a disgrace but a real scandal.

Every province pays taxes to ensure that the environmental assessment process for development projects is monitored. Now, all of a sudden, not only does the government want to speed up these projects by having less monitoring, but, from now on, it also wants to wash its hands of any responsibility for that monitoring. So the process will be faster and the government will not provide any oversight whatsoever.

This is one of the reasons why we are saying that these parts of the budget implementation bill must be removed and each one sent to the committees involved. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources and the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in particular could examine the bills that pertain to the environment so that people can come and testify about the importance of environmental monitoring of development projects.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know my colleague agrees with me that fair wages benefit the whole community and that no one gains or benefits when we drive down the wages of the middle class, so that they can no longer participate in the economy and purchase basic household items, et cetera.

What is my colleague's view with respect to the Conservatives eliminating, by virtue of Bill C-38, the Fair Wages and Hours of Work Act, which sets minimum standards for the construction industry right across the country? Now it would drive down wages because jobs can be offered at any wage at all. Some non-union contractors could advertise, "Wanted: Carpenters, \$10 an hour", and no one would apply. Then they would phone and get temporary foreign workers in at any price. This is opening the door to reducing the standard of wages and working conditions of all construction workers across the country by virtue of slipping this in without any announcement, any debate or any consultation whatsoever. It is driving down fair wages.

Does my colleague not agree that fair wages benefit the whole community and that undermining working people's wages benefits no one but the Conservatives' rich friends in the construction industry?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg Centre raised a good point. I would like to thank him for pointing that out to people because that is the major problem with this bill. It contains a whole bunch of measures that nobody will ever hear about. In fact, we never heard about them before the bill was introduced.

So many measures have been added to this bill—I call them poison pills—that we have to make sure people are aware of what is looming in front of them, as the member for Winnipeg Centre pointed out. This is a real sword of Damocles for many people.

However, what he just said comes as no surprise. This Conservative government has always had an ideological concept

of the economy. It is all about cheap labour. Here is one example. The member for Beauce, who is now a minister, did nothing when a bicycle manufacturer in his own riding closed its doors. Those people, libertarians certainly, are guided by the philosophy that if one industry shuts down—even if that means 250 or 300 jobs lost—it is no big deal because another will take its place.

Obviously, that is not how we see things. We do not think that the government should jump in feet first whenever something goes wrong with the economy, but there are ways to intervene in order to save jobs.

Do we have to say that our bicycles will have to come from Taiwan or China? No, we can make bicycles here. We can put measures in place to save Canadian jobs and make sure they pay well.

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this morning to deliver remarks on Bill C-38.

First and foremost, before we go into the detail of the bill, I would like to point out a couple of things. I would like to give deserved credit to the Minister of Finance. He has delivered budget after budget and has really, in the early years of our government, reduced taxes to put more dollars in the back pockets of hard-working Canadians, over \$3,000 more for the average family income. In addition, the tax freedom day comes more than 20 days earlier than it did in 2005.

Certainly, in the early years of the government, we have made several initiatives to reduce the tax burden placed on Canadians and, as well, on Canadian corporations to reduce their costs and reinvest those dollars in people, plants and equipment.

In 2008-09, when we were facing severe economic downturn, our Minister of Finance was there to provide stimulus to the Canadian economy to get us through a very difficult time. As we look at where we are today, both in our economy and with our country's finances, we see we are in excellent shape relative to other industrialized developed nations.

Credit should definitely go to the Minister of Finance for putting us in the place we are and also for looking forward, in the near term, to a near balanced budget in 2014-15.

That really lays the context for where we are today and where we will be with budget 2012-13 as it applies to hard-working Canadian families. This budget is a balanced budget in the fact that it remains committed to transfers to the provinces in the form of transfers for health, in addition to social programs. These programs are the fabric of what makes us Canadians and what makes us unique relative to the rest of the world.

In addition to that, we have also made some tough choices to reduce our long-term operating expenses, \$5 billion-plus in long-term ongoing reductions in operating costs, which will really set our country on a foundation of success for many years to come.

As we look to Europe and other developed nations that are facing massive deficits, debts and the fear of reduced credit ratings, we see that Canada remains in the elite position of having the top credit rating, which sets our country up for success in the future.

Government Orders

In addition, we have also made strategic investments for the future in research and development, science and innovation that will continue to push forward and lead our country into the rest of the century.

Getting into Bill C-38, I will highlight a couple of points that I think are good changes, good adjustments. The first one is a change to the registered disability savings program. This was a program that was brought in in 2008. It was tremendously popular, with more than 55,000 new accounts being opened and having dollars invested. In addition to that, our government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the form of grants into the registered disability savings program.

I should just mention that every three years this program is due for renewal and review. In 2011 a review was done and a report was tabled. The changes will be implemented in time. One of the issues that arose with the program is the issue around the disabled person who is actually unable to enter into a contract or is challenged to be competent to enter into a legal contract. This presented an issue.

Many provinces, where the jurisdiction lies for presuming somebody to be competent or not to enter into a contract, brought it into question. Many families were actually having to go the legal route to have a loved one deemed incompetent, which can be expensive and also heart-wrenching for the families.

• (1155)

Some provinces have worked to streamline this process to appoint what they would consider a trusted person, whether it be a spouse, friend, relative, son or daughter. The provinces have taken this initiative to streamline the process for the betterment of the disabled people as well as their family and loved ones.

British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador have all taken this initiative. I think we should tip our cap to them for doing it. My home province of Ontario has not done it to date, and I would encourage the McGuinty government to work hard to get that done so we can speed up the process to get the money into the accounts of these disabled people and set a better course and path for their future.

Another topic I would like to talk about rings true in the riding I represent, Huron—Bruce, which is likely one of the most beautiful ridings in Canada. There is no doubt about that. It has beautiful agriculture, rolling landscapes and Lake Huron. It is two and a half hours from the north to the south of the riding. It is very beautiful. There are streams, rivers and creeks that we all appreciate and use to kayak, canoe, fish or whatever one likes to do. However, one issue that has continued to rear its head for farmers and farm communities is the issue around municipal drains: building, implementing and cleaning out municipal drains.

We can go back a few years and look at all the different groups that would be involved with either cleaning out a municipal drain or building one. Members will remember that we changed the Navigable Waters Protection Act so that Transport Canada would not be involved as it had been in the past. However, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans would be involved as well as conservation authorities, engineers, contractors, drainage inspectors, quite likely the municipal or country roads officials and on and on. Members can

see the litany of people and entities that were involved in either building or cleaning out a drain.

A couple of years ago, our government made adjustments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act so that farmers were no longer required to make a case that their ditch was not a navigable water in which one could take a kayak. That was a positive change that helped farmers. Now it is time to change the Fisheries Act, so we can make adjustments for farmers who are putting in or cleaning out their municipal drains.

This is an important change because when farmers make an investment to buy a piece of land they need to get it drained, if it is not already drained, so they can get their crops in and get the highest possible return on their investment. It is very critical and very important.

Another key point we need to look at in the history of this issue is that about 11 years ago conservation authorities signed agreements with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to streamline this process. In my riding of Huron—Bruce, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority and the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority signed such agreements. This has been refined and revised through the years to the point now where conservation authorities perform 96% of the functions. It only comes in at the very narrowest of areas that DFO is involved and its biologists are utilized. However, this 4% likely creates 99% of the delays and problems with putting a municipal drain in or even getting it cleaned out.

• (1200)

It should also be noted that in our area of Huron—Bruce, most municipal drains run dry around the end of May or the beginning of June. We do not see much water of any magnitude and certainly no aquatic life, no fish, at any point through this time.

This is a good change that is reducing red tape. I know that the farmers in our area are very happy about it, as well as the engineers. Conservation authorities are happy about it because it is taking out a layer that is very cumbersome to the process. I tip my cap to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for making this change and providing support to our farming community.

One last change I would like to talk about has to do with CMHC and the steps we have taken with covered bonds to protect our government and the insurance we provide for people who buy homes and enter into CMHC financing. This change would enable attaching a bond to a security to prevent what we saw in the United States with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. It is certainly a timely and well-received change.

• (1205)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague has plowed deep down into Bill C-38 and realized the broad, sweeping implications that it has, implications that were never announced and about which there has been no consultation or even debate.

Government Orders

One that concerns me very much is the repeal of the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act for the construction industry. It used to be that this particular act maintained some level playing field between the unionized and the non-unionized sectors so that companies would win their jobs based on their merit, productivity, skill and competitiveness.

Now, with the elimination of—

A hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, somebody seems to be yelling at me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering who the member thinks would benefit from driving down construction industry wages, because now, without the protection of this legislation that has been in effect for 75 years, the non-union sector—the merit shop and the CLAC—can pay anybody anything, and a unionized contractor would never be able to win another contract because of the unfair advantage. Then, if nobody answers the call for \$10-an-hour carpenters, they get temporary foreign workers. The government is driving down the middle class's ability to consume, and that is the biggest advantage to our economy. Whose benefit is that?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, my opinion is that the member's form of logic is nonsense. In my riding of Huron—Bruce, Bruce Power has just completed one of the largest infrastructure programs with the refurbishment of two reactors. The member's comments are complete nonsense. The project needed thousands of skilled workers and well-paid workers.

If we go on the Internet today and look up all the companies in Alberta and Saskatchewan and northern British Columbia, we will find tens of thousands of open positions ready to be filled, so this whole idea that somehow there will be reduced wages does not hold any water. It does not make any sense and it is just another example of what we would be faced with if we ever had to have a New Democrat government in Canada. Then we should look out.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, something Canadians are just beginning to understand is that this budget implementation act goes far beyond anything that was in the budget announced by the Minister of Finance. One of the things that I find quite surprising for a government that has been struggling with its lack of transparency around the F-35 fiasco and missing, somehow, \$10 billion in procurement costs is that in this bill, one of the single largest moves to restrict accountability is a broad reduction in the oversight powers of the Auditor General. This bill would eliminate mandatory Auditor General oversight of financial reporting in about a dozen agencies under the government.

I would like to ask the hon. member this: why would you want less transparency and less accountability, when in fact you used to campaign on just the opposite? What happened?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this government is the most transparent government in the history of any government in this country. I will just use one example.

I am a member of the veterans affairs committee. It is this government that brought in the ombudsman for veterans affairs, so we do not need to take any lessons from the NDP on transparency. I would like to bring a point up to the member who just asked the question, because she used to be associated with the CAW. In my riding the CAW has built an industrial wind turbine in Port Elgin that strictly violates the current Green Energy Act.

I would ask the hon. member this: why do you not call up your boss and ask him to get on board and start protecting the people in the communities? There are over 200 homes in Port Elgin that are going to be directly impacted. They are clearly within the 550-metre setback of the Green Energy Act. Call your boss.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I will just remind hon. members to direct their questions and comments through the chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to express the anger and frustration that I and many people in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles feel with the tabling of this budget implementation bill.

Bill C-38, the bill to implement the budget, is a profoundly illegitimate bill. The Prime Minister promised to govern on behalf of all Canadians after the last election. In fact, however, with this budget, we see that the Prime Minister is governing for oil companies and mining companies, not for taxpayers. He is not governing for working people, for families, for seniors, for veterans, for people who are unemployed, for farmers or for people who work in manufacturing industries.

I have also met with Aveos workers in my riding who are worried, because they have been laid off and have no way of supporting their families. They are outraged at the Conservative government's track record since the last election, which amounts to a lot of back-to-work legislation but no support for working people and their families.

When it comes to providing unreasonable subsidies for big business, the government shows no hesitation, but when Canadian workers lose well-paid jobs, there is total silence from this government. We saw the same thing in the case of the Electro-Motive Diesel employees in London, Ontario.

There are other reasons why this budget concerns me, however. It is obvious that the Prime Minister's agenda was not laid out for Canadians. In the last election, the Conservatives were very careful not to tell voters that they would be taking their axe to the Environmental Assessment Act, that they would be going back on Canadians' word on the Kyoto protocol, that they would be cutting employment insurance benefits and services to veterans, and especially that they would be pushing Canadians' retirement age back two years.

How can the government claim to have the consent of the public when it concealed such fundamental aspects of its political agenda from them?

Government Orders

This brings me to another point: the government is adding insult to injury by including a series of provisions in the budget implementation bill that have nothing to do with the budget—provisions relating to the Kyoto protocol, environmental assessment, food safety, the powers of the Auditor General, assisted reproduction, oversight of the intelligence service and protection of fish habitat, to name just a few.

This bill can be described as containing everything but the kitchen sink. It is wholly improper for the government to include these provisions in a catch-all bill in the hope that it can slip them past parliamentarians unnoticed. This approach prevents parliamentarians from exercising the oversight that it is their job to exercise.

A modicum of decency would require that we split the bill to allow the Standing Committee on Finance to study the budget measures and other committees to study the measures contained in Bill C-38. The government refused this reasonable suggestion made by the official opposition. What does it have to hide?

Finally, in addition to short-circuiting Parliament by introducing an omnibus budget bill, the Conservatives have decided to steamroll Bill C-38 through. The government has used its majority to limit debate in the House to seven days.

Imagine. Just seven days to study a 431-page bill with 750 clauses that amend 70 laws. That is unprecedented.

Journalist Manon Corneliis called bill C-38 a mammoth budget. I do not know if she was referring to the size of the bill or the prehistoric nature of the measures it contains, but she is concerned, and with good reason, about how it will affect our democracy. I would like to quote her:

At this rate...the Conservatives will succeed in transforming Parliament into a theatre for political posturing. It will be a shadow of the democratic institution it is meant to be, a place where elected members are supposed to be the voice of the people. What a sorry spectacle.

I commissioned a poll of 100,000 constituents in the riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and I can tell you that the main elements of the Conservative budget do not pass muster.

• (1215)

Some 73% of the population of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles oppose raising the retirement age from 65 to 67, and 60% believe that the spike in the costs of the old age security system will be offset by increased government revenues.

The people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles are not fools. Like the Parliamentary Budget Officer and many economists, they know that the public pension system is viable and capable of dealing with the retirement of all the baby boomers.

In contrast to the provisions of this budget, which will reduce the benefits of thousands of unemployed workers, 50% of the residents of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles are calling for improvements to the employment insurance system. Finally, 75% of the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles condemn the withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol, as the government is proposing in Bill C-38.

This all clearly demonstrates that this budget and the budget implementation bill are completely out of touch with the priorities of the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and that the Prime Minister can

in no way claim to be governing on behalf of the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

What is most shocking about Bill C-38 is that this budget bill does not include any measures for job creation. Indeed, the only employment strategy included is the Conservatives' attempt to placate businesses by eliminating environmental protections. So what if we are jeopardizing our future by destroying the environment?

Bill C-38 is an unprecedented attack on the environment. It gets rid of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, an organization responsible for advising the government on sustainable development. It also repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, which required the federal government to comply with international greenhouse gas reduction targets and to report its progress.

If Bill C-38 is passed, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will be gutted. The public consultation process will be reduced to a rubber-stamping operation to satisfy gas, oil and mining companies. Cabinet will give itself the power to green-light projects even if the agency responsible for environmental assessment recommends that they not go ahead.

This bill gives the government the power to suppress charities, including environmental groups, that are too critical of the government. Bill C-38 is intended to silence the environmental movement.

On May 22, I was proud to be one of 400,000 Quebeckers who marched through the streets of Montreal to protest the backward environmental policies of this Prime Minister and his government. Clause 699, which repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act with no reason or explanation, is buried on page 401 of the bill now before us. That is insulting.

I would also like to take a few minutes to talk about automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement. We know that 135,000 Canadians and 45,000 Quebeckers are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement, but they do not receive it because the government is not doing everything it can to reach them.

To remedy this problem that has been going on for years, I introduced a bill on March 15 to force the government to contact those who are entitled to this supplement. During the budget speech, we learned that the government was considering implementing a proactive enrolment system for old age security benefits and the guaranteed income supplement.

Clause 454 of Bill C-38 states that, from now on:

(3.1) The Minister may, in respect of a person, waive the requirement...for an application for payment of a supplement...if...the Minister is satisfied, based on information available to him or her under this Act, that the person is qualified under this section for the payment of a supplement.

I must say that I am disappointed by the very restrictive wording used. At first glance, it seems very limiting since it implies that Service Canada has to have a file on the people who may be eligible. That does not solve the problem for people whom Service Canada is unaware of but who are known by other departments, such as Revenue Canada or Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Government Orders

In my opinion, the government's measures do not solve the problem of red tape needlessly imposed on those entitled to benefits. It may mean, for example, that the government will continue to require proof of marital status, when Revenue Canada already has that information.

• (1220)

I would like to summarize my ideas. I believe that the government, out of respect for Canadians and democratic institutions, should at least submit Bill C-38 to public debate and let the opposition do its job.

Bill C-38 must be split to allow the appropriate committees to study it. For this reason, and others mentioned in my speech, I strongly oppose Bill C-38.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as I know the hon. member has a huge interest and a lot of expertise in the environment, I will ask her a couple of questions.

The bill would change or repeal almost all of the federal environmental legislation to date. It is a massive deregulation. It would inadequately protect fish and wildlife habitat. It would mean less democracy for environmental decisions. There is hit back against non-profit organizations. It also would weaken the laws to keep Canadians and our communities, our land, air, water, ecosystems and species safe.

Is this the way we should be going in balancing economic and environmental priorities in Canada? What would she and the NDP do to greatly improve the bill and help with these serious concerns?

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of serving with my colleague on the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, so I know he is also familiar with these issues.

When we look at Bill C-38, we know that it would have numerous negative consequences for our fisheries. It would change the rules around fish habitat protection and the deposit of deleterious substances in fish bearing waters.

Having served on the environment committee, it has become clear to me that the government does not have a clear understanding of how biodiversity works. It does not have a clear understanding of the fact that we need to protect species of fish that are not necessarily fish that are exploited by fisheries, because these fish belong to an ecosystem that is interdependent among species. We see that there is not a lot of expertise on the government side on this issue.

We take issue with the fact that the bill would increase ministerial discretion when it comes to our fisheries and would give sweeping powers to the minister to transfer authority to the provinces or other bodies to allow for fisheries management. This is something that is of great concern to my constituents and to Canadians.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent remarks and for her work in the House generally.

I would like to raise with her the issue, which I do not seem to be able to get an answer from the Conservatives on, of accountability.

Many areas in the budget implementation bill have nothing to do with the budget. The environment, of course, is a key piece of that.

However, something that is really troubling Canadians is the changes that would reduce the transparency and accountability of the government, such as the elimination of Auditor General oversight from about a dozen agencies within the federal government. It seems to me that if we want to have clear accountability with an independent financial review, most Canadians look to the Auditor General.

Could the member help us understand why, in her opinion, the federal government is eliminating this clear accountability for Canadians by eliminating the Auditor General's oversight from so many government agencies?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her comments and her question.

I would like to mention some of the organizations affected by these changes. The Auditor General will no longer examine the activities of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board, or the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. These are rather important organizations that look after Canadians' health, food and transportation.

We are very concerned that this government is attempting to undermine the transparency of Parliament. This also prevents us from doing our job, which is to provide oversight. The government is trying to destroy the tools we use to do that.

Bill C-38 disbands the Public Appointments Commission, which will significantly reduce the transparency of the public appointments process. This is very worrisome and is the reason why we will be voting against Bill C-38.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to address the House today. I will begin by asking members to imagine what we, as legislators, might do if we wanted to ruin the Canadian economy, if we wanted the men and women of this great nation to have less opportunity, not more, and if we wanted families and communities to lose hope in tomorrow.

Since governments derive their power to control from the power to tax, we would start here. To begin, a government out to wreck our economy would enact a carbon tax, thereby driving up the cost of all goods and services paid by consumers. At the same time, personal income taxes would rise, shrinking the take-home pay of Canadian workers, making it uneconomical to work for an extra \$1 of income, say, by taking an overtime shift. Also, business tax rates would increase, boosting the cost of investment and making our nation less competitive next to our trading partners. If any citizen believed he or she should be able to keep more income from his or her hard work or risk-taking, the individual would be called greedy.

Government Orders

Next, that government would drive up the spending to levels beyond what taxpayers or even the economy could manage. It would table budget after budget that recorded nothing but red ink as far as the eye could see. It would issue billions of dollars of debt backed by paper IOUs. Those deficits would go up every year and we would be told that all that debt was a necessary investment and a small price to pay for nirvana. That ruinous government would proclaim this was all being done for the greater good, in the name of fairness and building tomorrow's economy. Should taxpayers think this was the road to serfdom, they would be thought of as uncompassionate.

Lastly, regulations would be enacted to stop the development of our natural resources, even though this abundant gift of nature fuelled Canada's growth. Environmentalism would no longer be about conservation but anti-development and statism. These prophets of doom would urge costly government solutions to our problems. Instead of relying on free markets and the ingenuity of mankind, they would create phony markets that buy and sell carbon credits as part of a cap and trade scheme.

Other proposals to make Canada a poor nation would be a draconian reduction in our energy consumption by a third almost overnight, throwing thousands of people out of work to comply with an international agreement that does not require the world's biggest carbon producers to reduce their emissions. If Canada failed to hit its domestic targets, a government bent on hurting the Canadian worker would pay out billions and billions of tax dollars to nations exempt from making carbon reductions under the very same flawed Kyoto protocol. All this, Canadians would be told, would be done in the name of progress.

Political and environmental groups would receive funding and tax concessions paid by our tax dollars, tax dollars that ought to pay for social programs but do not. That ruinous government, along with environmentalists, would push to shut down producers of abundant cheap energy. Fear-mongering, one asks? Federal regulators were recently petitioned to shut Point Lepreau, which is the only nuclear plant in Atlantic Canada and a provider of affordable energy. The shale gas industry in my province is finding it nearly impossible to establish itself in the face of a reckless environmental campaign. All the while, the New Brunswick government collects tax dollar transfers that come from shale gas earnings in other provinces. Our young workers go west to work in the very same industries that cannot open at home and our communities are despondent that they are hollowing out and the schools emptying.

A government working to damage our economy would hand powers to unelected bureaucrats to control industrial output and enact rules that make it impossible to open new markets and start new businesses. It would make energy from windmills and solar panels appear economical by driving up the cost of power from oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear energy. It would work to de-legitimize the use of abundant natural resources at home and eventually ban the export of those resources to other consumers in other markets. We are already seeing evidence of this with the oil sands.

Finally, a government that wanted to hurt Canada and Canadians would attack the foundation of our economy, notwithstanding that where free markets have been adopted, the west, Japan, more recently eastern Europe, China and throughout Asia, millions have climbed out of poverty, which, it is so easy to forget, was the human

condition for most of history. Where statism has triumphed, such as Greece, Spain, Cuba, parts of Africa, people suffer.

● (1230)

It really is not difficult to imagine these ruinous ideas becoming reality since they are, in one form or another, championed almost daily by the official opposition. Yet, we reject these policies. We understand that any government that is big enough to give us everything we need is also a government big enough to take away everything taxpayers have.

What our government is proposing in the 2012 budget is a low tax, low debt plan to keep Canadians working, to make Canada a place where businesses want to invest and to maintain our economic lead over other nations. It is a budget that puts us on track to eliminate the deficit. Voters sent us to Ottawa to manage the public finances the same way households and businesses administer their budgets; , prudently and with respect for the people paying the bills. This budget is a step toward a better government.

Total spending is not being cut this year. It will instead grow slightly by a modest 1.4%. If we listen to the opposition, its members are not proposing a serious alternative. In fact, they are proposing no alternative. We are seeking savings and efficiencies in a federal government that I believe is still too big and too bloated. They want an even bigger government and the inefficiencies and high taxes that come with it. Our focus is on delivering services and programs to Canadians with less bureaucracy. Their policy is more bureaucracy.

We should never apologize for streamlining government. Indeed, this is precisely why Canadian taxpayers sent us here. Of course, it would be easier to spend and spend more but to do so has a cost: higher taxes on ordinary families that make paying the household bills that much more difficult.

According to the Fraser Institute, a typical family makes \$74,200 each year and already pays a whopping 41.5% of that, some \$31,000, to one level of government or another. It is worth noting that Canadians pay more in tax than they do for shelter, food or transportation. That is why this side of the House believes taxes must be lowered. We recognize that government does not create wealth. It only consumes wealth others have created.

Government Orders

Instead of working to undermine Canadian workers, our plan will promote growth. It will remove burdensome regulation that hurt entrepreneurs and job creators. It will not raise taxes. It will finally wind down federal deficits. We owe it to Canadians to not let the reckless call for higher taxes and more spending coming from the opposition go unanswered or become a reality.

In fact, it is important that we stick to our pledge in the last election that we balance the budget by 2014, not 2015. We need to have a balanced budget so we can continue to bring in some much needed tax relief. Family income splitting is a promise we made to Canadians. We have an obligation to deliver on that promise.

Because of our many years as a minority government, we ended up having to campaign on the same promises two or even three times. Income splitting is a pro-family, pro-work promise I do not want to campaign on a second time.

Our Canada is one that is economically strong, creates opportunity and offers hard-working families a better tomorrow. We will continue to work for Canadians and remain focused on the economy.

Our economic action plan has Canada moving in the right direction. Next, we need to get our fiscal house in order and bring in some much needed tax relief to all Canadian families.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would challenge what the member opposite has said. I think all members in this House want to ensure that tax dollars are well spent and that our government is efficient and effective at delivering the programs and services that Canadians want and need.

However, this budget implementation act we are debating contains so much more than financial measures. I would like to ask the member why, in the name of efficiency or any other measure, would the government want to remove the oversight of the Auditor General from a dozen agencies and thereby reducing accountability and transparency. What does the government have against transparency being provided by the Auditor General? That is something the Conservatives used to campaign on but in office they are doing exactly the opposite.

Could the member explain that to us?

•(1235)

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I am perhaps one of the biggest fans of the Auditor General of Canada. In the past, Sheila Fraser was a great champion for taxpayers and I have no doubt that the new Auditor General from my home province will do just as good a job.

Part of our challenge as a government is to deliver better results while watching how we spend money. There are changes that are being made that will result in dollars being spent differently but that does not mean taxpayers will receive less value or less oversight for that. We continue to have the oversight that we need from the Auditor General and I do not see that changing despite certain budget reductions that are in this document.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his republican-style speech. We just need to think back a few years ago to when the current Prime Minister stood in the House and said that a 30-page budget bill was disgraceful, that there was far too much in it. I am trying to understand how the

Conservatives can now stand with a 400-page document full of all kinds of things, one of them being environmental changes to regulations that are clearly there to protect the interests of Canadians. The Conservatives are going to throw out all of those things in the name of expediting everything along the way.

The Conservatives will change OAS because they say that it is not sustainable, yet we know it is fully sustainable. This is just another choice that the government has made so it has less intrusion into the lives of people.

How can that member stand and say that his government is offering an alternative to Canadians, or protecting Canadians, when it is cutting out everything of value when it comes to protecting our country?

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, I was an observer about 10 years ago when a Liberal prime minister told Canadians that if they did not like paying high taxes they could move elsewhere. That was the wrong thing to say to Canadians and it was certainly the wrong message to send to taxpayers at large. I also remember times in the past when the Liberals had not one budget but two in a single year.

We have come forward with a comprehensive budget that includes not only tax and spend measures, but also other economic measures that will keep this economy strong and keep people working.

I see nothing wrong with streamlining environmental review, working with the provinces in a collaborative manner, so we get the answers the first time and do not require multiple levels. I do not think the majority of taxpayers would see anything wrong as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is concerned about wasting taxpayer money. How does he feel about the increased amount of spending, like \$8 million to go after charities that are already well-regulated under the existing charity act system?

Mr. John Williamson: That was an excellent question, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to answer it.

Any charity that is involved with any political activity should not receive the generous tax breaks that it does. When I was head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, an advocacy group, we also raised money, but we were unable to issue tax receipts to our supporters because we were involved with not partisan but political activity, trying to advocate a position.

If environmental groups want to engage in that kind of activity, they are absolutely free to do so, but they should not do so on the backs of Canadian taxpayers.

If we need these dollars to root out people who misuse the tax code, then I am okay with that because it will ensure we have a better democracy and a better tax system.

Government Orders

●(1240)

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today in opposition to Bill C-38, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures.

Let me be clear from the get-go. Not only do I rise in opposition to the Conservative budget, which is a backward step in so many ways for Newfoundland and Labrador and all of Canada, or then again step is not the right word, backward leap seems more appropriate for Newfoundland and Labrador and all of Canada, I also rise in opposition to those “other measures”. The bill is an omnibus bill, a massive bill, 421 pages long. It not only contains the means to implement the 2012 budget, but contains dozens of other measures buried in its pages, hidden in its pages, measures that have nothing to do with the budget, measures that include everything but the kitchen sink, from increasing the age of eligibility for old age pension to 67 from 65, to gutting the federal Fisheries Act, to ripping apart environmental legislation that may leave our country, when the Conservative government is done with it, in a mess.

I take back what I said a second ago about the kitchen sink. The sink just may be in the bill somewhere. Maybe that is why the Conservatives are so set on limiting debate. Maybe that is why the Conservatives are so set on ramming legislation through this esteemed House so quickly, legislation that was not even hinted at in the 2011 federal election, as a means to sneak through their secret agenda and to sidestep democracy.

I can tell members that the Conservatives will have a hard time getting anything past my party, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, try as they may. What is more, the Conservatives will have an even harder time getting anything past Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians.

The Canadian public is starting to get a pretty good idea of what the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister are about. They are about big business and the corporate agenda at the expense of average Canadians, at the expense of the environment and at the expense of real, meaningful jobs.

The irony is the budget is described as a job-creating budget at the same time that it kills more than 19,000 federal public sector jobs.

The face of Canada is changing, and I have heard this in my riding, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians do not like what they see in the Ottawa mirror. It is not who we are.

I have three perspectives on the Conservative budget implementation bill: the Newfoundland and Labrador perspective; the Atlantic perspective; and the national perspective.

I will speak about my own province first. Most people where I come from are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first and Canadians second. They will tell people that to their face if they are asked and even if they are not.

Bill C-38 would have a huge negative impact on my province with regard to federal job cuts. More of the federal jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador that we have are being moved to Halifax. We will lose more jobs and we have few already. The mayor of St. John's, Dennis O'Keefe, has gone so far as to say, “If this continues, we'll end up

being a colonial outpost — not of Ottawa, but of Halifax”. He further said, “Maybe it's happened [so] often, since 1949 with Confederation, that we're used to getting a kick in the rear end”. The final quote from the good mayor was, “I don't mind if we got our fair share, but we've never had our fair share of federal jobs in this province, period”.

There is no doubt that there is resentment in my home province toward the Government of Canada. Our fishery has been destroyed under Ottawa's watch. The federal presence in my province is but a faint shadow of the federal presence in other provinces. Not a single federal crown corporation is headquartered in my province.

There is resentment toward Ottawa, but there is particular resentment toward the Conservative Prime Minister who, to quote my people, “is no friend of Newfoundland and Labrador”.

●(1245)

Let me highlight some of the federal jobs that would be lost in my province as a result of the latest Conservative budget.

The Veterans Affairs office in Corner Brook will be gone. The Canada Border Services Agency is losing its director in my province. While the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is trying to build its cruise ship industry, the federal Conservatives are doing their best to stop it dead in the water. Border Services is also losing its only dog, trained to sniff out drugs and guns in Newfoundland and Labrador. Maybe we could get some psychics to step forward and volunteer their time.

Seafood inspection provided by the Food Inspection Agency will move to Prince Edward Island. I can see the sense in that, though. The federal Conservatives have written off the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, so why not move food inspection to P.E.I.?

The St. John's food inspection lab is slated to close with transfers to other provinces. There are cuts to Marine Atlantic, which operates the Gulf of St. Lawrence ferry link, which will likely drive up the fares and the cost of everything. There are also cuts to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, although not in the federal riding of Labrador, which a Conservative member represents. It is all good there for some reason.

Public Internet will be shut down at 96 provincial libraries around Newfoundland and Labrador. Parks Canada is also cutting back at national parks and historic sites in Newfoundland and Labrador. While the province of Newfoundland and Labrador spends millions of dollars on tourism campaigns to try to get Canadians and the world, to come to Newfoundland and Labrador, the Conservatives cut back on the amount of time the parks are open and they increase ferry rates. I do not get that.

Cuts to the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans will amount to nearly \$80 million by 2015. DFO is closing the marine rescue sub-centre in St. John's, transferring the jobs to Halifax and Ontario.

Government Orders

I do not know if all Canadians realize this, but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a unique dialect, a lot worse than mine and a lot better than mine. A skipper from outport Newfoundland, with seconds to send off a mayday before abandoning ship, may not be understood by a mainlander. That is the simple truth of it. Here is a quote from Merv Wiseman who works at the marine rescue sub-centre, and retires today. He said, “We know as professionals that people will die and we’ve expressed that view right on up the line, right up to the ministers themselves — to no avail”.

People will die. What could possibly be more important than the lives of our mariners? The answer is the dollar. The answer is a desire to stamp out a culture of defeat, as the Prime Minister has described us. I can tell the Prime Minister this. There is fight yet where I come from, and he will see that in 2015.

On a national level, the Conservatives are pushing through their plan to raise the eligibility age for old age pension and guaranteed income supplement to 67 from 65. That is not on with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They say that Canada is in danger of losing its soul. They say that Canada is in danger of losing her social programs that separate our great country from so many others. They do not like what they see in the Ottawa mirror. The Conservative face is a frightening face.

The budget implementation act will also see the word “habitat” removed from the Federal Fisheries Act. Let me quote from Otto Langer, a renowned fisheries scientists who came out against the changes to the act. More than 600 scientists actually came out against changes to the act. He said, “This proposed move by the Harper government is a travesty for our fishery resources and the health of the entire ecosystem and it ignores the needs of our future generations”.

A full one-third of Bill C-38 is dedicated to the gutting of environmental legislation and protection.

Again, Bill C-38 is an absolutely massive bill. What do the Conservatives do to ensure the debate is a healthy debate and in the best interests of the country they look after? The Conservatives limit debate and that is not good enough.

• (1250)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Just a reminder to all hon. members not to use proper names but to use the names of ridings or titles. This is something we encourage and it is a good habit for members in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to how the budget is going to have a tangible impact on Atlantic Canada in particular.

I think Canadians are aware that this budget is going to cut just over 19,000 civil servant jobs. That will have a significant impact on all Canadians from coast to coast. No doubt that in itself warrants a great deal of debate.

Towards the end of his remarks, the member made reference to the limitations that the government has put on debate on this budget bill.

That aside, the member spoke about environmental legislation.

There are some 70 different pieces of legislation that would be affected through the back door in passing this budget. I am

wondering if the member might want to further comment on that? This is in essence an entire legislative agenda that the government is trying to sneak through the back door, which is a slap in the face to democracy. This is what the Prime Minister is doing by not respecting the need for due diligence and fair process in a democratic state.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member hit the nail on the head when he spoke about environmental legislation that is included in this omnibus bill. The Conservatives are trying to sneak this legislation through the back door. With everything in life, there has to be balance. The balance between economic development and the environment has been lost with the Conservative government. It is not being up front with the Canadian people.

If the government were doing things right, it would pull this environmental legislation out and we would debate it separately from this budget implementation bill. However, the Conservatives, more and more, have a tendency not to do things right.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians may be confused. They hear opposition members saying that with Bill C-38 the government is gutting environmental laws, and they hear the Conservative members of Parliament saying that they are strengthening the laws.

The reality is clear when we look at the legislation. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is repealed. An entirely new act of 67 pages replaces it, which lacks the fundamental elements that have been there since 1992 when that act was passed.

I would like to ask my hon. friend if, in looking at this bill in relation to Fisheries Act provisions and the protection of fisheries habitat, he has concerns that are particularly applicable to his community of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I have concerns. As a representative for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, for Newfoundland and Labrador, I have concerns about anything fisheries-related from the Government of Canada, from the Conservative government.

Our groundfish fisheries, fisheries for species such as cod and flounder, were wiped out 20 years ago. There are no rebuilding plans and no rebuilding targets under the government, for the last six years under the Conservative government and under Liberal governments before it.

I have a concern about anything fisheries-related because the trust in the government is not there. It is absolutely non-existent.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the main concerns that many have been raising in this House is that there are so many things in this act that have nothing to do with the budget. This is the first new budget that the government has brought in since the last election, and it has many things it never campaigned on.

Government Orders

The member has pointed out that there are many items in here that have nothing to do with the budget. I would like to ask him what he thinks will happen if members of the finance committee are responsible for examining changes to the Fisheries Act or other environmental changes? What does the member think could be the danger of that happening?

● (1255)

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the danger, for example, of members of the finance committee examining changes to the Fisheries Act is that they would not have a clue what to look for. Again, it is part of the agenda and the reason why the Conservatives are doing it this way. They can sneak things through the back door, as the hon. Liberal member just mentioned.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to share with the House the widespread support of the constituents of Brampton—Springdale for economic action plan 2012. Leading up to the introduction of this budget, my constituents repeatedly applauded the Conservative government's focus and direction when it comes to our economy. Their support has never wavered. They trust and know that the Conservative government is the only choice when it comes to creating jobs and keeping our economy stable.

Before the budget was introduced, I held budget consultations and round tables and I spoke with thousands of constituents. There was a common theme during these conversations. Constituents wanted our government to look ahead not only for the next few years, but for generations to come.

My constituents understand the importance of looking forward when it comes to sustainability and growth. They understand and acknowledge that our country is changing. That is why they continue to stand side by side with our Conservative government. They want their children to grow up in an environment where opportunities are plenty. They have every reason to be confident in the Conservative government and economic action plan 2012. The constituents of Brampton—Springdale want opportunities. They want a government that will act in their best interest. They want a government that will take realistic, pragmatic and responsible action.

The measures contained in economic action plan 2012 are substantial, but they are reasonable and, more importantly, necessary. While others spend their time fear-mongering, the Conservative government is tackling the real issues head-on.

My constituents were appalled by opposition parties that, instead of supporting realistic measures that met the needs of all Canadians, wanted to take our economy down the wrong path. This is not what my constituents or Canadians in general need at this point. While other countries are facing the risk of long-term economic decline, Canada is in a position of opportunity. We are seizing that opportunity and making decisions that will position our nation for sustainable, long-term growth.

Brampton—Springdale is a diverse community that is home to thousands of hard-working families and Canadians who deserve to have a government that acts in their best interest. I vote for economic action plan 2012 because it is a practical strategy that ensures our economy will create good jobs and sustain a higher quality of life for generations to come.

The economic action plan was developed with all Canadians in mind. It proposes measures that would assist each and every one of my constituents, from seniors, children, students, families to workers in every industry. We are taking major steps forward that will build on the proven foundation that we have worked to lay since 2006.

The global economic landscape, along with the shifting environment in Canada, exemplifies the need to make important decisions. Instead of ignoring foreseeable problems such as the inevitable demographic changes in Canada, we are taking action that will allow Canada to avoid these dangers. We are also working to seize new opportunities for today and for the future.

Throughout the past year I have had the opportunity to speak with thousands of constituents about our economy and where our country is headed. What is remarkable is the fact that although this riding was held by a Liberal for many years, the constituents have praised our government for keeping taxes low and creating jobs in some of the toughest economic climates. They have expressed their appreciation for the Conservative government's focus and determination.

Brampton—Springdale is a community that is part of a growing city. The city of Brampton is home to more than 8,000 businesses and employs approximately 153,000 hard-working Bramptonians. These companies, entrepreneurs, workers and families depend on the government to ensure that their futures are brighter. I am always proud to tell others about Brampton's small business, manufacturing and entrepreneurial base. It is a city that is innovative, creative and successful.

● (1300)

When I announced that the Conservative government would be delivering more than \$1.1 billion in significant investments for research and development with another \$500 million for venture capital, constituents from across my riding were thrilled. These are actions that mean something to my constituents. We are not delivering mere words or promises, we are delivering action and results. Innovation, creativity and growth are by-products of a strong business sector. With the Conservative government at the helm, Brampton will continue to excel on the national and international stages. Investment in entrepreneurship, innovation and research is a fundamental necessity for our country. It simply is not enough to maintain our advantage in the global economy, we need to constantly strive for better. We need to always aim higher. These investments would allow us to position Canada not only to compete on the world stage but to excel there. Our country has enormous potential in almost every industry. This potential and our talent have been recognized around the world. We need to foster that success, sustain growth and innovation, and create new opportunities.

Government Orders

To help achieve that long-term prosperity and growth, our government is making it easier for students and companies to exceed objectives and benchmarks. As I mentioned, Brampton is home to a rapidly expanding small-business sector. By extending the hiring tax credit for small businesses, we are helping thousands of Brampton companies expand their workforce and capabilities. This initiative has already helped many businesses in my riding to grow within the marketplace and create well-paying jobs for my constituents of Brampton—Springdale.

Many, if not all, of us in this House would agree that youth are our future. That is why we have invested and will continue to invest in programs that help youth get into the workforce. We allocated \$50 million to the youth employment strategy to assist more young people in gaining tangible skills and experience that will allow them to compete in the job market. Brampton is home to thousands of students looking to make their way in a very unpredictable world. They are looking to make a name for themselves and to start their careers. They need and deserve to be provided with the opportunity to achieve their aspirations. We are working to provide our younger generation with the proper training and assistance that will make their dreams a reality.

More and more people are choosing to start their families in Brampton. The Conservative government knows the importance of providing relief for our hard-working families. Economic action plan 2012 highlights that focus. From improving the registered disability savings plan to increasing the travellers' exemption to promoting a more active lifestyle through continued support of Participation, our government is standing behind our families. This relief comes after six years of increased support across the board for families by our government. The residents of Brampton—Springdale are leading happier, healthier and more prosperous lives because of the Conservative government's continued support and assistance. My constituents are proud of their government because they have tangible results through our efforts.

Whether they are young people, students, families, hard-working citizens, seniors or business owners, these constituents know that they can count on the Conservative government to always be there for them. While the Liberals gutted transfers to health care and education when in power, our Conservative government is protecting and growing them to help support the services that Ontario families need. We are standing up for Canadians across this country because we know it comes down to opportunities that they are provided with. We will remain focused on job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity. This will help our country not only to remain stable but to excel in every industry. It all comes down to opportunities.

• (1305)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member's presentation. He talked for the most part about how he supported the direction the government is going in terms of its allocation of resources, of money, in the budget. He mentioned a couple of programs that he supported.

That is the kind of thing we expect in a budget. That is the kind of stuff that we saw when the Minister of Finance brought down the budget, and that is what we fully expected to be debating here in the

House. and that is what we expected to be going forward to the finance committee.

Instead—and I ask the member for his thoughts on this—what we have is a bill that makes significant and fundamental legislative changes to a whole myriad of legislation. Would the member not agree that we should be dealing with budget items and that legislative items should be dealt with in another forum?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member, as mentioned earlier by my other colleagues, that this budget was brought forward after conducting massive consultations with Canadians throughout the country.

Canadians gave our government a strong mandate for a reason: they expect results. They expect us to deliver. That is exactly what the government's intention is, and that is exactly what the Prime Minister and finance minister are focused on: creating jobs, creating prosperity and creating long-term growth. That is what Canadians expect us to do and that is what we will continue to do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the member can indicate that the Prime Minister led a government that had “massive consultations”. “Consultations” gives the impression that they might have been listening to what Canadians have to say, and we know very clearly what Canadians had to say in regard to the senior pension issue: a vast majority of Canadians believe the government is wrong to increase the age from 65 to 67. A vast majority of Canadians want to be able to ensure that they have the future ability to retire at the age of 65. That is what Canadians have told the Liberal Party, and I suspect that is the same message that they have told the Conservative government. Therefore, how can the member or the government claim that it consulted Canadians, when we know full well that some of the major platforms that the budget has taken go against what Canadians really want?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is taking steps that Canadians expect us to take by ensuring OAS remains strong and there for future generations by gradually raising the eligibility age of OAS and GIS benefits from 65 to 67 between 2023 and 2029. The changes are limited to those who are 54 or younger as of March 31, 2012, and will not affect current OAS or GIS beneficiaries in any way.

• (1310)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his very insightful speech. Hopefully members of the opposition listened.

Would the member speculate on why the NDP and Liberal members are voting against what Canadians want? The budget provides jobs. It provides what families need. It provides a plan of prosperity and growth for the future. Why would they vote against that? Why would they vote against improving environment policies? Could the member speculate as to why they would vote against what is good for Canada?

Government Orders

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, the reason the opposition parties are refusing to support this very important budget for all Canadians is actually beyond my understanding. I would encourage all members of the opposition parties to review the budget carefully, read it through, take the time and consider supporting the budget so that we can get on with what Canadians expect all parliamentarians to do: to work on their behalf and to continue to focus on their priorities, rather than playing political games.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on the very reasoned amendment from the member for Parkdale—High Park to Bill C-38.

I rose a moment ago and asked the previous speaker a question about the fact that a budget was introduced a few weeks ago when the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the government, talked about the government's direction and where it wants to allocate resources. While Conservatives talked about it as a jobs and prosperity budget, we know they are laying off tens of thousands of workers at a time when they are talking about creating jobs and we know that they have made a frontal assault on senior citizens in this country, yet lo and behold, when we see Bill C-38, we find that the damage and the destruction the government is intent on waging in this country are much greater than we would have imagined.

The previous speaker talked about how the government has engaged in massive consultation with Canadians and how Bill C-38 is exactly what Canadians want. I understand that the finance committee travelled across the country and held pre-budget consultations with Canadians, but never once was it suggested to Canadians that the government was going to gut environmental laws. Never once in those consultations or any of the consultations that happened in Nova Scotia on behalf of the Minister of Finance was there ever any discussion about the fact that the government was going to gut the Fisheries Act—completely turn it on its head and take away the power that existed in the Fisheries Act to protect fish habitat. Never once did it say anything to Canadians about its intention to do that.

I will give Conservatives credit. They did give us a bit of a heads-up on the OAS. There was an announcement by the Prime Minister. When he was in Davos drinking Chablis with his friends and talking off the cuff, he said that he was going to transform this country and that he would start by ripping dollars out of the pockets of senior citizens in 2023. I do not care if it is in 2012, 2015 or 2023; it is an attack on seniors in this country. That is what the government has done.

Now we have Bill C-38, which goes after the environment, fisheries, workers and seniors, as well as the accountability of the Auditor General to ensure that taxpayers' dollars being properly spent by a whole host of agencies. The complexity of the changes being proposed in this bill boggle the mind.

I had a conversation with a retired scientist from DFO who had been involved in the environment for over 35 years. When he initially examined the changes that were being proposed, he said the initial changes to subsection 35(1) were not too bad and that they would strengthen a bit of the problem with this and a bit of the problem with that. However, he then said the that other shoe drops, with the government bringing in changes that are going to

completely wipe out any of the improvements that were brought in and wipe out the effectiveness of the provisions in the Fisheries Act that deal with the protection of fish habitat.

● (1315)

The most damaging part of this whole bill is the attack being waged on fishing communities across this country and on the ecosystem, frankly, because fish habitat is about the ecosystem. It is about the interrelatedness of the water and the land to ensure that we have a variety of species in this world to contribute to the betterment of our society. Some of it may be commercially viable, but that is not the reason it is protected; habitat is protected because we want to make sure we have a strong and viable ecosystem. Habitat is the water and land necessary for the survival of all species, including fish. Habitat destruction is the most common reason for species decline, and the Fisheries Act has been essential in protecting fish habitats and the fisheries they support.

I have spent the last couple of weeks sitting in on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, where we heard witnesses talk about the problems with invasive species in the Great Lakes. I am from the east coast and I do not know a whole lot about invasive species in the Great Lakes. I know a lot about the cod moratorium and how it devastated the coastal communities in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., and New Brunswick. I also know how lobsters, scallops and other crustaceans have rebounded to fill the gap and I know that the fishery is critical to hundreds of thousands of families in this country—to communities, to families, to children, to our very way of being.

What I have learned over the past couple of days is just how closely connected our whole system is. Members have heard about the zebra mussel and how it clogs up the bottom of many of the Great Lakes and attaches itself to the outfalls of power plants and creates a great deal of problems. The quagga mussel is now also part of that.

There is another invasive species, a fish. I have forgotten its name, but it eats the mussels. The combination of the two creates botulism and results in huge fish kills, as well as killing waterfowl. Who would have thought that connection, that level of chemistry, would take place and affect the Great Lakes? It is a serious problem.

There are also problems with the sea lamprey and others. What was interesting was what we were told about the science, the ways to prevent these invasive species and how to mitigate their negative effects to ensure the return of more commercially viable fisheries. Those things are not known when an invasive species is initially identified; it takes science, time and the dedication of DFO and the Minister of Natural Resources in order to come to that conclusion.

My point is that the changes being proposed by the government, simply as they relate to the Fisheries Act and the definition with respect to the protection of fish habitat, are destructive beyond belief, and we cannot allow that to happen. For the government to be so gutless as to hide behind this omnibus bill rather than to bring about these changes in a bill that would go before a legislative committee in order for us to bring experts in to deal with the issue is absolutely wrong. It is fundamentally wrong.

Government Orders

● (1320)

I am talking to Canadians, as are my colleagues, and Canadians are waking up to what the government is doing. We will stand both here in the House and in our communities and do everything we can to ensure that Canadians understand what the government is intending for the fisheries, for the environment and for our society. We will do everything we can, along with lots of Canadians, to ensure that this does not happen.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised by many of the things that the hon. member said.

Many of the members over there have been complaining that there is not enough time to speak to the bill. The reality is that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster took 11 hours on this bill. That would have given 44 of their speakers time to speak to the bill, but they are complaining that there is not enough time. That simply does not wash.

They then said that they did not know about things in the budget like the OAS; that member had to acknowledge that he did, but then said that he did not know about the changes to the regulatory system. He is not paying any attention, then, because we have talked about the need for that in the House.

I chair the natural resources committee and that party has members on the committee. We hear again and again about the need to streamline the regulatory system. We have done it in a way that will protect the environment better because everybody involved would put their information into one stream. We would have a better environmental impact study but done in less time.

Why is the member complaining about these things? We need to look at this from a realistic point of view.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are gutting environmental regulations in order to allow for the development of natural resources, in most cases, oil, unfettered.

Tomorrow is the 20th anniversary of the Westray Mine disaster in which 26 miners died simply because the government of the day was not paying attention to its own rules and regulations and was not ensuring that the enforcement happened and that those workers were being protected.

That is what happens when a government does not pay attention to its own rules and waters them down to the point where they have no effect. The Conservative government better start recognizing that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-38, a budget bill that typically would be less than 40 pages at best. This bill has in excess of 400 pages and it impacts some 70 pieces of legislation. Over 120 pages deal with the environment.

That is why we argue that the government is using the back door of the budget, not only to limit debate on the budget but to sneak through legislation that should be set aside to go through the system separately. Would the member agree with the Liberal Party and acknowledge that the bill should be a number of different bills?

If the Prime Minister has any belief in democracy, he should break up the bill before it even comes to a vote.

● (1325)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, a motion to the effect of splitting up the bill in order that it receive proper scrutiny has already been made by the House leader of the official opposition, and we certainly support that.

In terms of the specifics of the bill being scrutinized, in the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans we heard the other day from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. It works closely with DFO, commercial groups and environmental groups on the whole ecosystem and fish habitat in the Great Lakes. Those officials do not know what the impact of these changes will be. They want to be part of the discussion before the changes go through to ensure they will be able to make them work to protect fish habitat and to protect the ecosystem of the Great Lakes for all Ontarians.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to budget 2012 on behalf of the residents in my riding of Palliser in southern Saskatchewan.

Our government has developed a positive, responsible plan to help keep Canada's economy growing, fuel job creation and secure the long-term prosperity for Canadians. It is a solid plan that will help businesses and individuals within my riding, within Saskatchewan and, indeed, within the boundary called Canada.

In the international financial community, there is admiration for Canada's stable position. These accolades include the World Economic Forum stating that our banks are the soundest in the world, and *Forbes* magazine ranking Canada as the best place in the world to do business, to grow business and to create jobs.

In fact, since July 2009, our economy has created more than 700,000 net new jobs.

I will talk about four parts of budget 2012 that would support businesses, families and communities in my riding: First, creating a more efficient immigration system; second, managing our resources better; third, expanding our trade opportunities; and fourth, creating a sustainable old age security program for future generations.

There are Canadians who are out of work or underemployed. At the same time, there is a labour shortage in Saskatchewan, as well as other parts of the country, for some jobs. This budget contains measures to create new, high quality jobs for Canadians while providing measures to fill vacancies through improving the temporary foreign worker program if, and that is a big if, there are no Canadians to fill these positions.

Since 2006, the government has pursued much needed reforms to focus Canada's immigration system on increasing economic prosperity for Canadians. We need to move to an increasingly fast and flexible immigration system that responds to the needs of the labour market in order to sustain Canada's economic growth.

Government Orders

During the pre-budget consultations, a business owner within my riding mentioned that the processing time for skilled workers needed to be reduced. He also mentioned that there was too much red tape during this process. I heard that from a number of constituents. I am proud to say that the government listened and committed to lessen the processing time for temporary foreign workers who made applications, while reducing the paper burden on all employers.

We propose further improvements to recognize foreign professionals, such as physicians, nurses and engineers, among other much needed roles within the Canadian economy.

Looking at the second pillar, I will talk about how budget 2012 will help to manage our resources.

My home province of Saskatchewan is blessed with many resources that drive the economy and there is demand for these resources worldwide. If we are to compete with other resource rich countries, which would create some of those high quality jobs that I mentioned, we need to put in place an effective, efficient regulatory system to review major projects.

We propose to streamline the review process to encourage responsible resource development. The proposed review process will include fixed timelines and a one project, one review process, while introducing stronger penalties for those who violate our environmental laws.

Turning to number three, I will talk about how our plan will help expand trade. I am supportive of the focus on international trade, as it create jobs for residents in my riding and in Canada. Since 2006, we have finalized nine free trade agreements with other nations and we continue to deepen trade agreements with other nations, including those with fast growing economies. In fact, a Canada-European Union free trade agreement would bring a 20% boost in bilateral trade, which would create approximately 80,000 new jobs.

Agriculture contributes enormously to our country's economy, with nearly \$35.5 billion in exports, which makes Canada the world's fifth largest exporter of agriculture and food products.

Our plan includes measures to help our farmers and ranchers succeed, which is good news for my riding where agriculture is the number one industry. They are succeeding partially thanks to efforts in opening markets for our Canadian beef, pork, canola, pulse crops, wheat and more.

● (1330)

We will continue to work on behalf of farmers and ranchers to ensure that people in other countries have access to our high quality Canadian food.

Our efforts and successes have been well recognized by the agricultural sector. Additionally, exporters within my riding would benefit through extending the provision of domestic financing by Export Development Canada.

I would like to take a minute to talk about the old age security program.

Budget 2012 proposes changes to the OAS program to ensure that it will be sustainable for future generations. Our plan outlines that changes will not be introduced until 2023, which means that seniors

or those who are nearing retirement will not be affected. Our government is providing many years of lead time to allow individuals to make adjustments to their savings plan as necessary to meet their own goals and aspirations.

I will provide a comment from a constituent who stated, when we were talking about pensions, "The pension reforms are acceptable, seeing that the age change will only take place after 2023 or 2029, allowing the next generation to prepare, and thus manage their economies of scale accordingly".

Our seniors are realists.

We are also eliminating the application process for OAS and GIS, which has been warmly received by many constituents who contacted my office.

I support changes for the sustainability of the OAS program on behalf of residents in my riding who may need the OAS in future years.

I would ask all hon. colleagues to support Bill C-38, a positive, reasonable plan that encourages job creation and growth within sound fiscal principles and without reducing transfer to persons. It is the right plan for Palliser, for Saskatchewan and for Canada.

Thanks to our elected majority government, I am excited for the opportunities facing Saskatchewan and Canada as our government works to allow business to flourish and families and communities to grow and strengthen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member talking about trade. I have two very simple questions for him.

Make no mistake: the United States is currently our largest trade partner. I know that the government wants to distance itself and all that, but what is the meaning of this? The government has announced \$143 million in cuts to border services. This will have an impact on the safety of Canadians and on wait times at the Canadian border, and it will have a direct impact on our small and medium-sized businesses. How are these cuts supposed to improve trade with our largest trading partner?

The government has also announced millions of dollars of cuts to consular services in the United States, South America and Europe. The hon. member spoke of a free trade agreement with the European Union and other free trade agreements. These cuts show that Canada is not at all interested, because the cuts to consular services will hinder our economic relations with other countries. I would like the hon. member to tell us how these cuts are going to allow Canada to improve—

● (1335)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I have to interrupt the hon. member because time is limited.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Palliser.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the mini address. It was very well put but I am afraid I am not quite sure how to respond to it because changes at the border are in a state of flux. That is the best we can say. Nothing has been formulated to really exclude or include different aspects of trade with the U.S.A. The latest information I have is that it continues to be our largest trading partner, so I guess things are not going too bad between America and Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many aspects of the budget I could talk about, and many other aspects I could talk about with regard to the 70-plus pieces of legislation that the government would be changing through the back door with this budget.

There is one issue that kind of eats at a lot of Canadians, and that is an issue of credibility. The Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence have talked a great deal about the need to replace the F-18, something the Liberal Party agrees with. There is a need to replace the F-18. Where we disagree is with the manner in which it has been done.

There has been a great deal of deception from the government to Canadians. At some point, it said \$9 billion was going to be the cost, and we are finding out that the cost is going to be more than double that.

My question to the member is this. How can Canadians believe the numbers the government is purporting to talk about on issues like the deficit, when it has really made a whole mess, and there is evidence to show it misled Canadians on the pricing of the F-35 contract? Why should Canadians believe the budget document is a legitimate document in the first place?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly glad I had the opportunity to speak first, because mini questions one and two have pretty well eaten up most of the time.

To answer my hon. colleague as best I can, I would say that the F-35 has been adjudicated by people who fly aircraft. We are talking about fighter pilots and those who train fighter pilots. I am referring to 15 Wing Moose Jaw, the base that trains all the pilots who are trained in Canada.

In discussion with pilots at the base, fighter pilot students and trainers, as well as others from the Winnipeg operation, I am given to understand that there is no plane that equals the F-35 in any which way, regardless of the fact that it is a single-engine plane.

I am not a pilot. I have to accept the word of experts. I do not profess to be an expert, but I know experts. That is their take on it, that we as a country should be looking very carefully at that aircraft because as far as they are concerned it is still the best one.

As far as whether the plane has been tested, it is still in the developmental phases. It has not been tested. Therefore, I am at a loss as to why we would think we could put a price tag on it when it is still in the developmental process. That plane actually being on the production line is a few months or maybe a few years away.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short title of the bill includes long-term prosperity, and so we must discuss in my speech funding for basic research, because that is very important for our future prosperity. There has been a trend toward less and less funding for basic research under the government.

Allow me to take a little bit of time to talk about basic research, what it is and why it is important, because I do not know if it has ever been explained in detail in this House by somebody who has spent many years working on it.

What is basic research? It starts with curiosity. Scientists are human beings. They are passionate people. Why is it that scientists spend so much time and work so hard, like crazy, to try to figure out things and discover things? It is because they have passion. We cannot have scientists who are simply told, "Check one, two and three and see which one works the best". Scientists work best when they do practical work in the world but they are allowed to step back and ask why things are the way they are and they are given the resources and are encouraged to try to answer that question.

Second, basic research is about finding a complete understanding, making logical sense of the world around us. There is a famous paper entitled "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural World" by physicist Eugene Wigner. In mathematics, in any logical system, any falsehood causes the entire logical edifice to fall apart. If we translate that into the natural world, any little inconsistency or oddity is worth sorting out, because it can lead to dramatic new understanding.

There are some really good examples of that. In the discovery of insulin, people noticed that when the pancreas of a dog was taken out, flies would be attracted to the sugar in the urine of dogs. In the discovery of stem cells, people noticed that there were little clumps of cells of different types on the spleens of irradiated mice. The study of the difference between theoretical models and actual measurements of the neutrino flux from the sun led to a complete changing of our understanding, our model for the physical universe and of the cosmos.

I mention these three examples because they are related to basic research that was done in Canada.

If we look very closely at nature, we find that there is always a lot more going on than we think. Science will surprise us, but after we have worked in research, we get used to that. It is why it is always possible to keep discovering new and important things.

That leads to the last thing about basic research, which is that it gives us hope for fundamental changes that will lead to a better life. It is not just technology or medicine; it is about learning better ways to take care of one another, better ways to communicate and cooperate, cleaner and more enduring ways to be prosperous and also for society to realize the real tangible value of intellectually honest pursuits of the truth. There is that value of basic research that I think is important.

Government Orders

The knowledge that comes out of basic research is like a piece of LEGO, a hard piece of plastic, hard, reliable, but it also has a history of dramatically changing the world. Knowledge is not really in books, journals and PowerPoint slides. It is in the minds of people. Basic research is where we train a lot of our graduate students who have the skills and acquire the knowledge, the experience in the ways of looking at the world and the discipline and rigour of working in scientific research, which they can then carry on and use elsewhere in their careers to benefit all of society.

Basic research produces models. It allows us to explain patterns we observe, and we need models. For example, if we want to sequester carbon dioxide underground, a rather important subject, we have to ask ourselves: Do we understand basic geology enough to be able to model the behaviour of that carbon dioxide underground for thousands of years?

The last thing I would say is that basic research produces unexpected discoveries. The results of basic research are uncertain. By definition they are uncertain, and basic, unexpected discoveries can be game changers. An example of that is basic research that was done in my riding on the ability of dissolved carbon dioxide to dissolve things, which may lead to the elimination of the need for tailings ponds in oil sands projects. Basic research can lead to a lot of unexpected things.

● (1340)

Why is government funding for basic research important? There are three reasons I would like to talk about today. One is that basic research leads to a public good. The market does not put a proper value on research that benefits more than just the people who do the research. There is a public good and that is why the government should get involved.

Second, the market fails when the funder of research has a commercial interest in the outcome. So in that case, sometimes private research creates ethical conflicts, and that is another time when government should step in.

Third, because basic research is intrinsically uncertain, it is intrinsically risky and small companies may not be able to take that risk, and that is another reason why a larger partner like the government should step in.

How do we know that funding for basic research in Canada has declined? We could look at the statistics, showing a decrease in funding for NSERC from \$420 million in 2006 to \$360 million in this year for basic research. Funding at SSHRC has declined after inflation. If we look at the success of grant applications to CIHR for basic research, it has hit 17% recently and has been going down for about a decade. Many research proposals, rated excellent by their peers, are being rejected and this is not limited to CIHR. We hear statements like, "I am appalled by the lack of the support for fundamental research in this country". This is coming from top researchers in the country.

There is more money being spent on research, but that is money where an industrial-academic partnership is required and it is not basic research. It is a good thing to fund that, but not at the expense of basic research.

Let me give an example of one cut occurring in basic research that is pretty harmful. It is the cut to NSERC's research, technology and instrumentation grants program. This is funding that allows researchers to buy medium-sized equipment. As an analogy, instead of cutting from ten carpenters to nine carpenters, it is like keeping the ten carpenters but not letting them buy any tools. That is the problem with the RTI program. That is why researchers are furious about this grants program being cut. One researcher says:

Without the possibility to maintain and expand these fairly inexpensive research tools, my research will grind to a halt, in turn losing my ability to support the training of highly qualified personnel....

Another researcher says:

The changes to NSERC under the...government have been incredibly destructive, and the RTI cut will be an unmitigated disaster.... If this plan goes forward, then when these essential tools inevitably reach the end of their life, so will my research.

So what could we do besides spend more money? People have been saying we do spend a good amount of money on basic research, but we do not seem to be reaping the economic benefits. What needs to be done already exists out there, and one example of that is something called the GreenCentre in my riding. That is a centre in which there are dedicated scientists who are familiar with the basic research that is done at universities, the discovery centres out there. They look at the discoveries and they are trained to detect or decide on discoveries that may have a commercial application. They talk to their industrial partners and get some advice on which discoveries could be commercialized, and they work to commercialize those discoveries.

So it is not just people in industry saying they have a problem and they want to get the government to pay for a university researcher to figure it out for them. It is unlocking the value that is already there in the research that is at our universities.

In conclusion, we know that businesses do not spend enough on research and development in Canada, and money spent on research does not appear to be affecting rates of innovation and commercialization of research as much as it should. That is because we need a better strategy. We need to not ignore the value of basic research or to cut basic research, but we need to invest our efforts in pushing out the value of the discoveries we already have made in basic research, our world-leading capacity in basic research, and we need to push that out into the marketplace instead of letting everything be driven by industry asking researchers to change what they are doing and simply solve problems of industry.

● (1345)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my friend, the member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, has a very impressive science background. Therefore, I can understand why he addressed his speech to that point. I will address my question to the same point.

Government Orders

When I saw \$67 million in the budget for the National Research Council, I was pleased. However, when I saw it was specifically required under the terms of the budget to be “business-led and industry-relevant”, I asked myself what Albert Einstein would have done with that. The greatest inventions of the modern era have been made by brilliant minds operating unfettered. In other words, it was basic research with an element of serendipity, not trying to get people to make a better widget and confine the human brain to the most base commercial elements.

Would my hon. colleague agree that is where the best inventions have been found?

• (1350)

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I do agree. There is a good example of that in Canada, which is canola. The research on canola was not done with a one-year research grant. It was planned and it was something that took many years and quite a bit of an investment. Look at what we have now. It is a major part of Canada's agricultural sector. It was developed not with a focus on immediate results, but a long-term vision and careful research to develop a product that could have commercial value.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech on innovation and research by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. The question I have is not directly related to what he said.

The Government of Canada spent about \$8 billion or \$9 billion on research and innovation over the last number of years. The Jenkins report talked about moving from the tax credit system to maybe more direct investment. Has the member read the report and what does he think of the Jenkins recommendations?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned billions of dollars being spent on research and development. Yes, money is being spent on research and development, but it is really being targeted at industry academic partnerships at the expense of basic research. That was the point I wanted to make in my speech.

I want to answer the member's question about the recommendations of the Jenkins report and replacing tax credits and the scientific research and experimental development tax credit by more direct grants. Reforms needed to take place in the SR&ED program. I disagree with some of the recommendations in the Jenkins panel report, for example, the recommendation to exclude the eligibility of capital expenditures from the tax credit. Some of the direct grant programs are quite good. The reputation of IRAP is very good. The industrial technology advisers have really good knowledge of the region that they are supposed to cover and, as far as government granting goes, are pretty good allocators of capital.

That is a good idea to discuss. We can talk about the details. There are some good things and there are some things that could be improved. It would be a good thing if the government would allow members of Parliament to make these suggestions, take them seriously and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sorry to interrupt, but time is limited.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everywhere we travel, we hear a common message, and that is our country now relies too much on the exploitation of our natural resources. We are again becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water. On the other hand, I hear from many other people who suggest that we have to rely more on our innovation and that in the future we will be thinking our way to prosperity.

Particularly for non-resource rich provinces, what does my hon. friend have to say about the future prosperity and its reliance on invention and innovation?

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, humanity has always relied on innovation, ingenuity and hard work, the kind that I see a lot of among my colleagues, to move forward and create economic growth where there were no natural resources. We can see examples of that in the Asian tiger economies, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, all the places where investments were made in people, knowledge and innovation to encourage certain industries to prosper. They succeeded, and we need to do that. Not every part of Canada is rich in every natural resource and we need to remember that as we think about how to move Canada's economy forward and improve the productivity of our people.

• (1355)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, as the member of Parliament for the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and on behalf of the people of my riding, to speak in support of Bill C-38, the budget implementation act, which speaks to our economic action plan 2012, Canada's blueprint for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

One of the reasons that Canada, relative to our economic trading partners, continues to outperform other western economies is the ability of the government to have a forward thinking vision, to plan for the future prosperity of all Canadians. It is clear that any thoughtful Canadian reading our budget sees the goal that we have set out to deal with some fundamental challenges that will arise if corrective action is not taken today. This is being done, while at the same time following our careful, prudent course that has made our finance minister the envy of the G7 countries.

Thoughtful Canadians in my riding have spoken out loud and clear. They like what they read in Canada's 2012 economic action plan. They understand leadership means making difficult decisions today to secure a confident, secure future for tomorrow.

As a Conservative member of Parliament, who makes it my business to directly speak to my constituents regarding the policies put forward, I am pleased with the positive reaction that our budget has received from all Canadians. I read every comment that I receive. For this government, public consultation means just that. We take the time to listen to our constituents, and I am grateful for the many positive suggestions, comments and observations I receive. All comments are welcome.

Statements by Members

As a member of the government, I ensure that our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance know what is on the minds of Canadians. Suggestions from constituents from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have played an important role as our government charts a future course intended to benefit most Canadians.

For many people, our budget does go far enough in cutting the deficit, particularly in cutting unnecessary government spending that seems to creep into every program, however well-intentioned the program may have been when it was first proposed.

The people of the Ottawa Valley are well-known for their fierce independence, as well as their common sense approach to living. Their responses to our budget reflect this back. They are people like Lance Bridges, who wrote the following in response to a series of questions I asked individuals to respond to concerning our economic action plan 2012, which will be implemented with the passing of Bill C-38, the legislation before us today.

In response to my question about lowering the deficit, Lance responded:

“I suppose it is a good thing. Unfortunately all my time is taken up trying to figure out how I'm supposed to keep up with my bills and repairs on my home. I used to be able to save on living off of the land but I had to quit when Bill C-68 (the liberal long-gun registry) came into effect, and now that it's gone, my deepest thanks for that, I have no means to get my licenses back since they won't grandfather them to me. It would be a big help if things were set up like fishing licences. It would be a large financial burden lifted from us if all these fees were exempt to the disabled. It would be even nicer if all these unnecessary licences (guns, fishing, hunting, etc.) were eliminated completely.

It's difficult to gauge how the federal budget really affects my family and as we have to survive on what little the Ontario Disability Support Plan offers us. And now with a freeze on, the help to keep up with prices doubling on almost everything is lost.

Thank you for what you've done in the budget”.

Our budget is intended for families like Lance's. I thank him for responding to our survey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke will have six minutes remaining in her speech when the House next resumes debate on the question and the usual five minutes for questions and comments.

Statements by members, the hon. member for Ahuntsic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[Translation]

MARONITE PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the presence in Quebec of the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude Mar Bechara Boutros Al Raï.

The pride of all Maronites, he is an invaluable ambassador for many Christians in the Middle East.

Above and beyond his caring personality, his voice is heard wherever his mission happens to take him, but no matter where he goes, he can be found easing social tensions and promoting human rights, unity and love. His mantra is “communion and love” and he remains faithful to it in both word and deed.

In some parts of the world, religious minorities are being threatened. We therefore must remain humble and listen to those who fight extremism and show us the path to peace, reconciliation and life.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is that time of year again. Farmers are entering their fields for the annual spring seeding.

Western grain farmers are anxiously waiting for their chance to seed their wheat and barley crop, which, for the first time in 69 years, can be marketed through the Canadian Wheat Board or through an open market.

As we witnessed in March of this year, the new voluntary CWB established its first grain handling agreement, providing certainty and clarity to farmers as they prepare for the open market in 2012. This agreement demonstrates how every grain company, including the CWB, will be offering contracts and programs to earn farmers' business in the new marketing environment. Farmers now have the freedom to market their grain as they see fit.

Canadian farmers are shrewd and competent international businessmen. They know how the markets work and they know how to minimize their risk. In these exciting times for western grain farmers, I only ask of them one thing: be careful, work safe and stay alive to enjoy this marketing freedom.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has heard from dozens of witnesses in a very short period of time, because the Conservatives want to pass Bill C-31 very quickly, but the bill does not correspond to any of the fundamental principles of Canadian justice.

Statements by Members

In fact, too much power is concentrated in the minister's hands. He even has the right to remove permanent residents who have been living here for years.

This bill will foster intolerance of refugees and xenophobia. Deport, control, remove, incarcerate: Conservatives like to use these terms. They do not hesitate to promote a bill that, according to the Canadian Bar Association and the Barreau du Québec, violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This bill goes against too many of our principles.

I will leave the fearmongering up to them.

* * *

DAVID DESHARNAIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people in my riding are proud of the success of David Desharnais from Laurier-Station, who is enjoying a budding NHL career with the Montreal Canadiens.

At just five foot seven, David has carved out his place among the big guys. Looking back at his journey, we see that our homegrown idol never gave up on his childhood dream. After his many minor hockey successes as leader and captain of the Chicoutimi Saguenéens, and after playing in Cincinnati, he returned full force, a year later, joining the Habs' farm team, the Hamilton Bulldogs.

David Desharnais was called up to the NHL last year and scored his first NHL goal on January 12, 2011.

He had a very good year this season, playing forward on the first line and ending up as the third-highest scorer on his team.

To all of us in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, David is a shining example of perseverance and determination.

Congratulations. We wish David a long career in the National Hockey League.

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[English]

JAMES KINLEY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Jim Kinley, a former Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, who passed away last week.

The proud native of Lunenburg served as our province's 29th Lieutenant-Governor, holding the prestigious post from 1994 to 2000.

Mr. Kinley was also a successful engineer who started and ran several businesses, including Lunenburg Industrial Foundry and Engineering Limited, which is now headed by his son.

He served his country as a merchant mariner during the Second World War and went on to become a commander in the naval reserves and head of the Navy League of Canada.

In 2002 Mr. Kinley was appointed to the Order of Nova Scotia and awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal.

I know Mr. Kinley's pride in his community and commitment to his family and country will continue to be an inspiration to his wife

Grace, his four children and nine grandchildren and to all Nova Scotians.

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● (1405)

MOTHER'S DAY

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we celebrate Mother's Day to acknowledge, honour and appreciate the strength, guidance and compassion of our mothers. Mothers are our most important role models, teachers and nurturers. Mothers are the foundation of the family and help make stronger families. Stronger families make stronger communities and a stronger nation.

As we pay tribute to our mothers around the world, we should take a moment to consider all the sacrifices they have made for us.

In fact, every day should be Mother's Day.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting mothers, both at home and abroad. Canada is leading international efforts with programs through our Muskoka initiative to improve the health of mothers and children in some of the world's poorest countries. This will help save some of the 24,000 children who die needlessly every day in the developing world.

I ask all members to please join with me in wishing mothers across Canada a very happy Mother's Day.

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ARMBRAE ACADEMY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 125 years ago this month, the Halifax Ladies College opened its doors to the curious and creative minds of Canadian women. The college was founded by Anna Leonowens, a trailblazer in her own right, who struck out on her own to teach around the world in the 19th century.

Soon after it opened, the college became home to Lucy Maud Montgomery, who used it as inspiration for part of her beloved *Anne of Green Gables* novels.

When disaster struck with the Halifax explosion, the college was even transformed into a temporary hospital to treat thousands of injured Halifaxians.

Known today as the co-ed school Armbræ Academy, this Halifax institution has become a beacon of acceptance and excellence in our community. Armbræ has kept the spirit of its history alive with a close-knit, forward-thinking school environment.

Tomorrow, I will be hosting a group of Armbræ students on Parliament Hill. I cannot wait to meet Halifax's next set of great minds.

My best wishes on the college's 125th anniversary.

*Statements by Members***CHALK RIVER LABORATORIES**

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the innovative workers at Chalk River Laboratories have increased Canada's ability to produce helium-3 by developing techniques to extract it from operating CANDU reactors. As such, Canada possesses one of the largest repositories in the world of this sought-after isotope.

Helium-3 is a scarce resource that has a number of important applications in nuclear security, science and medicine. It is widely used in neutron detectors, which enable the detection of contraband nuclear materials at border crossings around the world.

Helium-3 is used in science for achieving extremely cold temperatures and for neutron-scattering research in material science at reactor facilities around the world.

Recently it has been successfully polarized for the first time at Chalk River Laboratories.

Polarized helium-3 can be utilized in the magnetic resonance imaging, MRI, of air spaces in human lungs. Having no interaction with the human body makes it a highly appealing alternative to current MRI practices.

AECL's Chalk River Laboratories offer jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

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SANOBI BIOGENEUS CHALLENGE

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after months of research and hard work, nine of our country's brightest high school and CEGEP students arrived in Ottawa for the Sanofi BioGENEius Challenge.

I will take this time to congratulate the participants for presenting an impressive and cutting-edge number of projects. They are all winners.

Our government's top priority is job creation and economic growth. We recognize that, as the future workforce, young Canadians have much to contribute to our country's long-term prosperity. I see this every day in my riding of Simcoe—Grey.

Employers increasingly require highly skilled workers, so competitions like this one are an excellent way to inspire young people to explore rewarding new careers in high-demand fields.

I am proud that our government supports the BioGENEius Challenge and is investing more than \$93,000 through the youth awareness program.

As today's competition makes clear, our country's greatest asset is our youth, an inexhaustible source of creativity.

Canada is so fortunate to have so many brilliant young minds ready to take on new frontiers.

[*Translation*]**HOUSING**

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 44th National Congress on Housing organized by the Canadian Housing & Renewal Association was held from May 1 to 4 in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Representatives of 400 organizations, municipalities and businesses were there to examine the current state of housing in Canada. The consensus was that, despite some progress in the area of housing and homelessness, the housing crisis is nowhere near being resolved.

I had the honour of discussing Bill C-400, which I introduced last February, to establish a national housing strategy. Countless organizations support this bill. I cannot count the number of representatives from organizations located in Conservative ridings who asked me how they could convince their MPs to vote in favour of the bill.

While Canada is still the only G8 country that does not have a national housing strategy, while over 150,000 Canadians are living on the street and while about 1.5 million households do not have appropriate housing, what more will it take to convince the Conservatives that Canada needs a real housing strategy?

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]**VE DAY**

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 67th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day.

We pay tribute to the more than one million Canadian men and women who fought and the more than 47,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders who made the ultimate sacrifice.

[*Translation*]

I urge all Canadians from coast to coast to coast to take a moment to remember the heroic efforts of those who fought for freedom during the Second World War.

[*English*]

The values they fought for are those that shaped our country, and the courage, the honour and the valour they displayed are an inspiration to us all.

Their legacy lives on in the peace and freedom we enjoy today. Lest we forget.

[*Translation*]

Lest we forget.

* * *

[*English*]**WORKPLACE SAFETY**

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 20th anniversary of the Westray Mine explosion.

Statements by Members

Although it happened in the small town of Plymouth, Nova Scotia, it was a tragedy for all Canadians. We remember the 26 miners who perished in this preventable disaster. I would like to think that we have learned from the tragic death of those 26 men. My thoughts remain with the families of those brothers, sons and fathers.

In 2003, this House passed the Westray bill that introduced laws aimed to hold employers accountable for the health and safety of their staff. However, since the tragic event in 1992, over 8,000 workers have died on the job and no one has ever been charged in those deaths.

We must take questions of accountability and safety in the workplace seriously. It is incumbent upon me, members of this House and all Canadians to recognize that nobody should have to sacrifice their health or their life for a job.

* * *

UGANDA

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned of troubling reports that Uganda's parliament may pass a bill introduced by the government that will limit the freedom of assembly and severely restrict the ability of the opposition members or activists to hold public rallies.

That proposed legislation goes against our fundamental core values as Canadians, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We remain concerned that the bill, if passed, would further limit the freedom in Uganda.

Our government will continue to speak up for democratic values around the world and push this message to any country that seeks to undermine democratic institutions.

We call on the Government of Uganda to respect the rights of freedom of expression and assembly enshrined in its constitution and to fulfill its international human rights obligations.

* * *

VICTORIA BY THE SEA

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Victoria by the Sea of Prince Edward Island for its recent award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

This small picturesque community, with a population of just over 100 people, is on the cutting edge of the green revolution. In response to failing septic systems, the village developed an integrated water and waste water plan.

The new system is closed, which means that none of the water goes into the harbour being instead transferred to the ground after a series of filtering. Among the many positive results of the endeavour, CO₂ emissions related to pumping out the holding and septic tanks have decreased by 54%, suspended solids have been reduced by 90% and nitrate output to groundwater has been reduced 58%.

On behalf of the House, I congratulate the folks in the community of Victoria by the Sea on their recent award and I thank them for their effort to make Canada a cleaner and greener place. Simply put, the good folks of Victoria By the Sea are leading the way.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader's choice of the member for Vancouver East as deputy leader is particularly important, as it shows who he relies upon the most.

We have already demonstrated how his deputy leader is completely out of touch when it comes to getting tough on crime, but that is not the only area where the member opposite has demonstrated poor judgment.

Among other things, she is a leading proponent of ending a 10-year residence requirement for immigrants to receive OAS and GIS. In 2011, she introduced a motion demanding that new arrivals who have not contributed by paying taxes receive seniors' benefits. She has introduced this motion several times since 2000. It is estimated that this promise would cost more than \$800 million a year.

Calling for expensive extensions of Canada's social spending with no plans as to how the government could pay for it is all too typical of the NDP team.

* * *

●(1415)

[Translation]

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF GILLES VILLENEUVE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago today Gilles Villeneuve, the "little guy from Berthier", was killed in action.

On the Zolder track in Belgium, the driving ace, the people's hero, met his tragic fate. Gilles Villeneuve's determination, courage and talent blazed the trail for Quebec's motor sports tradition. His victory at the first Canadian Grand Prix on Île Sainte-Hélène inspired countless race car drivers.

[English]

Gilles Villeneuve was also a source of inspiration to the millions of us who are proud and honoured to see him rise to the highest of podiums. Villeneuve was one of the most well-known Canadians.

[Translation]

My heart goes out to his wife Joann, his daughter Mélanie, and his son Jacques, who has honoured his father's memory throughout his brilliant career.

On behalf of my fellow citizens and all of his fans, we will celebrate the life of a national hero this evening in Berthierville.

Gilles, *sarai sempre nei nostri cuori.*

*Oral Questions**[English]***NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA**

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants Canadians and Canadian provinces to fight with each other. For example, in his ongoing campaign against resource development, he is blaming the oil sands for the problems in the manufacturing sector. That is ridiculous.

What he does not mention is that the resource sector provides billions of dollars to the Canadian manufacturing sector in machinery, equipment and goods that are required to operate these developments. It is no wonder that Canadian manufacturers and exporters have come out in strong support of our government's resource sector and responsible resource development initiatives.

As Brad Wall, the Premier of Saskatchewan, asked:

If [the leader of the opposition] thinks a strong resource sector is a 'disease', what is his 'cure'? Higher resource taxes? NDP needs to explain.

We in this place know that the NDP's cure is to shut down Canada, to live in caves and to stay huddled together for warmth because where the NDP wants to go there are no jobs, no energy, no policies and no Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***THE BUDGET**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the NDP made a common sense proposal that would allow the budget implementation bill to be studied properly. This would allow members of Parliament to do the jobs we were all elected to do. It would respect the number one role of this institution: to hold the government accountable on behalf of Canadians.

Will the government do the right thing and agree to split the bill?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government received a mandate to make jobs, growth and long-term prosperity its major emphasis. The economic action plan was put before this Parliament in March and approved in principle in April. A first bill is now before Parliament, which will be debated for a record amount of time.

I would encourage all members of Parliament to focus on that work and move forward on the priority of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has to start putting the interests of the country and respect for institutions ahead of his own partisan interests.

The NDP's suggestion to split the budget implementation bill was made in good faith. Members of Parliament are elected to carefully examine bills. That is the work that needs to be done, and we all share this responsibility.

Why not let members do their job properly?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economy is the national interest of Canadians.

This government received a mandate to make jobs and growth and long-term prosperity its major emphasis. The economic action plan was put before this Parliament in March and approved in principle in April. A first bill is now before Parliament and will be debated in a record amount of time. I would encourage all members of Parliament to focus on the real economic priorities of Canadians.

* * *

● (1420)

*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner of the environment tells us that the Conservatives have no real plan to protect Canada's health and environment. He tells us that it is too late for the government to meet even its inadequate climate change targets for 2020.

Already future generations are going to be responsible for \$7.7 billion in environmental liabilities, and that is only the contaminated sites we know about, not the ones that continue to be created today. Why are the Conservatives compounding their environmental failures with a budget bill that would further gut environmental protection?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, this government has made record investments in environmental remediation and cleaning up sites that were not properly assessed in the past. This government is ensuring that we have thorough environmental assessments going forward.

We differ with the NDP in that we think that while environmental assessments have to be thorough, there also has to be a time limit. There has to be the ability to actually have economic development in this country. The no-development party does not favour that, but we do and Canadians do.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' targets are already too low, and yet they still cannot meet them. Furthermore, they have no idea how much their plan is going to cost. The Environment Commissioner has slammed the Conservatives' sector-by-sector approach to reducing GHG emissions. This plan is simply ineffective.

Is the minister trying to hide the cost, or is the government simply incompetent and does not know how much it will cost?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the commissioner that costing, as it becomes available, should be shared with both him and Parliament. As for costing in advance of consultations with industry, for example, as we are with the oil and gas industry now, that would be premature and speculative.

Costs that my colleague will not see in that report are a carbon tax, increased cost at the gas pump, increased home heating costs and generally an increased cost of living.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has not even done a simple cost-benefit analysis. There is no implementation plan to reduce emissions. Conservatives have no idea what their failed approach will cost the Canadian economy in the future.

Last fall the minister made the bizarre claim that withdrawing from Kyoto would save us money, but it seems he has not done a full life cycle accounting of his own plan.

Why will the minister not come clean with Canadians? Why is he hiding the full costs of the Conservative approach?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, withdrawing from Kyoto, as is our legal right, does save Canadians great costs. We are not sending billions of dollars of hard-earned Canadian tax dollars overseas to buy hot air credits from depressed eastern European communities.

We are saving Canadians a great deal of money with our sector by sector approach to regulation. With regard to regulations in the light car and truck sector alone, we are saving Canadians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when asked yesterday about his irresponsible allegations about so-called money laundering by unspecified NGOs, the Minister of the Environment hid behind the Minister of National Revenue. Maybe the government is nervous about him getting up and speaking. I spoke to him afterwards and told him that he should not make irresponsible allegations, to which he replied, “Don't you know what a figure of speech is?” A figure of speech. Will the Minister of the Environment get up and explain to us why slandering an NGO by innuendo is a figure of speech?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I think the member of the Liberal Party knows well, this government is committed to responsible resource development. We are also committed to responsible use of charitable moneys to ensure that charitable moneys go into charitable activities as opposed to political activities. However, at the same time, when it comes to the important environmental review processes we have in this country, we think it is ultimately important that Canadians control them and Canadians get input into those processes rather than foreign interests dominating those processes.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is hiding behind the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Revenue—his human shield.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am having a hard time hearing the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. He has the floor and he has the right to ask a question.

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, after the minister accused non-profit organizations of money laundering, he later told me in this House that it was just a figure of speech. Money laundering is not a just figure of speech; it is a criminal offence.

Will the Minister of the Environment rise here in the House, apologize and withdraw his irresponsible remarks?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have announced measures in the budget to provide more education to charities to ensure they are operating within the law and more transparency for those Canadians who donate so generously to these charities. We are taking action so Canadians can be sure that the charities they donate to are using their resources appropriately.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Commissioner of the Environment gave the Conservative government a failing grade. His report contradicts the government's unfounded claim that it will be able to meet even its weak greenhouse gas emissions targets. The commissioner said that poor planning, inadequate environmental assessment and weak regulations become expensive mistakes for future generations. Why does the government insist on gutting environmental legislation, despite the expert advice of the commissioner?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we received the report of the environment commissioner with interest. We have taken note of his recommendations, although we have also taken note of the fact that his points of reference are almost a year out of date. What the environment commissioner did not acknowledge was the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, what the commissioner did not note in his report was my greenhouse gas inventory report released last month. It shows that emissions have declined in almost all sectors, including oil and gas, since 2005; our GHG emissions are down 48 megatonnes from 2005—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Vancouver East.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years New Democrats and many others have been calling for a comprehensive strategy and action to improve mental health services for Canadians. Canada's mental health system is poorly coordinated and underfunded. The Mental Health Commission today called for a long-overdue overhaul of this broken system. The federal government must stop neglecting mental health care and take leadership to ensure that Canadians receive the care they deserve. What actions will the government take to implement the recommendations of this report, and when will we see these long-overdue changes?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the release of the mental health strategy this morning from the Mental Health Commission of Canada. As the opposition member knows, this important commission was created under our government. We are proud of the work that it has done so far. Our government will continue to work with the provinces and the territories in their efforts. We have committed to a long-term stable funding arrangement that will see health transfers reach record-high levels by the end of the decade.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question was, what action will the federal government take on the recommendations that came out today? The report outlines the need for collaboration and coordination among all levels of government.

Canadians need to see a significant federal investment in mental health. Enough of the self-congratulations. Will the government implement these recommendations, or is it really just washing its hands and leaving it to the strained provincial budgets to pick up the slack?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once elected, our government took quick action. In fact, we formed the Mental Health Commission during the first year of our mandate.

The Liberal record is deplorable. All the Liberals did was to cut transfers to the jurisdictions.

As for the NDP members, it is a bit rich that they ask such a question, as they voted against the establishment of the Mental Health Commission.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories in the rollout of these recommendations.

* * *

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by introducing a Trojan Horse budget packed with amendments that have nothing to do with the budget, the Conservatives have shown their true colours.

This budget cuts more jobs than it creates. It reduces seniors' benefits, provincial health funding, and food inspection.

Why is this government so determined to pass a bill that will weaken our economy and endanger Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the context of the budget is an effort to continue the economic recovery, jobs and growth and prosperity in Canada.

As the member opposite knows, Canada has done relatively well. Coming out of the great recession, we have about 700,000 net new jobs in Canada, the best job growth in any industrialized country in the G7. We have done rather well, but we need the long-term plan to get back to balanced budgets and have sustainable programs in the long term so Canada can maintain its record of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better than the irresponsible changes the government is trying to quietly sneak through in this bill.

From cuts that will affect Canada's poorest seniors the most to wide-ranging cuts that will harm Canada's multi-billion dollar arts industry to foreign aid cuts that will stop all aid to four of the world's poorest countries, this Trojan Horse budget will in fact kill more jobs than it creates.

When will the government stop listening just to oil lobbyists and start listening to Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite has read what the economists in Canada and elsewhere have said about the budget and how economic action plan 2012 continues Canada in the right direction toward jobs, growth and prosperity.

Yes, there are modest spending reductions over the course of three years built into the budget. If hon. members want to see drama, they should go to the United Kingdom, or watch what the United States will be obliged to do when it tries to get its house in order. We never want Canada to be in that place. That is why we have moderate spending reductions, returning to balanced budgets in the medium term.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Talking about getting the house in order, Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives should start with the environment.

There are 22,000 contaminated sites in Canada posing risks to human health, from abandoned mines to leaky fuel tanks. Canadians expect the government to take action on these sites. The environment commissioner has identified a half billion dollar funding shortfall. That is less than half of the cost of the meeting in Muskoka.

Oral Questions

Why have the Conservatives failed to make the cleanup of thousands of contaminated sites a priority? Why have they failed Canadian families yet again?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is wonderful the NDP has finally discovered the challenge this country faces with regard to contaminated sites.

The commissioner's report also notes that 42% of the inventory of contaminated sites have been cleaned, remediated by February this year.

The 15-year federal contaminated sites program is only at its midway point. We will continue to work to address the situation on all of the major contaminated sites in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a crock. According to the commissioner, those sites are the legacy of poor planning, inadequate environmental assessment and weak environmental regulations.

The Conservatives are using their budget bill to force Canadians to accept changes that scuttle environmental protection for Canadian families.

When will the Conservatives stop their constant attacks on environmental regulation? When will they start protecting the health of Canadian families?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that our colleague needs some help reading the report.

[*English*]

The report indicates that the commissioner says the Government of Canada is making good progress in addressing contaminated sites across the country. Through the federal contaminated sites action plan, the Government of Canada is addressing harmful effects of past practices and protecting Canadians and our environment for future generations.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative vendetta against environmental groups is becoming clearer. Tides Canada is fighting to protect the environment, yet it is being attacked and its activities are being scrutinized by Revenue Canada.

Rather than cleaning house at Revenue Canada, which is mired in allegations of corruption and is producing questionable videos, the Conservatives are intent on finding fault with environmental groups. Why?

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government does understand that registered charities are an important part of our Canadian society, and we do encourage Canadians to donate generously. CRA does enforce the Income Tax Act free of political direction, specific files or interference, and we expect CRA to undertake compliance and enforcement activities, as appropriate, to enforce Canadian laws.

We are taking action so that Canadians can be sure that charities are using their resources appropriately.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Tides Canada is a respected organization that does tremendous work in environmental causes and social—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie has the floor.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, Tides Canada is a respected organization that does tremendous work in environmental and social causes, but the Conservatives are targeting Tides Canada and treating people who disagree with their reckless environmental policies like criminals. The government is using the Canada Revenue Agency to attack charities that disagree with the Conservative Party line.

When are the Conservatives going to stop this outrageous war on Canada's environmental groups?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all organizations are subject to Canadian law. We expect that those organizations will be in compliance with Canadian law. Canadians want to ensure that when they donate to charities, those charitable resources will be used for the purpose they were intended.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now is the time to tackle environmental challenges, not attack environmental groups. The figures speak for themselves: in February, six years after the Conservatives were first elected, only two regulations had been put in place to limit greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation industry and no regulations had been put in place for the oil and gas industry. What a coincidence.

And yet the Conservatives committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17% by 2020. Given their irresponsible choices, they will not even be able to meet their own extremely low targets.

Why do the Conservatives not have a credible, costed plan to protect the environment and the health of future generations?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said any number of times in the House, we do have a plan, and that plan is working sector by sector. We began with the transportation sector, which accounts for 24% of our annual greenhouse gas emissions. We are about to bring down final regulations for the coal-fired electricity sector. We are in consultations now with the oil and gas sector. We will continue and we will hit those 2020 targets.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended the Military Police Complaints Commission hearings and met Sheila Fynes, the mother of a deceased soldier. I saw first-hand the impact his suicide is having on her. Compounding this enormous sadness was a 14-month delay in releasing the suicide note, leaving the family to wonder and to question the reasons for his death. The note included his hope to have a small, private funeral, a wish that went unfulfilled because the government did not release the note.

At what point in 2008 was the minister first made aware of the suicide note?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to say the least, the loss of Corporal Langridge to suicide a very tragic case. I have met personally with Ms. Sheila Fynes. All of this very unsettling and sad saga is playing out before a Military Police Complaints Commission, which is looking into the details of this matter.

This matter is now before an arm's-length tribunal. I find it unfortunate that the member opposite has tried to politicize this before the House of Commons while the matter is yet to be determined by an arm's-length body, the Military Police Complaints Commission.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is unfortunate is that the minister decided to attack instead of explain.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Corporal Steve Stoesz has defied orders and is courageously speaking out about the terrible state of mental health care services in the Canadian Forces.

He said:

[English]

“The country I fought for now has broken me.”

[Translation]

Meanwhile, the minister is cutting funding to programs to prevent suicide and to help soldiers overcome depression. Why?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact we continue to increase our mental health services across the country. Let me quote Colonel Jean-Robert Bernier, who spoke last week. He said that since 2006, the military health budget has grown by more than \$100 million, and \$38.6 million is spent annually just to provide mental health care and preventative programs to the Canadian Forces.

Is there more we can do? Absolutely. Are we continuing to make those investments to support our men and women who are suffering from post-traumatic stress? Indeed we are. We are working every day to ensure that those services are available.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last October the government supported a Liberal motion to implement a

national suicide prevention strategy. Eight months later, it has done nothing except cut suicide prevention programs for Inuit and aboriginal youth and the armed forces.

Today the Mental Health Commission of Canada recommended prevention of mental illness as one of six core strategic directions.

Does the Minister of Health comprehend that suicide prevention literally saves lives? Will she proceed urgently to develop a national suicide prevention strategy?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we welcomed the release of the Mental Health Commission's strategy this morning. As the opposition member knows, this is important work of the commission, and we continue to work with the provinces and territories in the rollout. That is why we have committed to long-term stable funding to the provinces and territories. The funding arrangements will see that health transfers reach a record high of \$40 billion, and provinces and territories will be able to adjust it to priorities in their areas.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives needed only 160 words to justify a procurement process worth over \$25 billion for the F-35s, which, I would again point out, are still in development and behind schedule and which come with no guarantee of any economic benefits.

A former senior official responsible for the F-35s has said: “The government insulted Canadians’ intelligence by using disinformation and repeatedly manipulating the facts to achieve its goals.”

So who is responsible for this manipulation?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a very comprehensive response to concerns raised by the Auditor General. We have now in place much more transparency, accountability, and reporting to Parliament and to the public. We also have independent oversight. Let me also add that there is a freeze on any spending until all seven steps are met.

Most importantly, I remind the House and the member opposite that there has been no money spent on acquisition. There were no contracts signed, but we are moving forward with this important replacement of the CF-18. I would encourage the member opposite to support this important investment.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot about the seven-step plan, but we have a seven-word solution: just put this contract out to tender.

Oral Questions

A retired assistant deputy minister in charge of DND procurement disclosed a document confirming that the Minister of Public Works and Government Services would have signed off on the 160-word letter from DND.

For now, rhetoric aside, simply yes or no: did the Minister of Public Works and Government Services sign off on the letter from DND?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we have followed the advice and the recommendation of the Auditor General. We responded with a very comprehensive plan. In fact, we have gone beyond that recommendation to ensure greater transparency and accountability. All of the departments now are working in unison through the secretariat.

We will move forward with this important procurement, unlike the members of the no-defence party. Those members have a thinly veiled agenda, which is not to support military procurement. We will move forward on this project.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Psychiatric Association president, Dr. Fiona McGregor, said that no officials in the Department of Defence have contacted the organization regarding mental health worker recruitment. Dr. McGregor said that recruiting by press conference is an ineffective way to encourage psychiatrists and psychologists to come to work for the military. She says that a more comprehensive approach to the problem is needed.

Can the minister tell the House what his government is actually doing to recruit mental health workers?

•(1445)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, I can. I thank the member for that question, because we have actually undertaken, over the last number of years, a very extensive effort to recruit psychiatrists and mental health professionals, including the use of a contracting firm in which we advertised online. We went out to find trade journals that would reach those individuals. We have recruited at conferences; as well, we have gone to the annual Canadian Psychiatric Association conference and worked collaboratively with the Canadian Medical Association and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Most importantly, we continue to bring these professionals into the fold in the Canadian Forces so that we can meet the challenges of mental health and bring these issues into the light.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cuts to mental health services in the Canadian Forces are of grave concern to its members, to their families and to all Canadians. Dr. McGregor said the Canadian Psychiatric Association and its members are keen to collaborate. Canadian soldiers returning from Afghanistan deserve support. This will not happen if the Conservative government continues its plan to cut services.

Military families are waiting for a commitment, Canadian health care professionals are waiting to collaborate and the Canadian public is ready for the government to treat our forces with the respect they deserve. Will the minister reverse his plan to cut these critical mental health services?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I will do is continue to work with my department to increase these critical mental health services, which is exactly what we are doing. We are working toward doubling the number of professionals in our hire right now.

We have continued to make those important investments, both in joint personal support units across the country, in programs and in working closely with Veterans Affairs. We will continue to make those investments because these individuals need the help and have asked for the help.

I am pleased to hear the member opposite mention that the Canadian Psychiatric Association is prepared to work with the Department of National Defence. We embrace that offer.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes any violation of our veterans' privacy is totally unacceptable. Over a year ago we took action and put in place a 10-point privacy action plan to ensure strict disciplinary measures for those who violate the law, while strengthening access, controls and monitoring.

Could the minister update the House on how our government has continued to enhance protection around privacy for Canadian veterans?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Huron—Bruce for his commitment to our great veterans and their families.

We are building on the successes of the privacy action plan to ensure that the private information of our veterans remains protected. That is why I present today the privacy action plan 2.0, which includes providing targeted training on privacy principles, streamlining consent forms and ensuring new initiatives are compliant with privacy requirements.

Our government is clear: we will not tolerate any privacy breach.

*Oral Questions***41ST GENERAL ELECTION**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, investigators have confirmed that the same IP address used by Pierre Poutine to order electro-fraud was also used by party staff to connect directly with the Conservative war room. Investigators have also confirmed that key evidence from the Conservative database has gone missing.

The Conservatives need to stop acting like Watergate burglars and come clean with Canadians. As first steps, would the parliamentary secretary at least admit that the IP address linked to voter fraud was linked to the Conservative Party? It is a simple question.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is the member is absolutely incorrect in stating that any IP address, as indicated, is in any way located or connected to the Conservative Party of Canada. It is absolutely incorrect. I can state that emphatically.

What I can also say is that the member continues to do what the Chief Electoral Officer has suggested that he should not do. The Chief Electoral Officer said he found making sweeping allegations of wrongdoing without facts to support them to be troubling. That is all this member does.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will reiterate the facts. The computers linked to illegal acts in voter fraud are also linked to the Conservative Party. The database information came from the Conservatives' database over on Lancaster Road, and we now know that key data records have been deleted.

Therefore, rather than subject Canadians to this endless fan dance of prevarication, would the member stand up and tell Canadians that he actually takes it seriously that electoral fraud happened under the Conservatives' watch?

• (1450)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to engage in a game of Clue with the member opposite, but perhaps he would like to get one.

What I can say quite clearly—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: What I can say quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, and the member knows this full well, is that there is no evidence. In fact, the evidence is clear. The Conservative Party of Canada had absolutely nothing to do with this. Any computer IP address that the member is referring to has nothing to do with the Conservative Party of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that when it comes to elections, the Conservatives are not very clean.

We are aware of new revelations about the crooks who hide in the Conservatives' ranks. Their former candidate in Verchères—Les Patriotes was the notary for the West End Gang, a criminal organization in Montreal. The man who posed proudly on Conservative signs signed off on loans with a 60% interest rate.

Will the Conservatives take on the usurers who are ripping off thousands of Canadians, instead of associating with these criminals?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they just keep going into the mud pit.

The allegations made by the member, first, have nothing to do with the operations of government, and second, have absolutely nothing to do with the Conservative Party of Canada. The individual that the member has referred to has absolutely no connection with the Conservative Party. He has not been a member for many years, and the member knows that full well. He should stop flinging mud.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians know is that the Conservatives got rid of him only because he accused the Prime Minister of abandoning Quebec, not because he was crooked.

The Conservatives chose a criminal who specialized in money laundering to represent them. They decided that a man who was hand in glove with organized crime was the dream candidate to be the Conservative standard-bearer in peaceable Montérégie.

Are the Conservatives going to admit their mistake and do something to take on their criminal pal who is stealing from people?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are outrageous statements that say a lot more about the member who made them than they say about anyone on this side of the House.

What I can say very clearly is that I can stand behind the ethical standards of this party, the people on these benches and the people who work hard on behalf of Canadians. Those allegations have nothing to do with the Conservative Party, and that person has not been a member of the party for many years.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we have another high-flying Conservative found guilty of wasting hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars.

This time it is Loyola Sullivan, the former fisheries ambassador for Canada, who has been busted for spending nearly \$600,000 on useless junkets. Mr. Sullivan served as ambassador at the same time as he was the Conservative candidate in waiting for the last election, racking up obscene amounts of expenses and delivering absolutely nothing.

Oral Questions

I see the Minister of Foreign Affairs looking down the way. My question is to you. Why do you condone this extravagant lifestyle at

The Speaker: Order, please. The member should know to address his questions through the Speaker and not directly at other members or ministers.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government expects all public officials, including those who represent us diplomatically abroad, to live an appropriate lifestyle.

In fact, if members look at our measures in the current economic action plan 2012, they will see that we are taking steps to ensure that government business is done at an effective cost for taxpayers.

As for the individual in question, we are very proud of the work he has done, standing up for Canada on important critical fisheries issues, standing up for our sealing industry, our sealers and our first nations who engage in that industry against threats from abroad. We are proud of the work that he has done.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to talk about seals, so let us talk about seals.

While that ambassador was there, he had 121 junkets, half of which were related to the sealing industry. What did we see? We saw seal markets in Europe shut out, seal markets in Russia shut out and seal markets in China shut out and no reduction in restrictive fishing terms, nothing to reduce foreign overfishing, and the list goes on.

The high-flying Conservative fisheries ambassador wasted thousands of dollars and accomplished absolutely nothing.

If the minister is so confident that the ambassador did a great job for Canada and it is such an important position, why has this position not been filled—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is undoubtedly a big job standing up for Canada's sealing industry against threats abroad, but the real problem is when one starts getting stabbed in the back by one's own Canadians.

Why does that member not talk to colleagues in his caucus? Maybe the ambassador should have gone to members of the Liberal caucus and told them to stop introducing bills on their side to shut down the seal hunt. That is what the Liberal Party has done. That is what we have been trying to combat.

They should get their own house in order and they should stand up for the sealing industry for a change.

* * *

●(1455)

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Competition Bureau says that Canada's credit card companies have set up a perverse system that thwarts the normal rules of the marketplace. It has been estimated that Canadians pay \$5 billion a

year in hidden credit card fees, some of the highest in the world. This is infuriating to both consumers and small businesses.

Why is it the Conservatives are A-okay with credit card companies filling their coffers with the money of hard-working Canadians? What is the government doing to address the lack of regulation on credit card fees?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we developed the credit card code of conduct with the support of consumer associations and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the New Democratic Party voted against it. That is what we have done. The opposition, of course, has done nothing.

The case to which the hon. member refers is before the Competition Tribunal. It raises specific issues between various parties and the tribunal will deal with them in the normal course.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is rubbish.

The Competition Bureau has released a scathing report. The commissioner says that the Conservatives spent over \$60 million in five years on government credit card fees. People are already paying unreasonable interest rates on their own credit cards, and they have to cover the fees on government cards on top of that. The government, which is in a good position to negotiate fair terms with the big credit companies, is getting ripped off, so imagine what is happening to small businesses.

How can the government justify wasting public funds like this when it is calling for austerity?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard for a long time to develop the credit card code of conduct. This involved consultations with consumer groups and small business groups. It has been very well received by the various business groups, particularly the small business groups. It is a way of regulating the market in a voluntary way.

We have made it clear that there must be compliance. I am happy to say there has been general compliance. We have had a couple of instances where we have stepped in, but then we have had compliance to the credit card code of conduct.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, legitimate trade and travel passing through the Canada-U.S. border is incredibly important to the success of our economy. Throughout our mandate, our Conservative government has taken strong action to work with the Americans to ensure that our border is open to officially process legitimate travel and trade but that the door is slammed shut to criminals, terrorists and human smugglers.

Oral Questions

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please update this House on what our government is doing to make travel to and from the U.S. more efficient?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's top priority is creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. The border action plan is designed to speed up legitimate trade and travel and improve security in North America.

Today the Minister of Public Safety announced enhancements to the NEXUS program, including increasing benefits to NEXUS members, streamlining the NEXUS membership renewal process and launching a plan to increase NEXUS membership.

This is good news for travellers and good news for the economy.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Community Groups Network is the main advocacy group for anglophone Quebecers. Its representatives have made every effort to meet the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages since his appointment a year ago, but he keeps refusing to meet them. Why is he snubbing them? Is it arrogance, indifference, crass laziness or gross incompetence? Whatever it is, will he commit to meet the QCGN at the first opportunity?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have met with the Quebec Community Groups Network a number of times. It is an important organization. We have met with a number of groups representing the rights and interests of anglophone communities in the province of Quebec.

However, my hon. colleague should know that my parliamentary secretary has been criticized unfairly and viciously because he is a unilingual francophone. I would hope that he would stand with me in opposition to those groups who are attacking him as he works to learn the English language, as he does a great job for Canadians, and stand with us and those who oppose those who stigmatize those who do not speak both official languages.

* * *

• (1500)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last three years, two veterans ombudsmen have said very clearly that the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is not doing its job by—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore now has the floor.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: —applying the benefit of the doubt clause when it comes to adjudicating—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has to come to order and so does the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie and the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has the floor.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, now that two veterans ombudsmen have stated clearly that the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is not doing its job by applying the benefit of the doubt clause to veterans who apply before the board for their rightful benefits, how long will it take before we eliminate this useless political entity and allow the front-line DVA people to make the decision on peer review of medical evidence? It should be very quick.

When the heroes of our country come to DVA asking for help, they should not be turned away by the politically appointed board.

When will the government eliminate that board—

The Speaker: The member is out of time. The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the totally irresponsible views of the NDP critic, the 4,000 veterans every year who turn to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board would be abandoned and deprived of their right to appeal.

I will quote the ombudsman who said:

The Veterans Review and Appeal Board has a critical role to play in ensuring that Veterans and other clients of Veterans Affairs Canada receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled....

—

The Speaker: Order, please. The minister is out of time.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the government launched a call for proposals for research projects that will help us understand the mental afflictions regarding the homeless.

Would the hon. Minister of Health share the details of this announcement with members of the House?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform members of the House that our government developed, in close collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, an initiative for projects that will complement its work and is consistent with the mental health strategy for Canada. The initiative was launched today. It will help us understand how we can prevent homelessness in those afflicted with mental health issues.

Government Orders

I am proud that our government created the Mental Health Commission of Canada in the first year of its mandate. It is too bad that opposition members voted against it.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hope that this government has the interests of Quebecers at heart. A major energy development project is being proposed across the border from the town of Stanstead, in my riding. There has been no consultation of municipal, provincial or federal authorities.

The people in my riding have reason to be worried about this project. Their health and safety are at risk because of the proximity of the project and its potential scope.

What will the government do to ensure that the interests of the people of Stanstead are heard across the border and that they are consulted when this type of project is developed?

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, the member referred to a project a number of times but never called it by name. There are many projects in Quebec and we respect the jurisdiction of the provinces, the states and the people that we work with.

Perhaps if we had a bit more information about the project, we could answer the question.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in tabling his report, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development informed us that Quebec has nearly 2,300 contaminated federal sites, 160 of which are high-priority sites and constitute a public health risk. Eleven of these priority sites are in Montreal, including in the Old Port and Lachine Canal areas.

The government has known about this situation for several years and has done nothing. When will it decontaminate these sites in Quebec?

• (1505)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question.

[English]

What this report fails to tackle is that this program addresses only the most contaminated sites across Canada. In that regard, the commissioner notes that almost half, 42%, of the sites in the inventory were cleaned up by February of this year.

This plan has worked well to date. It will continue to work well as we work our way to address the most serious contaminated sites.

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a document entitled *Privacy Action Plan*, version 2.0.

[English]

It is the same document I made reference to in question period.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has six minutes left to conclude her speech.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to help workers who may become disabled, we have implemented our wage earner protection plan, requiring federally-regulated private sector employers to ensure, on a go-forward basis, any long-term disability plans they offer to their employees. We are also improving the registered disability savings plan.

Our government is committed to extending support for families, students, seniors, pensioners and persons with disabilities. I am pleased to report that, without exception, Canadians in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, which includes CFB Petawawa, like the support our government has provided to Canada's armed forces, people like Robert Little, who wrote, "As an ex serviceman who served 20 years less a day for my country our service personnel should have the utmost protection when in the field or at home. This government and you have shown that you have great respect for providing all Canadians with a proud and excellent fighting force when needed".

John Dixon wrote, "Our military is very important and must be maintained. Don't let the purchase of new equipment fall behind as the Liberals did".

Mack from Pembroke wrote, "One American aircraft carrier has more planes than Canada proposes to purchase. For years our military has had to do with less than other countries in the UN and we lost some lives because of that, especially in Afghanistan, that is unacceptable. We need a decent and well equipped military in today's world".

Government Orders

In response to my question about taxes, Tom Peckett from Braeside said, “Good. Any time more money is put back into the tax payer hand is much better for our economy”.

Peter from Westmeath wrote, “Thank you for not raising taxes. Like your household and mine, if we haven't got the money, we can't have it, period. Government should take a lesson from the people and not from the lobbyists. Take away the ability of able bodied non-working people to have anything but the basics, no booze, no snack food, no big screen TVs, etc. I already pay for non-working people to have families. Why should I have to pay for 'breakfast programs' in schools as well?”

Unlike the old government, which relied heavily on lobbyists, we passed the Lobbyists Registration Act. This was our response to abuses like the sponsorship scandal.

Jim O'Brien had this to say about our budget, “No tax increases, no cuts to health and education are a welcome relief. All the other cuts in the budget e.g. public service were necessary to get the country back on course after the recession”.

We recognize the need to build and maintain infrastructure in our communities and to provide relief to our municipalities and relieve the burden placed on ratepayers through property taxes by permanently providing the federal gas tax revenue as a stable source of infrastructure funding. The 17 municipalities in my riding welcomed this commitment to our federal government. Unfortunately, in the province of Ontario rural municipalities are denied the provincial gas tax rebate. Providing the right climate for business, particularly small business, to grow and create employment is the role of government.

The need for dependable, affordable high speed Internet throughout rural Ontario is great. Access to better bandwidth and connectivity is essential to the future prosperity of eastern Ontario. As MP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, together with my Conservative eastern Ontario colleagues, \$55 million in federal funding was provided to get the job done and much of this funding was provided during the stimulus phase of our action plan. There were \$255 million provided through Industry Canada over three years to develop and extend broadband coverage to as many underserved households as possible.

Our government is implementing specific measures to ensure that Canadians living in rural Canada are able to receive the same high-quality services available to most other Canadians. When the job is completed in March of 2014, 95% of the population of eastern Ontario will have access to affordable high speed Internet.

Our Conservative government is focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. In 2010 Canada's natural resource sectors employed more than 760,000 workers, many of them in Renfrew county. The mining and energy sectors alone represent 10% of the Canadian economy and 40% of our exports. In the next 10 years, more than 500 new projects, representing \$500 billion in new investment, will be proposed for Canada. The potential for job growth is enormous.

• (1510)

With the passing of Bill C-38, Canadians will benefit from system-wide legislative improvements to the review process for

major economic development projects. One project, one review, in a clearly defined time period makes common sense. The people in my riding get that fact, as evidenced from the comments I received, “The only thing that bothers me is the pressure from the environmental extremist groups to delay us from getting our natural resources to the marketplace. We are natural resource rich and that alone could solve most of the current economy problems”.

Our forestry sector still needs our assistance. Too many forestry workers are without work, too many mills and plants are still idle. The challenge for eastern Ontario is that the province controls the wood supply. In eight short years, thanks to the anti-national resource extraction policy of Queen's Park, Ontario is now an importer of wood. The decision by our federal Minister of Natural Resources to call out some of the lobby groups that are writing policy for the provincial government to come clean on where they get their funding brings hope that rational policies that benefit Ontario will return to the forestry sector.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I heard the member right, in her reading of comments from her riding, one individual asked why he should have to pay for breakfast programs for children. I find this line of thinking on the part of the government most egregious. The member opposite has to vet her speech, so she has put that in intentionally. This is exactly what the Conservatives do on a day to day basis. They pick the most vulnerable and then they go after them.

I invite the member opposite to reconsider including a comment like that in Parliament. Does the member not understand that breakfast programs in schools produce better students, better adults, create a climate, a society and a culture that are more welcoming and safer? That kind of comment does not belong in the House. Would the member opposite care to comment on that?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the no-development party, the no-defence party, does not listen to the people. I am relaying the comments and concerns of the people of my riding. We listen to all comments, whether we like them or not. The House of Commons is the place to have the concerns of Canadians across the country heard.

Since 2006, our government has been working on this part to streamline the review process for major economic projects. It is through growing the economy that we improve social programs, the best social program being a job.

Government Orders

• (1515)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to system-wide legislative changes, which caught my ear. As members will know, the current government more than any other government, likely in the history of Parliament, has brought in substantial changes to legislation that go far beyond this budget. We have suggested and will continue to say that the government has used the budget as a back door in order to pass legislation that should have been stand-alone legislation.

In order to achieve her system-wide legislative changes that the member is so proud of, why is the government choosing to use the back door of the budget as opposed to bringing in a legislative agenda that would have allowed for more debate inside this chamber? It would have allowed for professionals and stakeholders from across the country to attend as witnesses in committee, literally hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of debates and discussions that should have happened, given the important legislation to be passed through the back door of this budget. Why this anti-democratic move that is being incorporated into the Conservative budget?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, a question like that simply demonstrates how unfit the Liberal Party of Canada is to ever be government again. Liberal members do not recognize that it is all the parts of the economy working together that helps us to achieve a healthy economy, creating jobs, long-term prosperity and growth for all Canadians.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on her comments and her speech. I would like to get a bit more clarification on the responsible resource development portion of the budget.

Does it in any way reduce the stringency, environmentally? We have been accused of that. I just want the member to clarify where we are at with the environment.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, currently companies undertaking major projects must navigate a complex maze of regulatory requirements, processes and approvals. They are long and unpredictable.

Responsible resource development streamlines the review process to create good, skilled, well-paying jobs while maintaining the highest possible standards for protecting the environment.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. member is about the government that allegedly believes in economic development.

Today in *Bloomberg*, out of New York, there is the title, “Canada Is World’s Biggest Oil Loser With Price Spread”.

It talks about rushing oil off to China in low value-added form, instead of to eastern Canada where we need it. Jim Prentice added that it:

....highlights the importance and potentially the value of pipelines in Canada that move our oil on an east-west axis.... That’s lost corporate revenue, government income tax, government royalties.

My question to the member is simple. Instead of rushing oil in low value-added form off to the west and China, does the member not agree that the government needs to start putting Canada’s energy security and jobs first, and build the pipeline to the east?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, Canada does have secure energy for its provinces across the nation. We are not in threat of not having enough energy.

There are simply not the economies of scale in Canada to make it viable to have the refineries built here. If the business were available here, if it were viable here, if it would create jobs and sustainable growth, the companies would build refineries in Canada.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-38, the omnibus budget bill of more than 450 pages. Not only is the bill’s content an affront to the democratic process, but so is the way in which the government intends to ram it through without proper examination. The Conservatives know it is inappropriate to make so many sweeping changes to so many different areas in a budget bill.

They know it is inappropriate to include a series of previously unannounced measures in a budget bill, like the measures that contribute to a less transparent and more secretive environment, including a massive gutting of the powers of the Auditor General.

They know it is inappropriate to give themselves the power to change employment insurance rules without the approval of Parliament. They know it is inappropriate to gut environmental protection and rewrite Canada’s fisheries laws in a budget bill. But they do not care.

The Conservative government members have made it very clear over and over again that they do not respect this House and, by extension, they do not respect the very people we were all elected to represent in this House.

I was elected to represent the people of my constituency and my community. They expect more from the current government, which does not even blink while undermining this Parliament by tabling a massive bill that goes far beyond the budget. Clearly, its objective is to ram through its radical Conservative agenda while hiding from oversight and avoiding accountability.

In an attempt to restore some sanity to this House and ensure a proper review of this bill, which is mostly made up of non-financial elements, the New Democrats have asked the government to work with us. That is why yesterday we asked Parliament to split the bill in order to allow for an appropriate review of it, which must include relevant committees hearing from experts about these sweeping changes being proposed.

Instead, what the Conservatives have proposed is to create a monster subcommittee to study all the changes, which is just another way to avoid accountability for measures they are hiding in this Trojan Horse budget bill, a budget bill that does not help our economy or get people back to work. It most certainly does not represent the priorities of the people in Surrey North or people across this country.

Government Orders

Last month, I held a public forum on the budget in my riding to ask my constituents what their concerns and priorities were. They said they did not understand why the government would add two more years before they could qualify for the OAS, when the program has been proven to be sustainable. Both the PBO and the government's own research team has shown that the program is sustainable.

They could not comprehend why the Conservatives would cancel the long gun registry when it helps to save lives. They thought that the government's insistence on destroying the registry records is ridiculous and reckless.

My constituents further told me that they did not understand why the government is paying lip service to the problem of foreign credential assessment and recognition, and not addressing the real shortage of doctors, nurses and medical professionals in our hospitals.

They want a national transit strategy and effective transit to facilitate economic growth in our region. They do not understand why the government would not make that a priority when every other G8 country but Canada has a national transit strategy.

They were very concerned about the protection of salmon habitat and the small and medium-size fishing industry in coastal British Columbia.

They want the government to protect our food security and implement the labelling of GMO foods.

They also do not understand why the Conservatives would dismantle the Wheat Board that was protecting our farmers.

They further told me that they do not want the gutting of environmental protection and removal of accountability that we see in Bill C-38.

However, the Conservatives are not listening to Canadians; they certainly are not listening to the people of my community or the full 80% of the British Columbians who opposed the northern gateway pipeline.

● (1520)

Instead, the Conservatives have done exactly what we have come to expect from the government, exactly what they want with no regard or respect for the people of the country or the democratic process by which they should be governed.

We all know that, when Conservatives do not like rules, they either break them or they undermine Parliament to change them, like changing the rules to undermine an entire environmental review and oversight so they could ram through a reckless pipeline project that puts the coastline of B.C., communities and local economies in peril; or like changing the rules so they could attack charities that target the organizations that are standing up to protect our coasts; or like gutting the office of the Auditor General so we will not know when they break the rules.

Those are just a few of the highlights of what we see in the bill. It is clear that the priorities of the people in my community are not represented by the government and they are most certainly not represented by the contents of the bill.

The Conservatives claim that budget 2012 is about job creation, but the PBO says the budget will cost 43,000 Canadian jobs. In fact, the budget actually plans for unemployment to rise. When the PBO's estimate of 43,000 lost jobs is combined with previous rounds of cuts, this number is closer to 102,000 jobs lost. Still the Conservatives stand in the House day after day, blustering about how the bill is about job creation. It is truly unbelievable.

One-third of the bill is actually dedicated to gutting important environmental protection regulations, so I would humbly suggest to the members across that they cool it on their talking points and admit what the bill is really about: ignoring the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who peacefully protested on Earth Day to show their support for expanding environmental safeguards; showing contempt for Canadians by taking this country backward when it comes to environmental protection; and creating a less transparent and more secretive government so they can lurk in the shadows and get away with their dirty tricks.

Proper oversight is a cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy, of any democracy, and New Democrats will fight for proper oversight and accountability. We will not allow the Conservatives to quietly sneak through these far-reaching changes. Trojan Horse budget bills cannot become the new norm, so if the government is not afraid of being held accountable, it should agree to work with us to split the bill into proper committees.

Separating the bill makes sense. It would allow for a full study with proper expertise at the table, and we would be able to make decisions that would benefit our country. It would allow opposition members to do their job and provide proper oversight. It would also help the backbenchers in the Conservative government to have input into this budget bill.

My sincere hope is that the Conservatives will take a step back and think about the consequences of undermining Parliament and removing oversight and accountability from our democracy.

I hope they will consider the consequences of seriously eroding the trust Canadians have in this House, which is precisely what they are doing with the bill.

● (1525)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have argued in the past, and I will pose it in the form of a question to the member, that if he looks at what the priorities of the government have been over the last number of months, we have to recognize that one of the most significant cuts will be to our civil service.

Well over 19,000 jobs will be lost. That means we will have issues of service delivery, whether it is someone who is unemployed or individuals who protect our environment, a wide spectrum. When we cut 19,000 jobs, it will have an impact on quality of service to Canadians.

Government Orders

Earlier this year the government made the decision to increase the size of the House of Commons. By increasing the size, more politicians for Canadians, that means additional staff for those politicians at a time when the Conservatives are cutting back on services but increasing the number of politicians.

I wonder if the member could provide a comment on what I would class as a misplaced priority.

• (1530)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, since the last election I have seen the Conservatives constantly either fudging the numbers or using only numbers that fit their own overall secret agenda. During the crime bill we heard the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety constantly talking about how they do not believe in stats or how they do not believe in research. I have seen the gutting of research that has been available to make decisions that are facing Parliament.

Here is a prime example. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, along with the government's own research, indicates that the OAS is financially viable and that we can provide OAS to our seniors, yet the government is cutting the funds available to vulnerable seniors.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the comments made by my colleague. He talked about the bill that the government says is going to create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. Could he comment on how the government wants good-paying jobs to be handed to foreign workers and wants employers to be allowed to pay lower wages? Could he comment on how that relates to jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for Canada? I just do not see how that will work.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the international trade committee, and this morning I was looking through the trade deficit. Over the last six years, under this government the manufacturing sector trade deficit has ballooned from \$18 billion to \$75 billion. What that means is that our manufacturing industry jobs, good-paying jobs for families across the country, have been decimated. Jobs in the manufacturing sector have gone away. What they are creating are service jobs that pay very little compared to manufacturing.

Again they say one thing, yet they are doing another thing.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to hear that the NDP is actually getting the message that the budget is about jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. I am really encouraged by that.

My colleague referred to the fact that he thinks backbenchers should have had more opportunity for input. Would he agree that his colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster used up, I believe, 20-some hours of House time? If he had shared that a bit, it would have given us all a chance to speak to the budget much more effectively.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster was speaking on behalf of all Canadians. He was getting messages from across the country to let the government know that this bill is not acceptable to all Canadians. That is what he was talking about.

This budget is not only about the financial side. This is about the environment and fisheries deregulation. This is about health care transfers. This is about weakening our Auditor General's office. This is about reducing our food inspectors. This is about a lot more than just financials.

[Translation]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to discuss budget 2012 on this, our 2,298th day as the servants of our constituents.

[English]

In the 41st general election we all acknowledged that the economy was still the main issue for Canadians. Citizens decided to re-elect a government that had proven itself in this area, with a plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

It was also the first time in the history of parliamentary democracies that a government won an election following a deep recession. I voted against holding that unnecessary election. Those on the other side, who voted for the dissolution of the 40th Parliament, remind me of the turkeys who vote for an early Christmas.

• (1535)

[Translation]

The opposition knew about the global economic downturn, and they gambled that Canadians would punish this government for it. Governments are not always rewarded for good economic news, but they are always punished when a recession rears its ugly head.

[English]

Except this time. The more the opposition talk down Canada's economy, the more Canadians solidify their support for their government and for their Prime Minister. Canadians increased their support for this government not only in spite of our economic challenges, but because of them.

With more than \$63 billion in targeted stimulus measures, the economic action plan has helped to protect Canada through the worst moments of the last global recession.

[Translation]

Canada has posted economic growth in nine of the last 10 quarters. Our great country has seen nearly 700,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, the strongest employment growth of all the G7 countries.

[English]

At the local level, nearly 33,000 jobs were created in Ottawa from October 2010 to March 2012, lowering the unemployment rate from 6.9% to 6.2%.

After the budget was tabled, *The Wall Street Journal* had the following to say in the April 3 edition: "Canada shows how mistakes can be reversed with sound policies".

Canada's economic action plan 2012 is full of measures that will help Canada stay in the driver's seat of the world's economies.

Government Orders

The budget we are debating today strongly supports world-class innovation and research. This government believes in innovation. Two weeks ago, I was pleased to announce that nearly \$1 million would be allocated for an IT professional mentoring program to encourage primary and secondary school students in Ottawa to take an interest in science and innovation.

[*Translation*]

This type of program is entirely consistent with this government's philosophy and vision.

[*English*]

The people of Ottawa—Orléans know of my unflinching support for scientific research and development. In this budget the Minister of Finance has taken action on the Jenkins report and is investing \$1.1 billion in direct support for R and D and \$500 million in venture capital.

With my meticulous support, the government is committed to granting \$110 million a year to the National Research Council to double support for small businesses through the NRC's industrial research assistance program. Improvements will be made to services offered to businesses by industrial technology advisers. I see this measure as a great opportunity for the NRC, located at the doorstep of Ottawa—Orléans.

[*Translation*]

Families are the heart and soul of Ottawa—Orléans. I regularly meet them when shopping on St. Joseph Boulevard, at mass at Divine Infant Church, and during the many community activities to which their servant is invited.

[*English*]

Families have not been overlooked in economic action plan 2012.

Under the budget, the registered disability savings plan will be improved to help guarantee long-term financial security for children with serious disabilities.

[*Translation*]

There are some 300 community organizations in Ottawa—Orléans. They will have access to \$150 million for repairs and improvements to existing community facilities.

[*English*]

This government also wants to promote more active lifestyles, to improve funding for victims and to increase travellers' exemptions. That is not to mention the measures we have introduced since 2006, such as 140 tax breaks, including income tax cuts for taxpayers in the lowest brackets and many others.

[*Translation*]

These are all measures that will help families, the backbone of Canada.

[*English*]

With regard to families, the government has not forgotten seniors, who represent our country's memory. Health investments are one of the biggest priorities for the seniors I met this morning at the Roy

Hobbs centre and at senior centres such as the Portobello Manor and the Royal Garden, which, by the way, was not named after me.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

In 2012, federal support for the provinces and territories reached a record high, and it will continue to rise.

[*English*]

In 2012-13, Ontario will receive record support through major federal transfers, most of which are earmarked for health. These transfers will provide this province with \$19.2 billion. This investment represents a 77% increase in transfers relative to those made by the previous government. Of that amount, Ontario will receive \$3.2 billion from the equalization program, \$11.4 billion through the Canada health transfer and \$4.6 billion through the Canada social transfer.

[*Translation*]

With this major investment in health, Ontario no longer has to make painful choices.

[*English*]

Between 1965 and 1995, the federal contribution to health care was 50 cents on the dollar. In 1996 the previous government reduced this amount, in one fell swoop, to 14 cents on the dollar. The provincial government of the day had to close 44 hospitals in Ontario, including the Riverside and the Grace, and had to merge 14 others.

[*Translation*]

Only one hospital on the list of facilities targeted by those cutbacks just barely avoided the knife, Montfort Hospital, as a result of unprecedented mobilization by the francophone and francophile community of eastern Ontario.

Since this government came to power, health transfers have increased to 30 cents per dollar invested in health.

[*English*]

Of course, health is not the only concern for seniors. Since 2006 we have taken nearly 400,000 seniors off the tax rolls, at a time when the number of citizens in this age group is rising sharply. We have introduced pension income splitting and raised the age limit for converting RRSPs to registered retirement income funds from 69 to 71.

To the many measures taken since 2006, economic action plan 2012 has added the third quarter project, which will receive \$6 million. This innovative online initiative is designed to help employers find experienced workers over 50 who want to stay active in the labour market.

[*Translation*]

Since the unemployment rate in Ottawa is relatively low, finding skilled employees can be a real challenge for employers.

Government Orders

[English]

Budget 2012-13 offers improved flexibility and choice for older workers. Those wishing to work longer will be able to postpone payment of their old age security benefits starting in July 2013. Those who do so will receive a higher adjusted annual pension.

Eliminating the penny is another initiative that reflects the government's pragmatic approach. Last Friday, the Royal Canadian Mint struck its last penny. This initiative may seem trivial in a budget of \$276 billion; my response is that this is proof of the serious approach the government has taken to managing public funds.

[Translation]

In his editorial of May 5, 2012, columnist Pierre Jury of *Le Droit* wrote that “cost-cutting on any scale is not wasted, and it was time to make this decision.”

Madam Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The Deputy Speaker: You are out of time.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: I appreciate your courtesy, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could add a few comments during the period for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, during his speech the member talked about how families have not been overlooked. I think what happened here is that the families have been targeted.

My question to my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans is this: why is his government closing the Kapuskasing Experimental Farm, which has been existence for 100 years and has provided excellent research for farmers in northern Ontario and Quebec?

Because of the focus on northern climate, this type of unique research cannot be generated at any other research station. Instead of putting people out of work, will the member work with us to save the jobs at the Kapuskasing Experimental Farm?

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Madam Speaker, I find it quite remarkable that a member such as this is asking me, a member from a city far from Kapuskasing, such a specific question.

The fact is that the government is doing a lot for families. We have been working for families since the beginning of our mandate in 2006. That is why, with each successive election, Canadians have given us a stronger mandate.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member says that the government respects the public tax dollars and he uses as his example that we are getting rid of the penny. That is the proof that the Conservatives are spending taxpayer dollars appropriately.

It is hard to digest that fact when a minister, who sits on the front benches of the government, orders a glass of orange juice and pays

\$16 for that glass of orange juice. It was uncovered. It is not like she admitted that she made a mess of that particular issue or that abuse of tax dollars. It was only because she was caught that she paid the money back, at least I believe she paid it back. What did the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance say in regard to that? They said nothing. They were quite content with a front bench minister who feels very comfortable in billing the taxpayers \$16 for a glass of orange juice.

I wonder if the member could give us his thoughts on a minister who would spend \$16 on a cup of orange juice. Is that a wise expenditure? If he were the minister—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I heard the amount that was paid for the orange juice. However, it is pretty rich coming from that member from the third party talking about expenses when he knows full well that travel expenses for this front bench are some 20% lower than the travel expenses were when that party was in office. That is probably why the voters sent that party to the corner where he is now.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way keeps talking about respect for the Canadian taxpayer dollars. I wonder if he might have a comment on the fact that when the Liberals were in government they borrowed \$55 billion from the EI fund and did not put it back. I wonder if the Liberals could talk about the cuts they made to our provinces of over \$25 billion that affected health care and education. Are those good examples of looking after taxpayer dollars?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Madam Speaker, the point is that when we compare action plan 2012 with the slash and burn of 1995, there is no comparison. What we are doing is very prudent. What that party did in 1995 was hamstringing all the provinces. It back-pedaled into the provinces its problems. Here in Ontario, we had to cut down 44 hospitals. The Liberals cut health care investment from 50¢ on the dollar to 14¢ on the dollar in one fell swoop. They still have not apologized for it but the Canadian taxpayers and the Canadian voters are on to this and that is why they are over there.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in today's debate on the budget implementation bill, although I must say that 10 minutes to deal with the 425-page bill is absurdly inadequate. It is impossible to offer a comprehensive analysis if the government is intent on giving me less than one second per page of the bill to articulate the concerns of my constituents. What happened to the government's commitment to accountability?

I will, however, try to make the most of what little time I do have. This speech may not end up hanging together very well but, in the interest of hitting on all the key points, I will just jump from one to the next while keeping a close eye on the clock.

Government Orders

I will begin with the environment. The Conservatives have the worst track record of any recent Canadian government when it comes to environmental protection and action on climate change. In fact, the government is engaged in an all out dismantling of Canada's environmental regulation and protection system.

Canada reduced its federal environmental spending by 40% between 1993 and 1997, starting a long and continuing period of environmental backsliding. Our country's environmental ranking is now the worst in the world. The 2011 Climate change performance index ranks Canada 57 out of 60 nations.

Why are the Conservatives doing this? They are gutting Canada's long-standing environmental laws so that their friends in the oil and gas industry get what they have been asking for: fewer environmental safeguards so they can push through resource megaprojects, including pipelines, with little regard to environmental damage.

Fully one-third of the budget implementation bill deals with such environmental deregulation. It is an all out attack on the laws that protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the communities in which we live. It is outrageous. It is our children and grandchildren who will pay the price.

Although there is much more to be said, I must move on and I will move from kids to the other end of the demographic spectrum and talk about seniors.

The Conservative government is using Bill C-38 to balance its budget on the backs of Canadian seniors. The Conservatives gave \$16 billion in tax cuts to profitable corporations without receiving a single job guarantee. Now, facing a revenue shortfall, they expect Canadian seniors to pay the price. It is absurd. The Conservatives have no problem spending \$30 billion on their F-35 boondoggle and another \$19 billion for their unpopular prisons agenda but they cannot spare \$540 a month for Canada's poorest seniors. It is about time they got their priorities straight.

In fact, it was not that long ago that the Prime Minister would have agreed with me. In the thick of the 2004 election campaign, his Conservative Party sent out a REALITY CHECK entitled "Paul Martin's hidden seniors agenda". At that time the Conservatives claimed that the Liberals were hiding a plan to raise the retirement age to 67 for the old age security. They ridiculed the idea of raising the eligibility for OAS because, "Canadians would have to work two years longer only to receive less from their public pension".

In 2004, the Conservatives were ready to stand up for seniors but that was then and this is now.

Today, the Conservatives have absolutely no qualms about leaving seniors behind. Instead of working to lift every senior out of poverty, the Conservatives are throwing tens of thousands of seniors into poverty. In fact, without OAS-GIS for two years, almost 100,000 recently retired Canadian seniors would be made poor today. For single senior females, the poverty rate would rise from 17% to 48%.

There is absolutely no sound fiscal or policy justification for any of that. In fact, all evidence shows that the OAS is sustainable. Pension and retirement expert professor Tom Klassen of York University noted, "I haven't heard any academic argue that there's a crisis with OAS". In fact, numerous experts, including the

Parliamentary Budget Officer, have confirmed that the OAS is sustainable in its existing form. Even the government's own latest actuarial report indicates that the OAS-GIS will account for a smaller percentage of the GDP in 2060 than it does today.

So why punish future generations? By changing the OAS, the Conservatives are pitting one generation against the next. We have all worked hard and played by the rules. There is no reason to bankrupt the next generation of Canadians with the Conservatives' reckless cuts.

In fact, that is exactly the position taken by CARP, one of Canada's leading advocacy organizations for seniors. CARP members have stated that they:

...do not see how cutting OAS spending would help future generations. Instead, they are calling for measures that will create job opportunities for them as a better way to secure their future. Rather than selfishly guarding their own interests... CARP members and other older Canadians are defending an important part of the social safety net and do not want to see it torn up for their children and grandchildren.

● (1550)

If only the government were only listening.

I will keep moving along.

I was encouraged when I heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance say last week, "the best way to fight poverty and deal with inequality is to ensure that Canadians have jobs".

I was cautiously optimistic that a government bill that is entitled the "jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act" might actually deal with the critical issue of jobs, and it does, but instead of dealing with job creation, it deals with job cuts. That is terrible news for communities like my hometown of Hamilton, which was built upon a thriving manufacturing sector.

Since the Conservatives came to power, Canada has lost 365,000 manufacturing jobs. There are nearly 1.4 million Canadians out of work and the employment rate remains well above the pre-recession level. Youth unemployment remains nearly double the national average at 14%.

What is the government's job strategy? It throws more people out of work.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates that, in addition to the 19,200 positions being eliminated in budget 2012, there will be a further 6,300 jobs cut as a result of the government's previous strategic reviews that have yet to be implemented and a further 9,000 jobs cut as a result of the government's budget operating freeze. That would total 34,500 federal public service jobs being cut.

Government Orders

The Parliamentary Budget Officer suggests that the total will be even higher, at 43,000 jobs lost, since, “we’re actually talking about cuts on top of cuts”.

Anyone who had hoped that the Conservatives would live up to their rhetoric of investing in jobs to alleviate poverty will be sadly disappointed. However, they will not be surprised because the government’s track record on poverty is one of exacerbating the problem rather than working to eradicate it. From cutting the National Council of Welfare to eliminating key public programs and failing to invest in housing supports and child care, the Conservative government has failed to ensure that we build a Canada where no one is left behind.

As the Canadian Labour Congress rightly pointed out, budgets are all about choices. With unemployment and underemployment still at very high levels and a shrinking middle-class, the federal government could and should have laid the basis for sustained and broadly shared economic recovery.

Instead, the government introduced a number of measures that will unfairly target the unemployed, severely reduce avenues for unemployed workers to appeal the denial of benefits and reduce the standard of living for workers everywhere.

Instead of fixing a broken EI system that results in the denial of benefits to the majority of unemployed workers, the Conservatives are making it even tougher for the unemployed to receive the benefits of an insurance policy they have paid into all of their working lives.

First, the government plans to cut unemployed workers off their EI benefits if they decline “suitable employment”. The definition of “suitable employment” will be set by none other than the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. That minister, of course, is the same minister of HRSDC who laid off claims workers at Service Canada at a time when unemployment and, therefore, claims were actually going up. That minister is also the same minister of HRSDC who sat on her hands while hundreds of workers at U.S. Steel in her own riding were unable to access EI during a recent lockout. If she is not willing to stand up for her own constituents, she certainly cannot be counted on to stand up for unemployed workers in other regions of the country. Yet, the minister is assuming even more power for herself under the EI appeal system.

Whereas the almost 26,000 EI appeals used to be dealt with by regional tripartite boards of referees made up of labour, employer and government chosen representatives, the minister alone will now appoint one board of full-time members to deal with all appeals. This is a recipe for unprecedented backlogs and logistical nightmares, and that is before I even begin to comment about the outrageous replacement of fair and balanced boards of appeal with the minister’s pet patronage appointments.

When we combine that with last month’s announcement that changes to the temporary foreign worker program will now allow employers to pay highly skilled migrant workers 15% less than the average local wage, the government’s agenda is thrown into stark relief.

The Conservatives are absolutely determined to interfere in the labour market to the detriment of not only migrant workers, but all Canadian workers by pushing down wages and, in effect, subsidizing big business.

Workers and their communities deserve better. It is time for the Conservative government to stop being preoccupied with issues of power and prestige and get to work on the bread and butter issues that really matter to Canadian families, like creating quality jobs.

Until we see that change, I will proudly vote against the budget at each and every stage.

• (1555)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague’s remarks. She indicated that there was no crisis in the OAS system. On this side of the House, we do not wait for a crisis. We actually try to put something into place to avoid crises, unlike the NDP.

My colleague knows that in 1970 there were roughly seven workers for each senior. In 2010 there were four workers for each senior. By 2030 it is projected to be only two for each senior. Clearly we need to take action on this before we run into a crisis.

My question is much more simple than that. She commented in her opening remarks that she only had 10 minutes to provide her input on the budget. Did she ask her colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster if she could have a bit of his time when he went on for hours and hours on the budget bill? It would have been nice for him to share. If she did, what response did she get from him?

• (1600)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Madam Speaker, I would remind my colleague of two things.

First, the NDP critic on finance, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, did a superb job laying out our concerns about the budget on behalf of all Canadians. He was not doing that to hear himself talk. He seized the opportunity to ensure that the views of Canadians were heard in the House.

Second, that was a speech on the budget. We are now dealing with the budget implementation bill. This is a bill of 425 pages in length. This bill needs to be considered with all due diligence. We do not have the opportunity to do that in the House because the government stubbornly refuses to allow sections of the bill to go to various committees so we can deal with the environmental changes, the OAS changes and the very significant changes that the government will make to the lives of everyday Canadians.

Government Orders

When the member suggests that Conservatives are trying to pre-empt a crisis in the old age security system, with respect, I would suggest that they are creating a crisis. Every actuary in the country says there are no financial reasons to change the old age security system. Therefore, we have to assume it is politically motivated. I do not understand a government that is politically motivated to do harm to seniors, the very seniors who built our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's point with regard to the length of this bill, being in excess of 400 pages. My understanding is the NDP's position is that it would like this bill broken down and sent to different committees, which is quite admirable. It is a good alternative to what members of the Liberal Party believe, which is that the bill itself encompasses what should be other pieces of legislation. Ideally, the whole bill should be rewritten and reduced from the 420 pages down to a normal size budget implementation bill of less than, let us say, 30 pages.

The other components, like the 120-plus pages of environmental legislation, should be reintroduced as a brand new bill so it can be thoroughly debated. Experts from across Canada would be able to participate through witnesses at the committee stage and so forth. Would she—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must give the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain time to respond.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Madam Speaker, we obviously share a very deep-seated concern about how the government is approaching its budgetary policy, as well as how it is treating Parliament and, by extension, Canadian citizens. This is a place for debate. It is not a place for us to debate each other and listen to our own concerns. It is about sharing the views of Canadians on very significant changes in public policy.

The way the government is ramming through its legislation in one omnibus bill, a procedure, by the way, which the government and the Prime Minister, in particular, used to object to when he was in opposition, is unprecedented in its magnitude and does not just do a disservice to members of Parliament, which it does, but, more important, therefore silences the voices of Canadians who we are here to represent. It is not about us, it is about Canadians, and the government owes Canadians an apology.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, while other countries are struggling to stay afloat, Canada remains the envy of the world.

I stand today to express my support for Canada's economic action plan 2012. I am confident in our plans. Our government and our Minister of Finance have laid a solid foundation on which budget 2012 is built. Since the global economic recession hit, the government has frustrated members opposite by simply leading the world through these troubled times.

When we first introduced Canada's economic action plan, opposition members tried to tell Canadians that our plans would ruin Canada's economy. Instead, Canada's economy led the world. Since we introduced Canada's economic action plan, Canada has enjoyed the strongest economic growth and the strongest job growth among G7 countries.

While the previous Liberal government could not even manage a program to put up flags in Quebec without losing tens of millions of dollars to its partisan cronies, this Conservative government was able to roll out the largest economic stimulus program in Canadian history, the largest infrastructure program since we built the railroad and we demonstrated to Canadians that clean and honest government was possible.

Having been proven wrong by the record, opposition members then tried to tell Canadians that our economic action success was only a coincidence. However, while Canadians heard their partisan claims, they also heard statements from non-partisan experts. They heard prestigious international publications calling our Minister of Finance the best in the world. They heard the International Monetary Fund state that Canada's economic success "owes much to the government's rightly-sized and well-targeted macroeconomic stimulus".

Similarly, we heard opposition members try to dismiss Canada's record of phenomenal job growth, trying to claim the jobs being created were part-time or paid poorly. Once again, the facts do not bear this out. According to Statistics Canada, almost 80% of jobs created since 2009 were in high-wage industries. More 90% of those jobs are full-time.

The challenge we now face is daunting, but not insurmountable. The stimulus phase of Canada's economic action plan is now ending and it is time for the private sector to step up. This budget supports their efforts by enhancing support for business innovation and research, improving conditions for business investment and investing in training infrastructure and opportunity.

This budget gets at the very core of the economic challenges we face. Let me explain.

Once again this year I conducted a number of consultations in the lead-up to this budget. I invited the constituents I represent to share their views. I hosted round tables where community leaders shared their perspectives. I communicated what I learned with our Minister of Finance and I found myself very pleased with how closely budget 2012 aligned with the priorities of my community.

The chair of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, as well as the mayors of all four of the communities in Kitchener—Conestoga called for a long-term plan for infrastructure renewal. They understood that the stimulus phase ended and that a return to surplus required sacrifice. They did not expect support to continue at the levels of recent years. What they wanted was a commitment that we would not abandon the good work already begun, that their government would continue to partner with them on infrastructure beyond the expiry of the building Canada plan in 2014. They wanted to know in what direction our government would take infrastructure partnerships.

Government Orders

I know they were as pleased as I to see that commitment in budget 2012.

Consultations on a national infrastructure renewal are under way right now with our partners at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels. Budget 2012 states our direction clearly. We will focus on investments that support long-term economic growth and prosperity, while encouraging greater private sector involvement. This phase of Canada's economic action plan also delivers new funding to renew community-based facilities.

My home of Waterloo region is known for its entrepreneurial culture. From the old order Mennonites who still use horses for agriculture and transportation to the digital media startup companies that seem to spring forth daily, our communities value hard work and risk taking.

Let me share with the House what the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce said about this budget. Ian McLean, president of the chamber, said:

Small and medium enterprises are the engine that drive the economy, and the government appears committed to help this sector lead a recovery from the recession...Overall, the government wants the private sector to step forward, create jobs, and compete on global markets. I'm certain local businesses are ready to meet that challenge.

• (1605)

The chamber was especially grateful for measures in economic action plan 2012 to encourage hiring via EI premium credits, as well as our clear plan to return to budget surplus without making cuts to transfers for health and education.

In our area, with its three world-class post-secondary institutions, we understand that education is vital. We view our universities and college as economic engines. It seems that economic action plan 2012 will help these engines fire on all cylinders.

John Tibbits, president of Conestoga College, praised our government's emphasis on linkages between the private sector businesses that need innovation and the educational institutions that can provide it. He said, "These partnerships have tangible impacts, leading to the creation of high-quality jobs for Canadians, improved competitiveness for industry, and enhanced local, regional and national prosperity".

We heard similar praise from Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur, president of the University of Waterloo. He said that this budget was a signal, "that Canada remains a serious world leader in terms of primary research, innovation and new economic development. And it is a great vote of confidence in universities like Waterloo and the excellent pure scholarship and spin-off applications produced with crucial funding from the federal agencies".

Dr. Hamdullahpur noted the value of spin-offs from federal investments.

The value of these spin-offs is also clear to Communitech, Waterloo Region's technology organization, that represents more than 800 high-tech companies in our area, many of whom grew out of our own local schools.

In the weeks and months leading up to the budget, Communitech made on thing very clear to me, and that was that one of the most

important things our government could do to help new companies grow and succeed would be to incent new money into Canada's investment markets. In Canada we have investors who will help a new company start. More than 300 high-tech companies were founded in Waterloo Region alone during 2011.

There are many willing to buy established, profitable companies. However, we suffer unfortunately, though, from a shortage of domestic venture capital to help new companies grow into successful mid-sized companies to reach the net rung of success.

Economic action plan 2012 addresses this. Ian Klugman, president of Communitech, was very encouraged to see our emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation. He noted that "emphasis on access to risk capital is recognition of one of the key barriers to growth and success to tech companies in Canada".

Waterloo region stands more able than ever to seize opportunities that may emerge anywhere in the world. Federal investments created competitive advantages for us in quantum computing, theoretical physics, digital media and visualization, and food processing.

I believe, along with our government, that Canadian entrepreneurs can take on the world. In Waterloo region, they already are.

Budget 2012 affirms this belief through policy statements, "Our Government understands that Canadians' standard of living and future prosperity depend on growing trade and investment".

Economic action plan 2012 will update the government's global commerce strategy and harmonize perimeter security and regulations with our largest trading partner. More than that, it makes clear this government's intentions to secure access for Canadian products and services in the world's fastest growing markets, markets that were ignored by the previous government, markets such as China, the E. U., India, and the trans-Pacific partnerships to name just a few.

However, we measure the health of society by more than its wealth. We measure it also by its compassion, how well we take care of our least fortunate citizens.

There can be no doubt that Canada's return to surplus will require sacrifice. I am proud to stand with a Minister of Finance who believes enough in Canada's public health system to preserve the transfers which support health care, rather than simply download our problems, a path chosen by the previous government with disastrous results for Canadian hospitals.

This government is doing more than supporting the provinces. In 2007 the government created the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which just today launched its landmark mental health strategy for Canada.

Government Orders

This year, on March 29, the Minister of Finance made a smaller announcement, which most media outlets did not even mention, a \$5.2 million investment in mental health research.

In a budget of hundreds of billions of dollars, I understand how a relatively minor sum can be overlooked, but investment in support of the Canadian depression research and intervention network will help connect over 80 of Canada's best researchers on this subject. There will be a particular focus on suicide prevention, and federal support will help leverage other public and private sector investments.

I thank the Minister of Finance for finding new money to address this critical issue during these tough times.

Since Canada's economic action plan was first launched, Canada's economy has led the world. Canada and my home of Waterloo region now have the modern assets we need to seize every global opportunity. Economic action plan 2012 charts a prudent course for Canada's return to surplus.

It is with the best interests of Canadians, especially those in Kitchener—Conestoga whom I am so privileged to represent, that I express my unreserved support for budget 2012. I thank the Minister of Finance for his efforts.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Madam Speaker, the extremely tight schedule we have been given to work on Bill C-38, which does not facilitate debate at all, reminds me of my childhood in Chile, where a small group of people legislated without listening to anyone else. Clearly, at the time, Chile was not a democracy. I therefore chose to live in Canada because of the strength of its democracy and the value of its parliamentary system, in which debate is of the utmost importance.

Why then are the Conservatives insisting on imposing such a tight timeline that undermines the nature of the Parliament of Canada?

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, as I indicated throughout my remarks, all members of this House hopefully took the opportunity to go back to their constituencies and ask for input as to what the next budget should contain. We did that on many different occasions across the country. That input was already solicited. However, a more important point is that when we first introduced this budget, the NDP and the member for Burnaby—New Westminster used up all of the time for so-called debate, which could have been put to good use by all members of this House on all sides, NDP, Liberal and Conservative. It was a shame that the time was not allotted to allow more members of Parliament to express their—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not as convinced about the input stage. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons came to my riding and did not have one public meeting. He had a couple of meetings with the councils. The one issue that was brought up predominantly got very little attention whatsoever after the debate. I will reserve that for now.

The member said in a question earlier that his government took precautions to weather the storm of the recession. Why is it that the Conservatives put this country in a deficit position before the recession came?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, many times over the past few years that I have been here in Parliament I have had to listen to this kind of question. It is always surprising that no one on that side will acknowledge that when this government took office, we paid down over \$37 billion of our national debt. That put us in a position that made us the envy of the world entering the economic downturn. When we entered that downturn, we had a plan ready to address the challenges that we were facing. If my colleague will just listen for a minute, he will remember that we have created around 700,000 net new jobs, 80% high paying and 90% full time.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. friend from Kitchener—Conestoga. Oh, I am making a mess of his riding name. I apologize for the pronunciation.

I am wondering about the loss of jobs because of the government's failure to invest in the green and renewable energy sector, particularly one of the rising stars in renewable energy, and the pun is intentional, which is called Arise Solar. It is out of Kitchener and Waterloo and it produces photovoltaic roofing tiles. When the company wanted to expand, the German government came and offered half the cost of a new plant. The company is now producing photovoltaic roofing tiles outside Dresden, Germany, instead of in Canada because we are blind to the opportunities of investing in renewables and creating jobs. I would like to ask my hon. friend if he is aware of that loss of opportunity.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I want to assure my colleague that even she, with all her power, could not mess up Kitchener—Conestoga. It is very secure, it has great representation and a great bunch of people.

There is no budget in history that has invested this heavily in innovation and research and primarily in the blending of the research with industry that is already doing the work. Industry comes to our post-secondary institutions for help in research and development and then industry works with the university to commercialize that innovation.

I am very proud of the record of the past number of years and of this budget and its implications in doubling the investment to IRAP, \$1.18 billion in direct research. Along with venture capital, these are all initiatives that will put us on a path forward that will lead us into further recovery.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand and speak on the budget implementation bill, Bill C-38, on behalf of my constituents in Vancouver Kingsway and on behalf of all Canadians who want to see democracy, accountability and sound fiscal planning for a fair and prosperous Canada.

Government Orders

I stood in the House three weeks ago and presented what the people of Vancouver Kingsway told me are the priorities they would like to see in a federal budget. Those priorities were things like housing. We know that the government of Brian Mulroney removed CMHC's participation in affordable housing in 1992, leaving only CMHC's role in insuring mortgages to this day. We also know that the Liberal Party promised in three successive elections to restore the federal government's role in housing and never actually delivered on that. It leaves Canada as one of the only G8 countries that does not have a national housing policy.

The people of Vancouver Kingsway said that they needed childcare. Working parents, single parents in particular, have said time and time again to politicians that they need an affordable, accessible, quality childcare system that will not only help them raise their children and make sure they have a good start in life, but also return an economic benefit that has been estimated at between \$5 and \$7 for every \$1 of investment. We know that childcare is one way to unleash the full economic potential of millions of Canadian families so that they can participate in the workforce.

The people of Vancouver Kingsway told me that they wanted to see meaningful and immediate action on the environment. They know that there is no dichotomy between the economy and the environment. People who are thoughtful in our country know that the environment is the basis for all economic activity in the country. Only the most short-term, blinded people would think that not taking care of our environment is some way to develop our economy.

The people of Vancouver Kingsway told me that they wanted to see a meaningful jobs strategy in the country, not jobs that are part-time, or service sector, or temporary, but jobs that one can actually raise a family on. They told me they wanted to see a budget that would take care of our seniors.

Bill C-38 is a bill that, I am sorry to say, fails in every one of those aspects. There is no national housing plan in the budget. There is no national childcare plan in the budget. Far from taking care of our environment, as I will talk about in a few minutes, the budget bill contains one of the most destructive programs of anti-environment policy that this country has witnessed.

Not only does the budget not provide any meaningful program for jobs, but it is going to see some 19,000 public servants lose their jobs. This is a job destroyer.

What did the seniors of the country see? They saw the government introduce a provision that will see seniors, starting in 2023, have to wait two years longer to receive their old age security. This puts in jeopardy the retirement of millions of Canadians, including any Canadian under the age of 54 right now.

We see a massive 421-page bill, which not only contains implementation of the 2012 budget, but that has many provisions on traditional, non-budgetary matters. Those are buried in the bill. We see fully one-third of the budget bill is dedicated to environmental deregulation. A major narrative in the bill removes powers of the Auditor General and removes many staff. I think what Canadians are seeing in the budget is a reduction in the accountability and transparency of their federal government.

Another major narrative in the bill surrounds the creation of a more secretive and non-transparent government through the removal and closure of oversight powers and bodies and a concentration of many powers in the hands of cabinet ministers who make decisions at cabinet, behind closed doors.

I would argue that, far from being a budget bill that is aimed at jobs and prosperity, as the government members assert, it is actually a budget bill that could be more properly characterized as one of destruction and an attack on democracy, accountability and our environment.

• (1620)

Let us see what is actually in the bill with regard to the environment. This bill would gut the federal environmental assessment regime to speed up major projects, notably pipelines. It would delegate environmental assessments to other authorities, including provinces. It would make sure that projects outside Canada are not held to account under Canadian laws, presumably targeting mining companies.

The division in the budget makes related amendments to the Environmental Violations Administrative Monetary Penalties Act and consequential amendments to other acts and repeals the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act entirely. This bill would give cabinet authority to make decisions regarding major pipelines and would allow the National Energy Board authority over permits related to pipelines and power lines over navigable waters, overriding tribunals that would find those projects unacceptable.

It would change the rules around fish habitat protection and the deposit of deleterious substances in fish-bearing waters. The bill would give sweeping powers to the minister to transfer authorities to other bodies to allow fisheries management. Many have questioned the constitutionality of that provision. It would weaken rules for disposal at sea. It would allow the government to issue longer-term permits under the Species at Risk Act and allow the National Energy Board to issue permits for development when such developments may affect the species listed.

It would change the definition of interested parties to weaken public participation in environmental decision making and exclude anyone not "directly affected" by a project. It would repeal the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, meaning government would no longer be required to report on its emissions under the act. I note that a report of one of the parliamentary officers responsible for environmental regulation is now saying that the government will not even meet its weak environmental targets by 2020. This act would give cabinet the ability to ignore the National Energy Board and any environmental tribunal and approve a project that had been turned down.

Government Orders

Those are not rhetorical comments, those are provisions of this bill. How anybody could read those provisions and not find that this budget bill is a frontal attack on environmental regulation and sustainability in this country is beyond me.

Let us turn to old age security. Conservative members stand in the House weekly and say they received a strong mandate from the Canadian people to govern. In some cases I think they are right. There are things the government campaigned on and delivered what it said. However, during the campaign the Conservatives did not mention one word ever about raising the old age security requirements.

They claim that this is required because of the demographic trend. The demographic trend in this country did not sneak up on them. The baby boom generation and the demographic trend in this country have been known by everybody for years and years. One is left with only one conclusion: the Conservatives did not mention their plan to raise old age security and put it before the Canadian people during the last election because they knew it would be unpopular and that the Canadian people would not give them a mandate to take that step.

Not only is there no mandate for raising the eligibility age for old age security but there is no evidence to support it, there is no need for it and there is no fiscal prudence in doing so. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been clear. He studied this issue very carefully and found that the old age security program is fully sustainable the way it is. That only stands to reason. The demographic reality is that retirees will peak with the 1964 cohort and then start declining. Since we fund old age security out of general revenues, it is simply a question of policy. If a government wants to fund old age security, it can do that.

What has the current government done? It has cut somewhere between \$25 billion and \$50 billion of revenue very year over the last five years by reducing the GST two points and reducing corporate income tax. Now the government says there is not enough money to pay for old age security. The government is financing corporate tax cuts today on the backs of our seniors tomorrow. That is irresponsible and unfair.

• (1625)

In terms of the Auditor General, Canadians want to see their government scrutinized. It is what makes us a democracy. We are not a dictatorship. By removing a dozen bodies from scrutiny by the Auditor General, Canadians know what they see, and what they see is a government that is afraid of having its activities scrutinized by the Auditor General, and that is undemocratic.

This budget is unaccountable. It does not reflect the priorities of Canadians. It is undemocratic, and I am proud to vote against it.

• (1630)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have heard this member and several other members from the official opposition and the third party make comments along the line that they simply do not have enough time to debate the bill. It is such a big bill that they just cannot deal with it for some reason or other. I would like to remind the member and others that it is their job to do some work on legislation like this. They have to spend

some time. They have to work on it. If they do their job, then they could handle this much better.

Members opposite talk about not having enough time to debate. Yet one NDP member stood in this House for 11 hours. With ten-minute speeches and five-minute question and comment periods, which is the common speaking time, 44 NDP members could have spoken in the time that one member spoke, so they are really speaking out of both sides of their mouths.

I suggest they change their ways, start to view these things in a more positive fashion and show some support just once. They have never supported a budget bill of this government. Yet around the world, our budgets are looked to as exemplary.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I would say to my hon. colleague that what we are talking about here is the proper way to present a budget in the British parliamentary system. That traditionally has been to present the budget, not to present a 421-page omnibus bill that contains measures on environmental regulation, veterans affairs, cutting centres of excellence for women's health and removing fish habitat protection from the Fisheries Act. Those are areas that this member knows full well are not properly contained within the confines of a budget,

His own Prime Minister knows that, because the Prime Minister stood up in this House when he was the leader of the Conservative opposition and railed against the Liberals when they brought in omnibus legislation and decried it as undemocratic and improper. My, how things change when the Conservatives are in opposition and then they are in government. All we are talking about is having proper parliamentary scrutiny.

Every member of the House was sent here to do the same job, which is to properly scrutinize government spending and properly study government legislation. When a government puts in legislation on 25 other areas outside of the budget, which should go to committees for proper study with Canadians and stakeholders coming to those committees to have proper input, but instead is put into the budget that will go to one committee, and then invokes closure on it, that is undemocratic, it is improper and it should be decried by every member of this House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been in opposition when there were Progressive Conservative governments, here nationally when we have a Conservative government and even when provincial governments were NDP. I have seen governments of all political stripes introduce omnibus...

An hon. member: Omnibus.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: ...omnibus bills, but the difference is the length of this particular bill and the number of pieces of legislation that the bill would impact.

We in the Liberal Party believe it is not a question of having the bill broken down and sent to different committees, even though we would prefer to see that than it just going to one committee. Our first preference would be for the government to recognize that it is an anti-democratic bill and that it should take back the bill and bring forward other pieces—

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must give the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway a minute to respond.

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I full agree with my hon. colleague when he says that the bill is ominous. It certainly is.

I would point out as well that one of the greatest myths in Canadian politics is that the Conservatives are good money managers. Under the government when the Conservatives took office, the annual debt was \$460 billion. It is \$570 billion six years later.

The biggest deficit in Canadian history is that of the Minister of Finance, second only to the deficit of Michael Wilson, a previous Conservative finance minister, yet the Conservatives talk about how they are careful managers of the public purse. They have put us over \$110 billion into debt and they have put us into deficit. To get themselves out of that, they cut core services to Canadians while giving irresponsible corporate tax cuts.

I ask one question. If we are in deficit and we have to say to our seniors that they have to work two years longer, what business does the government have giving corporate tax cuts to banks and oil companies that are making billions of dollars of profits a year, which all evidence shows does not result in the creation of jobs?

Madam Speaker—

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. member's time has elapsed.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Davenport, The Economy; the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, National Defence.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure today to be standing here in this great place to talk about the implementation of our sixth budget, Bill C-38, which is about jobs, growth and prosperity in the long term.

It is an interesting time. As I listen to the questions that come about in this House, basically, it is the same questions all the time. However, this is about trying to understand what this budget is about.

I am going to talk a little differently from some of the other speakers because, actually, budget 2012 is a building block that started with the foundation of Canada's economic action plan back in 2007.

The residents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex understand what the balancing of a budget means. They understand what it means to move forward. They understand what it is to build on top of a great foundation.

Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, which is in southwestern Ontario, is an area that has incredibly robust agriculture. It is an area made up of small and medium-sized businesses that have a vision and a goal to become more successful and to build on great plans. It is a

constituency that is made up of families that respect accountability and decisive action.

Therefore, when we go out as the Conservative Party of Canada to talk to not only the people across the country but specifically the people in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, they want to know how we got to where we are, in terms of the strength of this economy and the strength of Canada in relationship to the rest of the world. That always gives me the opportunity to talk about where we were, where we came from and how we are going to get there.

I think I am one of the most fortunate MPs in this House because I represent the people of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. They understand the significance that, when we create a deficit, we actually have to pay it down.

When we got elected in 2006, because we had to take over and fix up some of the stuff that had been done by the previous government, we actually had an economy that was moving along and we paid down over \$37 billion off the deficit, off the debt.

Actually, in 2008, things went bad.

In 2007 our party could see things around the world that were not conducive to growth, so we took action. Actually, that is when we introduced the economic action plan.

I do not know if there has ever been a budget process that has started with a vision as to how we are going to come into a problem, how we are going to work our way through it and then, at the end of the day, how we are going to continue to grow and build this country not only to be the great country it is now but to continue to sustain itself, not just for the short time but also for the long time.

We believe that if we give businesses of any size in this country the opportunity to grow and we give them the opportunity to be successful, most of them would take that chance. However, we have to give them some tools.

We believe that Canada was an overtaxed country, not only in terms of people but in terms of businesses.

We believe that governments are only the stewards of taxpayers' money. We do not create the jobs, but we have an obligation to create the environment so that businesses and organizations can create the jobs.

We believe that a low-tax system and structure is one of the key elements that would allow businesses to become successful.

• (1640)

It would allow people to be successful and to leave money in their pockets so they can hire people. That is the whole objective of success in the economy: people have a business; they have a product that people want; if they are successful and actually make a profit, they will hire people, generating jobs, and they will pay more taxes because they have generated a larger revenue.

It is a bit of an anomaly that the people on the other side are struggling to understand. It is the complete opposite of what they believe in terms of taxes. They believe we have to tax to death. We believe in taxing to give the ability to be successful.

Government Orders

One of the great things in my riding is agriculture. I do not have a large urban area. My largest urban area is 14,000 people, and the next one is about 13,000. I have 65 other small hamlets and villages in between. Agriculture fills in all those gaps. Agriculture is so important, not only to Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and the people in my riding, because of the diversity of my riding, but it is important to Canada. It is important to the economic stimulus and the ability we have in Canada to be successful.

For agriculture we have opened free trade agreements. That affects not only agriculture but obviously businesses, small businesses. Whatever they are making or producing or whatever technology they have, they understand the importance of our helping them in the research and innovation part of it, so they can stay on the cutting edge, and our giving them the opportunity to open their markets, not only domestically but internationally, which is key to their growth and success.

We have done that. Canada is a unique country in that in agriculture we have wide-open free markets. The grain and livestock sectors are free markets. In Canada we also have a uniqueness that is respected and appreciated by many around the world, and that is supply management. That has been able to build the strength and the confidence of our producers across this country.

From time to time we have heard that we will lose supply management because of our free trade agreements. We have nine trade agreements signed. We are on the verge of signing another one with the EU. We have had discussions with Japan. These are incredible opportunities, not only for agriculture but also for our small businesses. I can tell members that supply management is solid in this country.

One of the things that is important is our young people. I want to tell the House about Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue, Olympic champions, world champion skaters. What do they do? They set a goal. They work hard every day. They practise. When they reach a goal, they continue with a vision, so that they never hang up their skates. They continue to be persistent.

This budget is a bit like that. We have spent hours planning ahead, as we did with the economic action plan. We have set our goals. We have created a vision for Canada that will continue to move us not only from yesterday to today but into the future.

Once we reach those goals, we do not want to be stagnant. We will continue to move on to the next step, so we will continue to be stronger.

Folks, the implementation bill, Bill C-38 is about jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. This is a bill that needs to be supported, and it needs to be brought to the bridges right now. It is a fair and progressive budget. We should all get behind it.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to tell the member that I am very happy to have this opportunity to ask him a question and that I miss him very much at committee meetings.

That being said, how dare he suggest that the people in his riding who voted Conservative know what balancing the budget is all about, whereas those who voted for another party have no idea what a budget is? He is denigrating the intelligence of Canadians. This is not the place to do that. I am sorry, but every member of Parliament was elected by Canadians.

I would like the member to tell us, right here and now, that not one of his constituents has been to see him to voice opposition to the Conservative budget and the decision to raise the age of eligibility for old age security to 67.

Can the member confirm, right here and now, that all of his constituents agree with this policy?

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley: Madam Speaker, I am still on the committee; the member left, and I miss that.

Quite honestly, I do not ask my constituents to come to me; I go to them. We hold round tables and have meetings. That is what I enjoy most about my good rural riding.

No one gets 100% of the electorate's vote, but we received enough to form a majority government. I received enough to get elected, and I thank my constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for doing that.

I talk to my constituents and I am not afraid to ask them. I get good feedback about the direction the country is going. I ask them if they agree; not everyone does, but we work on the best advice that we have, and I thank them for giving me that opportunity.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for one thing he said and to also ask him a question.

At one point in his speech, he said that governments do not create jobs, but that governments try to create an environment where businesses create jobs. He should communicate that point to the Prime Minister and the various ministers, who every day in question period get up and say that the government created 600,000 or 700,000 jobs. As the member properly said, governments do not create jobs. Perhaps he could tell the Prime Minister that.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Madam Speaker, the member for Markham—Unionville has been here for many years.

What was meant was that governments actually do not create many jobs that create economic growth. That is what businesses do, but we give them all the tools they need. What they ask is that we give them the tools by which they can provide economic growth for businesses in Canada. That is our key point. The government has to give them the tools.

Government Orders

We also have the option of taking the tools away. The last Liberal government jacked EI premiums so high that it became difficult for businesses to survive. Then when that party had put the premiums so high, it borrowed money out of the EI fund and forgot to pay it back. That is not what governments should do in terms of building a credibility relationship with businesses.

We have done a great job in giving the tools to our businesses. That is why Canada is in the strong economic shape that it is in today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to share my views on Bill C-38.

This is a very important bill, but unfortunately, not in a positive sense. On the contrary, several elements of this bill are bad for Canadians and for the environment.

This bill is not a generous bill. It is not generous towards immigrants, towards small and medium-sized businesses, towards older people who want to retire, or towards the environment and our fish stocks.

I would like to focus on three main elements in my speech. First of all, Bill C-38 takes us in a direction and down a path that is undemocratic, which is reflected in the process and the content of the bill.

Second, this bill will have a devastating effect on the environment in the long term. This is very worrisome to me and to all Canadians. This bill will damage not only the environment, but also biodiversity, our fish stocks and the health and safety of Canadians who are counting on a healthy environment and healthy ecosystems for the long term. Passing this bill entails several risks.

Third, this bill should create hope, provide opportunities and be generous, since Canada is recovering from a serious recession. Instead, this bill does not help Canadians. On the contrary, this bill contains elements that are bad for small and medium-sized businesses and for Canadians employed by these businesses.

I will now address the first element in greater detail for my hon. colleagues.

• (1650)

[*English*]

While I am confident that there are some positive elements in this budget implementation bill, as there will be in any bill, unfortunately they are completely outweighed by the negative aspects of the bill. The complexity of a 420-page bill that amends some 70 other pieces of legislation makes it difficult to even assess and paint a picture of the things that concern us.

I know my colleagues in the New Democratic Party have been calling it a Trojan Horse bill, but I have a different name for it: I would call it the “infected blanket bill”. This is an infected blanket budget. I use that term very specifically because in the 1700s there are accounts that suggest that gifts by the British government to first nations in North America were knowingly infected with the smallpox virus, which then spread out in those communities and did damage.

Perhaps not immediately, but over time it was very detrimental to those populations, and this is that kind of bill. While the bill is presented as a gift to Canadians and as something positive, in fact some of the provisions, such as the changes to old age security, will inevitably fall most strongly and negatively on the poorest of Canadians, on disabled Canadians and on single elderly low-income women, with who knows what kinds of repercussions. In some case disabled persons report that they are waiting to turn 65 so that they can be lifted out of poverty by old age security and GIS. Those are the Canadians who will lose \$30,000 a year with the government's changes. That is the kind of negative gift that will keep on giving.

This infected blanket budget bill will cost our environmental protection incrementally over the long term. We have developed, over perhaps 30 or 40 years, a framework of environmental protection whereby economic development can proceed in a way that mitigates environmental damage. As populations increase and our economy continues to grow based on the development of resources, those good things need to be accompanied by a strong environmental safety net for the health and safety of Canadians and for the long term of an ecosystem that can provide Canadians the services that assist our well-being.

Down the road, if the air poisons us or we have oceans without biodiversity that cannot feed some of our aboriginal communities or we have failing seafood industries that cannot feed Canadians and our export industries, it is going to be negative for Canadians. Over the long term, by gutting these environmental regulations and taking the protection of fish habitat out of the Fisheries Act, we may well see the demise of the salmon stocks on the west coast comparable to what we saw with the cod on the east coast, although I certainly hope not.

• (1655)

We have had the experience of ignoring conservation and environmental sustainability as a principle that must be embedded in the way we develop our economy and our day-to-day lives, and we have seen the cost of ignoring that. That is why we have environmental assessment regulations. That is why we have the species at risk law. That is why we have a Fisheries Act that protects fish habitat and fish. Those are the very things that are being undermined in this bill, which provides an override to the government for political reasons or reasons of industrial pressure. That will cost our fish, wildlife, sea life and the very fundamental importance of them to Canadians in the future.

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That is why this budget is of such concern. It is not just that the future destruction is hidden in a budget implementation bill. It is not just that there is no opportunity to duly and properly give justice to these massive changes to our environmental safety net. It is not just that 300,000 people have staked their lives and futures on their hopes and dreams of coming to Canada, a group of people who have paid money, responded to requests for information and put their lives on hold to come to Canada and who are being told, "Sorry; you are history". It is not just the content of the bill, but the fact that the government is hiding the very contentious things it is trying to in a way that is anti-democratic and takes us down a road toward dictatorship. That is not too strong an image. We are going in a direction away from accountability, away from transparency and away from long-term responsibility for the resource base that must nourish our lives and well-being into the future.

• (1700)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, in her speech the member mentioned that some lower income Canadians would be out \$30,000 per year. I wonder where the member could find that figure for me because, as I read it right now, a maximum annual income for OAS is \$6,481 and the maximum for GIS is \$8,788. I wonder if the member could tell me where she got that \$30,000 from, please.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that correction. In my enthusiasm, I did intend to say "over the two year period". However, the fact remains that removing \$30,000 from the available income for the necessities of life for people who are disabled or who have no other source of income is a huge injustice that will only further increase income inequality in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her contribution to this debate.

Earlier this afternoon, in her speech about the budget, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said that there were to be no cuts to health or education. I believe I heard her correctly. I made notes about those comments.

However, we know that the budgets for health programs provided by certain organizations, such as the Assembly of First Nations and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, or ITK, have been slashed by 40%. The Métis National Council and the Native Women's Association of Canada have both lost 100% of the funding for their health programs.

Can the member tell us how these measures will affect the health of first nations people in Canada who are already coping with very difficult conditions?

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, the member is right. There are some very ideological cuts to a great number of organizations, including organizations that provide important services to aboriginal health, but also including environmental organizations like the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy that is pointing at some of the impacts of climate change on the north and on the Inuit people and their way of life.

There has been a choice of where to cut and where to spend. The kinds of things that this budget provides more funds for are not ones that address the needs of the lowest income Canadians or people who are seeking opportunities, such as small businesses and medium-sized businesses. There are cuts to the very programs that were creating the conditions for success for small business, such as the Canadian Tourism Commission and the Regional Economic Development agencies, while adding an EI tax increase. Those small and medium entrepreneurs in small communities and the aboriginal entrepreneurs get nothing from this budget and will only suffer from the cuts. That is why I call it an ungenerous budget for the people the member was talking about and for many others.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague, as a former minister herself, regarding the environment.

With all the regulations throughout this legislation that would be amended, they take up basically one-third of a very large document in what the Conservatives are doing here. Obviously, the rhetoric is that they want to make it easier for business and economic growth. However, all of these regulations have been built up over decades, or even longer in the case of protecting habitats. I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that, please.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, yes, there are always ways to make environmental regulations and laws more efficient, effective and simplified for people and for businesses without undermining the protection of the environment but this does exactly the opposite. The government's approach undermines that environmental safety net and will be costing us in the long term. It did not need to be this way. We could have made improvements. This is a deleterious approach to the environment and the fisheries.

• (1705)

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today in this place in support of the budget implementation act and on behalf of my constituents in Calgary Northeast.

In Calgary Northeast, we come from many backgrounds. We have hard-working and highly skilled workers, students, families, entrepreneurs and seniors from all around the world. We have residents who were born here in Canada, as well as large communities from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, China and many other countries. We have doctors, taxi drivers, engineers, restaurant owners, food industry, furniture builders, IT and many more.

We have hard-working seniors and long-time community volunteers; people like Merlin and Mary Bergeron. When not fishing, Merlin still works as a carpenter and Mary as a bookkeeper. Down the street is their place of worship, the St. Thomas More Catholic parish. A few blocks over is the Don Hartman sports complex where Canadians of all ages and backgrounds love watching and playing Canada's favourite sport, hockey.

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Across McKnight Boulevard and west is the sprawling Baitan Nur mosque, North America's largest, built by the blood, sweat and tears of the local Ahmadiyya community. Our current Prime Minister was there to speak at the inauguration in 2008.

Further west lies Calgary northeast's beautiful Croatian Canadian Cultural Centre opened by former Prime Minister Mulroney in July 1984.

Northeast from there, we will find the Dashmesh Culture Centre, the place of worship for thousands in Calgary's Sikh community. It is also the main organizer of Calgary's Vaisakhi parade coming up this weekend.

Of course, just as special days like Vaisakhi and Christmas are celebrated by those of many different faiths, so is Diwali. Speaking of Diwali, if we head over a little southwest we will find my family's home congregation and chief organizer of many Calgary Diwali celebrations, the Hindu Society of Calgary.

Across the street is Byblos Bakery, since 1975, producing some of Canada's finest Greek pitas, bagels, nans and baklava, and also providing jobs to many hard-working individuals.

I will now talk about the airport in my riding. Headquarters of WestJet and Canada's third busiest airport, Calgary International Airport is in the midst of a massive expansion to add an international terminal and a longer runway, complete with a tunnel beneath for future east access.

Why am I telling the House all of this? It is because I am very proud of Calgary Northeast and I am humbled to have been elected to represent residents there for a second term. Besides being the most diverse federal riding in Alberta, I believe Calgary Northeast is also the hardest working riding in all of Canada, and I proudly stand today in the House on behalf of my constituents and declare it.

Now I come to my main point. Because of the incredible hard-working spirit of my constituents, there are certain ties that bind them all together. Regardless of background, no one likes to pay higher taxes and yet my hon. colleagues across the way continue to somehow believe that money is like some sort of magical fairy dust and that Canadian workers and companies have a never-ending magical supply.

Unfortunately, the NDP and Liberals continue pushing for higher taxes, followed by higher spending, followed by higher taxes, followed by higher spending. That is clearly a recipe for disaster.

I will share what the former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, said. She said, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money".

Last May, my constituents in Calgary Northeast and constituents in a majority of ridings across Canada stood up against Liberal and NDP desires for higher taxes. Canadians want the government to focus on jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity while keeping taxes low. That is exactly what our Conservative government has been focused on and that is why Canadians elected a strong, stable, national Conservative majority government.

● (1710)

Unlike the NDP and the Liberals, our Conservative government believes in low taxes. When we leave more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses, we have done what is right. It is not our money. It is Canadians' money.

That is why our Conservative government has cut taxes over 140 times since 2006, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years.

Despite all the opposition and false allegations from the other parties, our Conservatives government has removed over one million low-income families, individuals and seniors from the tax rolls altogether.

Furthermore, we have cut taxes in every way government collects them: personal taxes, consumption taxes, business taxes, excise taxes and much more. This includes cutting the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%; increasing the amount Canadians can earn tax free; providing seniors with pension income splitting; reducing the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of an average family; introducing the children's fitness tax credit and children's art tax credit; bringing the landmark tax free savings account, the most important personal saving vehicle since RRSPs; reducing the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%; and lowering business taxes to 15% as passed in Parliament in 2007.

Our Conservative government's low tax record has provided tax savings for a typical Canadian family totalling over \$3,100 per year. Why would the opposition fight this? That equals nearly \$260 of tax savings per month. The good news is that our Conservative government's tax savings are for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, even when Liberal and NDP MPs vote against the very measures that make these tax savings possible.

When it comes to lowering taxes, here is the really good news. We are not done yet. Economic action plan 2012 builds on our Conservative government's low tax record, including extending the hiring credit for small businesses for an additional year, providing businesses with a credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2012 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2011. This new credit will help up to 536,000 employers with additional hiring, reducing small business' 2012 payroll costs by about \$205 million.

Our government is making Improvements to registered disability savings plans to make it easier for disabled Canadians to save for their future. We are increasing the travel exemption on the value of goods Canadians can bring in duty free and tax free from \$50 to \$400 after a 24-hour trip, and from \$400 to \$800 after a 48-hour trip beginning June 2012.

Government Orders

Standing against the efforts of the Liberals and the NDP to raise taxes, our Conservative low tax approach has in part led *Forbes* magazine to rank Canada number one in the world for business to grow and create jobs.

We all know that the Leader of the Opposition does not support the exploration of our resource sector and cannot recognize the economic spin-off. The opposition wants to raise taxes on job-creating businesses. When the businesses grow, jobs are created for Canadians.

While Canada has created almost 700,000 net new jobs since July 2009, global economic turbulence remains and too many Canadians are still looking for work. Economic action plan 2012 takes responsible action to support the economy now and over the long term, while keeping taxes low and returning to balanced budgets. We also want to ensure that our social programs remain available today and for our future generations.

Even if the opposition wants to raise taxes on Canadians and on Canadian job creators, the fact is simple: When businesses grow, jobs are created and Canadians benefit. Likewise, if businesses are choked and starved with higher taxes, jobs go down and unemployment goes up.

Therefore, my hon. opposition colleagues across the way can choose either to stand up for higher taxes and fewer jobs or they can stand up for their constituents by agreeing that their constituents deserve lower taxes, jobs, growth and prosperity. That is why I am standing up in support of our Conservative government's budget implementation act, the plan for—

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member may be able to add some comments during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I liked it when the member referred to Margaret Thatcher and what the socialists had done.

The member just has to look at the world right now to see which way people are going. The people to the right, not the socialists but the capitalists, were in charge when we went through the economic crisis.

It is nice to just say “Well, let's not pay taxes”, but who will pay for our hospitals, our education, our roads and streets? Let us bring down the taxes, let put it in the pockets of the people and let us have bad roads, let us close down hospitals and some schools. In some places in the country we see the fight about the education of our children.

That is the agenda of the Conservative Party, and it is surely not the agenda of the NDP. We have to look at what is happening in the world right now to see how people are upset because the government is giving tax breaks to big banks which are making \$20 billion surpluses and paying themselves bonuses of \$11 billion. Those are the friends of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from across the way for his passionate comments. However, I believe he missed the point I made during my speech, and that was

the Conservative government believed in creating all the things he talked about, while keeping taxes low. It is possible. That is what the record shows. Since 2006, we have created 700,000 net new jobs, while reducing the taxes.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, the hon. member just said that the government had created all those jobs. The previous Conservative speaker got it right; he got it wrong.

The government did not create the jobs. The government tried to create an environment in which businesses would create those jobs. Perhaps the member could communicate that change in tone to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

I would also like to point out that the member said something wrong. He said repeatedly that the government did not raise any taxes. Let me remind him, it raised employment insurance premiums on January 1 of this year to the tune of \$600 million per year. If there is any tax hike that kills jobs, it is EI premiums because they are direct tax on jobs. The sensible policy would have been to keep those premiums frozen for awhile until the economy was stronger.

As the member is such a lover of low taxes, why the government imposed a \$600 million a year tax on jobs?

Mr. Devinder Shory: Madam Speaker, I thought that the member, being a former finance minister, would understand that when I talked about the government's job-creating programs or job creation, of course the government created the environment. That was what I meant, and the member knows this well.

Let us talk about EI. I am very surprised that the member from the Liberal Party raises the EI issue. His party raised the EI premium to a level and actually stole \$57 billion from that account, used it and never paid it back.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member used the word “stole”. The Liberal Party never stole. That is a lie that member has said and he should not use that word in the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I would suggest that all members be more judicious in their choice of words, and avoid words like “steal” and “lie”. Those are not parliamentary.

• (1720)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is parliamentary when Conservatives say that the Liberal government stole \$57 billion, because it did, and they legalized the robbery by the Liberals when the Conservative government came into power.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are into debate rather than points of order at this point.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to have this opportunity to talk about Bill C-38.

Government Orders

I have the floor for 10 minutes, which means that I can talk about all 431 pages of the bill if I spend 1.5 seconds on each page. But that would be too fastidious, and it is not my job to do that right now. It is up to the appropriate committees to dissect Bill C-38. I doubt they will finish the job before the Rio Olympic Games, but that is the government's fault for having the nerve to hand us this giant mess of a bill. Even the Conservatives do not want to debate the bill because I am sure they can imagine the interminable debates we would be happy to subject them to.

Forgive me for being sarcastic, but consider it a defence mechanism. What I am saying is the truth. When Bill C-38 was delivered to the parliamentary office of the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent, I was reminded of certain books I have read. Indeed, Bill C-38 contains a narrative as long and convoluted as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. By page 20, there are so many characters involved in the story that one has to take notes.

I will give you an example. On page 19, it talks about highway fuel consumption ratings. On page 20, we get to tax exemptions for foreign missions and international organizations. On page 21, we are introduced to a pharmacist I will call "Anastasia Prokopov". On page 22, heart-monitoring devices make their appearance, along with a disturbing character, probably an envoy from the Czar, a priest named "Isosorbide-5-mononitrate". It goes on like that for over 430 pages, in French and English. But it is about as accessible as a document written in Ottoman Turkish. And I have only 10 minutes to speak to you about this imperial decree.

The appropriate committees will never have a chance to get anywhere near Bill C-38. This edict amends 69 statutes relating to a myriad of subjects. I am not saying that some of these amendments are not useful and even pressing, but I think that more than 750 surprise amendments with unforeseeable consequences at least deserve to be reviewed by the experts, to be discussed in committee, to be subjected to some minimum scrutiny other than through the prism of Conservative ideology.

Imposing a gag order on a bill that is full of so many things, or perhaps I should say so full of nothing, is worthy of Vladimir Putin himself.

Speaking of Putin, I am going to tackle a few clauses in Bill C-38 that are intended to make changes that I consider to be unwarranted and hard to justify. I would like to point out that when the Conservative Party was campaigning it never mentioned 90% of what we have in this mess of a bill. The Conservatives say that the people who voted for them understand instinctively that these measures are unavoidably necessary, so there is no need to discuss them. The right wing makes haste, and if it makes haste straight into a wall, no problem. The Minister of Finance calls this an act to implement certain provisions of the budget; personally, I call it an abuse of trust, an abuse of process and an ethical abomination.

So let us talk about trust. If the government were so sure that these amendments are the right thing to do, it would not feel the need to hide them in a document this abstruse and obtuse. If you want to improve the nation and you are convinced you are doing it the right way, you do not spend 430 pages playing shell games. All of these somewhat shadowy measures are as doomed to go down in defeat as

Napoleon's Great Army was in Russia, although by halfway through this tangled tale, the army still has not made an appearance.

Even the choice of words is an insult to Canadians: jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. How do the Conservatives create jobs and economic prosperity? By reducing government accountability with impunity, by silencing the opposition, by overriding environmental protection measures, and, finally, by trampling on everyone, except for corporations. What is more, they have the audacity to hide an entire pipeline in a budget implementation bill.

Quite simply, when I was reading this bill, I thought I might even find Amelia Earhart's missing plane hidden among the pages. If you have lost your keys, just look in Bill C-38. It has everything.

Pardon my tone, but when the government shows such contempt for Canadians and Canada, the environment that surrounds us and belongs to us, and then has the nerve to say that the opposition is playing petty politics, I feel compelled to make jokes because this is a joke. For the umpteenth time, my hopes and dreams as a citizen of this country have been dashed by this government, which is driven only by money.

Bill C-38 is the grand theosophy of cash. If it truly contains measures to ensure the long-term prosperity of Canadian families—and not just of corporations—the very people for whom Canada was created and who are being asked to make all sorts of sacrifices, then would someone from the government please stand up and name those measures.

Need I remind you that elsewhere in the western world, major countries are making serious decisions and getting rid of governments that talk only about money, money that they want first and foremost for themselves, their friends and possibly for a posh retirement in Dubai?

● (1725)

I would like to reiterate something that is very important. Bill C-38 does contain some peripheral measures that are completely valid. The bill contains so much information that not everything can be bad, that is for sure. I am not saying that all 753 amendments are atrocious, but I have a problem with how the Conservatives have dropped this on us like a ton of bricks. They tell us to stop whining, that it is for the long-term prosperity of all Canadians. The Conservatives would try to hide constitutional amendments in a bill on the reproductive cycle of Canada geese if they thought they could.

I would rather laugh than cry about this, since we have reached a point that is so Kafkaesque with this government, which is putting in doors that open onto brick walls and long, tortuous stairways that lead nowhere. It has become very clear that to this Conservative government, long-term prosperity, growth and employment are simply code words for me, myself and I. The Conservatives are thinking only of their own political future, of the hyper-well-being of their friends in big business, and they do not give a hoot about the working class, about Canadian families or about those who see this ton of bricks falling on their heads.

Private Members' Business

Where is my generation in this budget? Nowhere. The Conservatives sold our reputation by withdrawing from Kyoto and are laughing in our faces. They are telling us that it is for the good of young people. Young people should be seen and not heard. According to the government, young people should not speak out because they do not understand. They do not understand that Canada has always been poorly managed, that the previous governments were all wrong and that they insisted on cheating and deceiving a category of Canadians whose interests are now being protected by the great Conservative government that was just biding its time and waiting for the perfect moment to rise to power as a majority government and reveal itself to us all. All this contempt for young people reminds me of a quote by James Freeman Clarke, who said that the difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician thinks of the next election and a statesman thinks of the next generation. Clearly, the group before me is a group of politicians, not a group of statesmen.

The Conservatives are mortgaging our young people's future, government transparency and accountability, the environment, natural resources, old age security, agriculture, food safety and immigration. They are hiding immigration bills in a budget implementation bill. Is this a budget bill or the constitution of a new country? The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has made a lot of effort to travel to cities all across Canada to talk to immigrants who had the opportunity to come to Canada and convince them that they know his party is the one that stands for economic stability and the sound management of public money. He may have even thrown in a little Trudeau-style benevolent multiculturalism. The approach that has always worked for Canada can hardly be reinvented.

Speaking of immigration, the Conservatives think that terrorists are everywhere, trying to get into Canada. They are giving the minister incredible power. They can detain and incarcerate. When the experts tell us that these measures make no sense, the government talks about how Canadians will constantly be in danger if just anyone is allowed in. They are singing two different songs: "Vote for us because we like you" and "Go back where you came from because we have it too good here". If there is one thing that is growing and that seems to be here to stay, it is not jobs and prosperity; it is shame and contempt.

I would like the government to explain why it thinks it is a good idea to cut food inspection. A UN food safety inspector, Olivier de Schutter, is in Canada right now. Government members do not even dare to talk to him. Is that because they are too ashamed? If Mr. de Schutter had come here with a proposal for a free trade agreement with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, they would have fallen all over themselves to meet with him.

Let us be clear. The government does not care at all about young people and it cares even less about seniors, who are costing us too much money. Seriously, Canada does not need any enemies to make people laugh at us: the Conservative government is doing that well enough on its own. It is acting as though countless seniors got off a big yellow school bus last week. In addition to insulting our intelligence by trying to hide all these changes within these 430 indigestible pages, it is insulting us directly too: you are too old, you need to tighten your belt, you no longer contribute. The

Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves. Meanwhile, where is all the money going? It is greasing the palms of big business, which does not need it at all. This sounds more like Hollywood.

I would like to quote the member for Chambly—Borduas who said, "With great power comes great responsibility". However, for us, there will be no superhero and no harsh Russian winter to defeat this army of shame that is invading us. Even opposition members cannot state our opinions, since we will be muzzled. Bill C-38 only adds to this government's terrible track record. Canadians will have to wait three years to be saved by our superheroes.

● (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on the motion.

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]

BREAST DENSITY AWARENESS ACT

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC) moved that Bill C-314, An Act respecting the awareness of screening among women with dense breast tissue, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-314, an act respecting the awareness of screening among women with dense breast tissue, for the final hour of debate in the House.

Bill C-314 calls on the federal government to encourage the use of existing federal initiatives in order to increase awareness among Canadian women about dense breast tissue and the implications for breast cancer screening.

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women. It claims many lives, and many deaths can be avoided through screening and early detection.

This year alone about 23,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 5,000 women will die from this disease. That represents about 450 women diagnosed each week. This situation is difficult to accept. It affects women and their loved ones profoundly.

For women with dense breast tissue, breast cancer is generally harder to detect using mammography, resulting in the need for more frequent screening.

Raising awareness about dense breast tissue is important for Canadian women. Through the bill we can raise awareness of breast cancer screening for women with dense breast tissue. Greater awareness and information about dense breast tissue is a tangible way we can make a difference. It would help women and their doctors make well-informed decisions regarding breast cancer screening. For these reasons I will ask my colleagues to continue to show their support for the passage of the bill.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-314 would support a number of initiatives that the federal government already has under way to support early detection and screening of breast cancer.

As noted in the bill, the federal government plays a role in facilitating the sharing of best practices and information on screening, as well as supporting research through its programs and networks. Building on existing initiatives, the bill is focused on raising awareness in several ways.

First, the bill requires the government to determine if there are breast density information gaps in relation to breast cancer screening. Through research we can investigate the full spectrum of cancer prevention and control, including breast cancer.

In this regard, the federal government's cancer research investments through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, or CIHR, are serving to fill some research gaps. Through the CIHR, the federal government is supporting research on more effective diagnostic treatment and prevention for all cancers, including breast cancer. In 2010-11, \$171 million was spent on cancer research, and \$22.7 million was spent for breast cancer research.

These research investments are supporting important scientific work. In particular, CIHR's Institute for Cancer Research is supporting research that will lead to reducing the burden of cancer on individuals and families through improved prevention efforts. It has placed a priority on research concerning early cancer detection, and it is working with partners to advance this research priority.

For instance, the institute is currently exploring partnerships with groups such as the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Society of Canada, and it would include efforts in early detection as part of this focus. The institute is looking at targeted funding for research on the early detection of cancer, including breast cancer, to address information gaps. Scientific research such as this is helping to improve screening and is helping to raise awareness about the challenges related to breast cancer screening.

In addition, to raise awareness, the second element of the bill requires that approaches be identified, as needed, to improve information for women in order to, first, address the challenges of detecting cancer in women with dense tissue and, second, raise awareness concerning these challenges.

In response to the bill, the government will continue to raise awareness about breast density and its screening implications through the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative. This initiative respects the role of provincial and territorial programs and the role they play in early detection of breast cancer among Canadian women. Through it, we are working with the provincial and territorial governments to measure screening program performance nationwide and to develop better screening approaches.

The Canadian breast cancer screening initiative supports the good work already under way with our provinces and territories. By facilitating information-sharing about breast cancer screening across Canada, the initiative can achieve its goal of evaluating and improving the quality of organized breast cancer screening programs.

●(1735)

The Canadian breast cancer screening initiative is helping raise awareness about cancer screening, including screening for women with dense breast tissue. By building upon best practices and lessons learned, breast cancer screening programs can be improved and strengthened across the country.

The third element of the bill even more directly relates to the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative. The bill would require the existing Canadian breast cancer screening initiative to share information on dense breast tissue and its relationship to breast cancer screening and any follow-up procedures that may be necessary. The follow-up procedures are a pretty important part of this.

Sharing information about ways to improve cancer screening programs ensures women receive the full benefits of early detection, including information about all aspects of breast cancer screening.

We must sustain this collaboration and collective assessment of breast cancer screening programs. In this regard, the government has established a federal, provincial and territorial national committee for the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative, which also includes medical professionals and key stakeholders.

This is a platform for engagement. It provides opportunity for governments to work together on screening recommendations and approaches. For example, the national committee is currently looking at breast cancer mortality and improving screening for underserved populations. This committee encourages the sharing and pooling of information. This is a basis for a balanced set of protocols across Canada, based on best practices. There is no monopoly on a good idea, and an effective screening mechanism in one part of the country can easily be adopted in another part of Canada.

In addition to the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative, the government has also established a national repository on breast cancer screening. This national database is housed and administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Information is provided by provinces and territories and rolled up into a biannual report to Canadians on new cases of breast cancer and cancer deaths. The report also contains data on participation in organized screening programs, mammography use and follow-up.

In line with the bill, the database would include breast density information in the future. This is an important addition to the repository. In turn, information would be provided to Canadians on this important issue.

The Canadian breast cancer screening initiative would continue to provide a decision-making tool for women. It, too, would include information on breast density.

All this good work is helping build awareness and understanding of the effects of breast cancer screening on breast cancer survival rates and other important issues.

Private Members' Business

In sum, the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative is an invaluable collaborative effort. It accesses new information about screening on a regular basis; it ensures that programs and policies are informed by the most up-to-date information; and it provides good information to help Canadians and to help professionals make the best possible decisions about breast cancer screening.

The bill also recognizes the important work done by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer on cancer prevention and control, more generally. Our government established the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer in 2006 to implement the Canadian strategy for cancer control. In March 2010, we renewed its funding, investing \$250 million for another five years.

The Canadian Partnership Against Cancer is an independent, not-for-profit corporation. Its work includes prevention, early detection, treatment and support for Canadians living with cancer, and it involves many players, such as cancer experts, charitable organizations, government cancer agencies, national health organizations, patient survivors and others. Our investments in the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer help provide women with up-to-date information on breast cancer screening.

Recently, the bill was discussed at length in committee and a number of experts and witnesses shared their stories with us. I thought I would share a few.

Ms. Feather Janz detected a lump in her breast at age 20. However, despite going for numerous tests, cancer was not detected. She was finally diagnosed with highly aggressive grade three breast cancer at the age of 23. She underwent a radical surgery and her left breast was removed.

About 12 years later, Feather started to feel that her remaining breast was not quite right. Over the next four years, she continually went for mammograms but, again, nothing was detected.

● (1740)

The reports contained notations like “high dense breast tissue”, “too dense”, “quite dense” and “not able to see any abnormalities”. That is all the reports said. Feather insisted on surgery to have the other breast removed, and after the procedure the pathology report stated that it, indeed, had been a case of advanced aggressive breast cancer that had already spread to her lymph nodes. Feather told the committee she was shocked when she found out that the likely reason for this happening, and her life being threatened due to it, was because of dense breast tissue.

Another example is Mr. Bruce Cole, who testified before the committee about his wife, Sharon, who was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 36 and passed away at 40. Bruce Cole is from the same region of the country that I come from, Simcoe County. Mr. Cole talked about the incredible tragedy of losing his wife, who left behind children aged 17, 15 and 13. Her family had no history of this terrible disease and Mr. Cole testified that, regrettably, his wife did not have access to the screening technology and the knowledge we have today.

Since Sharon's tragic death, Bruce has been very active with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation as a donor and volunteer, and he attended the world forum on breast cancer last June in Hamilton. Bruce urged the committee to pass Bill C-314. He said it would help

improve the quality of information to women as part of Canada's organized breast screening programs. Bruce knows this bill would help raise women's awareness about breast density and its implications for their health.

Bruce correctly pointed out to us that digital mammography or MRI are more effective than screen-film mammography at detecting breast cancer in dense breast tissue like his wife had, and he emphasized the need for sharing information between the Public Health Agency of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments. Sadly, Bruce understands that his wife might be here today if these practices had been in place when Sharon needed them most, but he bravely soldiers on, fighting this battle in her memory.

With all of us working together, we can improve screening and early detection and provide important information to women, health care professionals and Canadians. Bill C-314 calls on us to do exactly that. By passing this bill, we can ensure awareness is raised about breast cancer screening for women with dense breast tissue. We can ensure that existing initiatives assist women and health care professionals in making well-informed decisions regarding screening. Raising awareness about breast cancer screening can lead to early detection, and early detection can save lives.

For these reasons, I encourage all members of the House to support my bill, and I sincerely hope that it will go a long way in helping to save more lives in the future.

I know this is something Canadians care passionately about. Every October the breast cancer walk is held in communities across Canada. In my home town, Barrie, there is a sea of pink, people walking on the shores of Kempenfelt Bay to support breast cancer research. This is a way to support the collective will of Canadians who say they want us to act and make a tangible difference in fighting breast cancer.

● (1745)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Barrie for bringing this bill back to the House. As he knows, New Democrats supported it in committee.

I am glad he read some of the testimony from the witnesses, because it was very compelling. I recall that one of the really important pieces of testimony committee members heard was about new technology that is available. We heard that even the existing technology, whether it is mammograms or MRIs, unfortunately, does not capture all situations that women with dense breast tissue are facing. I forget the name of the new technology the committee heard about, but there are only one or two locations in Canada.

Private Members' Business

I wonder if the member would agree with me that it is very important that we find a way to ensure that technology is made available and accessible and is not just a private for-pay service, because it really does affect women who have dense breast tissue. We heard that very directly from the one organization that has made it its mandate to warn women about this issue and encourage them to take the test, but they have to pay for it. I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the health committee for the question, and the New Democrats for their support for this bill. It is much appreciated and an example of how we can work collaboratively in this House.

New technology is critically important to the health care system. That testimony was invaluable. There are technologies out there that can 100% detect breast cancer. If women have dense breasts, in many cases, mammography is not accurate, but we know that an ultrasound or an MRI can accurately show if there is breast cancer. However, we did hear testimony about technology beyond ultrasound or MRI. That is the exciting thing about health care. As much as the system is challenged in many ways, technological advancements are a great way to deal with these challenges. I am happy to see our health committee studying technology in health care, because it opens the door for advancements in health services.

This bill does not deal directly with new technology, but by sharing best practices, it opens the door for that conversation. Obviously, we cannot have verbal recommendations saying "Spend money on this" in a private member's bill. However, that collaborative approach with the provinces and that best practices format, if there is a technology that is utilized in Newfoundland, perhaps will allow the provinces to rapidly work together to have these new technologies adopted in every health care system.

That is one of the measures that the bill focuses on, that collaborative approach among the provinces, territories and the federal government to ensure the best possible health care delivery throughout Canada.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak at report stage, the first hour of debate, to Bill C-314. I would like to congratulate the member for Barrie for bringing forward this bill. I agree that when we bring forward private members' business, whether it is a bill or a motion, it is an opportunity for each of us to show initiative, to bring forward an issue for greater awareness and, hopefully, get support in the House to make an advancement. There are women who live with dense breast tissue and may not be aware of their higher risk. There is still unfortunately too little known about the issue. So we very much appreciate this bill coming forward.

When we were at committee, we heard a number of fantastic witnesses. I agree with my colleague that the witnesses who shared their personal experience with us were very compelling. This tells us where things are and what it is that we need to do. I was struck by the witness who talked about innovation and new technologies. There is technology available that will assist women with dense breast tissue 100%. I am very concerned that even if women are aware of that, they may not be able to access the technology because of where they live. It may be very far to travel or they may not be able to afford the fees. It is a private service. It seems to run contrary

to the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act: universality, accessibility, public administration, comprehensiveness and so on.

I want to put on record here at report stage that the NDP supports the bill. However, after we heard from the witnesses, our concern in committee was that the bill was quite limited in its scope. It talks about information and information sharing, best practices and creating better awareness. All of those things are an absolute must, but they are sort of the bottom floor. For us in the NDP, when we heard the witnesses, we felt that we needed to go some extra distance with the bill.

We introduced a number of amendments. The most significant amendment said, "working in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments to establish national standards for systematic breast cancer screening". Unfortunately, that amendment and all the other amendments were defeated. It was disheartening that all of the amendments put forward in good faith from the opposition parties at the committee were turned down. I do not think they were beyond the scope of the bill. While I concur that information and awareness are very important, we could be doing so much more.

We are now more aware of which women are at risk. I believe this bill will help get a message out, and that is very important. However, we in the NDP believe that there should be a nationwide systematic breast cancer screening program for all women. It should be free of charge and it should be by self-referral. It is quite alarming that, for example, there is no screening program in Nunavut. This seems to be a glaring omission and speaks strongly to the need for a nationwide systematic screening program with standards for screening.

• (1750)

We heard from practitioners at the committee that if a woman has gone beyond a mammogram and is going for an ultrasound, even that can be very problematic. It depends on how experienced the practitioner is doing the ultrasound. It is not about human error, but it is a very delicate procedure in terms of what one is looking for. It did surprise me to hear that even if a woman has an ultrasound, it may not identify the fact she is at risk or may have cancer present.

Similarly, we all think that MRIs are a real window into what is going on. However, we heard that for women with dense breast tissue, even an MRI may not pick up their particular situation. We heard from a witness about the newest technology that involves 360° imaging.

This speaks to a lack of available screening and a lack of national standards to ensure that wherever one is in the country, one can be assured of getting the highest quality screening and care. Under the Canada Health Act, that is very much a part of our health care system.

I do not want to be negative, but the bill is mostly about information and awareness. While it is important, I feel that we missed an opportunity to do a lot more with this bill. Although opportunities were put forward at the committee, unfortunately the government members decided not to vote for those amendments. Now here we are at report stage with a bill that is quite limited in its scope.

Private Members' Business

We will support the bill because it is a step to providing much better awareness about dense breast tissue. I was not aware of it before I heard about the bill. It is an eye opener for all of us. For that it is commendable.

However, I wish that we had been able to strengthen the bill in the way that we wanted, and that we could have responded to witnesses' suggestions to the committee. Maybe at some point there will be another bill and we will get another opportunity.

When we hear from people at committee we should do our utmost to respond to what they say. We should listen in good faith to their suggestions. Where it is possible for us to incorporate those recommendations in a way that is realistic within a private member's bill, then why on earth would we not do that?

That is my only regret. I certainly appreciate the member putting this bill forward and getting it this far. I am sure that the bill will be approved. Let us all make a commitment in this House today, not only to support this bill but also to advocate for a nationwide breast cancer screening program to ensure that women in Nunavut have access to even the most basic screening.

We need to address the issue of standards for screening to ensure that where there are these unique challenges of detecting cancer in women, particularly women with dense breast tissue, that they are getting the very best they can get so that their risk is lowered and not increased.

• (1755)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will speak, as I have done in the past, in support of the bill at report stage, but not with the same enthusiasm that I did earlier. As my hon. colleague for Vancouver East just mentioned, the bill went to committee, and it did not implement many of the changes that would have strengthened the bill and made it far more effective. I will speak to that a little later.

The bill's intent is to ensure that women and health care providers have the best information possible regarding screening, especially regarding new technology, and an understanding about dense breast tissue so that women know about it and health care providers and technologists understand what to look for. We know that tumours can be harder to identify in women with dense breast tissue. I would like to add, though, that it does not necessarily mean that a woman with dense breast tissue is more likely to have breast cancer. It is just that it is harder to identify if she does.

Twenty-three thousand women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in Canada this year. Sadly, nearly a quarter of those women will die from that disease, so in many ways this is an important bill, in that it speaks to the issue of identifying and finding a cancer as early as possible.

The federal government has a definitive role to play in facilitating best practices and funding research related to cancer prevention and early detection as part of the Canadian partnership against cancer, which is a federal initiative with the provinces, especially, as well, since the 2004 health accord strengthened the federal leadership role in ensuring access to health care services no matter where people live in Canada.

Where I find a problem, and I find it disappointing, is in relation to the health committee's recent study this bill. We heard from many witnesses. We heard from experts, health care professionals, patients and researchers. They all agreed that the intent of the bill is a very good one. They all agreed that awareness is important and that information sharing is important. However, they all felt that the bill would fall short of achieving any really important outcomes unless some pieces were added to it.

The member who moved the bill earlier on praised the co-operation and collaboration across parties on his bill. However, it stopped short in the House of Commons and at committee stage, where witnesses made some very compelling testimony. They talked about ways to improve the bill to improve its effectiveness. This was voted down, not only by the member for Barrie, who moved the bill, but also by members of the Conservative Party.

A couple of items that I moved as recommendations to strengthen the bill came from the witnesses. One of them is about sharing best practices. Subclause 2(c) of the bill talks about the ability of the Public Health Agency of Canada to look at information and data sharing, et cetera. I consulted so that it would not add cost at all. I heard from the legislative wing of the Library of Parliament that in fact there was a way to make sure this would incur no cost. It would use the already existing infrastructure of the Public Health Agency of Canada, where they have data and information sharing, to add best practices.

The reason for this, as we heard from witnesses, is that there are provinces, such as my province of British Columbia, where the outcomes of breast cancer are, by enormous percentage points, better than anywhere else in Canada. Therefore, why do we not take a page from their book? Why are we allowing people to continue to reinvent the wheel when we know what would work? Of course, as with anything to do with health, time is of the essence. Why wait six years for someone to discover a new wheel, when other people discovered it six years ago and we could be implementing it now for the benefit of patients?

Therefore, I was really very disappointed that the member himself did not accept that amendment. In fact, he said that his concern was with the word "ensuring". He said that the work of the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative is not controlled by the Public Health Agency of Canada and that as such it should not be "ensuring" the collection, processing and distribution of information or "ensuring" the identifying, synthesizing and distribution of best practices. However, in subclause 2(c) he himself suggests sharing information through the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative.

• (1800)

It seemed as if this amendment, which would have enhanced the bill, was blocked purely because it was going to change the bill in some small way, even though to improve it.

Perhaps in his final remarks today, the member could clarify why such a no-cost, important thing that we heard from witnesses over and over was rejected.

Private Members' Business

I do not for one moment impugn the intentions of the member. He did a lot of hard work. I think it is an important bill and I think he brought forward a lot of things about it, but it had no teeth. There was nothing that would really change outcomes, other than increasing awareness.

This is an example of what concerns many of us, which is that the government is not listening to the expert testimony of witnesses appearing before committee, especially on bills and especially when these witnesses enhance the bill. It is a pattern.

I would like to say that we saw the same thing with Bill C-300. Witnesses appeared before the health committee and made several suggestions to establish a truly effective framework for suicide prevention. Twenty-one amendments were brought forward, including nine by the Liberal Party, and every single one of them, none of which incurred new costs, was voted down for no really logical reason that was given.

What we are left with are toothless bills that sound good and do small things, but do not really improve very much the lot of women with dense breast tissue or a suicide prevention strategy.

I hope this is not about ideology, because most of us have been supporting these bills because the intent is good. However, we would like to see them actually make a difference to the patients.

As I said before, I support the bill, but with a great deal of disappointment and reluctance.

● (1805)

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to be speaking in support of Bill C-314, regarding dense breast tissue and the importance of breast cancer screening.

The bill was introduced by our colleague, the hon. member for Barrie. I would like to thank him for bringing it forward. When it comes to his health, this member is certainly putting his money where his mouth is. He is constantly ensuring that he is staying in the shape he needs to be in to be able to do his work.

In fact, as many of us know, the Toronto marathon was held over the weekend, and the member for Barrie competed, running a tremendous marathon and coming in one minute short of being able to qualify for the Boston marathon. Bringing this bill forward speaks highly of this member.

This bill puts a spotlight on an important issue. Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women in Canada. There are a number of risk factors associated with breast cancer, and dense breast tissue is a significant one.

Greater awareness of this risk is needed. Bill C-314 calls for exactly that, for expanding awareness of breast cancer screening for women with dense breast tissue. It is well established that early detection through breast screening can save lives.

By supporting this bill, we can make a difference in the lives of many Canadians. As noted in the bill, Canadian women will benefit from increased awareness of the challenges related to breast cancer screening for women with dense breast tissue. An important aspect of the bill is that it is dedicated to improving collaboration with

partners to improve and share information on breast cancer screening with women and their doctors.

Bill C-314 will complement several current government actions supported by other partner organizations on cancer, breast cancer and breast cancer screening in our country. It is a priority for our government. Every single year, millions of Canadians are affected by cancer, either personally in terms of being subjected to the disease or by the experience of a family member or a friend or neighbour.

One in nine women in Canada will develop breast cancer during their lifetime. I am sure all of us who sit in the chamber today know a relative, friend or neighbour who has been affected and how stressful an experience it can actually be.

Early detection through organized screening programs is a key public health practice. It can protect women from breast cancer and the emotional, financial and personal costs that can often be associated with the disease.

Breast cancer screening can find cancer even when there may not be symptoms. The goal is to find breast cancer early, when it is small and less likely to have spread to other parts of the body. The most common method of breast cancer screening is a mammogram, which uses X-rays to take pictures of the internal structure of the breast.

For women with dense breast tissue it can be more difficult to detect small changes in the tissue that could be cancer, because both dense tissue and tumours appear as white space. This is why it is important for women in Canada and health professionals to be well informed so that they are able to discuss and make the best decisions around dense breast tissue screening.

Through better sharing of information and raised awareness of the risks presented by dense breast tissue, early detection through organized screening programs can help women in Canada by catching cancer at an early stage.

Our continued progress on cancer prevention and control relies on working across sectors, jurisdictions and organizations. The government has invested in partnerships that promote optimal screening, working with provinces and territories that deliver the services and with partner organizations.

Together we want to improve screening and early detection and to provide desperately needed information to women. That is exactly what Bill C-314 calls for: an assurance that we are doing all that we can with what we have to increase awareness and to assist health care providers and women in making well-informed screening decisions.

● (1810)

The bill's preamble recognizes that we are taking action related to screening through a number of initiatives. This bill reinforces our commitment and action on prevention, detection and control. It acknowledges the work this government does through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Canadian breast cancer screening initiative. The knowledge and information generated through these initiatives is then shared with doctors and networks that include health organizations.

Private Members' Business

The central initiative supported by the government to fight cancer is the Canadian strategy for cancer control. It is a coordinated, comprehensive strategy that was developed with governments, non-governmental cancer organizations, cancer survivors, researchers and health care professionals.

The government created and provides funding to the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to lead the implementation of the Canadian strategy for cancer control in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations.

The Partnership Against Cancer is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose work is focused on prevention, early detection, treatment and support for Canadians who live with cancer.

Screening and early detection is one of the main priorities of the strategy. Breast density and its implications for cancer screening are part of this strategic priority.

The Partnership Against Cancer has done much to ensure that cancer patients and doctors across Canada have state of the art knowledge about what works to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. It has encouraged hard to reach populations, such as newcomers to Canada, rural Canadians and people with disabilities, to undergo screening. This work has helped doctors to identify cancer at a much earlier time in an individual's life.

The government's cancer strategy is about people making a difference by working together and learning from each other so that Canadians, no matter where they live, can benefit.

One of the main resources offered by the federal government is the cancer view portal. This is a convenient single window for information for Canadians on cancer issues, including breast cancer screening. Cancer view connects Canadians to quality cancer resources. It provides tools to health professionals, patients and families, and it links people in the Canadian cancer community with each other.

To ensure that the valuable work of the partnership continues, the government has renewed its funding from 2012 to the 2017 fiscal year, providing up to \$250 million over that period of time. It is not the amount that is important, it is what the funding enables the Partnership Against Cancer to continue to do, and that is to raise awareness and provide the tools that strengthen prevention. It is important work aimed at reducing the number of new cases of cancer, increasing the likelihood of Canadians surviving cancer and improving a patient's quality of life. Its activities cover a wide range of areas, from cancer control and prevention to palliative and end of life care.

The federal government also makes significant investments in research, surveillance and education, focused on preventing and reducing cancer.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is at the centre of the government's research efforts. It provides more effective diagnostics, better treatment and more efficient prevention strategies for all cancers, including breast cancer.

Research investments in this area are supporting Canadian scientists and they are helping to fill critical knowledge gaps in our understanding about breast cancer.

In addition to searching for a cure, Canadian medical researchers are also helping to reduce the burden of cancer on individuals and families by providing information to develop prevention strategies.

CIHR's Institute of Cancer Research is leading an international imaging initiative in personalized medicine and this initiative includes breast cancer as a focus. Such scientific research is helping to improve screening in health care settings and contributes to building understanding about early diagnosis, as well as access to better quality cancer care.

Bill C-314 also highlights the importance of providing women and their doctors with the information they need to make decisions that affect and impact their health. The government is taking steps to increase awareness, to fund research and to provide information to Canadians about cancer prevention and early detection.

In addition to the good work already mentioned, the federal government is promoting education and makes information and resources available to communities across our country through the Canadian breast cancer initiative.

The community capacity building program is a key component of the Canadian breast cancer initiative. The community capacity building program supports organizations and provinces and territories to network with provincial and community breast cancer groups. This cross-Canada collaboration enables the sharing of best practices and ensures that information and supports are available for women with breast cancer.

• (1815)

Together, they regularly assess new information about screening to improve programs and to ensure that women have the full benefit of early detection. By raising awareness around breast density, we are also encouraging this important practice. It is essential to have the right information about dense breast tissue in order to determine the best screening method.

The government is engaged in cancer prevention research and education. We are raising awareness about the many health issues faced by Canadians. Clearly, we all have a role to play in the fight against breast cancer.

The member for Barrie understands, as does this House and this government, that this bill ensures the federal government will continue to raise awareness through existing initiatives about the challenges related to breast cancer screening for women with dense breast tissue.

Bill C-314 is another step forward for Canada in tackling breast cancer. I ask all members of the House to support this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. Accordingly, I invite the hon. member for Barrie for his right of reply. The hon. member has five minutes.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for all of the comments so far in the House on this debate. I thank the member for St. Catharines for his eloquent comments on this. It is great to have such a hard-working colleague, like the member for St. Catharines, support this bill.

There were some concerns raised by the member for Vancouver Centre from the Liberal Party. I realize that her submission was that there should be language that said "a best clearing house". I just want to explain that, as much as we appreciated her amendment and suggestions, we felt that the language was already in the bill.

However, I am heartened that members of the official opposition have supported this bill throughout the process and that the member for St. Paul's, who initially spoke to the bill on behalf of the Liberal Party, did so enthusiastically. I think these are the types of issues we can rally behind. There was no intention to ignore the amendment from the member for Vancouver Centre. It is just that the language was already there. I am a big believer that it is important that we not be redundant in terms of having multiple paragraphs in a bill that stipulate and say the exact same thing.

I believe we have a bill that works in the best interests of breast cancer patients. The reason I selected this as a topic to push here in the House of Commons is because where I come from in Barrie, for the entire time that I have been involved in elected politics, and I was elected to city council in 2000, the number one issue in Barrie was building our cancer centre. It will finally open on May 17 but it has been an 11-year fundraising campaign and something that I know is incredibly important to Simcoe county. When I asked members of the community what type of bill I should work on, the resounding response was something cancer related. This is something that our community has really rallied behind.

Members of the medical community and friends here in Ottawa who worked within Health Canada gave me suggestions but this was a suggestion we thought we could tangibly make progress on and tangibly move forward. I really believe this is an issue that is not partisan at all. It is an issue that every party can get behind and support because when it comes to trying to increase the survival percentages of breast cancer patients, it is something that is important to every community in Canada.

There has been tremendous progress in Canada. Having survival rates of 80% is an accomplishment for Canada but I believe we can go even beyond that. Embracing new technology, raising awareness and ensuring that we have best practices across Canada for dense breast tissue will enable us to reach new levels of success in beating breast cancer.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues in the House and I hope it will pass in this House very shortly.

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 98 the recorded division stands deferred until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 9, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House this evening to speak on behalf of the residents in my riding of Davenport in Toronto to issues that are of deep concern to them and issues that they want me to raise in this place.

Tonight I will talk a bit about urban issues, the issues that are deeply affecting big cities like Toronto. Toronto has, if we include the GTA, the greater Toronto area, about 5.5 million people, which represents roughly around 20% of Canada's GDP. We have a multiplicity of human resources to draw from. About 50% of Canada's new immigrants settle in the greater Toronto area and yet we are faced with some particular issues on which we have tried to get some engagement with the government side.

The government does like to invoke jurisdictional boundaries as its reason for inaction on certain urban files. We think that is unfortunate because if there were leadership and a will on the part of the government to really focus on a city's agenda, then we could make some movement on some of these issues.

For example, notwithstanding all the numbers that the government likes to throw about at will, the issue of affordable housing in the city of Toronto has not been solved. In fact, it is an issue that is affecting not only low-income people, but it is also affecting middle-income Canadians as well. It is almost impossible for people to buy a house in the city of Toronto unless they have significant means and it is getting harder for families to find rental accommodations.

The government loves to say that it will let the free market handle these things, that the market will solve the issue of affordable housing in Toronto. I do not know how many years or how many decades it needs to finally realize that the market will not solve the affordable housing crisis that affects cities like Toronto and actually affects cities, small towns and rural municipalities across the country.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government needs to take a much broader look at urban issues, issues of transit, issues of housing and issues of support for new Canadians. It has cut funding to immigrant settlement services in Toronto and yet 50% of the immigrants come to Toronto. That makes no sense to me and it makes no sense to most people who think about these things in a rational way.

I invite the government to take a more balanced approach to big cities.

I know the member opposite will stand and talk about all the wonderful things the government is doing but she needs to give Canadians a sense of how the government is solving the problem of affordable housing, of congestion, of historic traffic jams. We have one of the worst cases of gridlock occur daily in the GTA. We lose \$5 billion in lost productivity due to gridlock.

I would love to hear the government finally, in a real way, enter a dialogue and talk about these issues.

• (1825)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been in this place a couple of times now in late shows, addressing this exact same issue put forward by the NDP member. I must admit I am quite surprised the NDP member fails to ever recognize some of the steps forward this Conservative government has taken with regard to affordable housing. It really demonstrates some hypocrisy on behalf of the NDP when it does not do that. A number of measures have been put forward that have had an increased effect on affordable housing.

Rather than develop policies that would benefit Canadians in need of affordable housing, the NDP seems to be content to simply criticize the Conservative government's diligent work on this file, which I do not really understand. Perhaps if the member for Davenport spent a little less time blindly criticizing the government's actions and a bit more time familiarizing himself with what the government has done for Canadians in need of affordable housing, he would probably realize the absurdity of the comments he continues to make night after night.

Allow me to take some time to remind the member of what has been done.

Since 2006, under Canada's economic action plan, our government has invested more than \$2 billion to renovate and build new affordable housing across the country. Yes, in case the member is wondering, that includes the city of Toronto. In fact, I am happy to inform the member that an estimated 237,200 households in Ontario, living in existing affordable housing, receive this support.

What about the construction of new housing, one might ask. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation plays a pivotal role in ensuring that affordable housing continues to be an option for Canadians. By providing mortgage loan insurance for these projects, developers are able to access the cost-effective financing required to make these projects viable and affordable.

However, that is not all. Since 2006, our government, through CMHC, has invested an estimated \$12.5 billion in federal housing assistance. Through these investments, the living conditions for thousands of low-income Canadians have been improved and

stronger communities from coast to coast to coast have benefited in the process.

However, do not take my word for it. Let us hear what the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is saying about investments that this government has made to communities. It stated:

In the last few years, federal investments have helped municipalities put police on the streets, repair social housing and rebuild the roads, bridges, water systems and public transit Canada needs to support families, businesses and long-term economic growth.

Look at that. Municipalities from across the country are recognizing the positive contributions our government has made to affordable housing. One wonders why the NDP cannot do the same. For some reason, the NDP is content to repeatedly vote against these measures.

However, I may have figured it out. After all the good remarks by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, it is clear that the NDP simply votes against all of these measures because it really does not support measures that help families, businesses and long-term economic prosperity. It needs to think about this because Canadians count on all of us to ensure they are well taken care of, particularly in this area.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, positive contributions mean that we are making a situation better. It means we are actually creating a climate where fewer people are on waiting lists for affordable housing. That is how one measures whether what one is doing works.

We can talk all we want about putting gaffers tape on roofs and call it repairs to housing, but we have to look at the number of Canadians on waiting lists for affordable housing across all municipalities and then factor in the millions of Canadians who are in need of core housing. Somewhere along the line the government has to accept the fact that whatever it thinks it is doing or says it is doing is not working and is not enough. Canadians need and deserve much better.

• (1830)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely impossible to take the NDP seriously on this issue and here is why.

Let us review the NDP record for a moment. It voted against providing \$1.9 billion over five years beginning in September 2008 for the affordable housing initiative, the residential rehabilitation assistance program and the homelessness partnering strategy. It voted against providing \$2.1 billion toward the construction and renovation of affordable housing units. It voted against \$2 billion in low-cost loans to municipalities for projects, including affordable housing initiatives.

When the member stands in his place and asks us to talk about measures that actually show there were fewer low-income Canadians who were able to benefit from the measures put forward by this Conservative government, these were the measures that did exactly that. The member and his party voted against all of them.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 7 I asked the Associate Minister of National Defence a question. The question of course had to do with the contingency plan for the infamous F-35s. What is the plan B? What is the deadline? How many planes are we talking about? How much will it cost? So many questions remain unanswered.

On April 3, the Office of the Auditor General published its spring report and showed no mercy when it came to the F-35s: the Conservatives hid the real cost of procuring the F-35s. The Auditor General said that the government had known about the huge cost overruns of the program for a long time and that it had internal and external estimates that differed, coincidentally, by \$10 billion.

In the meantime, the minister and the associate minister responded to us, my colleagues and me, by playing the same tape over and over again and raising the same talking points, deviating from the script only slightly. Now, the talking points have changed with the situation. They have accepted the recommendations, but not the responsibility; the funding has been frozen; and a seven-point action plan has been put into place. Again, those are lovely talking points.

Today, the government has four minutes, instead of 30 seconds, to reply. Consequently, I would like to have a better answer. Now that an interdepartmental secretariat has been established, I would like to know what is happening with this file. Can the government provide information about certain points? The Auditor General pointed out that there was absolutely no communication between Public Works and National Defence and that National Defence refused to share pertinent information requested by Public Works. I quote:

We found that National Defence engaged PWGSC late in the decision-making process and hampered PWGSC's ability to carry out its responsibilities as contracting authority to ensure the integrity of the procurement process. At the same time, PWGSC relied almost exclusively on assertions by National Defence and endorsed the procurement strategy in the absence of required documentation and completed analysis.

What communication is there between these two departments? Who manages and checks that all documents are forwarded in a timely manner to the secretariat? Is it still taking several months for the requested information to be forwarded? Are unilateral decisions still being made?

I would also like to point out that the testimony given by Kevin Page before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts confirms what we have been speaking out against from the beginning and that is that the Conservatives deliberately hid information about the real cost of the F-35s. The Minister of National Defence also admitted that he was aware of the existence of two different sets of books on the actual cost of the F-35s.

The Auditor General and the NDP actively spoke out against the government's total lack of transparency in this regard. Today, I heard the Minister of Public Works and Government Services say in question period:

We expect full transparency and accountability from the Department of National Defence when it comes forward to table its updated cost estimates on the F-35s to all Parliamentarians.

I therefore expect full transparency from the department. What is the status of this file? How is the secretariat dealing with this issue? Is there any information in this regard? Have any consultations been held to find alternative solutions? Has a plan B been developed? How are the visits going? Have consultations been held with other aircraft manufacturers? What stage is this interdepartmental secretariat at in its efforts to replace the fighter jets?

● (1835)

[English]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member opposite because this gives me an opportunity, as the granddaughter of three World War II veterans, to talk about the pride I have in the plan our Conservative government has put forward to ensure we reassert the facts about the CF-18 replacement.

As my colleague is well aware, we need to replace our fleet of aging CF-18s, which have been a tremendous asset for the Canadian Forces. The commitment to purchase a CF-18 replacement fleet was clearly spelled out in the Canada first defence strategy. Our government has set a budget for replacement aircraft and we will work within that budget. As of this moment, we have not signed any contracts to purchase replacement aircraft.

As my colleague is well aware, we have announced a seven-step plan to guide responsible replacement of our brave men and women's fleet. This includes a secretariat to oversee that this important procurement meets the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

Let me take a moment to outline seven important points regarding the secretariat.

The funding envelope allocated for the acquisition of the replacement of fighter jets is frozen. The Government of Canada will immediately establish a new secretariat within the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada. The secretariat will play the lead coordinating role as the government moves to replace Canada's CF-18 fleet.

A committee of deputy ministers will be established to provide oversight of the secretariat. The Department of National Defence, through the new secretariat, will provide annual updates to Parliament. These updates will be tabled within a maximum of 60 days from receipt of annual costing forecasts from the joint strike fighter program office beginning in 2012. The Department of National Defence will also provide technical briefings as needed, through the secretariat, on the performance schedule and cost.

The Department of National Defence will continue to evaluate options to sustain the Canadian Forces' fighter capability well into the 21st century.

Prior to project approval, the Treasury Board Secretariat will first commission an independent review of DND's acquisition and sustainment project assumptions and potential costs for the F-35, which will be made public. The Treasury Board Secretariat will also review the acquisition and sustainment costs of the F-35 and ensure full compliance with procurement policies prior to approving the project.

Adjournment Proceedings

Industry Canada, through the new secretariat, will continue identifying opportunities for Canadian industry to participate in the joint strike fighter global supply chain as well as other potential benefits for Canada in sustainment, testing and training and will provide updates to Parliament explaining the benefits.

Canada has not purchased any replacement aircraft and has not signed any contract to do so. Canada will only proceed with replacing the CF-18s when all of the steps I just mentioned are complete and development work is sufficiently advanced.

I would urge members opposite, particularly the member who is speaking this evening, to really take into consideration the needs of our men and women in uniform and the needs of our Canadian air force. They do a tremendous job protecting our interests. They deserve to have the best equipment in a timely fashion. I urge that member to reconsider her position when she votes against our military equipment and sustainability model.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, although the parliamentary secretary has a more pleasant voice than the other two ministers, she is still repeating the same points that I have heard a million times. I have not heard any new information. After constantly receiving vague answers, I gave her the opportunity to give concrete answers, but she did not do so.

I would therefore like to know if the interdepartmental secretariat has all the information it needs to give Canadians and parliamentarians real answers. Will it finally give Canadians the real figures? Will it organize an open and transparent competitive bidding process? Will this secretariat make the ministers take a little more

responsibility for the disaster they have made of this file or will another secretariat have to be created for that?

● (1840)

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed to hear the member opposite speak in such a fashion. To be frank, I have never heard the two ministers talk about being a granddaughter of three World War II veterans. I am offended by her lack of compassion. I am offended by her insinuation that I read off speaking points and simply tried to somehow manoeuvre around the question.

I answered the question as truthfully as possible. I answered the question with some passion because I care about my grandparents. I care about future grandparents. I care about my children, their children and future generations. For that member to question my dedication to Canadians in this manner and to question my grandparent's service to our country is offensive and I think I am owed an apology.

Nevertheless, this government will continue on this path to defend our brave men and women in uniform and provide them with the equipment they so deserve to continue the wonderful job they have done over many years and more years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:41 p.m.)

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