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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

SAINTE-CLOTILDE GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE PRODUCER

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Sainte-Clothilde's Les Serres Lefort on a \$27-million investment that will create 60 jobs and make the company the largest producer of organic greenhouse vegetables in North America.

Châteauguay—Lacolle has been Quebec's leading market garden production region for some time, and now the bar has been raised even higher.

The company secured a \$5-million investment from the FTQ's Fonds de solidarité along with a \$7.5-million loan and an \$11.9-million loan guarantee from the Government of Quebec.

Les Serres Lefort was also awarded a prize during the Montérégie UPA's fourth Agristars gala for hiring a human resources adviser who developed tools to simplify information gathering and improve labour force management.

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[*English*]

SASKATCHEWAN

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 4, voters in Saskatchewan spoke loud and clear. They elected a provincial government that supports resource development, speaks with pride about Saskatchewan's and Canada's

oil and gas industry, and recognizes that international trade is crucial for Saskatchewan's economic growth.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Saskatchewan Party and its leader, Premier Brad Wall, for garnering 62.6% support on their way to capturing a third straight majority government.

I would like to wish our premier and the re-elected government all the best as they continue to provide strong leadership to our province over the next four years.

The government and the people of Saskatchewan can count on our Conservative caucus to be a champion for the values they hold dear.

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ANTONIA “TONY” BARRY

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life of Tony Barry. Affectionately known as Mother Superior of the New Brunswick Liberal Party, Tony passed away on April 3 at the age of 91.

Tony joined the New Brunswick Liberal Association in 1954 and quickly became a party fixture. She spent nearly 70 years leading, organizing, and advising party activities, working closely with six prime ministers, six premiers, and 17 party leaders.

Tony was fiercely committed to increasing women's representation in politics. The Tony Barry Fund assists women seeking election and party headquarters in Fredericton is known as Tony Barry House.

An accomplished athlete as well, she entered the New Brunswick Softball Hall of Fame in 2013. Her passion and dedication to community are surpassed only by the love and care she offered to family and friends.

We extend our thoughts to Cathy, Judy, Mike, Rick, and her entire family.

* * *

BULLYING

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks the day of pink, a day to raise awareness about bullying and a day to stand up to call for an end to bullying.

New Democrats wear pink today to stand collectively with the victims to say no to homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and all forms of discrimination that provide tools and targets for bullies.

Statements by Members

Bullying, in all its forms, has a detrimental impact not just on its victims but on our society as a whole. We have all heard the stories and seen the statistics that show increasing rates of youth self-harm and suicide.

Studies have concluded that bullying is not a behaviour that bullies outgrow but rather is a behaviour that matures into more serious issues of harassment and abuse.

Bullying can be stopped. It's not simply a part of growing up. We need to get to the root of the problem of bullying and work to put an end to the cycle of bullying.

The New Democrat team is committed to taking action on the issue of bullying in Parliament not only today but every day and doing so in ways that actually get results.

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● (1410)

VAISAKHI

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):

[Member spoke in Punjabi as follows:]

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the harvest festival of Vaisakhi, specifically, the festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa.

The fundamental beliefs of Sikhism include faith and meditation, unity and equality of all humankind, engaging in selfless service, striving for social justice, and conducting oneself honestly.

I was very happy to hear our Prime Minister announce that the Government of Canada will be apologizing for the *Kamagata Maru* incident.

I not only rise to celebrate Vaisakhi but I rise to celebrate Canada, a country which the Sikh community has called home for over 100 years, a country in which the son of a Sikh immigrant can stand as an MP opposite a defence minister that wears a turban, and a country in which the Prime Minister believes is strong not only in spite of our differences but because of them.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to commemorate the day of remembrance for the victims of the Katyn massacres. The Katyn massacres took place in April 1940, during the Soviet Union's continued occupation of Poland, when over 20,000 Polish officers were brutally murdered by the Soviet Red Army while being held as prisoners of war under the full protection of the Geneva conventions.

As if these terrible crimes were not enough, the Soviet government attempted to place the blame on the Nazi regime and only finally admitted its involvement in 1990. It has never issued an apology to the families and nation shocked and wounded by these terrible events that occurred in the Katyn forest near Smolensk.

As a Polish immigrant to Canada, I know the horrific impact the Soviet Union's invasion and occupation had on Poland. The events of April 1940 are forever seared into the hearts and minds of the Polish people and those of Polish heritage.

Today, I stand in remembrance of the victims of Katyn and of the terrible crimes committed by the Soviet Union.

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[Translation]

SAINT-JEAN CADET CORPS

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Corps de cadets 2595 Saint-Jean is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The corps was founded in 1956, and over 3,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 have been proud members.

Corps 2595 has become the largest army cadet corps in the Montérégie region. Thanks to the dedication of Major Latendresse and his team, every year over 110 cadets are able to learn more about Canada and develop the skills they need to face the job market with a positive outlook.

The commitment of all the stakeholders involved has helped many teens from all walks of life gain some independence in a fun, friendly, safe environment.

It is an institution that is governed by its values and encourages personal achievement and community engagement.

I want to congratulate the cadet corps—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Don Valley North.

* * *

[English]

BAYVIEW VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bayview Village Association in my riding of Don Valley North is celebrating 60 years of service.

It has always punched above its weight. The association has worked tirelessly to preserve the village's sense of community and service. About 50% of residents are members of the association. When they speak with one voice, all three levels of government listen.

Members know that a community is not just a collection of houses. Since 1956, it has protected the village's high quality of life.

I congratulate the president Tim Storus, members Judi Codd, Joan King, Jan Siegel, and all Bayview Village Association members for always putting community first.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is high time that the Liberals kept their promises and addressed the needs of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Coast Guard.

Statements by Members

According to an independent report that was quietly submitted to Transport Canada over four months ago, the Coast Guard fleet is aging. Maintenance costs are skyrocketing, and there is an urgent need to replace the oldest ships. Marine traffic is increasing while the service hours of icebreakers in the Arctic are decreasing. What is wrong with this picture?

● (1415)

The Speaker: Apparently there is a bit of a problem with the interpretation.

I would ask the hon. member to start again.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me more time to remind the House that it is high time that the Liberals kept their promises and addressed the needs of the Coast Guard and the Royal Canadian Navy.

Why? According to an independent report that was quietly submitted to Transport Canada over four months ago, the Coast Guard fleet is aging. Marine traffic in the Arctic is increasing while the service hours of icebreakers are decreasing. What is wrong with this picture?

During the election campaign, the Liberals promised to strengthen the navy and create jobs. It is time to take action. Rather than dismissing valid proposals, they now need to seriously assess offers that would allow them to quickly procure ships at competitive costs, create jobs here in Canada, and get Canadians working, while complying with the national procurement strategy.

When will the government stop burdening future generations with big spending and finally meet the pressing needs of the Coast Guard while creating jobs here in Canada?

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[English]

VAISAKHI

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Vaisakhi, the spring harvest festival celebrated across South Asia and the world.

Vaisakhi is particularly significant to Sikh Canadians as it marks the anniversary of the inauguration of the Khalsa and the fundamental principles of Sikhism by the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh.

The word “Khalsa” translates to the free, the pure, the genuine. Vaisakhi is a celebration of freedom and the principle that each of us should have access to the same opportunities and the same resources, regardless of the family that we are born into, whether we are male or female, and independent of our race or our skin colour.

Sikhism teaches us that we are all responsible for seeking unity, equality, justice, and prosperity for all of humankind. It teaches us that it is our duty to give back to the society through a selfless service called “seva”.

Opportunity, equality, and liberty are values that we all share as Canadians, and I encourage all Canadians to celebrate these values today. On behalf of all Sikh MPs in the House—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

VAISAKHI

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, members of the Sikh faith and others will be participating in Vaisakhi, a celebration that highlights Guru Gobind Singh who laid down the foundation of the Khalsa panth. My feelings and passion for what Sikhism stands for have inspired me from when I first attended a Gurdwara back in 1988.

In 1999, as a member of the Manitoba legislative assembly, I had the privilege of introducing a resolution that recognized the importance of the Khalsa. That resolution passed unanimously. Two days ago, on April 11, we witnessed history when we recited from the Guru Granth Sahib in Canada's Parliament building.

In addition to that special moment, the Prime Minister indicated that there was going to be a formal apology regarding the *Komagata Maru* in Parliament. The *Komagata Maru* was a racial incident that occurred in 1914, when people of Punjabi heritage were denied access to Canada as they sat in a ship that was built to transport coal. On May 18, we will hear that apology.

Happy Vaisakhi to one and all.

* * *

DAFFODIL MONTH

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about Daffodil Month. This is the Canadian Cancer Society's month to raise funds in support of fellow Canadians who have lived with cancer.

Currently, two in five Canadians will develop some form of cancer. My family was impacted. My mother passed away in 1989 of breast cancer, and my grandfather in 1981 of esophageal cancer. Many of us here are impacted by an individual in our family who has suffered from cancer. My family knows first-hand the value of the Canadian Cancer Society.

When we buy a daffodil pin and wear it in April, we are showing our support for Canadians living with cancer. It is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against this disease.

I ask all those here today, and for the rest of April, to please wear their daffodil pin, as I will, in support of all Canadians and their families dealing with this challenging disease called cancer.

* * *

● (1420)

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Pink. Canadians from coast to coast are united in raising awareness against all types of bullying and heinous acts of intolerance.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

In a country like Canada, which is a shining example of diversity and humanity, there is no place for hate, violence, and intolerance toward those who are exercising their rights and expressing their religious, sexual, cultural, and gender identity.

[English]

Canada stands up today for individuals such as Degas Sikorski, who received a horrifying and cruel Valentine's Day card containing homophobic slurs at his workplace.

Today, we in the House stand, dressed in pink, with all Canadians to say for victims such as Degas and everyone else, "Enough with hatred, enough with bullying. Today, you take ownership and pride in your identity". As our Prime Minister once wrote, "...your friends outnumber the haters by the millions...", and we are among those friends.

Happy Day of Pink to all.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is only fitting on Audrey O'Brien day that all of us remember April is pay equity month. April 17 is the day that for too many women their wages finally catch up to those earned by men in the previous calendar year. It is shameful.

Women in Canada on average earn only 74¢ for every dollar a man earns, despite doing similar and equal work.

Members may recall that on February 2, the NDP introduced a motion to implement pay equity. It was passed with support from the Liberal government. I am proud of the work of my caucus in advancing women's equity.

Sadly, the same Liberal government that supported our motion introduced a budget that would do little to nothing in the way of actually working to achieve pay equity for Canadian women. The Prime Minister calls himself a feminist. I would like to be encouraged by his sunny ways, but actions speak louder than words.

I encourage the government to honour its promises, to back them up with real substantive action that will—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

* * *

VAISAKHI

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *waheguru ji ka khalsa. Waheguru ji ki fateh.*

I rise today to express my best wishes to everyone in Canada and abroad celebrating Vaisakhi. On one of the most important days for members of the Sikh faith, we honour the creation of the Khalsa by spending quality time with family and friends.

Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike also participate in vibrant parades and celebrations. I am grateful I got to attend Khalsa Day Kirtan on Parliament Hill.

This is also a perfect day to honour the significant contributions that Sikhs have made to our great country. I wish everyone a safe and joyful holiday.

Happy Vaisakhi. *Waheguru ji ka khalsa. Waheguru ji ki fateh.*

* * *

DAFFODIL MONTH

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the beginning of Daffodil Month 2016. Every April, thanks to the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadians come together to raise awareness about cancer by wearing daffodil pins.

In 1938, the Canadian Cancer Society began its fight to create a world where no Canadians would fear cancer. Since then, the charity has funded over \$1.2 billion in cancer research. It has provided life-changing cancer information, as well as peer support, rides to cancer treatment, and prevention programs. If all of us have been touched negatively by cancer, then almost all of us have been touched positively by this society.

When people wear daffodil pins, it is a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. It shows our collective determination to one day defeat this disease. Please help the Canadian Cancer Society do more by joining the fight this April.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to say how thrilled we all are to see the Clerk back at her desk. Audrey O'Brien has had an exceptional career. She has served this Parliament, she has served her country, and she has served all of us. On behalf of everyone here, I would like to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, and I thank her.

Canadians understand that pipelines are the safest way to move our oil and gas to market. While our government approved the northern gateway pipeline, immediately after the election the Liberals killed it by slapping a transportation ban off the west coast.

If the Prime Minister is willing to kill a pipeline project after it is already approved, how can we have confidence he will not do the same thing to the Trans Mountain and the energy east pipelines?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to also add my voice to the many voices in the House who honour Audrey O'Brien for her extraordinary service, not just to members in the House and to this august place, but to all of Canada through an extraordinary life of service. I want to thank her very much.

Oral Questions

In the five seconds remaining to me, this government understands that environment and economy go together, they must go together. This is something the previous government simply did not understand, which is why it was unable to build pipelines to tidewater through 10 years of trying to do nothing but.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the failure of the Liberals to support Canada's energy sector is damaging the country, and it has real consequences. Thousand of jobs are being lost, families are losing their homes, and the communities are devastated.

All these families and communities need to hear is a clear message from the Prime Minister that he actually supports new pipelines. Will the Prime Minister finally assure all of us that if the National Energy Board approves Trans Mountain and energy east, he will also approve them?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have long pointed out that one of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian prime minister is to get our resources to market. In the 21st century, getting our resources to market means doing it sustainably, responsibly, and with community buy-in and indigenous support.

The fact is that the previous government did not understand that. It was unable to build the public trust necessary to help Alberta's industry, and indeed the jobs that needed to be created through it, and therefore failed the province it worked so hard to try to represent.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since taking office, the Liberals have completely failed to support Canada's energy sector.

While the U.S. has ramped up its oil exports, while at the same time blocking Canada's oil exports, the Prime Minister has done nothing about it. His principal secretary has said that oil and gas development is as bad as "hooking kids on cigarettes". His environment minister has said that we need to move in the direction of ceasing all development in the industry.

In his ideological quest to make Canada free of fossil fuels, is the Prime Minister willing to take responsibility for the hundreds of thousands of jobs that will be lost?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Again, Mr. Speaker, I find it mildly humorous that the opposition is taking us to task for being unable to do in five months what it was unable to do in ten years.

The fact is that the initiatives taken by the previous government did not help the Alberta oil industry, did not help Albertans, and did not help the workers who are now out of work. We need a government that actually restores public confidence and gets our resources to market in responsible, sustainable ways. That is why Canadians elected us. That is what we are going to work very hard to do.

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can talk about the past all he wants, but this week the government announced a \$70-billion cut in investments in oil development. He can talk about the past at length, but these people are living in insecurity today.

Many questions were raised after the budget was brought down. The parliamentary budget officer found that the Liberal budget was based on unrealistic assumptions when it comes to growth and that the Minister of Finance omitted crucial data for evaluating Canada's long-term economic growth. The Liberals still keep talking about transparency.

What is going on?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, today and yesterday, the Governor of the Bank of Canada confirmed that in fact, the measures we are taking in our budget will have a positive impact on growth in Canada and on families. That is what we were asked to do during the election campaign.

For 10 years, we had a government that refused to invest in Canadians. That is what we are doing. It was high time.

• (1430)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not agree with the Prime Minister. Unlike the Liberals, who promised a \$10-billion deficit and then presented a \$30-billion deficit, we made massive investments while balancing the budget.

It is unfortunate, but we now know that the Liberal's job plan was just an illusion. The number of jobs to be created by their reckless spending was greatly exaggerated in their budget. Canadians are right not to trust this government.

Why did the Prime Minister inflate the number of jobs that the Liberals' spending would supposedly create in Canada's economy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during and after the election campaign, and especially with the tabling of our budget, which invests in growth for the middle class, we have shown that we know how to grow the economy. We are investing in our communities and putting more money in the pockets of the middle class, and the people working hard to join the middle class, to stimulate growth, which Canadians did not see for 10 years under the Conservatives.

It is time to kick-start economic growth and to create jobs in our economy. That is exactly what we did with this budget.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Catherine and I want to welcome our friend, Audrey O'Brien, Clerk Emerita of the House of Commons.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

It turns out there is a slight problem in the paperwork for the Saudi arms deal, and maybe the government could help us figure it out.

For months the government has been telling us that it was a done deal under the Conservatives, but now it turns out that what to the untrained eye looks like the signature of the minister of global affairs approved it actually on April 8, just a few days ago.

Maybe the government could explain that one to Canadians. Why has the government mislead Canadians about the Saudi arms deal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say today what I have been saying every time anyone asks me about this, including during the election campaign. We will honour the contracts signed by Canada in February 2014. The fact is that there are jobs in London relying on this. Commitments have been made to the world that we will honour our good name when we sign our contracts.

Even the member for Outremont understands that we cannot cancel a contract retroactively. He said, “You don’t cancel a commercial accord retroactively. ... It’s just not done.” On that we agree with the member for Outremont.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Our good name includes standing to defend human rights around the world, Mr. Speaker.

The situation in Saudi Arabia has only become worse, and the Prime Minister knows it.

[Translation]

However, let us talk about paperwork. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister said that “a large percentage of small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes”.

He seems to have been talking about his own finances. He apparently used four companies to pay less tax.

How much tax did he avoid paying by using four investment companies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I worked as a professional speaker, I registered a company, as many Canadians do, and I paid all of the necessary taxes.

However, I have always said that the government has a duty to encourage small businesses, which create jobs, and that is exactly what we are doing with budget 2016.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): So, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister said that small businesses were just a way for rich people to avoid taxes, he knew of what he spoke.

[Translation]

Perhaps the Prime Minister can give us an answer to the following question. Why did he choose to dismantle one of the investment

companies he had used to avoid paying taxes the day after the election, on October 20?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party, I was open and transparent about my holdings and my personal finances. I have been from the start. I have always been open and transparent, and I will continue to be.

People expect the level of transparency and openness that we are giving them, especially after a government that thumbed its nose at ethics and transparency for years. This is what Canadians expect from us.

● (1435)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Is there a boat in Panama as well, Mr. Speaker?

[English]

When the Prime Minister revealed details about his financial arrangements, it turns out he left a few things out of the picture. The Prime Minister failed to disclose all of the companies that he used to shelter his investments.

Why did the Prime Minister not tell Canadians about all of these companies he was using to shelter his investments and avoid paying his full share of taxes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that every step of the way I have been open and transparent about my own personal finances and about my own holdings. Indeed, I raised the bar on transparency and openness in a way that members opposite simply never did.

I stand by my disclosures, my openness, and continue to challenge members on the opposite side of the House to reach the level of openness and transparency that on this side of the House we have always demonstrated.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): It is hard to keep a straight face, Mr. Speaker.

Last week we learned that the Minister of Justice attended a high-priced pay-to-play fundraiser in Toronto with Bay Street lawyers. Now it seems she has outdone herself. She is headlining a \$1,000-per-head fundraiser later this month. Copying the Wynne Liberals, the current government is creating a whole new scheme of paying for access to cabinet ministers.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us how many lawyers and lobbyists will be attending her latest pay-to-play Liberal fundraiser?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should be ashamed to raise an issue—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

Of course members, I know, are all mindful of the fact that it is Anti-Bullying Day and are going to act accordingly, on all sides, and are going to listen to the answers.

The hon. House leader.

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member who just asked the question should talk to his colleague for St. Albert—Edmonton, who, in fact, wrote a letter to the Ethics Commissioner with many of the same frivolous allegations. He received a three-page letter from the Ethics Commissioner, dated April 13, and the paragraph that I know everyone wants to hear reads as follows:

Based on the information available in the case, the fundraising involved the Minister of Justice, section 16—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard for Canadians to trust the justice minister to do her job with all of her dodgy fundraising activities.

It has been six months, but she has not introduced a single piece of legislation. Her husband has registered to lobby her own department, and miraculously, in the budget the organization he lobbied for got \$20 million. She has been caught giving access to high-priced lawyers and lobbyists.

Can the Prime Minister stop hiding behind his House leader and tell Canadians if this is the standard that he set for his own cabinet ministers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only person who is hiding appears to be the member who just asked that question. He knows very well that this is a series of fabricated allegations that his colleague sent to the Ethics Commissioner. Today the Ethics Commissioner confirmed that those allegations have no merit and no basis.

Why can the member not be satisfied with the independent opinion of the Ethics Commissioner that this House asked to look into these kinds of matters?

I have more faith in her judgment than in his.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Justice attends pay-to-play fundraisers, the minister has been AWOL in fulfilling her responsibilities as minister. After nearly six months, the minister has yet to make a judicial appointment, creating a situation that the Chief Justice of Alberta has called “desperate”.

When will the Minister of Justice stop attending pay-to-play fundraisers and start appointing desperately needed judges, or is the minister taking applications at the fundraisers?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think what Canadians are wondering is when that member will tone down the feigned indignation, especially given the fact that he got a three-page, precise answer in writing from the Ethics Commissioner, which concluded that the fake complaint he made had no merit.

The members opposite love to table documents in the House. They should stay tuned. Maybe after question period I will ask for consent to table the letter the Ethics Commissioner sent to that member.

● (1440)

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice, in attending the pay-to-play fundraiser with select lawyers and lobbyists, has compromised her independence, brought the office that she holds into disrepute, and breached ethical standards by which the minister is bound.

Will the minister stop the excuses and return the pay-to-play cash?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me try this again. That particular member made up a series of fake allegations and used his parliamentary immunity to make a whole series of allegations that he does not have the guts to go 25 metres out and say in front of a television camera.

He wrote a letter to the independent Ethics Commissioner with all these fake allegations, and she wrote back to him and said that at all times the minister followed the act and her responsibilities under the code.

He should be ashamed to keep asking those ridiculous questions.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Members should be keeping in mind that there will be partisan comments on both sides. It is supposed to be a place of strong disagreement sometimes. That is okay. It does not mean we cannot listen to answers, even if we do not like them, or questions, for that matter.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us just get to the bottom of this. The minister keeps evading questions about the pay-to-play Liberal fundraiser. She apparently cannot speak on this issue or will not. Simply put, who planned this fundraiser?

There have been a number of ethical issues with this minister ever since she took over the position. Did she plan these unfortunate events, or is she being set up by those closest to her?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. member may want to ask her colleague from St. Albert.

The second-last paragraph on page 3 of the letter that the Ethics Commissioner sent him makes it clear that it is entirely appropriate for all members, including parliamentary secretaries and ministers, to solicit funds.

She knows there is no scandal here. She is trying to fabricate something, and we look forward perhaps to the next fake allegation that will follow in the next question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice says that she went to the fundraising cocktail in Toronto to talk about issues facing her riding.

Oral Questions

Yesterday, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that the minister spoke to the commissioner in her capacity as minister and as MP because the two roles cannot be dissociated. However, when she attends a fundraiser, she attends as an MP, not as a minister. That is a double standard.

Can the minister make the list of attendees public so that we can see who in Toronto was interested in meeting the MP for Vancouver Granville?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague from Lévis had taken the time to read the Canada Elections Act, he would be aware that the names of all attendees will be disclosed proactively in accordance with the law.

There is no secret here. It was not a secret fundraiser. The member may be thinking of former colleagues of his who are now in prison for inappropriate financial activities.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, far too many first nations and Métis children are growing up in this country without any hope for their future.

Far too many families, including my own, have been affected by suicide. Just this past weekend there were more suicide attempts in La Loche.

This is a crisis that demands actions—not visits, not photo ops, but action—yet the budget contained no new funding for mental health services.

When will we see a concrete plan from the government on mental health?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, permit me to begin my comments by reflecting on last evening, when there was a very lovely and civil tone in this House when we discussed a matter that was both sobering and inspiring and talked about the fact that in this country, this wonderful, affluent, resourceful country, young people are deciding that life is not worth living and that we have not been able to find solutions to give them hope for the future.

I will continue to work with my colleague and all colleagues in this House to make sure that the mental health resources are there for young people and all Canadians when they need them.

• (1445)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues who participated in the debate last night. This may be a transformative moment, but the youth need action now.

First, there is a need for a family doctor in Attawapiskat. It is a simple request. Help us with that.

Second, there is no new mental health funding for the communities. We need that.

Third, I would like to ask the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to commit today to funding to empower indigenous youth, so they can start to look at how we can change programs, because after 140 years of failure and negligence and trauma, it is time we said that the youth will lead the way for the future.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, but I also thank him for his eloquence and passion last evening in discussing this, and his ongoing commitment.

No one knows the children and the youth in that community better than the member opposite, and we will work with the member.

We are heartened by what the mental health counsellors have decided to do: opening the centre and developing a youth council in that community, giving them ownership over the decisions that will be taken in their lives.

I look forward to working with the member on these things.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada can provide a secure and sustainable supply of LNG to the world. The Liberals' three-month delay for B.C.'s Pacific Northwest LNG project sets Canada back, while our global competitors gain ground on long-term contracts with Asian markets.

Thousands of jobs are on the line. Billions of dollars in investment, royalties, and taxes are at stake. The Prime Minister should fight for Canada. Is he really going to sit back and let this opportunity slip away?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the only way to get resources to market is to make sure we do it in a sustainable way. We have a regulatory process. The project that the member opposite is referring to is going through that regulatory process.

The proponent brought significant new information that would have potential impact on salmon, so we need to do our due diligence and make sure we get this right before we can make a decision as to whether a project goes ahead or not.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Northwest LNG project has gone through an extensive approval process to date. What was first expected to take a year has now taken more than 750 days.

Despite diligent community consultations and support from most first nations, the Liberals have added more barriers and costs at the worst time. Canada deserves this opportunity. Why will the Liberals not support private sector job creation and responsible resource development, so Canada does not miss out?

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians deserve is an environmental assessment process they can trust. That is why we have committed to do it.

This project is being reviewed. The proponent has brought significant new information. We received 34,000 comments, and we are going to do the proper job to make sure we are making decisions based on facts and evidence, because that is the only way we will get our resource to market in a sustainable way.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is that there are hundreds of thousands of jobs lost right now and hanging in the balance.

The Pacific Northwest LNG project would be the biggest private sector investment in British Columbia history. Billions in investment and thousands of well-paying jobs are hanging in the balance, yet the only thing the Minister of Environment will approve is a decision to delay the decision.

How can we expect the Liberals to be impartial when the Prime Minister's own principal secretary said he wants to shut down oil and gas development?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, we are committed to making sure that the environment and the economy go together, but that needs to be done in a responsible way.

We will make decisions based on facts and evidence. We are working very closely with the proponent and with the Government of British Columbia. I quote Rich Coleman, minister of B.C. natural gas development, who said:

...we are confident that working together with the federal government and the company, any remaining questions can be fully resolved expeditiously.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, residents and small businesses in my riding are struggling right now due to low energy prices. Liberals have an opportunity to support our economy, and that opportunity is B.C. LNG.

The fact is that residents have now formed community action groups, like Fort St. John for LNG, and are working tirelessly to ensure the voices of yes are being heard.

I will ask it again of the minister. When will the Liberals stop ignoring our communities and come to a final decision on projects like Pacific Northwest LNG?

•(1450)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will make a decision when we have the facts and the evidence necessary to do so.

We have committed to an environmental assessment process that has the confidence of Canadians. We will make decisions based on facts and evidence. We are working with the proponent. We are working with the B.C. government to get the information we need to do just that.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals said they were going to be different, but now they are becoming just exactly what they opposed.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs claimed that he had no choice when it came to the Conservative-backed arms deal with Saudi Arabia. He told us it was a done deal, but that was not the case. He approved the deal himself last Friday.

This is about human rights. Why are Canadians being misled on such an important issue?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, my colleague was confusing two different decisions.

The first one is to honour the signature on a contract. This is a contract that was signed in 2014. Her party, our party, and the Conservative Party committed to that decision to honour the signature.

The second one is about the export permits. I have the power to allow the export permits or to revoke them according to the behaviour of the county regarding human rights, on the use of the equipment. The equipment has not been misused since 1993. It is why, for now—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand. What is the point of the risk assessment process for arms exports if it is a done deal before the process even takes place? On the issue of the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister told Canadians repeatedly that there was nothing they could do, that their hands were tied. Now we learn that the minister authorized the sale himself last Friday.

Why did he deliberately mislead Canadians?

Why did he lead Canadians down the garden path?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the NDP's position is that we should have reneged on the Government of Canada's signature on a contract, I hope its members are prepared to say so in English in London. I hope our colleague from London—Fanshawe will also say so in London, because that was not their position during the election campaign.

Now, as for the export permits, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will grant them or deny them based on how the equipment is used. As long as the equipment is not used in any human rights abuses, as long as it is used in accordance with Canada's interests, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will honour the export permits. Otherwise, I will reverse my decision.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the vast majority of middle-class Canadians pay their fair share of taxes, but that some wealthy individuals hide their money in offshore tax havens to avoid paying taxes. On Monday, the government committed to doing more to fight tax evasion.

Can the Minister of National Revenue tell the House what is being done to actually change things?

Hon. Diane LeBouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the situation described by my colleague from Saint Boniface is unfair and unacceptable. Indeed, this must change. On Monday, I announced historic investments of \$444.4 million. As I intend to explain to the finance committee, these tools will help improve detection, investigations, and audits and will also make it possible to prosecute those who engage in tax evasion and organizations that create such schemes. The net is tightening.

[English]

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals love to make promises to Canadians, only to turn around and change their minds.

Instead of encouraging jobs and hiring, the Liberals have increased payroll taxes and EI premiums for small businesses. This does not affect just small business owners but also the millions of Canadians who work for them.

When will the Liberals stop killing jobs with higher taxes?

• (1455)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we have lowered taxes on small businesses; we have lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians. We are working with Canadians to ensure that we have a strong economy and that we create jobs. Budget 2016, which I encourage the member to read in its entirety, makes many investments, including \$11.9 billion in infrastructure spending, which will help small businesses, and \$500 million for broadband in rural and remote areas.

I see the Speaker's hand is waving, so I will stop, but the list goes on. I am thankful for the opportunity to stand to say how we are working with small businesses.

The Speaker: I guess I had better help members by letting them know that when I start doing that, it means they have 10 seconds and counting. I would ask them to keep that in mind.

The hon. member for Richmond Centre.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing is very clear: Liberals think borrowed money will somehow magically create jobs. Small businesses understand that jobs come from hard work and responsible spending. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business president Dan Kelly said, "Small business owners know that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes".

Why are the Liberals taxing job creators to pay for their reckless spending?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I have said in the House before is that saying it does not make it true.

Let us look at the facts. We are working with small-business Canadians. We are working with the Small Business Matters Coalition. We are working with stakeholders. There are 3.2 million Canadians whom we are representing on this side of the House. We are working with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and Dan Kelly himself. I have met with him and will continue to work with him.

We will continue to represent small businesses, and I encourage the member opposite to take some time to meet with me as well.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September the Prime Minister really spoke his mind about small businesses.

He said, "We have to know that a large percentage of small businesses are actually just ways for wealthier Canadians to save on their taxes".

I do not know who was in front of him when he said that, but he might have been looking in the mirror, because that is exactly what he did, use small businesses to save on taxes.

Will the Prime Minister do the honourable thing and stand up and apologize to Canadians?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and I invite him to read —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We know what day of the week it is today. We should not make fun of others. It is immature and inappropriate. Let us behave like adults.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Instead of fooling around, perhaps he should read the budget. If he had, he would know that we have lowered taxes for the middle class.

The small business tax has dropped and, just today, the governor of the Bank of Canada said that the measures set out in the budget would create economic growth in Canada, as the hon. Prime Minister was saying.

This budget is for families and the middle class. It is the right budget for Canada and we are going to continue doing exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Prime Minister, the Conservatives do not see SMEs as schemers. We see SMEs as creators of jobs and wealth.

This morning, *Le Journal de Québec* and *Le Journal de Montréal* reported that the Prime Minister personally owned four companies to save on taxes. That is unbecoming of a prime minister. He should rise and apologize immediately.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Once again, I would invite him to read the budget. He would then understand that we are working for Canadians. The opposition has been trying to create a diversion.

We presented Canadians with a budget that works for families, the middle class, and small businesses. The governor confirmed that this morning. We are going to continue down that path and we are going to continue working for Canadians.

* * *

• (1500)

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on April 24, 2013, more than 11,000 textile workers, most of them women, lost their lives in the worst industrial disaster in the history of Bangladesh.

Three years later, there is still much to be done to protect workers. Kalpona Akter, a courageous activist, is here in Ottawa to ask Canada to do its part.

What will the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie do to ensure that Bangladeshi businesses that are exempt from duties respect workers' rights?

[English]

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the individual from Bangladesh for being here and discussing this important issue with colleagues across the floor of the House to see what Canada can do to promote the human rights of people all across the world. I thank the member very much for this question.

* * *

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Azer children who are my constituents were abducted eight months ago. These four Canadian children were taken to Kurdistan in the middle of a war zone and they now may be in Iran. These children did not choose this. We need urgent action.

The Prime Minister has said that the safe return of these children is a priority of the government. Has the Prime Minister made contact with Kurdish President Barzani or members of the Iranian government to help bring these children home?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is very concerned about the well-being of the Azer children. We are engaged in this file. I have repeatedly met with Ms. Azer and our law enforcement agency and our consular affairs are providing services to the family. We will continue to be engaged

Oral Questions

on this file. We will do everything we can to bring the Azer family back home to their mother.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians I speak to are proud of our military history, a proud tradition of standing by our friends when called to do so. The Liberal budget is a deceitful betrayal to every Canadian who served, past, present, or future, who share our military history. The Liberal defence review is a shameful attempt at covering up the disdain the Liberals have for the military.

Why are the Liberals turning their backs on our friends and on the women and men who protect us by serving in Canada's Armed Forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member, as I did my critic some time ago, that the only cuts to the budget happened during the Conservative government, some \$3 billion. We have actually increased the planned spending with \$360 million for the operational budget, plus \$200 million for military infrastructure as well. The defence review is our way of actually committing to supporting our troops who serve us.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already set a course that will weaken our armed forces.

He promised Canadians that he would replace our combat capabilities with peacekeeping operations. He promised to delay purchases of important equipment until after the next election. He promised that he would not purchase F-35s. Finally, he promised to implement the recommendations of the Report on Transformation 2011.

In light of all of this, how can the government claim that it wants to hold consultations on defence policy when the Prime Minister has already written that policy?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure that our men and women have the capabilities for the missions of the future. The defence review is a wonderful process to allow all Canadians to have a voice in where the military needs to go. We are committed to replacing our fighters. We are committed to supporting our navy and many other procurement projects. We are re-profiling the money so that we can have it at a time when the military needs to be able to write the cheques for the procurement projects.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in committee, we saw that the Liberals would rather write the defence policy behind closed doors without being disturbed.

That is dangerous because we are aware of the Liberals' intense hatred for the Canadian Armed Forces. The Liberals gave us submarines that take on water and helicopters that do not take off.

Oral Questions

Can the minister confirm that Canada's defence policy is not cast in stone and that all interested parties will be heard by the Standing Committee on National Defence?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic that just yesterday all members of Parliament stood together at an important event and I stood up and said that all members of the House who are sitting and standing there support the military.

To hear this in the House is actually quite insulting, to be honest. I personally met with the member, so I do not think we need to get down to this level of question. I would be happy to meet with the member personally and explain in detail. I have opened up the department for briefings and have met personally with them. I would just like to stop this whole thing. Every member in the House supports our military. Let us not play this ridiculous game.

* * *

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government recently announced plans to invest heavily in arts and culture. That includes keeping its promise to double funding for the Canada Council for the Arts by 2020.

Can the minister explain how this investment in the Canada Council for the Arts will benefit not just artists but all Canadians?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

We are investing \$550 million in the Canada Council for the Arts over five years. This is a historic investment. Creative industries are an important part of our economy and our society, and our government was elected to stimulate economic growth. It is our duty to create the conditions that will allow ideas to flourish and to create a system for innovation.

Arts and culture are at the heart of this ecosystem. That is why we are so proud to support our creators.

* * *

[*English*]

SENIORS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have turned a blind eye to the unique needs and changing demographics of Canadian seniors. They have a minister of youth and a Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, but not a minister for seniors. To make matters worse, at committee the Minister of Families admitted that the Liberals will not appoint a minister for seniors because that is only good for photo ops.

Why is the Prime Minister not taking the needs of seniors seriously?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Like my fellow member, I recognize the importance of investing in the well-being of our senior citizens. The government's recent budget is proof of that. It contains significant investments that will change the lives of our seniors both now and in the future. We will help 900,000 seniors now with a significant increase to the guaranteed income supplement, and we will help them in the future by bringing the age of eligibility for federal pension benefits back down to 65.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2016, the Liberals allocated \$6 million to protect the waters of Newfoundland from a shipwreck, and yet there is nothing regarding the *Kathryn Spirit*, which has been languishing in Lac Saint-Louis, at Beauharnois, since 2011.

For five years now, the people have been waiting for the federal government to do something to protect their drinking water reservoir. According to the working group, it will cost somewhere between \$10 million and \$15 million to dismantle it.

Will the government commit today to immediately release the funds needed to dismantle the *Kathryn Spirit* and finally reassure the people of Beauharnois, as it did for Newfoundland?

[*English*]

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope members will forgive me if I seem nervous, but I have some little eyes watching me today.

I would like to assure the member that I have appointed a working group which has met. The Coast Guard has presented options to the group. The group will be meeting again to come up with some options to best deal with the situation once and for all.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made an important commitment to invest in transportation and infrastructure. Providing Canadians with transportation choices is critical to ensuring we are moving people and goods safely and quickly.

As a strong advocate for active transportation like cycling and walking, I know that investments in active transportation infrastructure are good for our economy, the environment, and our health.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities comment on how we are helping municipalities like Oakville and Burlington develop walking and cycling infrastructure?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague the member for Oakville North—Burlington for her advocacy on the issue of active transportation.

The Budget

Our government is proud to invest \$10 billion to \$20 billion over the next 10 years, which will include public transit as well as active transportation. Active transportation can also be funded through the gas tax.

We will continue to work with our partners to discuss their priorities as we develop our long-term infrastructure plan.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it is time to spend money or take part in fundraising activities, the government is always quick on the draw, but when it comes to putting an end to pimping out young girls, forget it.

Yesterday we learned that the Minister of Justice is considering rewriting Bill C-452 on human trafficking, even though that bill has the support of all political parties, the Senate, and the Prime Minister himself.

Why does the Minister of Justice refuse to protect young victims now, and why is she hiding behind the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without question, our government takes human trafficking and the exploitation of women and girls incredibly seriously. We are committed to strengthening the efforts to combat this problem.

With respect to Bill C-452, I have had discussions and there are concerns with respect to that particular piece of legislation in terms of the charter. We are working with our colleagues in the province of Quebec to ensure that we continue to address this issue in a substantive way. This is a very serious issue that we are dealing with.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In light of a series of very controversial order-in-council appointments in the dying days of the previous government, would the Prime Minister join with political scientists such as Carl Baar and Peter Russell and accept as a constitutional convention that it is illegitimate for a government to make order-in-council appointments that would not take effect until after an election? Would he agree that this travesty is an overreach?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. The previous government made a series of appointments that took effect after the last election. These non-transparent eleventh-hour appointments that were not scrutinized by Parliament were a clear abuse of the appointment process.

We want to clean up the ethical mess left by the previous government. That is exactly what we are doing. We released a very important document called, “Open and Accountable Government”.

Canadians voted for transparency, and we are proud to have raised the bar.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 12 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, April 11, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of Motion No. 2, under ways and means proceedings.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 35)

YEAS

Members

Aboultair	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bernier	Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeschen
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Gourde
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Raitt
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts

Points of Order

Waugh
Wong
Zimmer— 89

Webber
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcel
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jolibois
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)

Mendès
Mihychuk
Socurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Mencino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Moore
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 228

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am unbelievably shocked and disappointed on a day when we in the House have stood against bullying. Today I witnessed something which has deeply upset me. My colleagues on the other side mocked a fellow colleague on this side when he tried to answer a question honestly.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this point. She will recall that I addressed this during question period. I appreciate her reiterating that, but I did deal with this in question period.

* * *

AUDREY O'BRIEN, CLERK EMERITA

The Speaker: I believe members will agree that the senior officials who sit at the Clerk's table advising the Speakers and members on all procedural questions are a self-effacing group. Wishing only to serve the House of Commons to the best of their ability, they do not seek the limelight.

Points of Order

Today, however, we are taking a few minutes to acknowledge and to thank Audrey O'Brien, Clerk Emerita. She is retiring after almost 30 years at the Table, 10 of them as the first female Clerk of the House of Commons.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Ms. O'Brien, I hope you will oblige us as we recognize your valuable contribution to the House of Commons.

[English]

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize one of the true icons of Canada's House of Commons and our Parliament, a person I am extremely proud to be able to call a friend, Ms. Audrey O'Brien.

Calling Audrey a trailblazer would be an understatement, as her passion, her integrity and discipline has defined a career that has been nothing short of admirable and inspiring.

[Translation]

Audrey started out as a committee clerk in 1976, as the Speaker just mentioned. Mr. Speaker, I was a bit surprised that you glossed over our friend's age. I obviously will not point out that our Prime Minister was five years old when Audrey started working here. She was always prepared to share her knowledge, and her presence and experience were tremendous assets to all members who had the honour of learning from her.

[English]

I was honoured to inform the House of Commons of Audrey's nomination as Clerk of the House in 2005, when I was the then parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, and again to move her nomination as Clerk Emerita and an Honorary Officer of the House of Commons with an entrée to the chamber and a well-deserved seat at the Table.

[Translation]

As many people know, Audrey was the first female Clerk of the House of Commons. Her work no doubt opened many doors for everyone who aspired to, one day, take on a role so important to Canadian democracy, a role that she has fulfilled with dignity and honour since 2005.

[English]

Audrey's name will continue to permeate this chamber for many years. There is a reason why so many people colloquially refer to the book she co-edited on the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, O'Brien and Bosc, as the bible of parliamentary procedure. God knows, many of us would still be lost and wandering around this place if it were not for her writings, her wise counsel, and the person who has served as deputy clerk and acting clerk since her departure some months ago.

[Translation]

To those who had the honour and the privilege of dealing with her on a daily basis, she quickly became a friend and confidante.

[English]

Always cheerful, respectful, wise, and fair, Audrey exemplifies the very best of service to Canada, to our democracy, and to Canadians.

I want to say to Audrey, on behalf of all members in the Liberal caucus, a big thank you for her wisdom and her advice over so many years. We wish her the best in her next step forward and look forward to seeing her in this chamber, and on the Hill in good health for many years to come.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too am so thrilled to lend my voice to the accolades and tributes that our Clerk Emerita is receiving today. They are well-founded and so well-deserved. I know that I do not have to list all the wonderful accomplishments that the government House leader has mentioned, although I will note that he was here for both the beginning and the end of her career at the table. I do not know if that says anything about his colleagues or members in the House.

I do want to add my voice to everything that the government House leader said about the wonderful addition that Audrey O'Brien has left in this House, both in terms of the procedure and practice manual and the impact she has made on so many of us.

I know I speak for all my colleagues, probably none more so than the former chair of the procedure and House affairs committee, the former member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, Mr. Joe Preston. I know he was mentioning earlier how special this day would be for Ms. O'Brien, and the friendship that he had with her.

I want to note the high esteem in which our Clerk was held internationally. The House of Commons procedural team does a lot of capacity building for emerging democracies. Their representatives come to Canada to learn best practices on how to establish their parliamentary systems. They take that knowledge back with them and help make their parliaments stronger, more robust, and more dynamic.

A lot of that was done under the direction of Ms. O'Brien, and her work and leadership with her department. When some of us have travelled to visit those parliaments, people there often mention the trips they had here, the time they spent here, and the work that they did while they were here and learned so much.

I want to speak to a few of the other lasting legacies.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Even here, members take for granted the procedural services and reference works available in person, in print, and online. Few of us realize that they are there as a result of the pioneering work done with the help of the databases set up by Ms. O'Brien and her colleagues. This is a huge success, and those of us who access them on a regular basis have nothing but admiration for the complexity and nuance of this work. The fruits of these labours can be found in both editions of the *Procedure and Practice* book, more commonly known as O'Brien and Bosc.

*Points of Order**[English]*

I do want to mention that there are a few things I could probably share. Ms. O'Brien and I worked very closely for many years. It is ironic to talk about all the advancements in the digital age and some of the new technologies that Ms. O'Brien pioneered because she liked to refer to herself as a member of the rotary generation. I thought she meant some kind of service club, but apparently phones used to have some kind of different keypad. I remember many conversations we had where at the end of the advice she would give me, she would say that part of her job was saving me from myself and saving members from themselves.

Throughout it all, even throughout the advice given sometimes with a bit of self-deprecating humour and some of the therapeutic drafts we would often write before rulings, there was a real sense of the importance of Parliament. There is no doubt that Ms. O'Brien loved the House of Commons, loved Parliament, and loved our democracy. The lesson that she certainly left on me was that we had to take this place seriously and what we do here seriously, but we should not take ourselves too seriously.

At some point in my mandate as Speaker, there were talks about a life after politics where my chief of staff and the Clerk might embark on some kind of reality show. I think it was to be called "Stilettoes and Sensible Shoes". I look forward to that. I think it will give *Power and Politics* and *Power Play* a run for their money.

On behalf of all the members of my caucus and especially myself, my wife, and my children, who got to know Ms. O'Brien very well, I want to wish her all the best. It was such a pleasure serving with her.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are paying tribute to Audrey O'Brien, an iconic figure in the House of Commons for more than 35 years. She became Clerk in 2005, and was the first woman appointed to the position. She guided the Table through minority governments and the terms of two prime ministers.

[English]

Audrey O'Brien has been described as someone who has a deep respect for anything parliamentary. She has helped modernize the very institutions we operate in every day and has been a fierce defender of the independence of the institution from the executive branch. For that, we thank her.

Among her most tangible achievements is this great green procedural tome.

[Translation]

The second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* is a precious resource for any assistant who has some interest in the parliamentary process.

[English]

Known very well as simply O'Brien and Bosc, the book makes the rules of the House and Parliament clear and digestible, and available to all who wish to know more about the cornerstone of our democratic institutions. It makes great reading. It is better than an evening of Netflix.

Madam O'Brien's contribution goes well beyond interpreting the rules of the House. Her legacy includes an amazing ability to strike the delicate balance between respecting the rules of Parliament and the centuries of Westminster parliamentary precedence, and the ability to deliver practical results.

As we all know, the last government agreed to address the historical wrong of the residential schools policy that still stands as one of the great black marks on the history of our country. The House was faced with the practical problem of how to allow indigenous leaders onto the floor of the House for the ceremony. The presence of those for whom the apology would mean the most was absolutely crucial. As we all know, non-MPs, or strangers of the House as they are known, are not permitted in our chamber for our daily sittings.

It was Madam O'Brien who suggested the solution, to convene the House instead as a committee of the whole. This proved a solution that was both perfectly practical and perfectly parliamentary. That is trademark Audrey O'Brien.

● (1535)

[Translation]

Not only was Ms. O'Brien a master of procedure, but she also mentored many women who were elected to Parliament. In her years of service, she took many new female MPs under her wing, gave them valuable advice, and lent them an attentive ear.

[English]

The honour of being recognized as Clerk Emerita is one that is very rarely bestowed. One of the rare honourees was former NDP MP for Winnipeg Centre and parliamentary procedural legend, Stanley Knowles. Stanley took very seriously the honour of being allowed into the House after his retirement as an MP, almost as a duty one might say. He would regularly be found making use of his right to be seated at the table here in the chamber. Stanley was often a procedural thorn in the side of the government of the day. It may be the case that if the members of the House knew how much of Stanley they would continue to see and hear, they might have thought of another way to honour him.

[Translation]

Having said that, I sincerely hope that we will see Ms. O'Brien in her place, at the Table, a place that is well deserved.

[English]

On behalf of the New Democrats here in the House, and the entire NDP family, I wish her a happy, healthy, and long retirement.

If Madam O'Brien were to sit back and put her feet up on the table, even the table here in the chamber, we should seek the consent of the House that we look the other way because that would be so richly deserved after so many gifts to our country and for her work.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to see Ms. O'Brien once again in the House. She was with us and gave us advice for many years. The House will remember her as the first woman to hold the position of Clerk of the House of Commons.

Bloc Québécois members will especially remember her impeccable democratic principles. We will remember her great discipline, the respectful nature of her relations with every party in the House, and her keen sense of justice and fairness. Her legendary availability, warm welcome, and ever-present desire to serve the House with dedication and competence contributed greatly to her excellent reputation, not just here, but in the entire Commonwealth.

Ms. O'Brien, you embody all the founding values of this place.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank you for your years of service and I hope you have a happy retirement. You really deserve it.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is such an honour to stand and salute our Clerk Emerita, Audrey O'Brien.

I am without words to express my gratitude as a newly elected MP coming to this place and embracing my new bible, a big green book, which I took home and read immediately. I am not kidding.

Audrey O'Brien knows how much, as does Marc Bosc, O'Brien and Bosc as a bible for an MP is a good place to start and return to frequently. In those pages I found things that nobody ever knew, that members of parties with fewer than 12 MPs were allowed to put forward amendments during report stage, something that certain other members of this place wish I had not found.

However, understanding the rules of Parliament and respecting Parliament go hand in hand. Without the rules, how can we have the respect? Without understanding our traditions, how can we know our role?

I am deeply grateful for every moment of private counsel, friendship, and advice. I miss Audrey in this place. I wish her the best in retirement. I want her to know that not a day goes by that I do not reach for my copy of her bible. I thank her so much.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1540)

[English]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Hon. Jane Philpott (for Minister of International Trade) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, the Hazardous Products Act, the Radiation Emitting Devices Act, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the Pest Control Products Act and the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act and to make related amendments to another Act.

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

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, held in Stockholm, Sweden, March 2-3, 2016.

* * *

PETITIONS

TAX-FREE SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have risen many times in recent Parliaments to table petitions in the House. Today, I am pleased to table my first electronic petition, a 21st century innovation, introduced by the clerk as the session began, that enables Canadians to draw attention to an issue of public interest or concern much more easily than with traditional paper documents.

Although petition e-3, calling on the government to maintain the tax-free savings account contribution levels at \$10,000, has been superceded by the unwise action of the government, I would like the House to know that this petition has still drawn a total number of signatures just short of 5,000.

I am proud and honoured to table this petition today.

ANIMAL TESTING FOR COSMETICS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present two petitions this afternoon.

The first is from petitioners who are calling on the Government of Canada to act to protect animals from the impacts of testing in laboratories, particularly the use of animal testing for cosmetics, which I think we will agree is a non-essential use and completely distinct from animal testing, for instance, for health advances and scientific research. That is problematic in itself, but as for using animal testing for cosmetics, the petitioners ask the House to ban such practices.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, there are many hundreds of signatures on the second petition I am presenting, which calls for the Government of Canada to act against and pressure the government of the People's Republic of China to protect people who are practising Falun Gong and Falun Dafa from repression, jailing, and even torture.

The Budget

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present the following 13 petitions signed by residents of my constituency, who draw our attention to the fact that during the 41st Parliament, the chamber unanimously passed a motion calling on the government to create a national strategy on palliative care so that every Canadian has access to high-quality care at end of life. The petitioners, therefore, call on Parliament to develop and create this national strategy.

• (1545)

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I also rise to present another 14 petitions signed by residents of my constituency, who call upon Parliament to enshrine the freedom of conscience for physicians and health care institutions within the Criminal Code against coercion and intimidation to provide physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would ask you to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-9.

That a humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before the House a copy of the agreement between the federal government and the Government of Quebec, mentioned by the Quebec Minister of Finance in the National Assembly of Quebec on March 9, 2016, that will force both governments to honour the amnesty agreements made with tax evaders.

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that this notice of motion for the production of papers be transferred for debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all other notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by nine minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to echo the voices of my constituents of Markham—Unionville on the disgraceful proposed Liberal budget.

I will also be splitting my time with my colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge.

The Liberal government has dedicated a lot of space to buzzwords, investments, and spending, but it has yet to provide Canadians with a clear plan for job creation, tax reduction, and economic stability.

My constituents are hard-working Canadians with strong values, which include fiscal responsibility, the safety of our communities, and respect for their hard-earned dollars. These are all things the current Liberal government has overlooked in its budget and omitted.

The Minister of Finance recently stood in the House and talked about what the government's budget would give to Canadians. However, it is now clear that this budget promises far more than it can deliver. More importantly, it would deprive hard-working families of benefits and credits that provide relief for Canadians.

I draw members' attention to the topic of taxes, a subject with which I am sure many of us are concerned.

This Liberal budget would end the children's tax credit, the children's art tax credit, and the tax credit for post-secondary education and text books. These are the benefits that most Canadian families take advantage of sooner or later. However, under the current government, these valuable tax credits would no longer be available to provide relief.

The Conservatives reduced taxes over 150 times, bringing the tax burden for families to its lowest point in the last 50 years. In contrast, the Liberal budget would not only directly take money out of people's pockets, but due to the government's fiscal mismanagement, the proposed budget would also impact businesses negatively.

Over nearly a decade in power, an average family of four was saving almost \$7,000 per year under the previous Conservative government.

Contrary to what the Liberal government will try to tell Canadians, low- and middle-income families have benefited the most from these savings. This is not political hot air. It is coming straight from the parliamentary budget officer, who independently investigates the government's spending.

The Budget

Last week, the PBO came out with a report that showed Liberals were hiding information from Canadians, creating their own economic growth projections, and exaggerating job growth expectations.

Despite saying that budget 2016 would help Canadians, the current government would end the hiring credit for small businesses and completely abandon our manufacturing sector. The Liberals have not committed to funding the automotive innovation fund, the auto suppliers innovation program, or the advanced manufacturing fund, among other programs from which businesses have benefited.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the decision to not reduce the small business corporation tax to 9%, as promised, would cost small businesses almost \$1 billion per year as of 2019. Canadians will recall that the reduction to 9% was tabled by the former Conservative government in an effort to aid small businesses, which are the backbone and economic engine of this country.

Where has the Liberals' promise of hope and hard work gone?

The Liberal budget dedicated a lot of space to innovation and investing in innovation, but this budget lacks a clear plan to encourage businesses to invest and create jobs in Canada.

According to the Fraser Institute, under these conditions, businesses and entrepreneurs would either remain on the sidelines or decide to invest in other countries. Simply put, without a predictable business environment, Canadian businesses and workers would be left with a sad view of the future.

● (1550)

Additionally, according to the economists, the Liberals are spending at the rate of 7% more than they can afford. The previous Conservative government left Canadians with a budgetary surplus, and already the Liberal government has placed us all into a dark pit of endless deficits.

Let us not overlook the burden that will be left on the shoulders and in the pockets of our children and grandchildren. Please let us not play political games with the Canadian economy.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation rightly stated that this Prime Minister's first budget is an absolute disaster for future generations and for Canada.

My constituents of Markham—Unionville, alongside Oakville and Vancouver, are some of the highest taxed people in the country. This budget is an embarrassment for them and for hard-working Canadians across this country.

What is the most embarrassing? It is the complete disregard the government has when it comes to the safety of our communities. The world is not getting any safer, as the past few years or even the recent weeks have shown us. Mindless violence happens when we least expect it, whether in the heart of the European Union, in Brussels, Belgium, or at the military recruitment centre in Toronto.

Despite these recent tragedies, the Liberal government has allocated less than \$60 million for our country's public safety. The government lacks credibility when addressing our national security. These cuts go to prove how dangerously uninformed this Prime

Minister and his advisers are, by putting the safety and security of Canadians at risk.

The Liberals are highlighting buzzword investments at a time when they should be restraining or reallocating funds to serious issues, like national security and public safety, which affect Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Before my colleagues across the aisle start pointing fingers and accusing my caucus colleagues and me of being against investment in infrastructure, I want to clarify that this is not the truth. Conservatives support infrastructure spending that improves our quality of life and ensures that our goods get to both domestic and international markets.

Under the previous Conservative government, more money was invested in infrastructure than under any other government in history. We were second amongst the G7 countries in 2014 in regard to infrastructure spending.

In fact, under the Conservative government, more than one million net new jobs were created, the most per capita in the G7. These were high-quality jobs, with 80% of them being full time, of which 80% were created in the private sector.

Investing in infrastructure should create jobs, and those are investments that I support, but this is not the case with the government and its lacklustre budget. Canadian businesses, which may be able to contribute to local infrastructure projects, would not benefit from this plan, since the Liberals have decided to raise taxes on them.

Worst of all, the government would force provinces to introduce a carbon tax that could cost families over \$1,000 every year, and it would impact the ability of businesses to hire hard-working, deserving Canadians.

I cannot support a budget full of money-grabbing measures, meant to make all Canadians pay more now and for years to come. Therefore, I stand united with my caucus colleagues against the government and its senseless budget promises.

I would like to thank my constituents once more for enabling me to stand in this House today to voice their concerns about the measures introduced two weeks ago.

● (1555)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member and I have ridings in the same region, the York Region.

It is interesting to note that recently the mayor of Markham and the chair of York Region both said that the infrastructure spending in the last six to eight years was woefully inadequate.

How can the member stand there today, as the member for Markham—Unionville, and not encourage infrastructure spending in his municipality, pretending that what was done in the past was sufficient? It was not, and he knows it. Anyone who tries to get around our region knows that.

The Budget

There needs to be more money spent on transportation, more money spent on key infrastructure items that just were not done in the last six to eight years. How can the member answer to his constituents when they say we need more infrastructure spending and we need it now?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, these are the facts. The member just has to look at the record. The highest dollars spent in the G7 countries were spent in 2014 by the Conservative government. The most money was spent in the last budget.

I would like to raise something else. The Liberals do not have the money they are spending. This is money that belongs to future generations.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my friend, the member for Markham—Unionville, for his very inspiring words.

The last questions focused on infrastructure. During the campaign the Liberals said they would focus extra spending on infrastructure. There is money is for infrastructure, and we thank them for that. The problem is that infrastructure is not where the majority of their spending is. All of their spending is on program funding, which means it is permanent and locked in. That is the problem.

We could buy the biggest house and the best car, but if we are living beyond our means, at some point the bill comes in and we are responsible for it.

We are not in a recession. Our economy is showing signs of growth. Basically, we are spending for the sake of spending. What will happen when we hit a recession? We will have to dig deeper, and that is the problem.

My friend from Markham—Unionville has a business background. How would you deal with this in the business world? You cannot spend for the sake of spending and expect to come out ahead, as we have seen in Ontario.

•(1600)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Just a reminder that members have to ask their questions through the Chair and not directly to individual members.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, I was in business for most of my life. If there is no money, we have to budget the budget. We have to make sure we have fiscal responsibility. We have to make sure that we have the money or that we can afford to pay the money back.

In this case, the Liberals promised a \$10 billion deficit during the election campaign, but that amount has now gone up to \$30 billion. Our future generations will be on the hook for this debt.

This is a bad budget, and we will not support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it truly amazing. In listening to the hon. member, one would think he was commenting on a Conservative budget of a year or two ago.

The member needs to realize that the former Conservative government never spent those infrastructure dollars it talked about.

The Conservatives just made a promise that at some time in the future they would invest in Canada's infrastructure. This budget commits to spending on infrastructure today. It makes a commitment to children in every region of our country. We are going to see substantial increases to the Canada child tax benefit. This budget invests in seniors. It invests seriously in infrastructure.

Why would the member oppose a budget that would benefit so many of his constituents?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, the numbers have just been reworked. The children's tax credit, the children's art tax credit, and the tax credit for post-secondary education and textbooks were serious tax credits, but they are all gone.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the new Liberal government promised greater transparency, economic responsibility, and growth for the middle class. While these are laudable goals that those on the Conservative benches certainly share, budget 2016 falls far short of these aspirations.

Despite aiming to boost GDP growth, budget 2016 introduces measures which are either unrelated to growth or actually hinder growth. Despite its self-described goal of growing the middle class, budget 2016's deficits form a burden upon the middle class. Despite claiming to promote accountability, budget 2016 is built of broken promises.

Let me begin with the effect of the deficit on Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio.

During the 2015 campaign, among a litany of other promises, the Liberals offered to run a modest deficit while lowering Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio. The deficit has since ballooned from the surplus that the Conservatives left and has gone right through the promised so-called modest deficit of only \$10 billion. Meanwhile, the debt-to-GDP ratio has risen to a projected 32.5% in 2016.

This brings me to two more broken promises.

Contrary to its promise to return to surplus by the end of its mandate, the government is projecting deficits right through 2020. Not only does this break the promise of an eventual surplus, it breaks the promise to run modest deficits of only \$10 billion. Every single year in the government's term, it projects a deficit of well over \$10 billion.

While calculating the deficit, the Liberals appear to have deliberately understated GDP growth estimates by \$40 billion. By setting such a low baseline against which to measure future progress, the government is engaging in financial trickery. Even the Parliamentary Budget Office, the non-partisan fiscal watchdog, disagrees with the government's projection as unrealistically low.

Instead of being transparent and easy to understand, the Liberals have set an unrealistically low starting point, perhaps in order to claim greater success than the real economic numbers support. That is confusing and deceptive. It also gives the Liberals a chance to direct higher-than-expected revenues right back into spending, instead of using them to reduce the deficit or pay down federal debt.

This number-fudging is mere political posturing. This is not prudent planning, and it is certainly not evidence-based policy.

The Budget

This raises yet another broken promise, the promise for infrastructure spending.

When campaigning, the Liberals offered to run a \$10-billion deficit to pay for infrastructure to stimulate greater economic growth. Indeed, this was the principal promise of the platform upon which the Liberals were elected.

Canadians could be forgiven for thinking that this promise actually meant \$10 billion worth of spending on infrastructure, not a mere \$3.4 billion over five years to be spent upon productive measures such public transit, which we would support. The rest of the deficit is going to various other Liberal priorities.

Not only is the spending on actual infrastructure lower than promised, but the premise of kick-starting sluggish growth has now been undermined as well.

Although the economy contracted in the first half of 2015, it grew more than the market expected in the second half of the year. The dip in early 2015 was due more to the collapse in commodity prices than to sluggish fundamentals.

Despite the government's hope, social infrastructure spending in Canada will not counteract the challenges faced in the resource sector. In contrast, not killing or stalling pipeline projects such as northern gateway and energy east would actually benefit Canada and grow our GDP. Instead, the Liberals introduced a moratorium on tanker traffic on northern British Columbia's coast, thus blocking northern gateway, which was approved under the previous Conservative government.

The Liberals are also moving the goalposts on the energy east approval process. Not only does this not improve Canada's GDP; it actually deters new investment by creating uncertainty, which is exacerbated by the Prime Minister's remarks whenever he travels outside Canada.

Speaking of promised measures that do not grow GDP, the government plans to spend \$5 billion over five years on so-called green infrastructure. Other so-called green initiatives, such as working toward a national carbon tax, will directly harm GDP.

Conservatives have been warning for years that a tax on carbon dioxide emissions is a tax on everything.

Canada's long-term energy needs are not addressed by pushing for carbon taxes and subsidizing unreliable renewables such as wind and solar, which require 100% redundancy for cloudy and calm days. A prosperous and sustainable economy requires abundant, clean, and inexpensive energy.

I would like to remind the government that pipelines are infrastructure too. Indeed, they are the best kind of infrastructure. They produce many well-paying and highly skilled jobs, they are financed by private money, and they address a pressing need in both the short and the long term.

● (1605)

If the government wants to kick-start more economic growth, I encourage it to facilitate these pipeline projects without further delay.

I will move on to another means of stimulating the economy. One of the best ways to grow GDP is to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to expand. One of the best ways of attracting new small and medium-sized enterprises and encouraging existing ones is through reasonable corporate tax rates.

The government says that it understands this, but it is not acting on it. On page 254 of the budget, the government acknowledges that corporate tax cuts produce the strongest economic growth in the long term, yet the Liberals are breaking another campaign promise, their promise to lower the small business tax rate to 9%.

It is fundamentally dishonest for a party to promise a deficit to fund infrastructure in order to boost GDP and then direct most of its new spending to unrelated measures, all the while taking steps that actually impair growth.

Such dishonesty puts the lie to another Liberal promise, that of more open, accountable, and transparent government. The new Liberal government repeatedly boasts of its plan to be open and transparent. However, it is taking steps that directly contradict this lofty aim.

Upon taking office, the government immediately stopped enforcing the First Nations Financial Transparency Act. Canada's indigenous peoples receive much in the way of federal funding, but they no longer have a legal claim to information on how their chiefs and councils spend it.

The Liberals plan to spend just over \$2 billion on social infrastructure in indigenous communities with no accountability to the residents. My Conservative colleagues and I recognize that there are many issues in indigenous communities that the government can and should address, such as the boil water advisories, which are a national disgrace. We support tackling such problems, but we also know that fixing a problem today with no accountability for tomorrow means fixing it again in the future.

I will continue to an issue of vital importance for Canada's democratic future.

On page 209 of the budget, the government has set aside \$10.7 million over four years for outreach and awareness regarding electoral reform, but there is no money for a referendum. Shall we expect funds for a referendum in a future budget, or is the government planning to change the way Canadians select their representatives without directly asking them? Open and transparent government demands putting such a pivotal question to the voters.

I will move on to one last point about transparency.

The Budget

The Liberals made several commitments in their 2015 election platform that will cost a great deal to implement, but those commitments have not been included in this budget. How are Canadians to know what their government plans to spend when it comes to implementing all of the recommendations of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission without having calculated the cost? How can Canadians know what the deficit or surplus will be in the coming years when the government is faced with negotiating a new health accord with high-taxing, high-spending provinces?

Will the government reduce spending to accommodate these new expenses? Will it saddle future generations with higher taxes by borrowing to fund them, or will these be just be additional broken promises?

To conclude, budget 2016 demonstrates one deception after another. It demonstrates that the government misled Canadians in the 2015 election campaign on the purpose of running a deficit, the course such a deficit would take, the effect of a deficit on Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio, the efficacy of the measures the deficit was incurred to fund, and the commitment to openness and transparency. Budget 2016 is a budget built of broken promises.

• (1610)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for quite a detailed analysis. He has clearly read very carefully through the budget.

However, it is interesting that he failed to mention the Canada child benefit, which was clearly a promise and a very important part of what the Liberal government promised to do.

I wonder if he would comment, knowing that it would increase benefits to nine out of 10 families and raise 300,000 children out of poverty across the country. Would he not agree that this measure will have a significant impact on people in his riding and on their lifestyle and their quality of life going forward?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I would reiterate that the budget in total represents, for the most part, a litany of broken promises from the campaign. The hon. member across no doubt campaigned on the Liberal platform, which included a promise of a maximum deficit of \$10 billion. I do not doubt the member, in door-to-door conversations, defended this promise and assured the voters of her constituency that the Liberals would not exceed a \$10 billion deficit. This promise was completely abandoned immediately after the conclusion of the election along with a litany of other broken promises.

We could talk beyond the budget itself of broken promises when it comes to refugee policy and a number of other areas. The budget is built of broken promises that were committed by the Liberals during the 2015 election.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

One of the issues that the City of Sherbrooke in my riding is following very closely is obviously the infrastructure announcements. One has to admit that people had very high expectations

before the budget was tabled. Many municipalities across the country were disappointed. Sherbrooke was no exception.

One of the problems that Quebec has with infrastructure investments is that there has to be an agreement between Canada and the province regarding infrastructure spending. The agreement was not signed when his party, the Conservative Party, was in power, and it has not been addressed by the Liberals either. As a result, the money is still not available, although large sums are being announced. That is what happened with the Conservatives. They were always announcing large investments. Now the Liberals are announcing large sums, but the money is not getting to the municipalities.

I would like my colleague to talk about this aspect of the problem with infrastructure. Does he think that the announcement that was made fell short of what municipalities expected, given the Liberals' election promises?

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member raises an important point. It is true that when our government was in office, we announced and approved projects that were unable to be completed. Yet, I am not sure what more our previous government could have done in some cases.

When a municipality requests funding for a project and that funding is approved and when the project is not built, I am not certain how to be accountable for some of the management or issues at the local level that has prevented a project from being completed.

I am very proud of the track record our party had in office with respect to approving infrastructure projects. We approved the funding for the Green Line in Calgary, which represented the largest federal investment in infrastructure in Calgary at that time.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Today, I rise in this august House to recapitulate and review the promises made to Canadians six months back. We are in the process of a long journey whose milestone has been unfolded by this budget.

Canadians have struggled for the last 10 years to get ahead, but for most of them things were not getting better. The middle class remained stagnant for a very long time. Youth unemployment was eroding the faith of young Canadians and their parents. They were not able to move up the ladder, rather, some of them were sliding downward.

During our election campaign, we assured Canadians a new direction for our economy. We promised to invest in people and things that would make the lives of the middle class better. We all know that everyday lives can be better for people if they have good, long-term, and consistent jobs. They must have better modes to commute. They also need better child care, better schools, better hospitals, and better medical infrastructure. In addition to that, we all need clean water, fresh air, and green parks. All these things make the lives of common people better and livable.

The Budget

I represent the riding of Brampton Centre. It is part of the GTA and comprises hard-working, middle-class Canadians. Quite a few of my constituents work in downtown Toronto and nearby areas. When we travel to downtown Toronto, or elsewhere around, we see the lifelines of commuting, the so-called Highways 401, 410, and 427. They look like parking lots. What a colossal waste of time and resources. This leads to loss of time for workers, which could be spent at work contributing to the economy, or quality time with their families.

That is why we assured Canadians that our government had plans to invest in better means of transit, social, and green infrastructure. Our economy will grow so Canadians move ahead.

Our government is open to working with provinces. The funding has been made flexible for municipalities to have a coordinated, need-based and progressive improvement.

Investment in transit infrastructure would help to make a positive difference in our lives. It is the government's plan to quadruple federal investment in public transit to ensure that the projects actually get built. It would also give a boost to the economy.

Our government has also planned to invest in social infrastructure, on things like affordable and social housing, child care spaces, community centres, and also in youth and seniors. The government also plans to invest in green infrastructure.

These would all create greener energy, cleaner land, and more good jobs for Canadians, leading to a stronger economy and a cleaner environment. This would help the middle classes and those who are striving hard to join the middle class.

Our government is in the process of sending families a tax-free, monthly Canada child benefit worth up to \$533 a month for one child. Nine out of ten families will get more money from this plan. Middle-class Canadians can now save up to \$670 per person each year, with a maximum benefit of nearly \$1,350 for a couple.

When middle-class Canadians have more money in their pockets to save, invest, and grow, the economy is bound to benefit.

Our government has cut the middle income tax bracket to 20.5% from 22%. Canadians with taxable annual income between \$44,700 and \$89,401 have seen their income tax rate fall.

• (1620)

To pay for this tax cut, the wealthy 1% of Canadians are giving a little more. This government has introduced a new tax bracket of 33% for individuals earning more than \$200,000 each year.

Our government has already assured Canadians that we will lower the pensionable age to 65, thereby reducing the insecurity of old age created by the previous government.

Our government is taking direct action and working with provinces and territories to provide Canadians with a more secure retirement. Therefore, the quality of the lives of seniors is a major concern for our government.

In pursuit of goals for widespread prosperity, our government is also in the process of improving access to the employment insurance benefits. We all know that Canada is a country of small and medium-

sized enterprises. These enterprises are the back bone of our economy. Our prosperity is embodied in entrepreneurs who take chances.

It is imperative that businesses reduce costs and improve productivity if they have to survive the global competition over mid and long term. Hence "innovation" is our mantra.

This government has been encouraging and has also been planning to invest in innovations in all and every field. The previous government ignored the people who did most of the heavy lifting. Canadians were working harder and longer, but some of them were sliding downwards. The persistent lack of opportunities for youth was having a far-reaching impact on struggling classes.

Developmental plans were not managed with a vision. Too many eggs were put in one basket, which has not worked well for the overall economy. The temporary foreign workers program started by the previous government proved to be counterproductive. These programs were filling jobs which could have been filled by qualified Canadians. Therefore, there is a need to streamline this process.

I was fortunate that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced proposed progressive measures in my riding for implementing the vision of immigration. These will encourage pathways to reunification of families and citizenship to those who come to Canada to work, and will also review the temporary foreign workers program on needs-based criteria.

The Minister of Finance has presented his maiden budget. Canadians can see for themselves that a new hope is getting translated into reality. This budget has ushered in an era of implementation for what we had been promising to Canadians, and that is real change.

Spending on the infrastructure is realistic, keeping in view the long-term goals. Canada needs fiscal measures that will boost productive capacity. We see in this budget growth, a friendly tax policy, an openness to trade, competition and supportive reforms. This budget lays out a credible plan for fiscal sustainability. It also aims to ensure Canadians that the federal government is dealing with economic challenges with prudence.

I compliment the Minister of Finance and his team for their vision, efforts and hard work in this regard.

The Budget

• (1625)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about a lot of things in his speech, a lot of promises, which we now know as broken Liberal promises. One was with respect to the middle-class tax cut. He said that the Liberals were going to lower taxes on the middle class and ask the top 1% to pay a little more. It turns out that all Canadians will be paying a lot more because, according to the figures of the parliamentary budget officer, there is a \$1.3-billion deficit for this year alone, which means Canadian taxpayers will have to pay that, and \$8.9 billion over six years.

I would ask the hon. member how he explains that broken campaign promise to the people in his riding.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, this budget is one that gives hope to Canadians, mostly the middle class and those who are striving hard to join the middle class. It is the hope that this budget will give them more jobs and more benefits. Our government has decided to cut taxes to 20.5% from 22%, and give that back to Canadians. When Canadians get money back into their pockets, they are in a better position, and Canada will be in a better position.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, this budget would have been the perfect opportunity to announce the restoration of home mail delivery, which got a lot of air time during the election campaign. The Prime Minister actually promised to restore home mail delivery. The budget would have been a great opportunity to make an announcement about that and keep the promise that the Prime Minister himself made. Now people have to check the Liberal Party's website to see the real promise, even though the Prime Minister said something else.

Can my colleague tell us whether his community is also calling for the restoration of home mail delivery, particularly in downtown communities, which are often home to seniors and people with reduced mobility?

What are his thoughts on that? Does he think that the Prime Minister should keep the promise he himself made to restore home mail delivery?

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, the member's comment is not really a question. The Liberal Party has already agreed to restore home delivery.

This budget is providing all of the aspects of government spending which is for the middle-class people. That spending will be long-term spending for a better future. It will be spent to create good jobs and a cleaner environment for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member highlighted a very important aspect of the budget that has not been given that much attention, which is the issue of the processing of spouses from abroad. This budget does incorporate additional financing that will ultimately see families being reunited that much quicker. I wonder if the member might want to talk a bit more about how important it is that the Canadian

government speed up the processing so that we can get those spouses to Canada that much sooner.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha: Madam Speaker, the amendments to the Immigration Act that were announced by the hon. minister clearly indicate that there will be a reunification process and that families will be very happy.

In my previous profession I was an immigration lawyer. I have seen people cry because they could not have their parents reunited with them. It was very hard because the laws, which were being amended day by day, were very harsh and did not provide them that privilege. This budget provides the opportunity for the reunification of families.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Windsor West, Gasoline Prices; and the hon. member for Victoria, Justice.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brampton Centre for sharing his time with me.

It is such an honour for me to speak to budget 2016 this afternoon.

[English]

I am going to divide the 10 minutes that I have into three general categories: first, the overall quality of the budgetary information; second, a quick review of those things that are pretty good, but not good enough; and third, concerns about the environmental content of the budget.

First, on the quality of the budget, there is something that I think parliamentarians need to spend a lot more time talking about and demanding of Finance Canada. It has been a number of years since I have been able to find in the budget of Canada something that I think most Canadians would expect us to find, something called a budget: a statement of revenues, a statement of expenses, a bottom line, clear information.

I started saying with the previous government that we should really stop calling it the budget and call it the annual spring thick brochure so we would know what we were talking about. I expected more clarity of information, frankly, from the new finance minister, but as we have seen in the information from the parliamentary budget office in its review of this document, we still do not have detailed tables to identify the impacts of changes. Budget 2016 has actually shortened the time horizon on cost estimates from five years to two years, and it is going to be increasingly difficult to reconcile the program information with the budgetary information with our main estimates and supplementary estimates. I urge the new government to make sure that 2016 is the last budget that is not really a budget.

The Budget

In addition to the things that the PBO has asked for, I would like to see a return to budget documents that include a statement of the budgets that are comparable from the previous year to the next year, department by department. Quite often in the budgets over the last number of years, we can see an announcement that there is money for a department to do whatever, but we cannot figure out for months, if we ever can, whether that is new money, re-profiled money, or whether it is a real commitment. I would like to see that.

Another thing I would like the Minister of Finance to do before next year, and as a matter of fact as quickly as possible, is present legislation to enshrine the parliamentary budget office and the parliamentary budget officer as independent officers of Parliament, properly funded and not subsumed in the budget of the Library of Parliament. The PBO does an amazing job for us as parliamentarians. It should not have to fight tooth and claw for information from Finance Canada. It should be as available to them as it is to us, and we are not seeing that change yet.

This budget is clearly much more welcome to the Green Party of Canada than the ones over the last 10 years. I do not open it and cringe and fear weeping at every page. Therefore, let me go through those things that are good, but not good enough.

It is certainly welcome to see \$8.4 billion allocated to first nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. It is good, but not good enough, because it neglected where we really need to see some increased spending, which is on the care of children in those communities. Specific child care dollars were missed. We need more attention on those key areas. It is certainly welcome, but falls a bit short there. Actually, it is more than a bit short. It completely omits, as Cindy Blackstock has pointed out, money for first nations children and to make sure we act on all the commitments under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I was pleased to see action to assist young Canadians or any students with student debt in making that more manageable, but when one reads very carefully, one finds that there is no new money for that. It is re-profiled in ways that will help students carry student debt and ensure they do not have to start paying student debt back until they are making more money. It is encouraging, but not good enough.

There is more money for international development for Global Affairs Canada, but not nearly enough to catch up to where Canada should be. I want to see a reinstatement of our goal as a nation to 0.7% of our GDP into international development assistance. We are far short of that, even with the modest increase to spending in this budget.

It was very welcome to see money for housing and the federal government being involved again in housing. It is very important that we do that, but I was very disappointed not to see money in this budget for energy retrofits. I will return to that.

It is also welcome to see a return to the funding of basic science and away from the notion that we will not fund anything unless it has an immediate commercial application. It is very welcome to see a return to basic science research and more money for hiring scientists, such as the \$40 million that was recently announced for the

Department of Fisheries and Oceans to start rehiring scientists. Parks and marine protected areas also get funding.

● (1635)

One of Canada's greatest environmental thought leaders passed away earlier this year. I would like to take a moment to note that Jim MacNeill's passing is devastating to the whole policy community that has done any work on sustainable development. Jim MacNeill always said that the single most important environmental statement from any government is its budget. After analyzing this budget for the environmental promises, that is where we find the deepest disappointment.

First, on infrastructure, during the election campaign the Liberals promised to spend enough on infrastructure to stimulate our economy to hire a great deal more people to ensure that we have a strong and vibrant economy that could get us out of the deficit. That was the premise of the Liberals' election campaign. I have to say I do not quibble with that. The Green Party platform was a balanced budget, but I am easily persuaded that in a weak, stagnant economy, when the cost of borrowing is as low as it is today, it is not a bad idea to go into deficit to kick-start the economy. It is a good idea. However, the Liberals fell far short of what needs to be done to create the investments that we need in infrastructure and green infrastructure to create that vibrant economy.

In a nutshell, we read in this budget that over the next 10 years there will be \$120 billion invested in infrastructure. That is a big number and it sounds great, until we realize that part one is the next five years, past the next election, in which less than 10% of that money, \$11.9 billion, will be spent. The 90% of \$120 billion will come to us in the second five-year period. That is important to note, because it means that for public transit money, which is desperately needed, there is only \$3.4 billion over three years. It is not enough to significantly reduce greenhouse gases by moving us to public transit. A key piece of stimulus spending that would have put tens of thousands of Canadians to work quickly is to fund eco-energy projects.

With the previous Liberal government, under former prime minister Paul Martin who created the program, it was wildly successful. It delivered on greenhouse gas reductions. Homeowners loved it. Contractors loved it. Building supply companies loved it. It worked. It should have come back in this budget and it should have been expanded to include institutions like universities, schools, and hospitals, to replace inefficient furnaces, to bring in heat pumps, and to employ an army of carpenters, electricians, and plumbers who could go to work to deliver. It is missing and that is a shame. I hope it will get serious consideration before the 2017 budget so that we can actually attack the 30% of greenhouse gases that come from leaky buildings in Canada.

The Budget

However, I have to say the most despairing part in reading the budget was when I came to a section which has the heading, “Restoring trust in environmental assessment”. This is at page 165 in the budget. Restoring trust in environmental assessment requires fixing the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, brought in originally in 1993, was repealed in 2012 in the spring omnibus budget bill, Bill C-38.

This section of the budget suggests we are going to keep the broken, bogus, useless Environmental Assessment Act that was brought in under Bill C-38, and that we are going to keep it for four more years. There is a specific reference to it getting funded for four more years. This is an enormous mistake, and it must be reversed. Similarly, we must get rid of what Bill C-38 did to our Fisheries Act, to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which was in the fall omnibus budget bill, Bill C-45.

We need to fix our environmental laws if we are going to have a hope of restoring public trust in the environmental assessment process. This must be fixed and it is a budgetary issue. However, it is an urgent parliamentary concern that we undo the damage that every single member of the opposition fought against in 2012. Every New Democrat, every Liberal, and every Green MP fought that. We need to pay attention to the mistakes in this budget and fix them immediately.

•(1640)

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her thoughtful speech and for her engagement on budget 2016.

Over the past few weeks we have heard a lot of discussion in this House on Canada's oil and gas resources. For our friends in the Conservative caucus, it cannot happen fast enough that resources get to tidewater, even though in the last 10 years they have not achieved one pipeline that has actually reached tidewater.

The Liberal government has committed to a more robust, transparent environmental assessment process in which Canadians can trust and have confidence. I wonder if the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands could elaborate in a bit more detail what the conditions are for her, under which Canada's oil and gas resources would be able to reach tidewater?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I neglected to observe that I stand on the traditional territory of the Algonquin First Nation and do so with gratitude.

The name of my riding derives from the name Saanich of the W_SÁNEC people of southern Vancouver Island, who have unceded treaty rights, and in fact Douglas treaty rights to the use and occupation of the territory, Saanich, on which I live.

There is no circumstance in which I am the least bit interested in seeing unprocessed resources reach tidewater. It is an inanity—in large letters. When did Canadians ever think it was a smart use of our resources to ship them out raw as fast as possible?

We do that with forest products. On Vancouver Island, we deeply regret every raw log shipped offshore. Value-added processing of resources, whether forest resources, fishery resources, or bitumen resources, makes sense. Building pipelines no one wants for tankers

that are dangerous to ship raw products to other countries makes no sense.

•(1645)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too was quite struck by the budget when the documents were tabled.

The information was not forthcoming, literally. We actually cannot find the information in terms of what the budgetary items are, in terms of the actual spending in comparison to previous years.

On top of that, I was quite struck by the process, the budget being debated in committee, and in most instances, the minister only being at committee for one hour. We are talking about billions of dollars of spending, and to scrutinize the budgets, MPs will only get one hour in committee to do this work.

I would certainly love to see change in that regard. I wonder if the member could comment on that and share her view around that as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, that is one of the critical things that we are entrusted with here as members of Parliament.

The fundamental principle is that Parliament controls the public purse. That means it is incumbent on each and every one of us, as members of Parliament, to have access to proper information and be able to study it properly.

There have been a lot of sloppy practices developed over time. It is not new. I certainly cannot lay it at the door of the new government. However, I expect it to do more to clean it up.

We have billions of dollars of spending in supplementary estimates, approved and deemed to have been studied. This has to stop. I completely agree with my friend from Vancouver East. We need access to information. It needs to be clear. We need time to properly question not just the minister but those officials in Finance Canada who can provide proper answers quickly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what are the member's thoughts, specifically with respect to the Canada child benefit program, which we believe would lift literally hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty in every region of our country?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, it is hard to give a brief response.

I want to see universal child care back in this country. We do not get to it with the child care benefit. However, I do agree that it makes sense to target child care needs to parents who need the help.

I also support getting rid of the boutique tax cuts. The current government just got started. I hope it will do more to clean up the tax code. In general, I support public spending for community recreational facilities more than private reimbursement of wealthy families who had their kids in sports anyway.

The Budget

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

I am very pleased today to speak in support of budget 2016. This is a budget that invests in Canadians; it invests in people.

The greatest assets in any democratic country are the combined knowledge, experiences, ideas, and creativity of the people. When we invest in those ideas, when we give every Canadian a real and fair chance to succeed, when we make sure that everyone has the opportunities they need to contribute to growing our economy, then we all do better. This is a budget that would create growth that is inclusive for all.

Recent graduates in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean are looking for good jobs where they can use their skills. New immigrants are eager to start businesses and find jobs so that they can give something back to the country that welcomed them.

In my riding, there are many highly educated and skilled workers who lost their jobs when Nortel collapsed and who are looking for venture capital, so they can take their good ideas to market. By focusing our budget on growing the economy rather than on cuts or austerity, we would ensure that they all have their chance to build their dreams. Every dollar we invest in Canadians would come back to us over and over again in the future.

Budget 2016 would invest in research, innovation, and commercialization of new ideas. This includes an additional \$95 million a year to the granting councils: SSHRC, NSERC, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Budget 2016 would also provide \$800 million for innovation networks and clusters, as well as measures to scale up businesses, help small and medium enterprises to grow, and provide support for accelerators and incubators.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Many residents of Ottawa West—Nepean are public servants. After many years of job cuts and lack of respect for federal scientists, researchers, diplomats, experts, and professionals, our government wants to hear about public servants' experiences and good ideas.

Budget 2016 promises to enhance the public service, which is one of the best in the world, and provide the space and opportunity for public servants to give advice based on solid evidence. We are committed to negotiating in good faith and never making unilateral changes to collective agreements.

[*English*]

My parents immigrated to Canada in the 1960s, and if I may say, today is the 50th anniversary of the day my mother first landed in Canada as a 19-year-old young woman immigrating to Canada by herself. This is a shout-out to my mother, Maria.

Being the daughters of immigrants, my sister and I had the opportunity to go to university. We had the opportunity to get good jobs and succeed in life. This is my wish for every single child in Canada.

The new Canada child benefit would give nine out of 10 families more money in their pockets to help with the cost of raising children. It would raise hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. It is income tested, so that those making less money would receive more. The average family would see \$2,300 more every year because of this benefit, and we would not tax it back. Therefore, all of the money would stay in their pockets. This is in addition to the middle-class tax cut that we have already put into place, which would benefit nine million Canadians.

Many of the most vulnerable in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean are seniors. In Canada today, there are more people over the age of 65 than there are children under 15. I have a constituency with more seniors than most others in the country. Many of them are single seniors and single women living in poverty.

Budget 2016 commits to increasing the guaranteed income supplement for single seniors by 10%. This would benefit 900,000 seniors. We would also work with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan and reset the age of retirement for OAS from age 67 back to age 65.

In addition, we would provide more than \$200 million over the next two years for affordable housing specifically for seniors, which would benefit 5,000 low-income seniors. This is part of an infrastructure program that would invest \$3.4 billion in social infrastructure over the next two years, including \$2.3 billion for affordable housing, which would upgrade or build 100,000 affordable housing units for the most vulnerable.

One of the most important parts of ensuring that every Canadian has a real and fair chance to succeed is access to education.

In budget 2016, we would provide students with up to \$1,000 more per year in the Canada student grants, which would help 247,000 low-income students. Budget 2016 would put an additional \$165 million into the youth employment strategy, which includes doubling the Canada summer jobs program. That program would do much to help students find meaningful employment, but it would also benefit many non-profit organizations and small businesses by giving them more staff support over the summer.

In addition, we would provide support for co-op programs for students, particularly those in the STEM professions. Even with these job programs, some students still have trouble finding well-paying full-time jobs after graduation. That is why budget 2016 makes a commitment to students that they would not have to repay their student loans until they are making at least \$25,000 a year.

The Budget

● (1655)

[Translation]

In investing in Canadians, we must recognize that not all Canadians have the same advantages. Women in Canada still earn 73¢ for every dollar earned by a man. Women have greater caregiving responsibilities, and are under-represented in the upper echelons of business and politics. They are also more likely to face violence.

[English]

That is why this budget would invest almost \$90 million to build 3,000 new shelter spaces for victims of violence. The budget also includes \$23 million for the Status of Women, which would allow it to expand its programs.

I wish to make a special note that the budget includes funding to restore the court challenges program. This vital program allowed Canadians, who would otherwise not have been able to afford legal fees, to bring cases forward based on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This program, until it was cancelled by the previous government, was vital to many of the advances that have been made for women and other groups based on the charter.

[Translation]

I was personally very proud to receive messages from my former UN colleagues about the strength of Canada's delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women last month.

The Prime Minister has shown a true commitment to gender equality in Canada and around the world. As a result, Canada earned a place on the Commission. I could not be more pleased.

[English]

I am also pleased that the budget would commit an additional \$256 million over two years to increasing international assistance. I have seen first-hand the need to invest in development of democratic institutions, pluralism, civil society, and peacekeeping around the world, especially in failed and fragile states.

I also look forward to Canada once again leading the world when it comes to peacekeeping and implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, which says that women must be involved in all levels of peace negotiation and peacekeeping operations. Canada is uniquely positioned in the world to make a real difference, to lead responsibly, and to bring true conviction to our foreign policy.

One in three residents in my constituency were not born in Canada. The proudest moments I have had since becoming a member of Parliament have been when I have seen the generosity of spirit of the many Canadians who have come forward to help the Syrian refugees.

This is why I am very supportive of measures in the budget that would allow 10,000 more privately sponsored refugees from Syria and increase the number of permanent residents by 7%, allowing for 300,000 new permanent residents. I also fully support measures to facilitate family reunification, including 20,000 parents and grandparents. To ensure that families do not have to be separated for long periods of time, we would spend \$25 million more to reduce

processing times and handle the backlog of people waiting for their cases to be resolved.

I look forward to many happy reunions in the near future. There are many more measures in budget 2016 that would benefit Canadians. This is a budget that is truly inclusive of all Canadians.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I have one main concern, and that is we continue to use the word "average". Statistics Canada has changed what the average family makes. What is the member's definition of average? Could she please give me an actual number?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, in the case I was referring to was just the average of the families. My colleague might be referring to who we consider middle-class Canadians. The middle-class tax cut applies to the tax bracket between \$45,000 and \$90,000. In terms of just simple math, those are the people we would be referring to.

Most of us, me included, rely on a paycheque. We worry about whether we can pay off our mortgage if we lose our job. We do not live off our investments. Most people probably understand us to be average Canadians. However, I prefer to think of nobody as average.

● (1700)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member's mother on her arrival here 50 years ago.

The member talked a lot about the importance of immigration and the immigrant community in her riding. There is an injection of \$25 million in this budget to process family class applications. In the last five years, from 2010 to 2015, the Conservative government cut \$350 million out of processing on the immigration file. During the campaign, the Liberals promised a one time injection of \$25 million, plus an ongoing \$50 million each year after that. That is nowhere to be found in the budget.

Would the member stand with me and call on her government to keep that promise to inject the additional \$50 million each year so we can get the backlog and the processing done?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, since being elected, this is probably the number one issue I am getting calls about in my constituency office. There are heartbreaking stories of mothers leaving their children behind to come to Canada. They have to make terrible choices. That is a legacy of the cuts that were made over the last 10 years.

This is why our government has committed to restoring the funding to ensure we deal with those backlogs and decrease the processing times, particularly for family class immigrants. Keeping families apart, especially mothers and fathers with children, is even more difficult if they have been apart for a number of years. Why on earth would we want to do that?

The Budget

This issue is a priority for the people in my riding. It is a priority for the Minister of Immigration, who has been doing a wonderful job so far in trying to fix what has happened over the last 10 years in that department.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech, which was eloquent as usual. She gave a very complete overview of all the benefits of this budget.

I would like to hear more from the member about investments in the national capital region. We are both active members of the national capital of Canada caucus. I am certain that, like me, she noted the infrastructure investments in federal assets that will total some \$700 million or more in the region, or the public transit investments in her city of Ottawa.

Could she tell us more about this?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague.

It is true that there are a lot of investments in the national capital. They are not just in public transit, but those investments are very important, especially for Ottawa's LRT. There are also funds for SMEs. That is very important for our local economy and our public services. It is very important for our community.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since I was elected to the House six months ago, I have met with hundreds of people from the riding of Laurentides—Labelle, either one-on-one or in small groups. That is the riding where I was born, where I grew up, and where I now live with my family.

It is an exceptional riding. It is four times bigger than Prince Edward Island and 40 times bigger than the Island of Montreal. It has almost as many mayors and municipal councillors as there are members in the House of Commons. I have met with almost all of them in an effort to understand the major challenges facing the riding and the solutions needed. I have also met with representatives of dozens of chambers of commerce, charities, and community organizations for the same reason. Budgets cannot address every issue, such as the management of lakes, but this budget is a major step forward in improving the situation in our region.

The southern part of my riding, namely the Pays-d'en-Haut RCM, which includes the communities of Sainte-Anne-des-Lacs, Saint-Sauveur, Piedmont, Estérel, Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson, and Sainte-Adèle, is a more populous region that reflects the region's diversity. It is the northernmost suburb of Montreal, a tourist area, and cottage country, where many retirees live. It is also a growing hub of leading-edge technology.

It is an area that is both rich and poor. This RCM is the only one in Quebec that does not have a sports and recreation centre for youth. It is also one of the regions of Quebec with the highest average age. At the time of the last census, the average age of people in Saint-Sauveur was 54.7.

The budget provides for a significant increase in the guaranteed income supplement, which will improve the financial security of

900,000 seniors. It also provides for investments in recreational infrastructure and is therefore an excellent budget for the region.

A little further north, the Laurentides RCM is made up of 20 municipalities: Val-Morin; Val-David; Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts; Ivry-sur-le-Lac; Sainte-Lucie-des-Laurentides, where I grew up; Lanthier; Val-des-Lacs; Lac-Supérieur; Saint-Faustin-Lac-Carré; Arundel; Barkmere; Montcalm; Saint-Rémi d'Amherst; Bréboeuf; Huberdeau; Mont-Tremblant, an area that most MPs are familiar with; Lac-Tremblant-Nord; La Conception; Labelle; and La Minerve.

This region's economic interests are also diversified and show a certain imbalance. The economy is based primarily on tourism. The region has plenty of activities for people to enjoy: swimming, recreational boating, resort activities in the summer, cross-country or downhill skiing and snowmobiling in the winter, sugar shack activities in the spring, admiring the beautiful colours in the fall, and so on.

Many of the jobs are seasonal. Job prospects for young people can be limited. The changes to the EI system made by the previous Conservative government have hindered economic development. EI eligibility rates for seasonal workers have dropped from about 80% to about 20%.

Due to a lack of good quality high-speed Internet access and a cellular network that does not extend everywhere outside the urban centres, or that often does not even cover the central areas of our villages, it is hard to keep young people in the region and improve our migration numbers.

The budget begins to seriously tackle these issues. The changes we are making to employment insurance will help seasonal workers in my region make ends meet. Since the Laurentian region relies heavily on tourism, the people who live there are especially vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

During times of relative prosperity, the region flourishes. Conversely, the slightest economic downturn has serious effects. The effects of the country's economic situation are amplified in the region, and we need some tools to get through these difficult periods.

In the north, there are 17 municipalities in the RCM of Antoine-Labelle: Rivière-Rouge; Nominingue; La Macaza; L'Ascension; Lac-Saguay; Lac-des-Écorces; Chute-Saint-Philippe; Lac-Saint-Paul; Mont-Saint-Michel; Sainte-Anne-du-Lac; Ferme-Neuve; Mont-Laurier, the largest city in the riding; Saint-Aimé-du-Lac-des-Îles; Notre-Dame-de-Pontmain; Notre-Dame-du-Laus; Lac-du-Cerf; and Kiamika. The region is also home to thousands of square kilometres of unorganized territory.

This RCM has an area of 10,000 square kilometres and is both the largest and one of the poorest RCMs in Quebec. It is largely made up of wilderness, ZECs, or controlled harvesting zones, nature reserves, and parks. According to various estimates, 80% of the economy relies on the forestry industry.

The forestry crisis dealt a huge blow to this region, which was hit hard. The region is in need of investment, but it has a lot of challenges to overcome.

The Budget

In 1987, Brian Mulroney's Conservative government, with its glaring lack of vision on transportation, amended the National Transportation Act to make it easier to abandon rail lines. In the following two years, thousands of kilometres of rail lines were dismantled and abandoned.

I was told that at the time, the 200 kilometres of railways that crossed the riding of Laurentides—Labelle, which helped build and develop our region, were sold to a company that cut them and transformed our regional infrastructure into millions of disposable razor blades.

• (1705)

We were lucky, because the rail right-of-way was preserved and this allowed us to build a bicycle path known as P'tit Train du Nord, which is extremely popular. An estimated 1.4 million people use it every year, whether on bicycles, cross-country skis, or snowmobiles. I am not talking about the number of uses, but rather the number of people. It is one of the main tourist attractions for much of the area.

Still, the demise of the railway was extremely harmful to our heavy industry. The region is directly linked to the south and the west. From Mont-Laurier you can travel to western Canada through Abitibi. You can also travel south, to Ottawa or Montreal.

The region has a complex problem to overcome, and many people from my riding have spoken to me about it. The main highway that goes through the Antoine-Labelle RCM is Highway 117. It is part of the Trans-Canada Highway, which was built by the federal government but is administered by the provinces.

If you want to travel or ship goods from Montreal to western Canada, without going through southern Ontario, you must go through Antoine-Labelle. That section of Highway 117 is quite busy. It is estimated that half a million heavy trucks use it every year. It is an essential piece of infrastructure. Many accidents happen on that highway, and there is often congestion. It is a very important highway. Without a railway, it is the only option. On some sections, if just one lane is blocked, it can cause considerable delays.

Although it is called the Trans-Canada Highway, it falls under provincial jurisdiction. I am delighted that our budget will help the provinces and municipalities invest in their essential infrastructure. I also look forward to seeing the results of these investments, which are long overdue.

In the long term, I hope to one day see the return of the railway to rural regions, so that we can help their economies grow without harming the environment.

There is another problem that aggravates the social, economic, and infrastructure problems in my region: our outdated digital infrastructure. It is not just a few years behind; it is a whole generation behind, and it is exacerbating our problems and preventing us from implementing solutions. Entire towns lack cell phone service. Entire towns have practically no high-speed Internet service. Go anywhere other than downtown, and there is nothing. This is preventing us from keeping young people in the region and preventing businesses from coming to the region. Telework is not an option. This problem hinders economic development and widens the gap between urban and rural regions. This is totally unacceptable.

Nowadays, real, high-speed Internet access should not be exclusive to a privileged few who live in major centres or have more education. No, Internet access is a right for all Canadians. It is an essential service for anyone who wishes to be an active member of society. Our role as parliamentarians is to do what we have to do to make this service as readily available as electricity and running water.

Internet access is no longer an option. It is what a community must rely on to become a society. Beyond all the other reasons, this is why I am pleased that the government included in its budget a \$500-million investment in broadband Internet access. This investment will help some 300,000 more homes connect to the Internet.

Our budget addresses the needs of Canada's rural regions. It prompts us to take the first step in eliminating the gap that has been dividing urban and rural regions for generations. In addition to helping the middle class and those trying to join it, our budget will help entire communities to fully participate in today's economy and society.

I commend the Minister of Finance and the government for their extraordinary work in drafting this document. This is a plan that will make our country more inclusive, give hope to millions of Canadians, and restore my region's confidence in the future.

• (1710)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He represents a riding that is almost as beautiful as the Eastern Townships, which I have the honour of representing. I was intrigued by something that he said in his speech. When he mentioned the crisis in the forestry industry, I wondered what solution he was going to offer. Unfortunately, he made no mention of a solution. I wondered what the government was planning to do because there seems to be nothing in the budget for the forestry industry.

How does he explain this to his constituents who trusted him to represent them in the House? At the first opportunity to find solutions for this industry, the government shows up with a document that makes absolutely no mention of solutions.

• (1715)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, it is clear that the forestry crisis has never been fully addressed, and the government is working very hard on this issue.

As we all know, the proposed solutions are not final. We are not going to stop working on this issue, and I am not going to give up in my riding either. This is an important issue to us and one in which I have a keen interest because it affects our economy. We are studying all plans and potential solutions. We will continue to work on this file, and I am certain that we will find a solution.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, could the hon. member comment on the middle-class tax cut? Some would say it is probably the biggest fraud of this budget. However, I certainly would not use such harsh language.

There are 1.6 million families that make \$48,000 to \$62,000 a year. On average, those families will see a middle-class tax cut of about \$51. It goes up incrementally. Those making \$62,000 to \$78,000 will see about \$117, from \$124,000 to \$166,000 about \$521, and from \$166,000 to \$211,000 about \$813.

Granted the top 1% of \$211,000 will see an increase of \$2,912. However, as we have found out from the parliamentary budget officer, there is a \$1.3 billion deficit this year and an \$8.9 billion deficit over six years.

How does he and the members of the Liberal caucus feel about giving themselves a bigger tax decrease than those 1.6 million families who are making \$48,000 to \$62,000 a year?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives would like to talk about budget fraud, we can look at about 100 and something years of Conservative history. I am wondering if the Conservatives know the last time that a Conservative government went from a budget deficit to a budget surplus. It was when John A. Macdonald managed to go from a deficit to a surplus in his time in office and he was a Liberal-Conservative.

When the Conservatives talk about budget fraud, I am really not sure who they are talking about. Are they talking about their own long history of dishonesty in government?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was inspired by the Conservative member when he wanted to talk about feelings. I wonder if my colleague can talk about his feelings with respect to the Conservative members voting against a bill that gave the middle class of Canada a tax cut. We are talking about teachers, firefighters, industrial workers, and individuals from every region of our country. That tax cut was given to support Canada's middle class.

Does he think that there might be a few sore feelings across the way because the Conservative members were forced to vote against a very progressive bill that ultimately gave a tax cut to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. There is not much time left. The member has about 10 seconds to answer.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I am not really sure when the Conservatives gained an interest in the middle class. This is entirely new to all of us.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Essex.

I am honoured to share with the House my riding's concerns and hopes in response to the federal budget. The people of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Anmore, and Belcarra are excited to be free from over a decade of Conservative rule. For too long our country has turned its

back on science, seniors, youth, the environment and climate change, and working families.

On October 19, Canadians voted for change and it is my job to ensure they get it, to cut through the spin, the selfies, and to get to the truth. We need to ensure that the hope created by the Conservatives' defeat does not sour into cynicism caused by broken promises and missed opportunities.

On budget day, the hope of Canadians was on display. Canadians wanted to see the Liberals' campaign promises become reality. However, I am sorry to report that the Liberal budget spends much, but accomplishes little.

Where it counts, this budget comes up short for Canadians today who are increasingly unable to afford the cost of housing, child care, and prescription medications. It does nothing to confront the threats Canadians face tomorrow, such as funding for home care for our aging population, restoring the \$36 billion cut to health care, and investing in an economy that is environmentally sound and socially responsible.

For a budget targeted at the middle class, the main beneficiaries of it are anyone but. This Liberal budget adds to the abundance of those who already have and it forgets to provide for those who have not. It allows wealthy CEOs to continue to avoid paying their fair share of taxes on stock option income, a broken Liberal promise that will cost taxpayers \$1.6 billion over the next two years.

At a time when Canadians across the country need jobs, the Liberals broke their promise to reduce the tax rate for small businesses. Small and medium-sized businesses are the largest job creators in the country and the small tax cut would help the local economy recover and allow communities to thrive. This cash grab from small businesses comes from the Liberals' much-lauded revenue-neutral middle-class tax cut, a tax cut that redistributes wealth from the super rich to the almost as rich, adding \$1.5 billion to our ballooning budget deficit.

Canadians cannot afford Liberal mistakes and bad math. They need real investments that will create jobs and expand the public service. Unfortunately, Canadians have already waited 10 long years for change, but they will have to keep waiting.

While we wait for real small business investments and job creation measures, Canadians need access to the employment insurance they deserve. Budget 2016 expands employment insurance benefits for some, but ignores those hardest hit by the collapse in commodity prices. Out-of-work Canadians cannot understand the government's inaction as they struggle to pay the bills.

I urge the government to rethink its decision and ensure that benefits get to those who need them most. In my home province of British Columbia, people are waiting for the Liberals to make good on their promise to defend their coastline and protect their mariners.

The Budget

During the election campaign, the Liberals repeatedly promised to reopen the Kitsilano Coast Guard station to its former full complement and to keep marine communication traffic service centres in British Columbia open. Even Liberal MPs believed that promise. On December 8, the member for Vancouver Centre spoke in the House and said:

Our Liberal government made a commitment during the election to reopen Kitsilano Coast Guard base and the marine communications on B.C.'s coast. I was pleased to see that commitment in the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard's mandate letter from the Prime Minister. The voices of the people of Vancouver were heard.

I am not sure they were heard by the Prime Minister because since the election the centre in Tofino has been closed, the Comox station will be closed on May 10, and the Kitsilano station remains unopened.

● (1720)

This is happening while a parliamentary committee is completing a review on the closure decision of the Comox MCTS. However, there is still time to stop the closure in Comox. I urge the Liberals to keep their promise to B.C. and keep that station open.

Affordable housing is of particular concern to those living in metro Vancouver as housing prices continue to rise at a rate far outpacing any rise in household income. Family budgets are being pushed to the limit and young people are facing the possibility of never being able to afford to buy a home in our region. Businesses are increasingly finding it hard to hire new workers because many people simply cannot afford to live in the metro Vancouver area.

Canadians were promised \$520 million over four years in tax incentives for construction of new affordable rental housing, \$5 million per year for improvements to the RRSP home buyer's plan, and renewed co-op housing agreements that support rent geared to income units. I am sorry to report that none of these investments are in budget 2016.

I recently met with Edith McHattie of Salal Housing Co-op because she wants me to know how worried she is about funding to keep her co-op going. Liberal inaction will do nothing to help young families like hers, some who are moving farther and farther from their work, increasing air pollution, and decreasing their quality of life.

To deal with this problem, create jobs, and combat climate change, the government should be investing in public transit. Unfortunately, here too the Liberals are falling behind. In budget 2016, Canadians are shortchanged \$802 million for public transit, \$1.5 billion for green infrastructure, and \$1 billion for social infrastructure over two years. That is a two-year total shortfall of more than \$3 billion on infrastructure compared to Liberal campaign commitments.

This budget has a missed opportunity to invest in our future, but it is not too late to take action.

The government could act now to provide for our aging population by following through on its promise to fund home care for seniors. It could fast track infrastructure spending to ensure that Port Moody gets a new upgraded sports field and Coquitlam gets funding for the YMCA community centre.

I met with the mayors and councils of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Anmore, and Belcarra about their infrastructure needs and priorities. They told me infrastructure dollars are desperately needed in Anmore for a new village hall and Belcarra is concerned Canada's oil spill response capacity is inadequate to protect its beautiful shoreline and keep it clean. I also met with the Kwikwetlem First Nation and I know it is hopeful for funds to build a new community centre.

The government could act now to reverse the Conservatives' \$36 billion cut to health care and protect our country's most cherished public program. It could invest in clean technology to combat climate change, rather than rubber-stamping LNG projects on salmon spawning grounds.

It could live up to its promises to first nations children, with investments in first nation education, mental health supports, child welfare, health care, and Jordan's Principle.

After pledging that his government would be different from promise-breaking Liberal governments of the past, the government has delivered a budget that breaks promise after promise, especially to Canadians who can least afford it. We need a Canada where no one is left out and no one is left behind.

Canada's New Democrats will work to ensure action is taken not only to address the problems of today but provide for the opportunities of tomorrow.

● (1725)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit I am a little confused after hearing the hon. member's comments. He speaks about his riding's priorities. I do not disagree with him. Investing in communities, affordable housing, first nations communities, helping students go to school by making tuition more affordable are all contained in budget 2016.

I share my hon. friend's sense of priority of these important issues, so how can he be so against a budget that, in fact, contains these important priorities that I know would help the people of Port Moody—Coquitlam and across our wonderful country of Canada?

I would like him to elaborate on why he sees the budget not going far enough in that regard because, frankly, it does. I think the member knows it does. It would be great for his riding as well as mine and hopefully all of our ridings.

The Budget

•(1730)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, this budget is a missed opportunity. Unfortunately, it does not deliver on the priorities of the people in my riding, and I think many Canadians feel the same. They feel they were not included in this budget.

I mentioned to the member that I met with the mayors and councils of both cities and both villages, and they have serious concerns over their infrastructure needs. I met with a young woman who has a very real concern about whether her co-op will get the funding it needs to continue with their mortgage. They have worked so hard. We have many co-ops in the riding, and we have many infrastructure needs. I also mentioned the first nation. There is not only the community hall; there is also an unfinished boat launch that funding is needed for.

There is a real opportunity to provide for the needs of the people in my community and for the needs of many Canadians. Unfortunately, they see this as a missed opportunity and have been telling me so.

I mentioned that there were promises made during the election about keeping the MCTS Comox station open. Two weeks ago, notices that the station will close May 10 were delivered to workers. If that closure goes through, it will be another broken Liberal promise.

There is still time. There is still hope. I hope that the Liberal government will do the right thing and keep that centre open. I hope the Liberals will do the right thing by providing for the needs of many Canadians, not just in my riding but in all communities across this great country.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found this whole budget debate very ironic when I reflect on both the budget debate and the campaign commitments that different parties made.

When we look at the Liberals, we see that their commitment was a very small deficit. They blew that out of the water. We were going to have a plan for a balanced budget. They blew that out of the water. They were going to help the middle class, but they cannot define it, and they use significantly misleading graphs to define what the middle class might be and what has happened.

However, I have to say that to me the NDP is the biggest puzzle. The NDP stood up during that campaign and said that it was going to have a balanced budget. We are now hearing that the NDP has the Leap Manifesto and would shut down the oil sands, but the NDP has a whole lot of ideas about how to spend money.

Has the hon. member committed to his party platform? How would the NDP pay for all these things that he has talked about that the community he represents would like to have?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked about priorities and spending.

Certainly New Democrats promised a fully costed platform during the election. I was very proud of what we put forward to Canadians. There was a focus on health care, child care, and home care for seniors. There were supports for jobs for working-class families and for small business investments. There were so many priorities that

were fully funded and costed in our platform that I was very proud to stand up for it.

When I went door to door, I had a very good response in all the communities and villages in my riding. That is why on October 19 they made a resounding choice to put me back here to defend those issues and those concerns. I will continue to do that every day that I can in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, we will go to the member for Essex.

Before she starts, I will remind her that we will have to stop for private members' business in about four minutes, but she can resume once we get back into debate on this topic.

The hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a great man once said governing is about priorities, and there is no better indicator of a government's true priorities than its budget choices. This happened to be the hon. member for Outremont, who graciously rose in this place yesterday and outlined, in no uncertain terms, how the Liberal government's inaugural budget is a missed opportunity to deliver the positive, progressive change that Canadians voted for and deserve.

I will begin my remarks by talking about an issue close to my heart: promoting greater equality of women.

One of the first analyses of this budget that I read was a piece by Kate McInturff, entitled "Budget 2016: Not enough Real Change™ for Women". She outlines how the government estimates will create tens of thousands of jobs in construction, a sector where 88.5% of the employees are men. Like Kate, I am all in favour of creating jobs for men, but I am also in favour of creating jobs for women. One of the issues I have with the Liberals' budget is that it makes limited investment in sectors where women are predominantly employed, such as health care.

Stephen Lewis delivered a phenomenal speech this past weekend at the NDP convention. In his first critique of where the NDP differs from the Liberals, he stated:

...we have a message for the prime minister: feminism is a vacant construct without a childcare program across Canada.

It is extremely disappointing that parents of young children, who are struggling with the sky-high costs of child care, are being made to wait once again. There is no funding for child care this year and only \$500 million in the following year, with no long-term plan.

The Liberal budget talks about health care but fails to provide a redesigned funding formula for a new health accord. The Liberals have abandoned their promise to invest \$3 billion over four years for home care, which is deeply needed in Canada's aging population.

Private Members' Business

There is also nothing in the budget for mental health, palliative care, or long-term care for seniors.

Again, to quote Stephen Lewis:

The Liberal pledge for homecare appears to have been abandoned, and universal pharmacare is nowhere to be seen. Those are programs that we must pursue as though life depended on it because, in fact, life does depend on it.

Something I campaigned on and I heard about so often on the doorsteps is concern over the Conservative government's wrong-headed move to hike the retirement age from 65 to 67. I welcome the Liberals' recommitment to returning the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 65.

However, the Liberal government needs to do more for seniors than simply correcting the terrible policies of the Conservatives. More than one-quarter of all seniors live in poverty, and many Canadians wonder whether they can count on a secure income for retirement.

During the campaign, while knocking on doors, I met a wonderful man named James Harrison. Jim came to my open house last week and asked me what the budget had for him. It was so difficult to tell him that there was very little help.

This man lives in social housing, has retired after working his entire life, and is struggling to make ends meet. This is a man who cares about our community in Essex. He is engaged in his government and knows we can do better.

I call upon the Liberal government to stop leaving seniors in our communities behind. Bold action today can lift all seniors out of poverty. Instead of waiting until July to increase the GIS for single seniors, raise it now; restore Canada Post home mail delivery now; fund home care now. It is time to get the job done, and the time is now.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING ACT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC) moved that Bill C-226, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences in relation to conveyances) and the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague, the public safety critic and the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, for letting me give this speech today.

I would also like to thank my colleagues who are here today, the member for Lévis—Lotbinière, whom I have been working with for 10 years, and my colleagues from all parts of the country, who have shared some moving accounts with me in recent weeks.

I would also like to thank my friend, the member for Durham, who is also a public safety critic. Furthermore, I am very pleased that

someone for whom I have a great deal of respect will address the House shortly, and that is our justice critic.

[*English*]

I am here because of the determination of the victim's family who fought for years for tougher impaired driving legislation and because of my friend from beautiful Langley, a member who shared his story with me along with his dream of making this place a place where we can make change, and make a change for victims in our capacity to avoid further victims of drunk driving.

"No one should have to endure the terrible loss that victims' families face when a loved one is killed by an impaired driver", is what my colleague said on February 23 when I tabled the bill. There are thousands of stories, but he spoke about the story of Cassandra.

Cassandra was 22 years old when her life was taken by a drunk driver, but her mother, Markita Kaulius, founded an organization that would move to change this loss into a tribute and into action. This is what we are giving all members of this House the opportunity to do, because over 1,200 Canadians are killed every year because someone irresponsibly chose to drive while impaired, instead of finding a safe way home.

A car in the hands of an impaired driver is a carelessly used weapon that can cause irreparable harm. It is reckless and 100% preventable.

More than 100,000 Canadians have signed "Families for Justice", Markita Kaulius' petition, which calls for tougher laws, including mandatory minimum sentences for impaired driving causing death. Canadians believe that our impaired driving laws are too lenient.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

That is why I am rising today. Every day, three or four people are killed on our roads by impaired drivers. It is the leading cause of death under the Criminal Code. Impaired driving continues to wreak havoc despite all of the commendable efforts that have been made to raise awareness of this problem.

I am thinking about the remarkable work done by Operation Red Nose, which was created by Jean-Marie De Koninck and eventually led to the creation of the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière. Today, I am pleased to announce that the measures set out in the bill are based on the recommendations of the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière and seek to reduce the incidence of accidents.

I met with experts who believe that the only way to eliminate this problem is to increase drivers' perceived risk of being charged with impaired driving. I am talking about the fear of being caught. That is how we, as legislators, can make the measures that are in place more effective.

Private Members' Business

Studies have shown that roadblocks do not work in over 50% of cases because drivers manage to hide any signs of intoxication. MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, has data to show that a person would have to drive impaired once a week for three years before being charged with an impaired driving offence. As legislators, we have the unique opportunity to put an end to the harm drunk driving causes.

[English]

The bill has three components: one, tougher sentences for repeat drunk drivers; two, relieving pressure on the courts by eliminating legal delays and loopholes; and three, systematic testing to increase the efficiency of roadblocks and catch repeat offenders with alcohol addiction who conceal their drunkenness. Why? Because we can save lives.

Where it has been implemented in other countries, hundreds of lives have been saved. It is a conservative estimate that we could save 200 lives at least within the first year of implementation of the bill, and that would increase.

• (1745)

[Translation]

As I just mentioned, this bill has three components: tougher sentences for repeat drunk drivers, relief of pressure on the courts, and systematic testing.

This afternoon, I would like to focus on two measures with respect to the tougher sentences. The bill proposes a minimum sentence of five years in cases of impaired driving causing death, depending on the severity and the aggravating factors. Although this is similar to the existing sentence, it sets a threshold. In our society, it is important to establish that impaired driving is a crime that needs to be punished. Someone who takes the life of more than one person could receive consecutive sentences.

The other objective of tougher sentences is to give judges more latitude to increase the amount of time an offender may serve. Hardened repeat offenders will face a one-year prison sentence for a second offence and a two-year sentence for subsequent offences, if they are found guilty. The minimum sentence will therefore be five years if someone causes the death of another person, and the sentences will be consecutive if more than one person is involved.

The bill's second measure has to do with freeing up the courts by eliminating loopholes and legal delays. Indeed, some wily people use legal proceedings to avoid facing the consequences of their actions, and above all, to clog up the courts, which is very costly and results in delays. We know how important it is to make the process easier so that our courts can be more efficient and deliver justice as quickly as possible.

The bill will eliminate two measures. The first is known as the last drink defence. In this case, the driver claims that he had a high blood alcohol level when the test was administered because he consumed a large quantity of alcohol right before getting behind the wheel, and basically, at the time of the accident, he was not impaired. Of course, this can cause legal delays.

The other defence is this: the driver claims he was so upset about the accident that he had a drink. It is known as the intervening drink

defence. If that is the case, then that is the case. However, if it is a trick to avoid facing the consequences, the law must be set out in such a way that people cannot abuse the good faith of our courts.

Those are the two measures set out in the bill.

We also want to encourage guilty pleas so as to avoid clogging up the courts. Sentences are reduced when the person admits wrongdoing and pleads guilty. That way, the case is settled and we avoid clogging the courts.

These two measures were proposed by our government in the last few months. I want to commend the work of our colleague and former minister of justice, Peter MacKay. This cause was very important to him. A lot of work went into these measures that I am including in the bill.

The bill also includes a very important measure for victims that has proven effective. For that I want to thank Marie-Claude Morin, spokesperson for the Quebec chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who helped draft the bill, and Angeliki Souranis, president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who lost a son in an accident involving alcohol.

This is a preventive measure that would make it clear to serious repeat offenders that they can get arrested through routine screening.

I mentioned that roadside spot checks were ineffective. In fact, more than 50% of drivers whose blood-alcohol level was higher than 80 milligrams per decilitre went through the spot checks without being stopped. In other words, they crossed the line without getting caught.

It is a problem because it makes our roadblocks less effective and results in fewer arrests for impaired driving.

When drivers get behind the wheel of a car, they need to know that our roadblocks work. How can we make sure of that? By implementing systematic testing.

Systematic testing is simply detecting alcohol and then using an approved device to perform a second test. It is simply detecting the presence of alcohol because our police officers currently need reasonable grounds to believe that a person has been drinking.

People use vehicles on public roadways. Responsibility goes hand in hand with that privilege. I would never allow someone to come into my living room, my kitchen, or my patio to measure my blood alcohol. However, if I am driving a vehicle and putting people's lives in danger, obviously I have to deal with justice and the authorities, just like for a vehicle inspection. At any time while I am driving my car, authorities can stop my car to make sure it is working properly. It is perfectly reasonable for authorities to check any of the three conditions with which I must comply when I get behind the wheel of a car: being sober, abiding by the rules of the road, and having a valid driver's licence.

Private Members' Business

More than two-thirds of Canadians agree that the police should be authorized to perform random breathalyzer tests on drivers to combat drunk driving. Why? Because it saves lives. Every country that has systematic breathalyzer tests has seen a significant drop in the number of deaths caused by drunk drivers.

• (1750)

[English]

Millions of Canadians continue to drink and drive because they can do so with little fear of being stopped let alone charged and convicted. Recent survey results indicate that one could drive drunk once a week for more than three years before even being charged with an impaired driving offence and for over six years before ever being convicted. We have an opportunity to end that by increasing the efficiency of our roadblocks and ensuring that those who are drunk on the road are taken off the road.

I am overwhelmed by the support the bill is receiving. I already have thanked Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Families For Justice. All members of my party and most of their predecessors on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights have recommended the adoption of the third measure, random breath testing. This was done in 2009. We have been given the opportunity to move forward. Why? Because the bill would save lives.

The Canadian Police Association was supportive back in 2009, and is still supportive of the bill. I also have quotes from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Some members may have met Mr. Clive Weyhill. This organization strongly supports this measure because it is one of the most effective methods of deterring impaired driving in other democratic societies.

On a more legal aspect, Mr. Hogg is a well-respected lawyer. I am an engineer. I did not know him. My colleague from Niagara, who is a lawyer, agrees.

[Translation]

He is one of the most respected authorities on constitutional law. I can table the document if need be. It indicates that the Supreme Court of Canada will uphold the validity of random breath testing.

Basically, this bill is built on a solid legal and scientific foundation. I will be pleased to see, in the coming hours, how this bill can move forward to save human lives and allow us, as parliamentarians, to do our jobs.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for a very cogent presentation with respect to the scourge of drunk driving. Everyone in the House shares our collective concern that we want to take measures that will ultimately reduce the incidence of this practice.

I want to congratulate the member for introducing his private member's bill for debate in the House. It is an important issue and it has been a particularly important issue in my area, given a recent very public case with the loss of three unfortunate children and their grandfather in the greater Toronto area. That was an extremely public instance of a tragic loss of some very young lives due to drunk driving.

In reading the bill, there are many aspects that I can certainly support. However, one area I have some difficulty with, and where I would like to pose a question for the hon. member, relates to the use of mandatory minimum sentences.

I know there has been a penchant, particularly from the Conservative caucus, in various justice legislation to impose mandatory minimum sentences. Is there a particular rationale or reason why the member feels the five-year sentencing threshold would be appropriate in the case of drunk driving causing death?

• (1755)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are always touched when the members from our own ridings are impacted by these tragedies involving driving and alcohol.

My answer would be something I just found a few minutes ago. Drunk drivers themselves are asking for stiffer sentences. An individual got three and a half years behind bars after killing a 21-year-old woman when he was driving drunk. That was two decades ago. Today this individual came back and said that this was not enough. He said that it was a crime for which he should have paid a bigger sentence. When we are at the point where drunk drivers are asking for stiffer sentences, I believe it is time for parliamentarians to take our responsibility and set the standard.

Five years is what we already see in many courts, but it establishes a base and sends a signal that this crime is not acceptable in our society. That is why mandatory minimum sentences are there. They are not for all crimes, but they are there to send strong signal. We know that drunk driving is the number one cause of deaths related to the Criminal Code.

Hopefully the committee will be given the opportunity to debate the bill. Certainly it is open for discussion and debate, but that is the argument I would bring to the members of the committee.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my question by thanking the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for introducing reform of our legislation dealing with driving while impaired. It is long overdue. It has been since 2008. Driving while impaired is responsible for more than 1,000 deaths a year, and it is a leading cause of criminal death in Canada. I thank him for his efforts in this important area.

In light of the Liberals' commitment to reform other laws where impairment could occur, such as marijuana or other drugs, my question is whether the issue of drug impairment would be affected positively, negatively, or at all by the legislation before us tonight.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for having reviewed the bill. Hopefully, we can review it further in committee. I believe this Parliament would win if this legislation is moved forward and adopted. All the members would win.

Private Members' Business

The issue of drugs is very important one. This private member's bill is focused on alcohol, but it has a side effect. I believe some additional legislation might be needed, especially if there is a wider use of drugs. We know this is a very important issue. I would certainly welcome a bill, or an amendment if the scope of the bill allows it in that regard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis and thanking him for his work on this issue. It is an extremely important issue and we obviously support the intent of this bill.

[*English*]

I am pleased to join the second reading debate on private member's Bill C-226.

Bill C-226 proposes significant reforms to the Criminal Code provisions related to impaired driving.

Sadly, impaired driving remains the leading criminal cause of death in Canada. It has been a plague on society for nearly a century. The recent case in Toronto, in which Mr. Muzzo was sentenced to 10 years after killing three children and their grandfather, once again focused attention on impaired driving and the devastation it causes.

I believe that we can all agree that Parliament must do what we can in order to combat this crime, which continues to kill more than 1,000 Canadians every year and to injure many thousands more, often inflicting catastrophic injuries.

To end impaired driving, we need a concerted effort on the part of individuals, families, provinces and territories, the hospitality industry, advocacy organizations, schools, health professionals, and addiction service providers. I submit that Parliament needs to be a part of this effort. Therefore, I thank the hon. member for bringing this issue to the attention of the House through Bill C-226.

This is a very complex bill. The proposals represent a significant change to the laws on impaired driving and driving offences in general.

Under Bill C-226, the Criminal Code driving provisions, including impaired driving and over-80 driving offences, would be repealed and reintroduced in a brand new part of the Criminal Code.

This would not be the first time that Parliament has considered the problem of impaired driving. In fact, Parliament has a long history of trying to deal with the problem of drinking and driving.

In 1921, Parliament first addressed the issue by enacting the crime of driving while intoxicated. In 1925, Parliament enacted the offence of driving while impaired by a drug. In 1951, Parliament replaced the offence of driving while intoxicated with driving while impaired. Later, in 1969, Parliament enacted a new offence that reflected developments in the area of forensic breath testing. This is the offence of driving with a blood alcohol concentration that exceeds 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood.

This offence is commonly called "driving over 80". It is a criminal offence separate and distinct from the crime of driving

while impaired. It applies whether or not the driver exhibits bad driving or signs of impairment.

The actual measurement of blood alcohol content is carried out on an approved instrument, often referred to as a breathalyzer, typically at the police station. The breath testing is done by a police officer who is specially trained as a qualified technician to operate the approved instrument.

The Attorney General of Canada lists new approved instruments in a ministerial order after considering the advice of the Alcohol Test Committee of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science. The Canadian Society of Forensic Science is a non-governmental scientific body, and its committee is composed of very dedicated forensic scientists who, voluntarily and without remuneration, evaluate breath-testing equipment against the committee's published standards. The Alcohol Test Committee then provides its advice to the Attorney General of Canada for her consideration.

In 1979, Parliament authorized the use of the approved screening device at the roadside. The roadside screening device permits police officers to screen drivers for alcohol consumption. If a driver registers a fail on the roadside screening device, the police officer would have reasonable grounds to believe an over-80 crime has been committed. This belief is required in order to make the demand for a test on the approved instrument back at the police station.

● (1800)

It is only the result on the approved instrument that can be used in court to prove the over-80 offence. Despite Parliament's efforts to bring clarity to this area of the law, the impaired driving regime remains the most heavily litigated area of criminal law.

One of the areas that receives significant court attention relates to the issue of proving blood alcohol content. Parliament enacted a rebuttable presumption that the blood alcohol concentration at the time of testing is presumed to be the same at the time of driving in the absence of any evidence to the contrary. The courts came to accept a defence strategy whereby the accused and one or two friends would testify to minimal consumption of alcohol. The defence would then ask an expert to calculate what the blood alcohol concentration would have been at the time of driving based on the testimony of the accused. This calculation, unsurprisingly, would be under 80, and therefore, it rebutted the presumption, leaving the prosecution no other way to prove the over-80 offence. This stratagem became known as the two-beer defence.

This defence was severely limited in 2008 by the Tackling Violent Crime Act. In 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada, in the case of the *R. v. St-Onge Lamoureux*, upheld the key elements of that legislation. Now, in order to raise the defence, the accused must first show that the approved instrument was not working correctly or that it was not operated properly. Evidence of the amount a person drank is not by itself evidence that the approved instrument was malfunctioning.

Private Members' Business

This has had the effect of greatly reducing trial time by reducing the number of cases where the defence challenges the accuracy of the approved instrument's analysis of blood alcohol concentration. It is important to note that modern approved instruments are very sophisticated with internal checks that ensure they are working properly.

Despite these changes in 2008, I am given to understand that there remain significant challenges with proving blood alcohol concentration in the courts. I wish, therefore, to focus my remarks on the measures proposed by Bill C-226 with respect to proving blood alcohol concentration, which I believe respond to the St-Onge decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Bill C-226 proposes to replace the current rebuttable presumption with respect to blood alcohol concentration with a provision that states that blood alcohol concentration is conclusively proven if three conditions are met: the approved instrument was in proper working order; there were two tests 15 minutes apart; and the two tests had results within 20 milligrams of one another.

Of course, this raises the question: How is it proven that the approved instrument was in proper working order? Bill C-226 proposes that the instrument is considered to be in proper working order if the qualified technician complied with the operational procedures recommended from time to time by the Alcohol Test Committee.

I note as well that the bill seeks to eliminate the defence of bolus drinking, sometimes called the drinking and dashing defence, where the driver consumes a large amount of alcohol just before driving and claims that although his or her blood alcohol concentration was over 80 at the time of testing, the alcohol was still being absorbed at the time of driving and he or she was under 80 when driving.

The bill also proposes to limit the intervening drink defence, where the driver drinks after being stopped by the police but before the driver provides a breath sample. In that situation, the driver claims he or she was under 80 at the time of driving and it is the post-driving drinking that put the driver over the limit. Bill C-226 would limit this defence to situations where the driver has no objective reason to think that the police would make a demand for a breath sample.

There is much more in this bill than I am able to convey in my allotted time. It is a significant piece of legislation proposing substantial reforms to the area of impaired driving and transportation offences in general. I look forward to listening to the continued debate on the bill and for a discussion of many of the other elements which are proposed.

• (1805)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address such a complex and pressing initiative, as my friend the parliamentary secretary has also indicated.

Let me say at the outset that we firmly believe there needs to be future consideration of the bill, and I look forward to working with members of all parties to advance the debate on the need for a comprehensive, effective response to impaired driving that all of our communities so desperately need.

[*Translation*]

I stand with my colleague, the member for Jonquière. She and the Lac-Saint-Jean community have also seen preventable tragedies.

She told me the story of Johanny Simard, who was killed by a repeat drunk driver one month before her 16th birthday. She also told me the story of Mathieu Perron and Vanessa Viger. This young married couple in their twenties were expecting their second child when they were killed instantly by a repeat drunk driver who was behind the wheel of a speeding truck. Their son Patrick, who was in the back seat, was only two years old. He died in hospital shortly thereafter.

I would like to thank my colleague from Jonquière for her help on this file. I would also like to thank her for seeking justice, finding solutions for the future, and helping me to understand what her community has gone through.

• (1810)

[*English*]

However, they are not alone. Far too many Canadians have friends or family members who have been injured or even killed by impaired drivers. Just last month, in a case to which the parliamentary secretary also made reference, there was a case involving a gentleman north of Toronto. Justice Michelle Fuerst wrote in her decision something I wish to quote:

The sad reality is that the sentence I impose today will not make whole the families who lost three children and their grandfather, nor will it return a grandmother and great-grandmother to good health. While the criminal justice system can deter and denounce, it is ill-suited to make reparation for harm of the magnitude involved in this case.

Neither judges nor lawmakers can make these families whole again. However, as parliamentarians we can and must work against the next tragedy. Somewhere in our communities is the next victim of impaired driving.

We owe it to them and to their families to rededicate ourselves to the task of finding the most effective measures to finally put an end to impaired driving on our roads. They are counting on us not to give in to the temptation to simply talk tough in the wake of these tragedies. They are counting on us to stop the next crash, the next injury, the next death. That means having the debate our country needs, founded on the evidence, guided by the lessons of other jurisdictions, and focused on effective deterrence. It is time we measured our progress not in years served but in lives saved.

Let us consider some facts.

Successive federal governments have increased the penalties for impaired driving offences: in 1985, 1999, 2000 and 2008.

Private Members' Business

For 16 years, the law has set life imprisonment as the maximum punishment for impaired driving causing death, and 10 years imprisonment for causing bodily harm. The average prison term for such crimes has lengthened, and the percentage of offenders receiving custodial sentences has risen.

What effect has this had on the rate of impaired driving? If we look at the latest numbers from Statistics Canada, we see that Canada made incredible strides between 1985 and 2000, cutting the rate of impaired driving incidents in half. However, after 2000 progress stalled.

Six years ago, the Standing Committee on Justice completed its study on impaired driving. It showed that in 2006, the latest year for which data is available, saw more Canadians killed by impaired driving than in any year since 1998 and the third consecutive annual increase in fatalities.

That report stated:

...impaired driving remains the number one criminal cause of death in Canada... despite our collective best efforts and intentions, it is apparent that the problem of impaired driving is worsening in Canada and we are losing ground in our efforts to eliminate the problem.

Those words remain true today.

More recent data available to us now shows that the problem continued to worsen after 2009. Why is this so?

Let me turn to a review of the evidence by Mothers Against Drunk Driving for answers. They say the media, politicians, and others often argue for increased sentences as a means of deterring both the offender and others who might otherwise engage in the conduct. However, research during the last 35 years establishes that increasing penalties for impaired driving does not, in itself, have a significant specific or general deterrence impact. Rather, the evidence indicates that the risk of apprehension and, to a lesser extent, the swiftness with which the sanction is imposed are the key factors in deterrence.

This seems counterintuitive to many, but consider this: people drive impaired, even though they know it could kill them. If they can ignore that ultimate penalty, what chance does the distant threat of a jail term stand?

The evidence marshalled by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, based on numerous studies from Canada and abroad over a span of decades, led to this stark conclusion:

...lengthy prison terms cannot be justified in the name of specific or general deterrence and may even be counterproductive in terms of recidivism.

This evidence raises specific concerns about efficacy of the sentencing reforms proposed by my colleague in the bill, not to mention the vulnerability of new mandatory minimums to charter challenge.

However, the bill has two other goals, and it is for these and the urgency of its basic objective that I support further debate and study of the bill.

First, the bill would restrict some of the more dubious legal defences that contribute to Canada's distressingly low charge and conviction rate for impaired driving. My colleagues have spoken about those.

The second is that the bill would introduce random breath testing for drivers. This is a measure that has been proposed before in this House and adopted by many OECD countries, reportedly with considerable success in reducing the incidence of impaired driving. I know from my own discussions with legal and law enforcement communities that it has its supporters but also its critics. However, in the face of continuing tragedies like what we have heard about in Lac Saint-Jean, I cannot justify denying further study in this House of that potential successful measure.

These and other provisions deserve study because we know that simply raising the penalties for the fifth time in three decades is not enough, and it will not do it. We need more than new laws that happen to be appearing in our Criminal Code. We need well-trained, well-supported police officers on our roads. We need collaboration with the provinces and territories. We need smarter investigative tools, so that families are not denied justice by a technicality. We need to study the penalties that are already in place to see what works and what does not. We need to assess the technology to detect drug-impaired driving as well.

In closing, I know that every member shares our commitment to the objective of the bill, which is to save lives by deterring and ending impaired driving. This has been the goal of many studies, bills, and laws that have been passed in this place before.

I look forward to working with all members to study the bill and measure it against the standards of comprehensiveness, practicality, efficacy, and constitutionality. We owe it to the families I spoke of when I began, and countless others across Canada, who have suffered a tragic and preventable loss, to hold ourselves to high standards, to move past half measures, and to find the most effective solutions to regain the ground we have lost over the last decade in the fight to end impaired driving.

●(1815)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-226, which was introduced by my colleague, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis. I want to thank him and congratulate him. He has a great passion for fighting impaired driving in our country. That was very evident in his comments today before the House. I am very honoured to get up and say a few words on his behalf and on behalf of the legislation.

I also want to thank him for mentioning our colleague, the Hon. Peter MacKay, who was moving forward on a number of these things. The justice agenda is always very busy and very challenging, but certainly that was one of the issues that he was dealing with as well.

I am glad my colleague now has the bill before the House. The bill would amend the Criminal Code on offences in relation to conveyances and would be known as the impaired driving act.

Private Members' Business

As we are aware, drinking and driving remains a serious social problem in this country. As has already been indicated, approximately 1,200 to 1,500 motorists, passengers, cyclists, and pedestrians are killed annually as a result of impaired driving.

In addition to that, there is a tremendous human and social cost of impaired driving. It is estimated that an additional 70,000 lives per year are affected by drinking and driving. Factors such as property damage, physical injuries, and psychological injuries such as PTSD cost an estimated \$20 billion a year.

It is not just the statistics that we are talking about or worried about; it is the individual tragedies that take place when people are victims of impaired driving. Many of us can recall loved ones or friends who have lost their lives at the hands of a drunk driver. I know many will remember the heart-rending story of 20-year-old Francis Pesa, who had his young life cut tragically short on New Year's Day in 2014 when an impaired driver crossed the centre line and sideswiped his vehicle.

Francis was an aspiring accountant who had just returned to Calgary two hours earlier from travelling to his native Philippines. He had gone there to help the victims of the devastating typhoon that had ravaged that country. This young man was deprived of realizing his goal of having a rewarding, successful career through which he could contribute to his community and to his nation. He will never know the joy of having a spouse, children, or grandchildren. His family and friends have been robbed of a loved one and will be forever affected by this tragedy. Canada lost a productive citizen whose hopes and dreams will never be fulfilled.

According to Professor Robert Solomon, a law professor at Western University, the national director of legal policy at MADD, and an individual I met on a number of occasions, drunk driving is the number one criminal cause of death in the country. We are all affected by it.

I remember very clearly years ago when very early one morning there was a knock at our front door. It turned out the woman at the door was my wife's cousin. She was in tears, and conveyed to us the terrible news that my wife's aunt, Armida McIntosh, had been killed by a drunk driver. She was on the Niagara Parkway returning home one night when her car was slammed head-on by a car that was filled with a number of young men who had been drinking and were now driving. There are very few people in the country who could say they are not touched one way or another by impaired driving.

The House has a duty to send a message and a warning to those who choose to drink and drive, and that is simply, "Do not do it. Do not take the chance, because there is legislation in place that increases the penalties and the consequences." The measure we have today, Bill C-226, would carry with it a mandatory five-year sentence for impaired driving causing death, with a maximum sentence of 25 years. In cases where more than one life was lost, justices would be able to apply consecutive sentences.

I am very much appreciative of that provision, which would ensure that no victim is left unanswered or unaccounted for.

● (1820)

I am pleased as well to see the maximum sentence for impaired driving would increase from 10 years to 14 years. These are

deterrents. They send out a clear message that I believe would result in fewer Canadians losing their lives at the hands of drunk drivers.

I noticed that the parliamentary secretary mentioned in his comments one of the aspects of the Tackling Violent Crime Act of 2008. I was very honoured to be justice minister at the time that measure was introduced.

One of the issues that was directly tackled was, again, the two-beer defence. This was a defence that was becoming more and more common and more and more challenging. In the two-beer defence, individuals would bring a couple of their friends into court to testify that their colleague only had two beers, so the test must be wrong. I was very pleased that this was something that we curbed at that time.

It was a step in the right direction, and I believe that what we are talking about here is a step in the right direction because, as I pointed out, 1,200 to 1,500 people lose their lives in this country, and the number of people who are affected by drunk driving and hurt by it is exponential to that number.

We have a solemn responsibility as lawmakers to protect the citizens of this great nation of ours and to make sure there are serious consequences for those who risk the lives of others by drinking and driving, so I ask my colleagues in the House to band together in sober thought and take action again to deter drinking and driving in Canada by further strengthening the present legislation and supporting Bill C-226.

● (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to talk about an important issue that society has had to face for many years.

I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's history with respect to the degree even this distinguished House has had to deal with criminal law to deter individuals from drinking and driving.

I would like to take a different approach and go back to the days when I served in the Manitoba legislature. A number of issues came to the table back in those days and drinking and driving came up on an annual basis. Many organizations and stakeholders had serious concerns. I can recall times when we were told that we needed to lobby Ottawa to make changes to the Criminal Code. I can recall many other discussions that went beyond that, and this relates to what a speaker said earlier today, that it is not just the Criminal Code that we need to look at. If we want to wrestle this issue to the ground, then we need to take a more holistic approach.

I would like to bring a couple of things to the attention of members in the House. We need legislation that would reform our criminal law so that we could provide a deterrent. That is absolutely critical. There is no doubt in my mind that we will be having many more debates on that.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight one other aspect of this issue and that is education. When I talk about a holistic approach, what I am really talking about is the importance of getting different levels of government to work together. Let me give the House a specific example.

Private Members' Business

I was but a teenager during the seventies. It was quite acceptable, in fact it was the norm at that time, to drink and drive. I worked in a garage where some of the mechanics would drink rye with no questions asked and then they would get into a car and off they would go. Back in the seventies no one would have told them that they could not drink and drive. I graduated from an urban high school in the late seventies and I cannot recall my peers being told that we should not drink and drive.

Let me fast forward to the eighties when statistics showed a decrease in drinking and driving and fatalities. It was during the late eighties and early nineties when a much more proactive approach was taken in the school system. It was the young people in Canada that really started to take note. In the last 15 years very progressive attitudes have come out of high schools in particular. If we did a bit of research we would see.

Maples Collegiate is a high school in my riding of Winnipeg North. The students came up with what is called the safe grad pass. It is a special pass that is given to a guest to participate in the grad celebrations, because in times of celebration, there is often a considerable amount of drinking involved. Mandatory classes are also held in various schools where students are educated about safe driving and safe grads. These are the types of programs that I believe have really made a difference.

It is important that we debate the legislation that is before us today. I can appreciate why the member is suggesting that we put in further deterrents. No doubt that will be well debated. However, we need to look beyond the legislation component for a good reason.

● (1830)

Every member who has spoken today has highlighted stories. If we look at the numbers, many stories will never get told. We are talking about 20,000-plus lives some of which are terminated because of drunk driving. Whatever the age might be, it is sad to see someone lose his or her life because of drinking and driving.

I am especially touched when someone of a relatively young age is killed or when multiple individuals are killed by one drunk driver. It happens far too often. Over 1,000 Canadians a year lose their lives because of a drunk driver. That is not to speak of the thousands of others who are injured every year because of drunk driving.

I heard reference to the organization of MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. If we talk to anyone who has served on that organization, we will hear stories about the reality and the consequences of drinking and driving. Those stories will blow the minds of most Canadians. All one needs to do is to visit its website to get a good sense of the consequences.

What I respect about MADD is that it has a more holistic approach. I believe it understands the importance of education. I really want to emphasize this. There are many social conditions in society that can be best addressed through education. This does not mean that legislation or the Criminal Code has nothing to do with it. We need to ensure we have legislation or laws that will be a deterrent, that there is a consequence.

People who drink and drive need to understand and appreciate that there will be a consequence to their act. However, quite often, individuals who drink and drive do not get behind the wheel

believing they are going to get into some sort of horrific accident. They believe they are going to ultimately get away with it. For those who do get behind the wheel, there needs to be a consequence. We need to educate people so they understand that when they get behind a wheel and they are intoxicated, or they are past that .08, the likelihood of an accident is enhanced greatly.

I know generations of Canadians did not understand that or did not appreciate it. Because of the hard work of many organizations and because of debates of this nature, we have a greater understanding of the consequence. However, I am not convinced to what degree we have educated and provided incentive for people not to get behind the wheel and drive.

I am sure that in many communities, come Christmas and New Years, we will see special programs. The idea of spontaneous Breathalyzer tests deserves a lot of merit and there should be a lot of discussion on it. We should not focus our attention on one time of the year.

There is an onus of responsibility as parliamentarians to not only look at the criminal law aspect, but to also look at ways in which we can work with others, other stakeholders in particular, other levels of government, right down to the school board level, to see what we can do to better educate people so they understand the consequences of drinking and driving. We have dropped the ball on this over the years. We can do so much more.

I am pleased to see the bill here today and I look forward to an additional hour of debate on it. I would just emphasize the importance of education. We need to do something for the sake of all the victims of drinking and driving.

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate with the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I remind him that we will be cutting him off in about three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that although this bill has some flaws, it is still worth studying.

I would also like to recognize my colleague from Jonquière. She is new to the House, but she has already been working hard to lessen the impact of impaired driving.

As members know, this is a problem, whether we are talking about Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, a region I know well since I lived there for many years, or about my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby. This is important. We must all work together to bring down the rate of impaired driving and reduce the number of deaths each year. I just wanted to recognize my colleague from Jonquière, because I think she is doing excellent work on this matter.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

What is lacking in the bill is the whole notion of crime prevention. We saw this under the previous Conservative government that gutted funding for crime prevention right across the country. What that does is simply silly. The education and crime prevention element is extraordinarily important. Yet, we saw a Conservative government that gutted the funding that would actually serve to reduce crime rates, including impaired driving.

Members know that if we spend a dollar on crime prevention, we save six dollars in policing costs, courts costs, and penal costs later on. Therefore, it makes good sense to make the investment in crime prevention. It makes good sense as well to have bills that would reduce the rate of impaired driving.

Although it is interesting to study this particular bill, it does raise questions about the Conservatives' record on crime prevention which was deplorable. I will have more to say on that when I get the other seven minutes when we consider this bill at a future sitting of Parliament.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1840)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight on adjournment proceedings to pursue a question that I asked in the House on February 23. My question related to actions of the previous government, and I want to stress this. This issue primarily rests with actions taken by the previous government where multitudes of British Columbians, first nations, and conservation groups were looking to the new government to correct a wrong to right an injustice.

I asked about this. In the dying days of the federal election campaign, in fact in the last two weeks of September 2015, 14 federal permits were issued for destruction of riparian zones along the Peace River in pursuit of a British Columbia project referred to as "Site C". This is a massive hydroelectric project that will flood some of the best farmland in British Columbia and it offends treaty rights. I will give more specifics about Site C later.

In the last two weeks of September 2015, the minister of fisheries and the minister of transportation under the previous government issued 14 permits, some under the Fisheries Act and some under the Navigable Waters Protection Act, to allow construction activities to begin. Further backing up the actions of the previous government, this project, Site C, went to an environmental review. The findings of the joint federal-provincial advisory panel were very damning, no pun intended.

The joint federal-provincial review found that this project would probably cause economic losses to British Columbians. It found that the proponent had not adequately considered alternatives. It found

that the proponent fell short of proving any need for the project. It also found that this project would cause permanent damage to the environment, including:

...probable extirpation of three species and would further unbalance the species diversity in the River through the ascendancy of [various]...introduced species, into the reservoir...would act cumulatively to affect fish throughout the remaining, previously undammed sections of the...River...

In other words, it would result in "...significant adverse cumulative effects on fish".

The panel review also found that this project would cause a net loss of habitat, profound change in the type of character of remaining habitat during construction and operations that would be "...probable, negative, large, irreversible and permanent so long as the Site C Dam remains".

In relation to first nations rights, which was the main point of my question, the panel review found that the first nations peoples of this area, namely a number of communities within the Treaty 8 First Nations, specifically the Halfway River, Doig River, Prophet River, and West Moberly First Nations, jointly within Treaty 8 protections would suffer permanent losses of cultural rights and treaty rights.

Against this backdrop, the previous cabinet met and decided the economic benefits of this project, which were not found by the panel review, outweighed the permanent environmental damage and permanent damage to treaty rights. This matter remains before the courts.

The treaties were issued by the ministers of fisheries and transportation. Further permits from these ministries will be needed for the project to continue. My question for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs was this. Will the new government honour its commitments to the first nations and not issue a single additional permit?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the issue and the question raised by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands regarding Site C. I appreciate the passion with which she speaks of this matter.

During and subsequent to the recent election campaign, we on this side of the House have clearly stated that we are committed to working collaboratively with Canada's indigenous peoples to achieve results that will be beneficial for all Canadians.

As members know, a key focus of budget 2016 is on investments related to ensuring that indigenous peoples have similar opportunities and prospects for the future as all Canadians. Our government is committed to building a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous people that is based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

Adjournment Proceedings

Our government has also made it a priority to review Canada's environmental assessment processes, with the goal of developing and implementing a federal process that is robust, based on science, protects our rich natural environment, respects the rights of indigenous peoples, and supports and provides certainty for our natural resources sector.

This review, which will be launched later this year, will be conducted in close consultation with indigenous groups. One of its aims will be to enhance consultation, engagement, and the participatory capacity of indigenous peoples in the review of major projects.

With respect to the specific matter of Site C, as the member opposite is aware, the matter is presently before the courts, and as such, it would be inappropriate to comment in great detail. What I can say in answer to the hon. member's question are a few comments as to how we got here.

In the fall of 2014, the former government approved the project and set legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply. Permits were issued in the fall of 2015, and the project is now in the construction phase. The project proponent, BC Hydro, is required to meet the conditions that were set out in the decision statement. Environment and Climate Change Canada is actively verifying compliance with the conditions. Going forward, we will continue to engage in discussions with indigenous leaders on how we can work together on issues related to consultation, environmental protection, and natural resource development.

Consistent with this commitment, the minister met recently with Chief Roland Willson and Chief Lynette Tsakoza of the West Moberly and Prophet River Nation first nations to discuss their concerns on the Site C project. During that meeting, she heard their suggestions and their concerns.

In closing, I want to reiterate to the House that this government takes environmental assessment matters very seriously.

In addition, we are firmly committed to renewed nation-to-nation relationships with indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

• (1845)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, with no offence to my friend and colleague, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I do believe that the wrong department has responded. My question is specifically in relation to indigenous issues, and it is very clear that the ongoing construction is an ongoing daily violation of treaty rights, which the new Liberal government has sworn to uphold, as the hon member says, on a nation-to-nation basis.

This project underwent a robust evidence-based environmental review because it was reviewed under the legislation that pre-existed the omnibus budget bill, Bill C-38, which wrecked our environmental assessment process and within which the current government finds itself trying to jerry-rig bad processes. This was a fair process. It was a fair federal-provincial review which said that this would cause irrevocable damage, and cabinet overturned that good advice. The current cabinet can overturn that bad decision, stop the project, and respect the rights of first nations.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I have outlined some of the key background elements of this project, including those that occurred before our government came to power. However, as this matter is before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the specific case.

I would say that our government is fully committed to renewing nation-to-nation relationships with Canada's indigenous peoples. The crown will execute its consultation and accommodation obligations in accordance with its common constitutional and international human rights obligations, including aboriginal and treaty rights.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today with respect to a question I asked in the House of Commons on February 25 with regard to oil and gas prices and the need to have some expansion with regard to authority and accountability on this file.

We noted that oil and gas prices rose by 2% in January, the highest rate increase in more than two years. Even the Bank of Canada has noted that falling oil prices have not been matched by lower prices at the pump. New Democrats asked the government to investigate this, and we put forth two suggestions, one for an ombudsman and the other for a petroleum monitoring agency. I was pleased to hear the minister's response in the sense that the government is looking to work toward solutions and is open to suggestions.

In the House of Commons, numerous suggestions have been made over the years on this particular file. In fact, I wanted to bring them here today, whether from the Liberals or the Conservatives, but I was concerned about the carbon footprint of the truck that would be necessary to deliver the documents that I have been accumulating over the years.

The fact of the matter is that we have a really good opportunity to do something, and I am hoping that the current government returns to where it was at one particular point in time.

At one point in time, the Liberal government, in its previous manifestation, was interested in this issue and had actually adopted some very good policies, but those policies were later nixed by the Conservatives and were never put in place.

In particular, we could have a Canadian weekly petroleum status report that would go to the petroleum monitoring agency or the ombudsman, whatever we want to call it, as a third party. This would be very similar to the U.S. Department of Energy's weekly petroleum status report. This report would be published every week, which creates accountability. If there were a problem with it, there would then be some accountability to follow up.

This would also be in line with pushing back against some of the privatization that has occurred and the potential lines of conflict. Right now, Kent Marketing and M.J. Ervin and Associates actually do some of this reporting, but they also have clients that include big oil, so the reporting is basically done through a connection in the industry. That arrangement is similar to the safety management system, whereby companies have to self-report their errors, and that is not acceptable for consumers, because it does not allow for accountability.

Adjournment Proceedings

The problem is that when there are big upswings, consumers pay for them at the end of the day and do not see the benefits. Even if prices go down one day, within a week or sometimes later, the profit margins still increase, and that is the problem. There is no accountability. Accountability through an ombudsperson who would have authority and third party independence would be extremely important to the process.

That is just one of the simple solutions that the NDP is proposing. This is done in the United States, and it adds a layer of accountability that we do not have right now.

The self-policing model for gas pricing is over. It is done for. We now have an opportunity. We had an opportunity in the past but never got it up and running properly because the Conservatives actually nixed that idea. It came from a former Liberal member over on that side who is known as one of the country's best experts on this subject matter, if not the best expert.

I would encourage the minister and the parliamentary secretary to take us up on these suggestions, which have been tabled in motions in the House of Commons multiple times, and do something for Canadians and their pocketbooks.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments made earlier by the hon. member for Windsor West. He has a lot of experience, and I have had the pleasure of getting to know him better on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. I appreciate his advice and, especially, his observations.

I know that the member asked the government to create an oil and gas price ombudsman and a petroleum monitoring agency. I will start by saying that the government recognizes that gas prices have a real, significant impact on the Canadian economy, the public, and Canadian businesses. We are determined to ensure that consumers are paying fair, competitive market prices for gas. What the hon. member said is true. The government has a role to play in preventing price fixing and collusion. We certainly recognize what the hon. member called for.

That is where the Competition Bureau, the independent body responsible for administering the Competition Act, which includes provisions against price-fixing, price maintenance, and abusive behaviour by dominant firms, comes in. All of its provisions apply to gasoline and other petroleum products markets.

However, the act does not provide the Bureau with the power to regulate prices. In fact, the federal government does not have the constitutional power to enact legislation to regulate the retail price of gasoline except in a national emergency. We know that the price of gas can vary from place to place because of a number of factors. I want to emphasize that, even when retailers charge similar prices, they are not necessarily violating the Competition Act. Furthermore, high prices in and of themselves are not a violation of the act. There has to be evidence that the competitors agreed to set those prices.

The Competition Bureau's mandate is to enforce the law in order to protect competition and consumers. If there is evidence, in any

sector, of anti-competitive behaviour that violates the Competition Act, the bureau does not hesitate to take the necessary action. We witnessed that last April when a company was ordered by the Quebec Superior Court to pay a \$1-million fine for its role in a gas price-fixing scheme that affected many markets in Quebec.

This case was part of a broader investigation by the bureau that ended with charges being filed against 39 individuals and 15 companies. To date, 33 individuals and seven companies have pleaded guilty. Fines of over \$4 million have been imposed, and six individuals have been sentenced to a combined total of 54 months in prison.

In closing, the companies that joined together to fix prices increased costs for consumers and created problems for law-abiding companies. One of the Competition Bureau's key priorities is to go after those who have participated in price-fixing schemes. When it has proof of practices that violate the Competition Act, the bureau does not hesitate to take measures to protect competition and consumers.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention by the parliamentary secretary, and I have enjoyed getting to know him on committee.

However, I think it is important to put perspective here with regard to the Competition Bureau and what has been taking place. The resources have been gutted. It is limited in its actions and capabilities. It is kind of like asking somebody to go after an elephant with a fly swatter. That is a good type of analogy, because at the end of the day, yes, there have been a couple of incidents that have actually gone forward, but those are the rarity.

Over the last number of years, in fact two decades, there have only been a few cases in this perspective, so I would argue that there is nothing wrong with, at least at the bare minimum, the government requiring—maybe even reporting to the Minister of Industry—the rack pricing and the individual amounts that have to go in the weekly reporting that is done with the U.S.

If we are looking at some of the harmonization we are taking in industry, why not do it for consumers on this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, the problem with adjournment debates is that we do not have enough time to learn more about the issues raised.

The hon. member raises some very important points. I am very familiar with the former Liberal MP, Mr. McTeague. He was an expert on the subject who was recognized Canada-wide.

We now have the Competition Bureau, a system that has produced good results. We could perhaps do better. For example, we could consider amending the law to address the concerns that the member just raised. However, for the time being, the system is working under the current legislation. If the hon. member would like to suggest improvements, I am prepared to work with him to reach that objective.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 25, the member for Scarborough Southwest and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice answered a question of mine in which I pointed out what I thought was confusion that Canadians were experiencing about the status of the government's policy on marijuana reform.

I want to point out his answer to my question. He said:

...we want to remind all Canadians that until that important work is completed, the only control that is in place is the current criminal sanction for the production and trafficking of marijuana, and those laws remain in effect.

Of course, the member is an expert on this topic, so we know it was a slip of his tongue when he forgot that the word "possession" should have been included among the remaining criminal sanctions for marijuana. I acknowledge that. However, it is time for the government to stop denying that there is indeed confusion among Canadians about the current legal status of marijuana and about the government's intentions.

The parliamentary secretary and I sit together on the justice committee. In that committee, we have also learned that the government may spend up to \$4 million this year alone prosecuting simple possession cases. Who knows how much more the provinces are spending, who of course are responsible for the administration of justice and pay crown council, have court rooms available with judges, and the like? How much are they spending for prosecuting possession of marijuana?

It needs to be said that the Liberals are spending this money despite the government's promise to legalize marijuana and despite what we hear is a growing concern from judges regarding the continued prosecutions for marijuana.

Indeed, we have obtained from the director of public prosecutions the recent case of *Regina v. Racine* from the Ontario Court of Justice, in which the hon. Justice Selkirk refused to accept a guilty plea for possession of marijuana. This is the court transcript of what Mr. Justice Selkirk's remarks were in December 2015.

I recall distinctly the Prime Minister in the House of Commons saying it's going to be legalized. I'm not going to be the last judge in this country to convict somebody of simple possession of marijuana....

You can't have the Prime Minister announcing it's going to be legalized and then stand up and prosecute it. It just can't happen. It's a ludicrous situation, ludicrous.

That is not me speaking. That is a justice from the Ontario Court of Justice.

By all means, the government must take the time to craft a responsible framework for legalization, but do not ask ordinary Canadians to keep paying the price.

My question is a simple one. Why does the government refuse to take the common-sense step of immediately decriminalizing simple possession of marijuana?

• (1900)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I also express my gratitude to the member for Victoria, both for his question but also for his ongoing interest. We have worked closely

together over the past several months and I am really looking forward to his continued contribution, advice, and assistance as we move forward on this very important issue of public policy which I truly believe, when done effectively and right, will result in safer communities, better protection for our children, and a more just society.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to attempt to bring more clarity to the government's position. With respect to the comments just quoted from Justice Selkirk, who said that the Prime Minister rose in Parliament, and perhaps he was alluding to the throne speech, and said that we were going to "legalize, regulate, and restrict marijuana".

If the judge recognized the entire quote and the clear articulation of the government's intention, he would have a better understanding of the path forward. It is this government's intention to replace the existing criminal sanction with what we believe to be a far more effective regulatory regime of a public health framework to respond to the risks associated with the use and abuse of marijuana.

We believe that through regulation we could do a better job of protecting our children. We could do a better job of taking profits away from organized crime. We could do a better job of making our communities safer from the violence and victimization associated with the involvement of organized crime in the illegal trade of marijuana. We believe that we can do a better job of providing real, factual information to Canadians about the very real risks that marijuana use presents to them and through public education, we can help keep Canadians safer and healthier.

While that work takes place, it is important that it be done right. It is important that it be based on the evidence and the best advice that we can obtain from experts, so that we are given an opportunity to examine other places around the world. If we follow down this path, we could learn from their experience and we could do the right job of ensuring that the regulatory regime that we put in place allows us to effectively control and regulate the production, distribution, retail, and consumption of marijuana in this country to affect our very important public interest purposes of keeping our kids safe, our communities safe, and all Canadians healthy.

The control that currently exists for marijuana in this country is the criminal law. It has been that way since the 1920s. We believe that it could be done better, but until that regulatory framework is put in place, we have to rely on the existing criminal model to proceed. There is, within that criminal law, discretion for police officers, prosecutors, and judiciary. We acknowledge and respect that, but the law is also required to help keep our communities safe. In some instances we see flagrant abuses of that law.

We remind all Canadians that the law must be upheld. The law should be obeyed and enforced. Until we replace the existing criminal law with a more effective regulatory regime, it is necessary and appropriate that we continue to uphold the laws that have been passed by Parliament and deemed to be constitutional by our courts.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1905)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary very much for his kind words. I definitely wish to continue to collaborate with him in trying to get, as he put it, the best regulatory framework for the future of cannabis use in Canada that we can. I want to make that clear and welcome his leadership on this file.

I respectfully disagree with my friend opposite. There is confusion that persists as the government does its necessary work to create safer communities and to do the things my colleague referred to. I do not understand why young people would still be prosecuted, have their lives impacted dramatically for who knows how long, for what will apparently be legal shortly thereafter.

It seems to me we need to address the status quo now while waiting for effective reform regulation in the future.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the further enquiry from my friend from Victoria. I will say a number of things in response to that. The enforcement of the current law is really determined through judicial discretion. Our expectation is that law enforcement,

prosecutors, and our courts will continue to uphold our laws to maintain a safe environment.

Earlier, the member for Victoria suggested that we could have an interim step of decriminalization. It is important to address that particular suggestion. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, in its review and recommendations for a public health framework, clearly identified and stated this, and I will try to quote it as accurately as possible: decriminalization is a half measure that “does nothing to address the health harms” that we are attempting to effect with a regulatory framework. It does nothing to protect our children or to reduce organized crime's involvement in this. It does nothing to improve Canadians' health. What it does do is facilitate easier enforcement. Therefore, the decriminalization would likely—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:08 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS			
Sainte-Clotilde Greenhouse Vegetable Producer			
Mrs. Shanahan	2159	Mr. Trudeau	2163
Saskatchewan		Foreign Affairs	
Mrs. Block	2159	Mr. Mulcair	2163
Antonia “Tony” Barry		Mr. Trudeau	2164
Mr. DeCoursey	2159	Ethics	
Bullying		Mr. Mulcair	2164
Mr. Garrison	2159	Mr. Trudeau	2164
Vaisakhi		Mr. Mulcair	2164
Mr. Sikand	2160	Mr. Trudeau	2164
Poland		Mr. Mulcair	2164
Mr. Kmiec	2160	Mr. Trudeau	2164
Saint-Jean Cadet Corps		Mr. Calkins	2164
Mr. Rioux	2160	Mr. LeBlanc	2164
Bayview Village Association		Mr. Calkins	2165
Mr. Tan	2160	Mr. LeBlanc	2165
Canadian Coast Guard		Justice	
Mr. Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	2160	Mr. Cooper	2165
Vaisakhi		Mr. LeBlanc	2165
Ms. Khera	2161	Ethics	
Vaisakhi		Mr. Cooper	2165
Mr. Lamoureux	2161	Mr. LeBlanc	2165
Daffodil Month		Mrs. Vecchio	2165
Ms. Leitch	2161	Mr. LeBlanc	2165
International Day of Pink		Mr. Gourde	2165
Mr. Boissonnault	2161	Mr. LeBlanc	2166
Status of Women		Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Mathysen	2162	Ms. Jolibois	2166
Vaisakhi		Mrs. Philpott	2166
Mr. Saroya	2162	Mr. Angus	2166
Daffodil Month		Ms. Bennett	2166
Mr. Oliver	2162	Natural Resources	
		Mrs. Stubbs	2166
		Ms. McKenna	2166
		Mrs. Stubbs	2166
		Ms. McKenna	2167
		Mr. Doherty	2167
		Ms. McKenna	2167
		Mr. Zimmer	2167
		Ms. McKenna	2167
		Foreign Affairs	
		Ms. Laverdière	2167
		Mr. Dion	2167
		Ms. Laverdière	2167
		Mr. Dion	2167
		Taxation	
		Mr. Vandal	2168
		Mrs. Lebouthillier	2168
		Mrs. Wong	2168
		Ms. Chagger	2168
		Mrs. Wong	2168

Ms. Chagger	2168
Ethics	
Mr. Deltell	2168
Mr. Champagne	2168
Mr. Deltell	2168
Mr. Champagne	2169
International Development	
Mr. Aubin	2169
Ms. Gould	2169
Consular Affairs	
Mr. Johns	2169
Mr. Alghabra	2169
National Defence	
Mrs. Gallant	2169
Mr. Sajjan	2169
Mr. Paul-Hus	2169
Mr. Sajjan	2169
Mr. Paul-Hus	2169
Mr. Sajjan	2170
Canadian Heritage	
Mr. Housefather	2170
Ms. Joly	2170
Seniors	
Mr. Warawa	2170
Mr. Duclos	2170
The Environment	
Ms. Quach	2170
Mr. Tootoo	2170
Infrastructure	
Ms. Damoff	2170
Mr. Sohi	2170
Justice	
Mr. Rayes	2171
Ms. Wilson-Raybould	2171
Government Appointments	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2171
Mr. Trudeau	2171

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Amendment negatived	2172
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mrs. Schulte	2172
Audrey O'Brien, Clerk Emerita	
The Speaker	2172
Mr. LeBlanc	2173
Mr. Scheer	2173
Mr. Julian	2174
Mr. Plamondon	2175
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2175

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Food and Drugs Act	
Mrs. Jane Philpott (for Minister of International Trade) ..	2175
Bill C-13. Introduction and first reading	2175
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	2175
Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Bagnell	2175
Petitions	
Tax-Free Savings Account	
Mr. Kent	2175
Animal Testing for Cosmetics	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2175
Falun Gong	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2175
Palliative Care	
Mr. Hoback	2176
Physician-Assisted Dying	
Mr. Hoback	2176
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux	2176
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Ste-Marie	2176
Mrs. Philpott	2176
Transferred for debate	2176
Mr. Lamoureux	2176

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion	2176
Mr. Saroya	2176
Mr. Peterson	2177
Mr. Schmale	2178
Mr. Lamoureux	2178
Mr. Kelly	2178
Ms. Dabrusin	2180
Mr. Dusseault	2180
Mr. Sangha	2180
Mr. Brassard	2182
Mr. Dusseault	2182
Mr. Lamoureux	2182
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2182
Mr. Spengemann	2184
Ms. Kwan	2184
Mr. Lamoureux	2184
Ms. Vandenbeld	2185
Mrs. Vecchio	2186
Ms. Kwan	2186
Mr. MacKinnon	2187
Mr. Graham	2187
Mr. Dusseault	2188
Mr. Brassard	2189
Mr. Lamoureux	2189
Mr. Donnelly	2189

Mr. Peterson	2190
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo).....	2191
Ms. Ramsey	2191

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Impaired Driving Act

Mr. Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis).....	2192
Bill C-226. Second reading	2192
Mr. Chan	2194
Mr. Rankin	2194
Mr. Casey (Charlottetown).....	2195
Mr. Rankin	2196
Mr. Nicholson	2197

Mr. Lamoureux.....	2198
Mr. Julian.....	2199

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Indigenous Affairs

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	2200
Mr. Wilkinson.....	2200

Gasoline Prices

Mr. Masse (Windsor West).....	2201
Mr. Fergus.....	2202

Justice

Mr. Rankin	2203
Mr. Blair	2203

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