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Friday, November 4, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 4, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)

[*English*]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House resumed from October 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I start my remarks on this very important subject matter, I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women who have served our country with bravery, dignity, and honour and to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice at home and abroad to protect our freedoms and the way of life that Canadians enjoy.

On Remembrance Day, I will be home in my riding, as I am guessing most members here will be, to pay my respects to all the veterans who have served this country well. The people of the Kenora riding will never forget their sacrifices, nor will I. Sometimes, as wars get further and further away, it is easy to forget, but I think it is important for all of us to play a role in making sure that this does not happen.

I am pleased to rise in the House today as the representative for the Kenora riding to speak to the enhanced Canada pension plan. Over a year ago, we committed to helping Canadians secure financial stability in retirement, and we are now making that promise a reality.

For the first time in a generation, we are making changes to the Canada pension plan, which will greater reward those who have worked hard throughout their lives. I am very proud of how we have worked to fulfill this promise, because those of us who were completing the last campaign will know that it was a very important part of our discussion during the election campaign.

The Minister of Finance and his provincial counterparts have worked diligently and collaboratively to see this project through. They should be enthusiastically commended for their work.

Sometimes we forget the importance of pension plans, because we get busy in this place, and we assume that Canadians are wealthy. It is one of the wealthiest countries on earth, quite frankly, with a great quality of life and a great standard of living. However, we forget that this was from the previous generation's work. This generation has to continue to focus its attention on the importance of making sure that when people retire in their old age, they have the quality of life and security this country values so much.

I will give examples of why this is important economically, because people tend to see this, at least on the other side of the House, on occasion, as an attack. They expect that it has an impact on Canada's economy.

Here is an example from a study by the Boston Consulting Group. It is a little dated, it was done in 2012, but it is a good example.

The study found that on average, 14¢ of every dollar of income in Ontario and in Ontario's communities comes from pensions. It found that in northern communities, in places like Elliot Lake, pension benefits are 37% of the economy. In Ontario, 7% of all income in our towns and cities, or $27 billion, is derived from defined benefit pensions.

This is just an example of why this is such an important debate. Not only is it security for seniors, it is also a very large part of our economy. We forget sometimes that in places like the city of Kenora, the city of Dryden, and the community of Sioux Lookout, there is a large economy that is generated by the pensions that people in the previous generation receive.

We are making great strides. In early October, we saw British Columbia sign on, making a total of nine provinces in this agreement. From coast to coast to coast, the provinces are realizing what an asset this will be for the over 11 million Canadians who currently do not have a workplace pension plan.

I want to speak today about pensions, because I am concerned about the looming crisis that is going to occur in this country if we continue to let the private sector erode pension plans in the private sector to the point that the next generation may have virtually no pension except for CPP. In the previous generation, it seemed that they understood the importance of that process in the private sector. Now it is moving away from it.

● (1005)

Everyone talks about defined benefits in a certain way and about reducing the risk for business, but nobody seems to talk about the effects on that man or that woman who is a blue collar worker who expects that at the end of a lifetime of work, he or she will have the opportunity to live a good quality of life.

We need to broaden the discussion not just about the role of the Government of Canada but about the role of the private sector.

I come from a region where pulp mills, paper mills, sawmills, railroads, and mining companies all had decent pensions for their retiring workforce. We are now starting to see that erode. I am concerned about what that may look like 20 or 30 years down the road. We have to think about the long-term future of our young people and what that would mean for Canadian society.

When people have instability, risk, and concerns not just about where the next job will come from but about the ability to live out their retirement years, they tend to be a lot more aggressive about how their government should react. They tend to swing far to the right or far to the left. We have been successful as a nation because we have given that kind of security to men and women right across this country. I want people to think about that as we work through this as the government and other governments right across the country.

I am very pleased that the Government of Canada, through the Minister of Finance, and the provincial governments see the importance of enhancing the Canada pension plan. There is a lot more to it than that. Dignity is about security. We have to keep in mind that this is what this is all about.

In my riding of Kenora, I have heard from many of my constituents, both young and old, who fear that they may not have enough savings to retire in dignity. I think this debate is going to continue election after election until we deal with this issue in a comprehensive way.

I want to commend the minister and the government . I also want to encourage the government to send the message to the private sector that it has a role to play. We signalled, by taxing the rich, as we put it in the last election, that they could give more. The people we are speaking about are those who have major corporations and major businesses and are doing quite well in society. They have to give back. Part of that is a pension plan Canadians can rely on. Having a decent pension at the end of our careers is something we should guarantee not just in the public sector but in the private sector as well.

Canadians are compassionate, but at the same time as we are watching the discussions internationally about trade deals, we are not thinking about what that may mean eventually in Canada if the benefits of trade deals do not move through the system to the blue collar worker and the average Canadian.

I want to remind the federal government and other governments that Canada has always led the way in making sure that Canadians have a good quality of life.

There is overwhelming support for public pensions. It is about 75%. When we think about that, Canadians are ahead of us in their views on what exactly should be done compared to what we hear sometimes from others. The effects of these enhancements will not only be felt by seniors and families but by young Canadians who are and will in the future be entering the workforce.

In closing, simply put, I believe that after a lifetime of hard work, all Canadians deserve a secure and dignified retirement. It is because of these types of programs, developed throughout our history, and our continuing commitment to social fairness, that we have helped to make Canada what it is today, one of the best places to live in the world. I hope we can keep it that way.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Our take on the Canada pension plan is very simple. We want to give Canadians the tools they need to make choices that work for them, tools such as the TFSA.

Can the member help us understand how the measures in the bill, which boil down to taking another $1,000 from people's pockets, $1,000 per worker, per company, will help Canada's economy? That is less money for businesses and more money for government. Can he help us understand that in light of an internal Department of Finance memo stating that this measure will have a negative impact on jobs for the next 20 years?

● (1015)

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Nault: Mr. Speaker, I go back to my opening comments about the differences in this place. I understand the Conservative Party's view that somehow, if we just give every Canadian the opportunity to save for themselves, it will get done. However, we know that most Canadians live paycheque to paycheque and do not have the savings being promoted on the other side. Every day, they manage to get their kids off to school and pay for some of the things the kids do. They do not get anywhere near where they think they need to go.

The reality is that there has to be a way to help Canadians save for retirement. That is why private pension plans have always been useful at work, because it comes off a person's paycheque. People know it is going to come off, and that is the way it works. It is the same with the Canada pension plan. It is a way of saving for retirement.

Does it have an impact on the economy? As I mentioned earlier, it has a positive impact on the economy. If $27 billion a year, at the very least, goes into Ontario's economy through a pension plan, and that goes to people to have dollars to spend, to go to the grocery store, and to buy things from small businesses, that is a positive thing. No one in this place can tell us otherwise. I see it as a win-win for all of Canada.

If we keep going down the road the member and his party suggest, we will have difficulty in Canada, because people will not be secure in their pension style and their quality of life, and they will demand that we change that.

I suspect that the member of Parliament is saying to us that somehow we should leave people to their own devices and they will figure it all out. I do not believe that is possible.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that underlies the entire CPP system is the fact that someone has a job and is earning an income. If people are not making any income, they cannot even contribute to the CPP. When they retire, there will be no CPP for them.

In this time, when it is difficult to get a job, the increase in the CPP is making it even more difficult for people to hire people. Why would the government bring this forward at this time?

Hon. Robert Nault: Mr. Speaker, that is a line the Conservative Party uses almost every time we want to improve social programs for Canadians. I have heard so many times that this is not the right time that it is like a broken record. It means that they are not totally opposed to it, but we cannot do it today, because the economy is not doing very well. I heard that in the 1980s under Brian Mulroney. I heard it under Mr. Harper, and it continues to be the broken record the Conservatives use.

The reality is that good policy should not wait until the economy is where some Conservative thinks it should be. In fact, difficult times are the times to invest in infrastructure and the development of our economy. Those are the times to bring more security to Canadians so they can prosper and grow.

I do not buy the argument that somehow we are always in a difficult financial situation or that our economy is struggling. Now, the economy does struggle when the Conservatives are in power. That is true. I have seen it over the last 30 years. However, I can assure members that it will change when the Liberal Party has some time to fix some of the problems these guys have put in place.

The last time I was here, in 1988, and we came into power in 1993, it took three years for our party and the Chrétien government to sort out the mess, get rid of all the debt and issues, and build an economy that was at 3.5% to 3.8% every year. Therefore, it is going to take a little while.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-26.

I want to first acknowledge that yesterday the Prime Minister held another news conference to celebrate his first year in office. While I am sure Canadians are getting a bit tired of the Prime Minister's endless PR stunts, it is even more frustrating that he is celebrating a record that is hurting Canadians.

Let us talk about that record: widespread job losses, massive tax hikes, more debt, higher deficits, no plan. It is not a rosy picture, which is why I, along with my colleagues on this side of the House, am a little surprised that the Liberal solution to higher taxes is yet another tax hike, but it is okay, they will call this one a CPP expansion, hide the details, and maybe Canadians will let it go.

The government seems to be selling us a line from the hit Dire Straits song *Money For Nothing*, but there is no money for nothing. This tax hike will cost jobs, wage growth, and GDP growth.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business projects that by 2020 total employment in Canada will have dropped roughly 110,000 jobs because of the CPP expansion and higher tax. Two-thirds of small businesses surveyed indicated they would cut hours and wages to offset this tax hike. One out of every three are looking at lay-offs to offset it. The hike is also forecast to move wages lower by 0.8%.

Every time the Minister of Finance stands in the House he talks of the low-growth economy. He forgets to mention his own finance department says the CPP tax expansion will shrink the economy.

We stand opposed to all wasteful tax hikes designed to fund the Liberal government's continued expansion, and this CPP tax hike is no exception. In fact, it is worse, and let me tell members why.

There are several problems with the CPP tax hike besides killing jobs and stifling growth. First, quite ironically, it cancels out the Prime Minister's much beloved middle-class tax relief. Remember the 1.5% Canadians were supposed to see back? Shockingly, the government decided that maybe it likes having more money to take limos, have expensive meals, and take pretty pictures in exotic locales, so it designed a tax hike that will take away that tax relief. One thing the government never seems to realize is that government cannot give what they have not already taken from us.

Let us consider Martha and Henry. They are both middle-class wage earners who work hard and pay their taxes. Tired of being slammed with the new Liberal taxes and a slow-growth economy, Martha and Henry diligently save part of their paycheque every month. They cannot take another hit. However, because the government has priorities that are out of touch with Canadians, Martha and Henry can now see up to $2,200 more deducted every year, wiping out the meagre 1.5% saved with the much vaunted middle-class tax cut. Keep in mind that neither Martha nor Henry will see any of this money back for an extra 40 years.

The government will tell us that it is okay, because at least Martha and Henry will have something to show at the end. The problem is that the government assumes Canadians have no idea how to manage their extra money.

Where could the extra money have gone? Let me tell hon. members because it leads directly to the next problem with the CPP tax hike. The CPP as an investment vehicle is weak. According to the Fraser Institute, the average return, long term, on investment for Canada bonds is 3.5%. The return on investment for Martha and Henry's CPP investment on the new expansion is 2.5%. That is right, 2.5%, barely enough to cover inflation. This is not exactly ideal, because the CPP will need to cover far more than just inflation as more Canadians move into retirement over the next several years, or what is more likely is that the government will simply come back, hat in hand in the future, and demand more money from Canadians to cover the shortfall.

Why does CPP have such mediocre returns? Among a host of reasons, primary ones are high fees for asset management. Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* comments on a gathering momentum of more staff, higher pay, and rising operational expenses, and he concludes, all for no appreciable payoff for Canadians.

More worrying is that because finance ministers looking for cash have a strong tendency to lean on pension funds as a source of investment for infrastructure projects, the CPP would earn even lower returns. This tendency was confirmed by the Minister of Finance's own economic advisory council, which stated repeatedly that pension funds should be looked at as a source of untapped potential for infrastructure by government.

This approach undermines the independence necessary for a fund to be truly profitable and provide meaningful returns. Without that independence and with constant interference from the Minister of Finance to fund whatever project his government sees fit on a given day, the ability for pension funds to garner higher returns is undermined; hence 2.5%

● (1020)

It is fairly clear the government wants more cash and this CPP tax hike is the way it is going to get it.

I know what members are thinking, Martha makes a decent wage, could she not just move a little more of her income into a fantastic and well-received investment vehicle such as a TFSA? Sure, she could, but the same Fraser Institute, those pesky policy wonks, studied hard and found for every dollar increase in CPP contribution, private savings are reduced by 90¢, fully 90%. This is not a winning formula and misleads Canadians on the benefits of CPP.

Speaking of misleading, the next problem with this hike is that Canadians are rapidly finding out the finance minister is selling them a bill of goods. The finance minister wants to help the vulnerable and this is a good goal, a worthy goal. This goal will not be accomplished by a CPP hike and here is why.

First, CPP only pays those who pay into it. If I die tomorrow, my wife would not receive my CPP pension. If I invested this money in something smart like those fantastic TFSAs I mentioned earlier, my wife and kids would have a tidy sum to walk away with. However, because CPP has punishing rules for the survivor's pension, my wife would receive 60% of the CPP at best. If she collects CPP on her own, she would receive even less.

There are fewer retired Canadians living in poverty now than at any point in our history. For Canadians on our bell curve, our bell is located above the high average. The thing with bell curves is that they all have a tail on the lower end, but the solution is to help the lower end and it is not to move the rest of bell even lower. Those struggling at the lower end of the tail need help directly. Lowering the rest of the bell to meet the tail does not help anyone.

The shame of the bill and the whole deceit of it is that this added CPP expansion will do nothing to address those seniors living in poverty. It is misleading for the finance minister to tell Canadians that this CPP expansion helps those who need help, because it does not.

It is simple. We could double or triple the CPP payouts, but if people have never paid into it, they get nothing. A huge amount of our seniors who are living in poverty are in that position because they, for whatever reason, did not contribute or contributed little to CPP during their working years.

We want to help those who need it. We want to help the widowed grandmother struggling to get by on a fixed income or the disabled grandfather trying to make ends meet. We want to help Martha and Henry ensure that they are planning for their retirement. We want them to use those TFSAs and RRSPs and invest their savings in the market because the market earns far more than 2.5%. A simple ETF invested in the Standard & Poor's 500 would yield a far greater return and allow Martha and Henry to access their savings at any time.

We want to help those who are struggling at the lower end. This is why the previous government expanded the GIS. It is why the previous government expanded the tax-free savings account to $10,000. It is why we introduced income-splitting for seniors and why we lowered the mandatory withdrawal rate for registered retirement income funds. These are evidence-based policies that benefit every senior today and we are proud of our record to help the most vulnerable.

We do not believe it is fair for the finance minister to mislead Canadians, raise taxes on workers, and leave the most vulnerable behind.

I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding after the words “seniors in need” the following: “; and (d) will impede Canadians' ability to save for the future.”

● (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The amendment to the amendment seems to be in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for West Nova.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. Every argument in every part of his speech could be used as a rationale for cancelling entirely the Canada pension plan. Would he be logically consistent and admit that he would agree that the Canada pension plan serves no useful purpose whatsoever and should be scrapped entirely?

● (1030)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, that is a ludicrous assertion. No one on this side is suggesting that, and I am embarrassed for the member for even asking that.

I will say, though, that we on this side want to give Canadians a tool to save for themselves. We believe in Canadians. We believe they know how to raise their families and spend their own money. We believe in Canadians and suggest that side of the House start believing in Canadians as well.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I notice that the member did not quote any youth organizations or, frankly, seniors organizations that endorse the Conservatives' position or amendment. In the alternative, all of the seniors groups that I, my colleagues, and the Liberal government have spoken to endorse improving CPP payments.

One in four seniors is living in poverty. How can he assume that they are going to have tax-free savings accounts if they are struggling already? Are we simply going to let them suffer and not contribute to the economy?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of things.

To address the first part, if we look at CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, its comment was that it would like to see a small change in CPP, but it wants poverty addressed through other means, such as a higher GIS. This would not do anything for seniors living in poverty who do not have access to CPP. That is the first thing.

Second, TFSAs were massively used by seniors. Taking away their ability to save does not help them one bit. You should be promoting seniors' ability to save more for themselves.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind hon. members to speak in the third person through the Speaker and not directly to members.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for an excellent speech. I love how he compared what the Liberals are doing to songs like *Money for Nothing*. I would add to that *Talk Talk*, *It's Only Words*, and *Shameless* for starters.

This CPP benefit would take $1,100 out of everyone's pockets and out of small businesses' pockets, and it would not benefit anyone for the next 40 years. However, I think a lot of damage would be done in the interim. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, it is a worrying issue. We have great faith in small business and the representative for small business in Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has been very clear that it is very worried. Its members say they are going to cut staff, cut hours, and cut wages. The finance department's own internal report shows there are going to be devastating losses of over 100,000 jobs. This is not the right way to fix any perceived pension problem.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our economy and job market have been headed downhill and gaining steam for 10 years. There have been 400,000 manufacturing jobs lost. The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce notes that the jobs that were created were, for the most part, part time and low quality. Turning that around is not going to be easy. A change in momentum is going to take work, which this government is committed to.

What does the member say to the fact that 60% of people who work in the private sector right now have no company pension plans and no money to be putting into the elite-finance TFSAs? What should they do? Should they simply hold off and let some government in the future deal with the fact that there are Canadians who are badly prepared for retirement, which should be the golden years of their lives?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I will point out a couple of things.

We have heard time and time again that Canadians have no extra money to put aside for savings, so the government is going to step in and take more from the non-existent savings they have. There are a couple of things about this so-called pension crisis.

Again, Conservatives have great faith in Canadians and one thing the bill does not address is that for every $1 of the trillions of dollars in RRSPs or pensions, there are $3, that means $9.5 trillion, in other assets outside of pensions, so we need to take the holistic picture before deciding to punish small businesses and low-income workers with this added tax. That is one issue.

The other part is that, again, Canadians have been very successful saving their own money. Saying that they do not have any money now so the government is going to take it away does not help. We are making people more reliant on government when that is not the answer.

I found a great quote by pension expert Paul Williams. Thinking about making people more reliant on government, he stated, “Think of our gang of politicians—Dalton McGuinty...Rob Ford. Think of other government projects—gas plants—”

● (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to resuming debate, I would like to point out to the hon. members, if they do not mind while they are giving their speeches, just look up once in a while. I will give them a signal if they have some time left. I hate to cut anybody off, but once it goes over a little bit, it gets beyond the point. That is just some housekeeping for this morning.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start out, as many of the members have this week, by giving recognition to the veterans in my city, particularly in Edmonton Strathcona. I will be joining many at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in my riding, with the Light Horse regiment, where we will have a service and then march to the cenotaph. I look forward to joining Edmontonians in thanking our veterans for their service and remembering those who did not come home.

I am also pleased to rise to speak to the reforms proposed in Bill C-26. The pension reforms are a welcome response to the growing pension crisis in Canada. Contrary to what some members in the House allege, people are not able to save, and we are in a crisis. We need to support those who move to retirement.

My colleagues and I have been calling for these reforms for a considerable amount of time, as have many unions, provincial governments, and seniors organizations, including CARP.

While better was possible, and the full benefit will not be felt for five decades, the proposed benefit enhancements are a good first step. Challenges will remain for those currently retired or approaching the age of retirement.

Today's seniors will not personally benefit from these changes, but as Wade Poziomka, CARP's director for policy, has explained:

> CPP enhancement is important to CARP's membership because they recognize the challenges that young people face today when it comes to savings.... With less access to workplace pension plans, a CPP that meets the needs of Canadians today is so crucial.

The federal and provincial governments are to be commended for having reached the agreement that led to this bill. I am pleased that the Government of Alberta was among the first to support this critical step forward, contrary to the case with previous governments of our province.

As has been pointed out by previous speakers on the bill, fewer and fewer Canadians are being provided access to workplace pension plans. Where pension plans are provided, they are in many instances offering reduced retirement security.

Additionally, with younger workers increasingly likely to change their jobs many times over their lifetime, and with many, as my colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, has pointed out in this place, facing precarious work, the need for secure and adequate public pensions is becoming increasingly important. Only about a third of those who are eligible to do so actually contribute to RRSPs. It is clear that Canadians need support in saving for retirement. This is not because they are profligate or irresponsible. Young families have to prioritize paying for rent or, if fortunate, a mortgage, paying down substantial and growing student debt, and simply putting food on the table. Later in life, they may be faced with helping to cover significant and growing education costs for their children, and retirements needs for their own parents.

The Canada pension plan has proved to be a reliable and safe way to save for retirement. Why would we not use it as a mechanism to ensure retirement with dignity for future generations?

Concerns have been raised by some about the additional costs to employees and employers of increased contributions to CPP. However, with respect to the costs to small business, we are still awaiting the promised—the long promised, frankly, by both the Conservatives and Liberals—reduced taxes to small business.

The economy has taken a hit recently, particularly in my own province. Therefore, the contribution of seniors to the economy remains essential to all of our communities, in particular to small and medium-sized independent businesses, of which my own riding of Edmonton Strathcona has so many. We need future retirees to be sufficiently economically secure to ensure economic health in the future. The most cost-effective way to do that is to enhance CPP and QPP.

CARP has been among those who have pointed out that the proposals in Bill C-26 only go part way toward a full solution of the problems we face in ensuring retirement with dignity for all Canadians.

It is estimated that we need about 70% of our income at retirement to maintain our standard of living. Currently, CPP and OAS together bring us to about 40% of that. The changes in Bill C-26 would increase that to only 50%, meaning that Canadians will still need to have some kind of workplace or private pension plan to stay ahead, or ability to save.

According to a recent Statistics Canada report, currently about 12%, or 600,000 seniors in Canada, live in poverty. This includes more than one in four seniors, most of whom are women.

● (1040)

In my constituency office, we hear from many facing the challenges of insufficient income to pay for the basics of life. This is especially true for those relying solely on OAS and GIS. Many of those who are eligible for those benefits are not accessing them because they are either unaware of those benefits or they do not know how to apply.

The question I wish to put to the government is this. Why should seniors have to apply for these payments? Why not issue them automatically to those in need, as is the case with GST credits?

We are also discovering, while checking on applications for constituents, that the processing times for OAS and GIS have exploded. It is now six to eight months, whether they applied before they turned 65 or after. In some cases, they wait a year. In the meantime, the applicants are relying on nothing at all, bare cupboards. It is important to recognize that few seniors are actually receiving the maximum CPP benefits, as meagre as they are.

If they have some RRSPs and decide to cash them in to get by while waiting for OAS or GIS to kick in, they may be penalized in the following year by having the GIS clawed back. We need to end this GIS clawback.

Among the reasons that our offices hear from so many seniors is that it is almost impossible for them to contact a government department employee to discuss their issues. While it may be efficient to have everything online, it does not suit everyone or every situation. Even at Service Canada offices, it is difficult for people to find someone who has access to the files. It is pitiful that seniors cannot call and talk to a real person over the phone about their pensions.

We have waited a long time for the reforms contained in Bill C-26. Let us make sure we take this important step towards ensuring retirement security for the people we represent. Let it not be the last time we look at the issue of pensions or support for seniors in this place. It is time to ensure greater availability of affordable senior housing and care, including home care, palliative care, and pharmacare. Canadian seniors should not live in poverty. It is our responsibility to make sure they do not.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gave a very good speech. The NDP is always very good at bringing forward interesting ideas, and I like hearing about them.

However, I know that the Liberals have reached a good balance when the Conservatives say we have gone way too far and the NDP say we are not going far enough. It is the perfect happy medium, yet again.

Would the member like to comment on that?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, that is simply astounding.

I am sorry, but when it comes to Canadian seniors, a happy medium is just not good enough. Every senior should have the right to retire in dignity. All we are saying is that we appreciate a little increase in CPP. However, let us take these actions that we are recommending on making GIS and OAS readily available, and let us finally act on palliative care, home care, and retiring in dignity.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things the member mentioned right off the top was that young people today are not able to save.

They are not able to save because, in some cases, they do not have a job or are not making enough money. Why does the member think we should be taking more money from them when they are not able to save rather than working to make sure the economy is flourishing?

As the member well knows, in a hot economy in Alberta, we typically make much more than the rest of the country. If we could get the economy rolling again, would the ability to save come back?

● (1045)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is not just the young people who would be contributing to a better CPP at the time of retirement. We are all going to be contributing. I am happy to contribute more so that my niece can retire in dignity in her time. The deductions are proportional to what people are earning.

Frankly, we need greater action so that not just the young people, but so many in my province and across the country, are not relying on precarious work.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP have long advocated for increases in the GIS. While we were thankful to see that 10% increase recently, there is still much more that needs to be done.

We all know that the GIS depends on tax revenues, but some of the arguments I hear from the Conservatives are that they want to increase the TFSA. That is going to have an impact on future revenues upon which the GIS depends. We are going to increase the guaranteed income supplement but take away the revenues it depends on.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on that inconsistent argument.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's intelligent question answers itself. Very few Canadians can actually contribute to a tax- free savings account. Those of us who are well paid are fortunate that we can contribute. I am pleased that the government is limiting those contributions so that there are more dollars available. We can provide support to those who cannot afford to contribute, so that they too can retire in dignity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we very much appreciate the fact that the New Democrats are supporting at least some aspects of the budget in regard to the increase to the GIS. It is also important that we acknowledge that the Liberal government is also reducing the age of retirement from 67 to 65. We have three public foundational pension programs. All three of them have been dealt with in a very positive way in the last 12 months by this government.

I wonder if the member might want to comment on how important it is that Canadians recognize there has been significant movement in this last year, more so than in the previous 10 years, on three very important social programs that Canadians truly love.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member and his party for bringing forward these changes, but I would like to see far more changes. We know we have had a lot of promises about additional changes coming forward, possibly after the next election. We welcome this change, but I ask that the Liberals please take action on the additional changes that we and that seniors have been calling for, for quite some time.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it might be helpful, or perhaps even instructive, if I prefaced my remarks by sharing with my colleagues the definition of a tax. A tax is defined as a “compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions”.

I would suggest that anyone with a reasonable outlook would know that hiking the CPP premiums is a form of taxation. It is in effect a payroll tax.

I would argue that raising taxes in times of a sluggish economy, in times of the weak economy we are experiencing here today in Canada, is absolutely the wrong thing to do. Raising taxes would have negative impacts on the Canadian economy. For example, it would restrict and reduce the ability of businesses to reinvest in their businesses. It would reduce the ability of Canadians to have more take-home pay, and it most certainly would reduce their ability to add to their savings. It would reduce the amount of money they would be able to save.

It is simply the wrong approach to take. This payroll tax is regressive. It harms employers and employees alike. Most particularly, it is harmful to small businesses.

Let me share a small story from just a few weeks ago. I happened to be in Thunder Bay on some business. Since I had never been to Thunder Bay before, I went out for dinner to a restaurant that night with a colleague. I had a lovely dinner. Following dinner, the business owner and I engaged in a conversation. Once he found out I was a member of Parliament, he wanted to talk about the proposed hike in CPP premiums. He told me his profit margin was so skinny that any increase to the CPP premiums would result in only two things. One, he would be looking at a negative profit for the year, which might result in his closing his doors; or two, he would be forced to lay off employees. Neither of those two options was particularly attractive to this young employer. He said he had a business partner in another restaurant in Edmonton who was facing exactly the same situation.

I know it does not matter whether one is a small business owner in Surrey, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Thunder Bay, Ontario; or Corner Brook, Newfoundland, because this is a problem for all small business owners.

The frustrating thing about this is there is no need to increase CPP premiums. The government's stated objective is to allow Canadians in their retirement years to retire more comfortably. However, the statistics do not indicate there is a problem today. Statistics indicate that fewer than 4% of seniors are living on a lower income, or below the poverty line. That is a great change from many decades ago. In fact, in 1970, 29% of seniors were living below the poverty line, so we have made great strides in the decades since 1970.

Additionally, statistics indicate that Canadians are saving more money today. In 1990, Canadians saved slightly more than 7.5% of their income. Today, it is almost twice that. Canadians are saving over 14% of their take-home pay, or at least their gross income, and putting it into savings vehicles like RRSPs, TFSAs, and the like.

We are making progress on that, so for the government to say it is doing this out of necessity is, frankly, disingenuous at the very least.

The government appears to be trying to create a solution for a problem that does not exist. The irony of all of this is that because of the government's reckless, out of control spending, the reality is that the government is creating a problem for which there is no solution, because of the billions of dollars of debt it is incurring and throwing upon the backs of taxpayers. It has no solution for getting out of debt. There is no plan to get back to balance.

● (1050)

It appears that the government's economic plan, if we want to call it that, is following very closely the path of the previous Ontario governments of McGuinty and, currently, Premier Wynne. That disastrous economic plan has resulted in the Province of Ontario, on a per capita basis, being more indebted than any jurisdiction in the world. What is even more frightening is the fact that two of the main architects of the disastrous economic policy of Ontario were Gerald Butts and Katie Telford, who are now two of the main economic advisers to the Prime Minister. I would hate to see these two do to Canada what they have done to Ontario, but that is certainly what appears to be happening.

However, I think there are alternatives to what the government is planning and proposing with Bill C-26. I have always thought it is instructive and helpful if opposition members, rather than just criticizing the government, offer alternatives or things the government could at least consider to replace flawed legislation—and Bill C-26 truly is flawed. My suggestions to the government would not cost the taxpayer a nickel.

The first suggestion I would make is this. Why does the government not work with its provincial and territorial counterparts and encourage them to add financial literacy to the K-to-12 educational curriculum? I think it would be extremely helpful for young people to learn why they need to save for retirement. It would helpful for them to learn how to save for retirement, to learn about the investment and savings vehicles that are available in Canada today, so that when they finally enter the workforce, they have a plan, or at least have charted out a course of action, to be able to work their lives and then retire with dignity. That no-cost item would, I believe, be extremely helpful.

The second thing is again a very simple concept. Of course, I believe it is totally alien to the government's thinking, but it would not cost the taxpayers a nickel, and it is simply to lower taxes. Do not raise taxes, but lower taxes. Allow Canadians to take more money home with them. Put more money in their jeans. Put more money into savings vehicles. At the same time, lowering taxes would stimulate the economy.

Our previous government had a low-tax, high-productivity agenda. It resulted in having the lowest tax regime in 50 years. What was the result? Well, we created 1.3 million net new jobs from the height of the recession until the day we left office. Why? It is because lowering taxes increases productivity. That is a concept the current government is totally unaware of. Bill C-26 is totally opposed to lowering taxes, because this bill would raise taxes.

For those reasons, and some of the others I articulated in the few moments I had for my address, my colleagues and I in Her Majesty's loyal opposition will be vociferously opposing Bill C-26.

● (1055)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have heard is a message from the darkest heart of the Conservative core.

We have had a situation in the last 10 years in which 85 families in this country have had more wealth than 20 million Canadians. Those are the people who, yes, have been able to save. Their savings rate has gone up and, yes, it pulls up the national average. However, we have also had 10 years where we have relied on average Canadian citizens going further and further into debt to bolster the Canadian economy. Therefore, there is no money for fancy TFSAs, except at the top of the elite 1% of 1%.

The previous member did not respond to my question, and so I ask again, what about the 60% of Canadians in the private sector who, even though they have a job, do not have a company pension plan? What do we do for them?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, outside of the fact there were a great many factual inaccuracies in my colleague's presentation and question, I will deal with the last part of his question first.

While it is true that many Canadians do not have a Canadian pension plan, the fact of the matter is that they should be in a position where they have made their own retirement plans and own retirement and savings decisions. As I pointed out during my presentation, fewer than 4% of Canadians are living on a low-income, and more and more Canadians are saving more and more of their money on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis.

For the member to suggest for one second that it is a required course of action for the government to raise taxes, for the government to impose its will on Canadians on how they should be saving, is absolutely ludicrous.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan will have three minutes and 15 seconds for questions when we come back from question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

HYDROELECTRICITY

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know things are pretty bad when an ultra-federalist Liberal Party of Quebec minister like Jean-Marc Fournier says that Ottawa's announcement of a $3-billion loan guarantee for the Newfoundland and Labrador hydro project is inexplicable and unacceptable. That is what the Bloc Québécois has been saying for weeks.

We were hoping to prevent Quebeckers' money from being used against Quebec's economic interests yet again. Well, now it is official. Ottawa is setting up unfair competition against Hydro-Québec. As usual, federalist MPs from Quebec, be they Conservative, NDP, or Liberal, are putting Canada first.

Here in the House, 68 federalist MPs from Quebec are scuttling Quebec's national and economic interests and betraying the will of Quebeckers.

Federalism is costing us more and more—

● (1100)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Scarborough Centre.

* * *

[*English*]

PROJECT TORONTO WELCOMES

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an amazing group of people that is making a difference in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

The more than 30 members of Project Toronto Welcomes came together through Facebook out of a desire to do something concrete and practical to help ease the humanitarian crisis in Syria. The group has raised over $100,000 to support a large Syrian family and has been busy with dinners, comedy shows, and good old-fashioned bake sales.

I recently had a chance to join Project Toronto Welcomes at a very successful fundraising concert, headlined by a great Canadian artist, Jim Cuddy.

There are groups like Project Toronto Welcomes across Canada that are making a difference. I ask the House to join me in saluting all these amazing volunteers who make us proud to be Canadians.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT IN VEGREVEILLE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister does not care about killing jobs in town by closing the Vegreville immigration centre, maybe he will care about the social impact. Seventy-six per cent of CPC Vegreville employees are women. Therefore, he is ripping the mothers, daughters, babas, the volunteers, and the leaders out of town. Everyone will be hurt by this edict.

CPC Vegreville employees raise money every year during the Government of Canada workplace charitable campaign. This year, they raised over $12,000 in one month. These donations went to the Vegreville food bank; Vegreville breakfast club; and Vegreville KidSport, which helps disadvantaged kids join teams in town. Funds also went to VALID Association, which helps people with disabilities find work and housing and live in dignity. It has partnered with CPC Vegreville for many years. This bond is a model for all of Canada. On top of this, employees have raised over $300,000 for United Way since 1994.

Charities and local groups will suffer. This edict will hurt the most vulnerable. The minister should reverse it immediately.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JACQUES VIGER, JOHN DUBEAU AND ROMÉO ROCK

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is next week.

I rise to pay tribute to three veterans from my region who passed away in 2016. These inspiring Canadians fought for our country and to defend the values we uphold.

I wish to salute the memory of Jacques Viger of Nominingue, who passed away on October 17 at the age of 93. In 1944, Mr. Viger was 19 years old and a soldier with the Royal 22nd Regiment when he suffered serious injuries to both legs in Italy.

[*English*]

I want to pay homage to John Dubeau of Arundel, who fought across western Europe in the Second World War. He was decorated by both Canada and France. Always a personality, he left us on August 17, at the ripe young age of 101.

[*Translation*]

I also salute the memory of Roméo Rock of Saint-Faustin—Lac-Carré, who passed away on July 23 at the age of 89. He gave two years of his life to military service in 1944 and 1945.

I want to pay homage to all veterans from the Laurentian region and across the country. Lest we forget.

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SAINT-HYACINTHE—BAGOT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to represent a riding that is home to dynamic small and medium-sized businesses that are constantly innovating.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's ranking of Canada's top entrepreneurial cities, Saint-Hyacinthe is the sixth best city in Quebec to start up and develop a business, and the 20th in Canada.

Success like that is not achieved single-handedly; rather, it is thanks to partnerships among the chambers of commerce and economic development of two RCMs, namely Maskoutains and Acton, as well as the Saint-Hyacinthe Technopole and the Société d'aide au développement de la collectivité d'Acton. Businesses in my riding are widely recognized for their success.

In the agrifood sector, we have businesses like Barry Callebaut, Brookside, Liberté, Exceldor, Baxters, Saputo, Agropur, Jefo, and Lassonde, to name a few. In furniture manufacturing, we have Dutailier Group and Groupe Lacasse in Saint-Pie, while Acton is home to businesses like Beaulieu, Airboss, Roski Composites, and Burnbrae Farms.

I am very proud of them all.

* * *

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by congratulating my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on his announcement of $2 billion over the next 10 years for rural communities across Canada.

This $2 billion in infrastructure funding demonstrates how our government is committed to a promising future for Canada's small towns and villages. It is an investment that builds on the $500 million that budget 2016 allocated over five years for rural high-speed Internet access. Our government is listening to folks who live outside the urban setting, and we are supporting sustainable rural development across Canada.

However, after one year in office, this government's work is far from done. Along with my colleagues, I am working to overcome the previous Conservative government's legacy of de-funding and shutting down the rural secretariat in 2013. There must be an institutional mechanism within the Government of Canada to ensure that all federal departments take into consideration rural realities, to coordinate across departments, to invest in small local businesses, and to create a dialogue with stakeholders in the smallest of Canadian towns.

I am confident our government will deliver a vision of rural-urban complementarity where the resources of—

● (1105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I was elected as a member of Parliament, I was a journalist for 30 years. One of my most rewarding assignments involved commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-Day. I accompanied hundreds of Canadian and American D-Day vets aboard the *QE2* to revisit the beaches of Normandy.

On that trip, I made friends with a veteran named Paul Lefaivre of Edmonton. He was just 20 years old when he answered the call of duty and landed on Gold Beach. He was just a kid, who answered the call to serve his country.

Paul taught me a lot on that trip. He taught me about bravery, about love of country, and about duty. I am inspired by his generation and how they responded when duty called.

I kept in touch with Paul. He is 93 years old now. Just this week, he told me his strong religious faith gets him through the day.

Remembrance Day is just around the corner. Today, I would ask members of this House to salute Paul and all the veterans who have served the greatest country in the world, Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work done over the past few months that culminated in the signing of a comprehensive economic and trade agreement that will protect the environment and workers, while creating bright future prospects for the middle class.

Thanks to this progressive agreement, Canada will have access to a market of more than 500 million consumers in the European Union. Many businesses in the riding of Saint-Jean will benefit from this historic treaty. Gaining preferential access to this market will translate into creating good jobs for Canadians.

The dynamic negotiations and the work done by the Minister of International Trade mobilized the European Union, federal and provincial politicians, as well as civil society. These considerable efforts brought together the necessary forces to make Canada a key trading partner with Europe.

I hope that these final steps will lead to the implementation of an agreement that benefits all Canadians.

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[*English*]

HINDU ENCYCLOPEDIA

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise today and recognize a constituent of mine, Dr. Madhav Sinha, who recently helped complete a one-of-a-kind literary masterpiece, the Hindu encyclopedia.

This 17,000 page, 11 volume collection, is a first of its kind in English, taking over 20 years and more than a thousand scholars to complete. It explores Hinduism's religious, philosophical, and cultural ideas, as well as its place in Indian history and the history of South Asian peoples across the world.

Dr. Sinha was in charge of quality, ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the encyclopedia's references. To ensure this vast work reaches all audiences, there are plans to translate it into Hindi and make it available online.

I wish my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Sinha on this wonderful achievement.

Bahut bahut dhanyavaad, Dr. Madhav Sinha.

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REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day draws near, I would like to congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion General Stewart Branch #4 in Lethbridge on its 90th anniversary. This impressive legacy of service is certainly something worth celebrating.

I would like to thank the legion for providing support to our veterans and for promoting the importance of honouring those who fought and those who continue to fight for the sake of our great country.

On this Remembrance Day, I would also like to thank and honour the veterans of Lethbridge. I thank them for their dedication and service. I thank them for their selfless act of service on behalf of their neighbours. I thank them for enduring hardship and risk so we might live in peace. I am grateful for their courage, and we honour the sacrifices they have made.

Lest we forget.

● (1110)

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize veterans who served and fought for freedom around the world.

Remembrance Day marks the anniversary of the Armistice in Europe, which ended the First World War in 1918. The First World War was to be the war to end all wars, and as history has shown, peace has not yet been realized.

I am honoured to attend Remembrance Day services in my riding in Kettleby, hosted by the Kettleby Cemetery, and at the Schomberg Cenotaph, hosted by the Schomberg Lions and the Schomberg Agricultural Society.

[*Translation*]

In honour of their sacrifices, we must continue to work toward a more peaceful world.

[*English*]

We made a vow to always remember. Lest we forget.

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ABILITY FIRST

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in this place today to tell members about an organization that is near and dear to my heart in my home town of London, Ontario.

Ability First is an organization that brings together businesses to share best practices and experiences related to hiring and retaining persons with disabilities.

I was on the founding board of Ability First 10 years ago, and yesterday it held its annual award breakfast. I am once again humbled by the incredible work businesses in London are doing by hiring for Ability First.

Many employers now realize it is good business to hire someone with a disability. We know that when we hire a person with a disability, we are taking on a devoted individual who will work tirelessly.

This year, three London businesses were honoured: Pets 4 Life, Valu-mart on Oxford Street, and Spectra Venue Management Budweiser Gardens. All of these employers are fine examples of how hiring for Ability First can make all the difference, not only to a person with disabilities but to the general workforce as well.

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VETERANS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the next week, millions of Canadians will gather at cenotaphs and memorial squares from St. John's to Victoria. They will gather in silence and while many will cry, all will be thankful.

There are, however, a great many of our veterans who will suffer in silence next week, as they do every day, haunted by what they had to deal with in the service of their country. They need not be silent, and my message today to veterans is that there is help if they seek it and it is okay to ask for help.

As a country, we have come a long way to end the stigma and barriers related to mental health and suicide. Canadians are good with the fact that we are having a national conversation about this, and it is okay to talk about it as individuals.

Canada owes our veterans, and we must do much more to help our veterans and their families, suffering from the effects of occupational stress injuries, PTSD, mental health issues, suicide, and homelessness.

* * *

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we honour our veterans for their courage, service and sacrifice, men and women in uniform who have answered the call and stood their ground to defend our democracy.

We must remember our veterans who have given their lives in times of war and also those who have served our country in times of peace.

We, as Canadians, are people of peace. Internationally, Canada stands as beacon of democracy. It is because of our veterans that Canada remains this way. For their service, their sacrifice, for our freedom, we thank them.

On November 11, I encourage all hon. members and Canadians to take a moment to remember, to share a family story, to shake a veteran's hand, to observe the clock striking 11 o'clock. Understand that our peace is not without sacrifice. Lest we forget.

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INCUBATOR SEED FARM

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, I had the pleasure of visiting the first of its kind in Canada, incubator seed farm. Located in the beautiful Cowichan Valley, this farm will focus specifically on training new seed farmers.

A secure, diverse, and regionally adapted seed supply is essential to a community's food security. The Cowichan incubator seed farm will host aspiring farmers who will undergo a year of education and training in the basics of organic farming and seed production. The result will be skilled seed producers ready to contribute to our local seed capacity.

This project will cover all aspects of farming, from local food production, processing and distribution to business planning, marketing and sales.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the staff and board of the Cowichan Green Community who brought this important project to life.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a former commanding officer of the Régiment de la Chaudière, I got to spend some time with the heroes who sacrificed everything to spend years training in order to be ready to join the invasion of Europe on the beaches of Normandy.

These heroes did not see themselves as such. To them, the real heroes were the fallen comrades in Flanders fields. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians from across the country and from all backgrounds, answered the call to defend liberty against oppression.

Those who served under the flag, those who worked in the arms industry to support the war effort, and the country as a whole were united in this fight. When the times called for it, an entire generation sacrificed everything.

As Canadians, we have a duty to remember these heroes. Lest we forget.

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LIBERAL GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to mark the first anniversary of our government. As the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, I would like to congratulate our Prime Minister and all my colleagues in the House for their excellent work.

In the last election, Canadians opted for real change, which is now under way as a result of a new relationship with First Nations, and the Canada child benefit, which helps those families most in need. In my riding, there are 10,000 families receiving this benefit.

[*English*]

There will be support for students and seniors, and historic investments in infrastructure in Canada's transportation network. I am proud of this government's accomplishments over the past year, but there is more to be done. I look forward to working with all members to continue implementing the real change that Canadians voted for.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign last year, the Prime Minister sugar-coated the pill for everyone by talking about infrastructure investments that would justify a deficit. Once again, we are going to get another list of the many things that went wrong. In October, Canada lost 23,000 full-time jobs because of the government's decisions.

What is their plan? Are they going to do the same thing hoping for different results, or will they present us with a more realistic plan that actually works?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we were elected, we have introduced the most ambitious infrastructure plan in Canada's history. We are talking about total investments of $187 billion, with $81 billion invested over the next few years. More importantly, since taking office we have approved more than 950 projects; 750 are part of the first phase, and 65% of these are currently under construction. There will be better transportation systems and cleaner water for our children.

[*English*]

Conservatives like to talk. They like to talk and talk and talk. We prefer to act.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that borrowing billions of dollars would create jobs for Canadians, but we just learned this morning that 23,000 full-time jobs were lost in October.

Will the Prime Minister finally get a plan to create jobs, not just deficits?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the job survey that came out today is a snapshot of time. On the numbers for October, there were some positive aspects in there. There have been increases in employment, and the participation rate has gone up as well. Of the jobs created, two-thirds of them were in the private sector. There were 24,000 well-paying construction jobs created. I would think that has something to do with the investments that have been made in infrastructure. They will continue to grow. We know that the economy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we were in office, we implemented the two largest infrastructure plans in the country while balancing the budget. On April 1, 2014, we launched a $70-billion project. It takes two to three years to get infrastructure projects started. We are the ones who did the groundwork for the projects that the Liberals are announcing. It is easy for them brag about that today. That being said, they are going to fund their infrastructure investments with a multi-billion dollar deficit. We never did that.

They are creating deficits for the future and they are borrowing money, but no actual work is being done. What is more, winter is on the way. I look forward to seeing how they will start digging in January.

● (1120)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean asked me that question. If he would like to see work being done, I invite him to come to Montreal.

I would like to remind my colleague of something that he is well aware of. I am proud of this government's 2016 fall economic statement. It is the next step in our plan. The first step was to invest in Canadian families. That is why we were elected.

We announced historic investments, things that the Conservatives were unable to accomplish. We will invest over $180 billion in infrastructure. We are going to create an investment agency in Canada and attract talent. That is how we are going to grow—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' big spending plan is failing. There has not been a single full-time job created. What is worse, the Liberals are borrowing an extra $32 billion to finance their out-of-control spending. This is not just a little deficit. This is serious, long-term debt that we are handing our children and grandchildren.

When will the Liberals stop their out-of-control spending and start listening to the concerns of Canadians who need jobs today, full-time jobs?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing I can assure everyone is that we will continue to invest. We will continue investing in Canadians, and we will continue investing in the economy. I am very proud of the fall economic statement. This is great news for Canadians. We decided to invest in creating jobs in this country and to improving the quality of life of Canadians. That goes to infrastructure, that goes to attracting investment in our country, that goes to attracting global skills in this country. That is how to grow an economy.

I will point out that even Madam Lagarde of the IMF said that she hopes what we are doing goes viral in the world. We will continue.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not buying that. They are also not buying the government's not guilty plea on their cash for access fundraising schemes.

Canadians are expected to obey laws and follow the rules, but they know that what the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers are doing is wrong.

Canadians want to know, why do the Liberals always think they can get away with breaking the rules? Why does it always seem that there is one standard for Liberals and their friends, and then a completely higher one for everyone else?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to remind Canadians that at the federal level, we have some of the strictest rules and principles around fundraising at any level.

The Conservatives talk about doing fundraising differently. They did. They chose to appoint people—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry, I was having a hard time hearing the hon. government House leader because of the noise. I would appreciate it if members kept it down. It would make it easier for me to hear. I would like to thank the members.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party chose to name people like Irving Gerstein to the Senate, and charge them with the responsibility of fundraising for the Conservative Party.

We have a different approach to the Senate. We have a different approach to actually following the rules. I will repeat, the rules are some of the strongest in the nation.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Federal Court ruled that CSIS has been illegally storing sensitive personal information on untold numbers of Canadians—Canadians who the spy agency itself has determined pose no threat.

This is a gross abuse of power and an unjustifiable intrusion into the privacy of Canadians. The minister just admitted that he was told of this abuse of powers. Does he really believe it is enough to just advise the review committee? Why were Canadians not told immediately?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue was first raised in the report of the Security Intelligence Review Committee for the 2014-15 calendar year. It relates to a period long before this government came into office. That report was tabled in Parliament on January 28. That is the time when the public was alerted to the issue.

Thereafter, CSIS worked with the Department of Justice to better inform the court. Obviously the court's decision was rendered yesterday. We are not appealing. We accept that judgment, absolutely.

● (1125)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, CSIS, the spy agency, set up the illegal program a decade ago and hid it from the court.

It is clearer now than ever that we need a parliamentary watchdog with real teeth. The government's bill, with its censored, after-the-fact review committee, just will not cut it.

The NDP has proposed concrete, balanced amendments to ensure the committee can provide real oversight and get access to all the documents it needs to do the job. Will the government accept our amendments to create real parliamentary oversight of Canada's spy agency?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the committee, we have already indicated that we are willing to consider all constructive ideas and amendments.

However, I would point out that the powers presently drafted in Bill C-22 do provide the committee of parliamentarians with the authority to examine current operations.

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[*Translation*]

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for several days now, the NDP has been asking exactly how many journalists the RCMP and CSIS are spying on.

When questioned about the Federal Court's decision on the collection of personal information, the director of CSIS said that he could not comment on operational details. Journalists across the country want an answer to this question.

This is an opportunity for the minister to give the people a clear answer. How many journalists are being spied on?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the director of CSIS was very clear, and the day before that the commissioner of the RCMP was very clear, in terms of the troubling issues that are being reported upon in Quebec in the last number of days. Both the commissioner and the director have said that is not happening at the federal level.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only acceptable answer is “zero”.

However, neither the minister nor the Prime Minister can tell the people that no journalists are being spied on. When questioned about this, both the Minister of Public Safety and the Prime Minister replied that safeguards to protect freedom of the press are in place.

What are those safeguards?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to correct the record so it is very clear, both the director of CSIS and the commissioner of the RCMP have said clearly the answer is “none”.

In terms of the review of the safeguards that are in place, the ministerial directives are very clear and we have already indicated, long before this controversy arose, that we are reviewing all of those directives to make sure that they safeguard the rights and interests and freedoms of Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning's jobs numbers do not bode well for the coming year for Canadians who want to work. Apparently, 23,000 full-time jobs were lost.

[*English*]

It is bigger than a snapshot. This is a reality. My colleague from Cape Breton—Canso said this is just a snapshot. This is a reality.

[*Translation*]

Meanwhile, the government keeps borrowing and will grow the deficit by $32 billion over the next five years.

When will the government see that its plan is not working and will be disastrous for Canadians?

[*English*]

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we were so eager to answer the question, we all rose at the same time to explain to the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, for whom we have enormous respect, how our plan is going. Let me remind him of a few things, because sometimes he tends to forget these things, but let me say what we have done in our budget.

We promised to help seniors: we did help seniors. We promised to help students: we did help students. We promised to help families: we did help families. And now we are continuing investing in infrastructure, attracting investment in Canada, and investing in talent. That is what confident and ambitious countries are doing, and we will continue to do just that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that this government is borrowing huge amounts of money and running up colossal deficits. We are talking about deficits totalling nearly $150 billion over its term. That is unacceptable.

It is funny, because those folks are borrowing billions of dollars as though money grew on trees, which it makes no sense, but when it comes time to ask Canadians to invest in their mortgage, the Liberals are making things harder for young families, for those who are starting out in life, and for Canadian workers.

Why is the government borrowing billions of dollars on the one hand, while on the other hand asking Canadians to show some restraint when it comes time to borrow?

"Do as I say, not as I do". Is that the Liberals' policy?

● (1130)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question. If the opposition could do as we say, everything would be fine.

What we are saying is that we have tightened the rules around the mortgage market because we know that, for Canadian families, buying a home is probably the largest investment they will make in their lifetimes. That is why the Minister of Finance's first responsibility is to ensure long-term stability in the housing market in Canada.

That is exactly what we did in December. That is exactly what we did with the new rules we announced. Canadian families understand this, because it is in their—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please.

The hon. member for Carleton.

* * *

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's Statistics Canada report on jobs brought more bad news. There are now 23,000 fewer Canadians working full-time from September to October; 25,000 fewer manufacturing jobs today than a year ago when the Liberal Party took government; and 25,000 fewer young people are employed full-time as work has become more scarce and precarious.

The Liberals promised deficits and jobs. We have the deficits, where are the jobs?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, certainly the investments we are making are starting to show that kind of increase in jobs. Among young Canadians, we have seen an increase of about 26,000 jobs. What we know is that back in October 2015, Statistics Canada started publishing trend lines, and what we have seen over the last four months is job opportunities trending up in this country. The investments this government is making are starting to pay dividends.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually the PBO's report on jobs showed precisely the opposite, that Canada is performing below the trend line in every single area, and nowhere worse than with males. In fact, 70,000 fewer men are working full-time today than a year ago. The number of unemployed men is up to 7.1%. That means dads with nowhere to go in the morning and no paycheque to bring home at the end of the month. That is because of the big losses in energy and manufacturing sectors, two sectors that will be hardest hit by payroll and carbon taxes.

Knowing that, will the government announce today its plans to cancel future tax increases on manufacturing and energy jobs in this country?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said to my hon. colleague, we have been making investments. In talking about growing the economy, I spoke with a number of men today from the construction sector, who like the investments we have been making in infrastructure. We are putting tradespeople back to work with the investments we are making in infrastructure.

Having seen the downturn in commodity prices, they are happy that our government is making those targeted investments in infrastructure so we can get tradespeople back to work.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, there is one project with shovels in the ground.

The Liberals' economic plan has failed. The deficit has gone north of $30 billion, job growth has gone south of the border, they have decimated oil and gas jobs in the west and ignored opportunities to create jobs in the east. The unemployment rate in my riding is now at an all-time high, and actual infrastructure implementation is at an all-time low. The Liberals' moral compass is broken, along with their promises, so why can the government not see that real change is lost in space?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, real change is really on this side of the aisle.

It is really clear that real change is about investing in Canadians. That is what confident and ambitious countries are doing. We are in 2016. Ambitious countries invest in their population. They invest to create jobs and invest in the future to improve the quality of life. That is why we have announced more than $180 billion in infrastructure spending to bring back jobs in the country, to invest in our future in public transit and green infrastructure, and to invest in our cities and social housing. That is what Canadians expect in 2016. That is what we are delivering.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister said all staff at the Vegreville immigration centre will be "guaranteed jobs in Edmonton". However, officials say more than half will not be covered to move, some will not even get an offer at all, and others cannot afford to commute.

The minister's answers keep changing and contradicting officials and others. He has no clue. He is killing hundreds of jobs and ripping apart this community. Does he not care about rural Albertans? Will he not stop this edict immediately?

● (1135)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Vegreville is not one of job loss, but of job maintenance, and in fact job creation. The individuals in Vegreville will have their positions secured in Edmonton. In addition, in moving the processing centre to Edmonton we will increase efficiencies, reduce processing times, and make that centre more able to employ more Albertans.

What we are doing for the people of Vegreville is reaching out to the member opposite and the mayor the town to facilitate that transition, and we continue to look forward to executing that in the coming days and months ahead.

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, stakeholders from the agriculture sector were clear: as long as there is a labour shortage, there will be problems. Our farmers are losing millions of dollars with every harvest, but that was to be expected.

Instead of taking concrete action on this, the Liberal government holds endless consultations. In the meantime, 14 foreign workers were arrested in Victoriaville on Wednesday and the farmers are facing criminal charges.

When will the Liberal government do something about the labour shortage in the agriculture sector?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector needs reliable access to labour.

In many regions, temporary foreign workers make up a significant part of the workforce for some industries.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with its federal partners to ensure that the policies and programs pertaining to the labour force take those needs into account.

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SHIPPING

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for more than a decade the Liberals and the Conservatives have done nothing about the renewal of the icebreaker fleet. This is now jeopardizing the St. Lawrence Seaway and the prosperity of the regions that depend on it. It is not just local stakeholders who are worried and asking for the government to intervene. A confidential internal report by Fisheries and Oceans Canada deems the situation to be critical.

What will the minister do to quickly resolve this situation and guarantee that the Seaway remains open during the winter?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by reassuring the marine industry, the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation, and all users of the Seaway that the Coast Guard takes icebreaking operations very seriously and provides exemplary service.

The Coast Guard meticulously maintains its fleet of icebreakers, and we are going to invest in modernizing and extending the lifespan of this fleet in order to ensure that they service the Seaway until new vessels are built.

The Coast Guard and stakeholders in the Seaway have an excellent working relationship. We are investing in our fleet so that vessels operate longer during peak periods and to meet the needs of our economy.

* * *

[*English*]

ETHICS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at last Thursday's ethics committee meeting, I asked the Commissioner of Lobbying what she thought of cash for access fundraising involving lobbyists. Her answer was pretty clear. She said:

> ...I think we're seeing in the media and so on that this is an issue that's potentially creating real or apparent conflicts of interest, which is why I'm looking into it.

If cash for access fundraising with lobbyists does not break any rules, then why is the Commissioner of Lobbying investigating them?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind all members of the House that when it comes to the rules and fundraising, the rules are some of the strictest across the country. Indeed, it is true that federal politics is subject to some of the strictest political financing legislation and regulations in the country. When it comes to accepting donations from trade associations, or businesses, or anything else, we cannot do that federally.

The Conservatives do have a very different approach when it comes to fundraising, because they chose to appoint people like Irving Gerstein to the Senate to do their fundraising.

We will not do that because we support the independence of the Senate. We will reform the Senate, and we will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Lobbying repeatedly said that she is looking into cash for access fundraising involving lobbyists and Liberal cabinet ministers. She said that when a lobbyist organizes a fundraiser, a sense of obligation is created.

It is time for the government House leader to stop reciting irrelevant talking points. Why does she defend cash for access when the practice is clearly under investigation?

● (1140)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that this government engages and speaks to Canadians and that we welcome any perspectives because, as our Prime Minister says, we are here to serve Canadians and to ensure that this government is working hard for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it.

All members of Parliament, in all parties, fundraise and all abide by the exact same rules. When the rules are followed, no conflicts of interest can exist.

We know how the Conservatives fundraise. We will not follow their directives, that is for sure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 10 years after the Gomery Commission exposed for all Canadians to see the culture of corruption that pervaded the Liberal government of the day, a central figure in the sponsorship scandal and close friend of the Liberal Party has been found guilty of influence peddling, forgery, and money laundering.

Will the government learn from the past and finally follow the ethics rules imposed by its own Prime Minister when it comes to fundraising?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all federal procurement processes are carried out in an ethical manner that protects the interests of Canadians.

We need to ensure that all procurement processes are open and accountable. That is what our government promised, and that is what we are going to do.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for weeks, the Liberals have repeated the same talking points about their elite and exclusive cash for access fundraising schemes. Canadians do not believe the Liberals' excuses.

Just a year ago, the Prime Minister ordered his ministers to obey his own “Open and Accountable Government” rules, but the finance minister, the innovation minister, the trade minister, the natural resources minister, and even the Prime Minister have completely ignored them.

Will the Prime Minister stop using government positions to fill the Liberal Party coffers?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to remind Canadians that, at the federal level, we have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government.

The fact is that the Conservative Party chose to name people like Irving Gerstein to the Senate and charge them with the responsibility—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am sorry. I am having a hard time hearing the hon. government House leader. I would appreciate it if we just kept the sound down on both sides.

The hon. government House leader.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Conservative Party chose to name people like Irving Gerstein to the Senate and charge them with the responsibility of fundraising for the Conservative Party of Canada.

We have a very different approach to the Senate and fundraising. That is what Canadians expect, and that is exactly what we are delivering.

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[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has failed to respond to requests by the Mikisew Cree First Nation and the McMurray Métis for a federal environmental assessment of an experimental project to extract bitumen.

These communities have raised serious concerns about how the chemicals involved could impact their ground and surface waters and fisheries.

Prime Minister Harper excluded these kinds of projects from federal laws, which the Liberals have yet to reverse.

The government claims to respect the rights and interests of first nations and Métis. So, why has the minister not used her overriding power to order this environmental review?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand today on the first anniversary of our government.

We are working very hard to rebuild trust in our environmental assessment process. We announced transitional principles that govern how our government is going to approach environmental assessments, which includes respecting our obligations to consult and accommodate indigenous people.

We have also launched a review of environmental assessments. I certainly encourage the member opposite and all members to feed into this review, because we need to get environmental assessments right.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Happy anniversary. Mr. Speaker, it is time for all feet on deck over there.

Yesterday the Canadian network on corporate accountability recommended establishing a human rights ombudsperson to oversee international mining operations. Reports document hundreds of incidents of violence associated with Canadian resources extraction companies abroad. New Democrats have long called for an ombudsperson to provide much needed oversight in this sector.

Will the minister admit the current system is broken and support this recommendation to protect human rights?

● (1145)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes very strongly in the importance of corporate social responsibility and the absolute duty of all Canadian companies to respect human rights and their corporate social responsibility when they are working abroad. In fact, our government has a policy that companies found not respecting corporate social responsibility outside of Canada can have the withdrawal of the services of the trade commissioner. This is an issue that we are seized of.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Paris agreement comes into force, far earlier than expected. A year ago, 195 countries came together to tackle climate change.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please update the House on how this historic agreement will support our economy and the environment?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for King—Vaughan and the chair of the House of Commons environment committee for her great question.

I am extremely proud that on the anniversary of our government, the Paris agreement has come into force. The signs of climate change are clear. Climate change is real, it is man made, and the world is taking action now to address it.

We are working hard at home and abroad to tackle climate change and to grow a clean economy.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when asked about his defence minister's comments that Canada will find the root causes of the problems in Africa, the Prime Minister said, “Canada has an awful lot to offer other than just stopping people from shooting at each other”.

The Liberals will be sending our soldiers to some of the most dangerous parts of the world in Africa. When radicalized terrorists start shooting at civilians or at our troops, will they be able to defend themselves, or are they expected to just talk to the jihadists about their feelings or the root causes of the conflict?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wherever we send our troops, we will send them with the appropriate equipment, appropriate training, and robust rules of engagement.

When it comes to the root cause, every nation who is looking at conflict right now is talking about the root cause, because we cannot just send our soldiers into harm's way all the time. We need to start preventing conflict to reduce these things so that we do not have to send our troops into harm's way and eventually have to send these tragic messages to families that their soldiers have been hurt.

We will look at all aspects of this, and we will take a whole-of-government approach to conflict.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister and the minister said that stopping extremist groups from shooting at each other was not the priority, but to me, that is a prerequisite for peace.

The government is about to send our soldiers to Mali to play social worker and talk to extremists. We know how jihadis think. They want to kill all foreign soldiers and infidels.

Will the government send our soldiers on this mission like lambs to the slaughter?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually resent that question.

We will always send our troops with the appropriate equipment and rules of engagement to be able to defend themselves. Our troops have done this with the utmost honour. However, we also need to look at conflict when we send our troops. We need to look at smart power. We need to be able to send our troops in a manner that they can reduce conflict, and our troops have demonstrated this.

Militaries around the world are looking at conflict. They are looking at the root causes, because our troops, while they are ready for the threat, can also help reduce the threat as well.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, veterans are talking about the lackadaisical approach by the Minister of Veterans Affairs. The minister is way behind schedule on the 23 or so priorities promised in his mandate letter. So far, only two of the promises have been implemented after a year in office. The minister and government's inaction is hurting veterans who have sacrificed so much for all Canadians.

It looks like veterans were only a priority for the Liberals at election time. When will the minister get the job done?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, doing a better job of looking after our veterans is right at the top of our list. We understand the abuse and the neglect that they suffered over the last 10 years, and making some of these changes is going to take time. We have hired new people. We have opened new offices. We have new conversations. We are going to get this mandate letter done and we are going to do it on time.

● (1150)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals campaigned to end legal proceedings against veterans, but the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Prime Minister resumed a court case that was halted by the previous government. It was halted because the previous minister of veterans affairs and current member for Durham told the former prime minister that it was wrong and the court case against veterans needed to stop.

Why will the minister not stop listening to the bureaucrats, show leadership, and tell his Prime Minister to stop fighting veterans in court?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned, there is a lot of work under way in order to improve the services and support we are giving our veterans. It is unfortunate that this group of veterans felt that it had to take the previous government to court in order to do that. It is regrettable that the veterans felt they needed to stay that course, but the thing we need to remember is that it is their absolute right to do so. We are working hard to solve the issues that were brought up and we are going to get them solved.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over half of the strategic investment funding for post-secondary institutions has been announced. There is a 2018 deadline on the money but not a dime has been committed to Manitoba. The Conservative government in Manitoba does not get the importance of investing in post-secondary education for students, for construction workers, or for employers.

The question is this. Are Manitoba's Liberal MPs just going to sit there and watch as a short-sighted government on Broadway passes up funding of up to $100 million for Manitoba? Or are they going to commit to working with Manitoba's post-secondary institutions to make sure that Manitoba gets its fair share of the money before the clock runs out?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member that this government is working very closely, not only with its provincial counterparts but certainly with the great delegation of Manitoba MPs on the government side to make sure that there are going to be some wonderful investments to come into the post-secondary institutions of Manitoba. I ask the hon. member and I ask the House to stay tuned.

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HEALTH

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is cutting critical funding from the fight against HIV/AIDS across rural communities, including my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. This will result in service reductions to HIV prevention and education programs. One organization in my riding, ANKORS, will be forced to lay off experienced staff, and other organizations will lose important resources in the midst of an opioid crisis.

Why is the Minister of Health proceeding with these dangerous cuts, and why are the Liberals walking away from the fight against HIV/AIDS in the B.C. interior?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, HIV and hepatitis C are serious but preventable diseases. The funding that the Public Health Agency of Canada provides to community-based organizations across the country to combat HIV and hepatitis C is staying steady at $26.4 million. There are a number of new organizations that have been invited to submit full proposals. This is part of an open, evidence-based, and transparent process and decisions were made by a committee of technical experts.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Alberta families who have been impacted by the bovine tuberculosis quarantine need some answers. They are in very real danger of missing their one payday of the year. Their family farms are at stake. One of the ranchers affected, Brad Osadczuk, said they are in a lot of trouble. He said, “There’s people’s livelihoods, health and families that are hanging in the balance”.

Can the health minister tell Albertans if all CFIA inspectors available have been deployed to Alberta to help solve this potential disaster?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the health of Canadian families and animal health. To honour that commitment, we have launched an investigation into this matter.

We are acutely aware of the issues facing ranchers who are dealing with bovine tuberculosis. Many of them would probably have sold the affected animals, so they are now coping with unexpected financial constraints. We will make sure that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency does its work as quickly as possible.

We take all of the issues related to disease prevention very seriously, and we hope the disease can be eradicated from our herds.

● (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta is about to face another test. Harsh weather conditions have left hundreds of thousands of acres still to be harvested and Alberta farmers are bracing for the worst. The agriculture minister needs to understand this is a catastrophe for farmers and farm families and they need help.

Will the minister consider flexibility within the advance payment program and the fast-tracking of unharvested crop claims through crop insurance programs?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a grain farmer myself, I understand how important it is for farmers to harvest the fruits of their labour.

We are working on developing the next agricultural policy framework. We have engaged with the provinces and territories to ensure that Canada's agriculture and agrifood sector remains a leader, and we are making progress. Our priorities include business risk management, environmental sustainability, science, research, and innovation.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent years have been tough on farmers in my riding of Yellowhead, especially in Brazeau County. In July of last year, the county declared an agricultural state of disaster due to drought. Earlier this week, constant rain forced Brazeau County to declare another state of agricultural disaster. Up to 75% of local crops remain on the ground.

What is the government planning to provide in income disaster assistance to this vital sector?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already consulted with hundreds of stakeholders, farmers, and Canadians from across the country. Their contributions have been vital to the development of a new framework.

On July 22, 2016, my provincial and territorial colleagues and I issued the Calgary statement. That document outlines the over-arching themes and priorities for the next framework and is based on input from stakeholders.

The Government of Canada will continue working with its provincial and territorial partners and consulting with stakeholders on the key elements that will define the next framework.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Minister of Finance delivered his economic update in which he announced the next part of our historic infrastructure plan.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities explain to us how this additional money will be allocated across the various categories?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It gives me the opportunity to point out that we announced $81 billion in new funding for infrastructure, including $25.3 billion for public transit, $21.9 billion for social infrastructure, and $21.9 billion for green infrastructure. We are adding two categories: $10.1 billion for trade and transport and $2 billion for rural communities. This means more highways, more buses on the roads, better housing for those who need it, and direct support to our rural communities.

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[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the foreign affairs minister and two of his Liberal colleagues held a private round table on appeasing Iran. Two attendees said it was unfairly balanced toward supporters of Iran, stacked in favour of those who want to cozy up to this serial human rights abuser. Missing were critics of Iran's human rights abuses, such as that country's religious minorities: Baha'is, Baluch, and Iranian Kurds.

My question is for the foreign affairs minister. Is this what the Prime Minister means by Canada is back, rewards of embassies for despots, tyrants, and serial human rights abusers?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is open and has met with individuals with a range of views and beliefs, including members of the Baha'i community.

We are committed to step-by-step re-engagement with Iran. Engagement does not mean agreement, but it does give a platform to raise Canadian values, like human rights and the rule of law, as well as consular cases.

The Conservatives seem to want Canada to stand alone, which helps no one, not Canadians, not our allies, and not the Iranian people. We are committed to engagement with our eyes wide open.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, our Prime Minister made a commitment to gender equality by appointing the first gender-balanced cabinet and the first ever full Minister of Status of Women.

Can the parliamentary secretary for Status of Women please inform this House of the accomplishments of our government over the past year on gender equality?

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Our Prime Minister appointed not only a gender-balanced cabinet, but he also appointed a minister dedicated solely to the status of women, a first in the history of Canada. Our government has taken positive steps toward achieving gender equality.

[*English*]

A gender-based violence strategy, an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, gender-based analysis of our policies and all of our future budgets, pay equity legislation, over 3,000 shelter spaces, the Canada child benefit, a framework for early education and child care, and a national poverty reduction strategy.

[*Translation*]

We are just getting started.

* * *

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Development said that "Ethiopia has managed to be a sea of stability in a hostile region". However, Feyisa Lilesa, the Olympic silver medallist from Ethiopia, could not return home after he crossed his arms at the finish line to protest the Ethiopian regime.

Does the minister believe that a government that imprisons, tortures, and kills its own citizens is actually a good government?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to promoting human rights around the world. Our government has never shied away from raising human rights issues at the highest level.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs is embarking on a trip to Africa to make sure that we raise, obviously, the interests of Canadians but also human rights and our consular cases. I do not understand why the previous Conservative government wanted to stand on the sidelines and not raise these issues.

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources stated that he had informed his Quebec counterpart of Ottawa's decision to increase by $2.9 billion the loan guarantee for Newfoundland and Labrador out of courtesy.

I will define the word "courtesy". Courtesy means not being complicit in unfair competition with Hydro-Québec. Courtesy means not using Quebeckers' money to undermine Quebec's interests. Courtesy means respecting the unanimous will of the National Assembly.

How can government members from Quebec accept this direct attack on the interests of their own nation?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the amount provided to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is a commercial loan. Like the Province of Quebec, we recognize the importance of clean energy in the fight against climate change. We are pleased to work with the provinces on energy files.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is throwing another $3 billion into the bottomless pit that is Muskrat Falls: 22 cents per kilowatt hour is a slippery slope. To date, almost $10 billion of taxpayer money has been invested in a project that should never have been started and that will never make a profit.

Meanwhile, the government is not offering a cent to Bombardier, the largest exporter in the manufacturing industry and Quebec's aeronautics flagship, which is developing the best technology project in the history of Quebec and Canada.

How can the government justify investing $10 billion in the Muskrat Falls project, while refusing to give Bombardier a red cent?

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague just said, the Government of Canada is offering Newfoundland and Labrador a commercial loan.

The Government of Canada stands with Quebec. We are making investments in every community.

With regard to the aerospace industry, our government is working closely with Bombardier. We are still holding discussions with the company. As the minister said, we are definitely going to help Bombardier. It is just a matter of time. We are going to stand with the aerospace industry.

* * *

[*English*]

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

The government has committed to improving food security in the north. However, the nutrition north program continues to fail us. The rate of food insecurity in Nunavut is more than four times the national average. The government has stated that the program will be "more transparent, cost effective, and culturally appropriate".

When will Nunavummiut see these changes? Would the minister be willing to consider pilot projects to help her address these program issues?

● (1205)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague would agree that northerners need to have a voice in transforming nutrition north. That is why we have been in consultations with more than 20 communities across the north. We will complete those consultations by November.

We want to look at how we can better support this program to make food more accessible and more affordable. We want to look at better support for hunters and improve access to country foods. We are interested in looking at all options, whether that is a pilot project or some other program that would benefit people in the north.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, there have been 29 deaths by suicide in Nunavut this year. In June, the Prime Minister announced $69 million in funding for immediate action on addressing our suicide crisis; $800,000 has been earmarked for this fiscal year.

The Government of Nunavut has submitted a proposal that is yet to be funded. I believe that this is a result of no clear guidelines or criteria.

Could the Minister of Health designate an individual to meet with the Nunavut government to ensure that this much-needed funding can be utilized before it expires?

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in June, our government announced $69 million in immediate and targeted mental wellness support for first nations and Inuit. Of this, $3.8 million has been allocated to Nunavut over the next three years.

Funding decisions for the three new mobile mental wellness teams were determined in partnership and by consensus with the Government of Nunavut and the Inuit representative body in Nunavut. Senior officials from our department continue to be in regular contact with Nunavut government officials, including on the implementation of this new funding.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): This brings question period to a close.

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct something I said.

I did not mean to mislead my colleagues of the House of Commons, but when I feel passionate about something, I sometimes muddle my words.

In my response, I meant to say that it was not a question of whether we would help Bombardier, but rather how we are going to do it.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled "Agreement on Air Transport between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Republic of Ecuador", done at Ottawa, on June 8, 2016.

As well, I have the "Agreement on Social Security between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Italian Republic", done at Rome on May 22, 1995, and the "Protocol to the Agreement on Social Security between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Italian Republic", done at Rome on May 22, 2003.

Last, I have the "Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of Montenegro", done on May 19, 2016. An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT BOARD

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 42 of the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2015-2016 annual report of the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board.

* * *

● (1210)

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Also, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 84 of the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act annual report.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 19 petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

The committee has studied the bill and has agreed to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and honour to table petition e-394, an electronic petition with over 600 signatures representing almost every province in the country.

The petitioners are calling on the House to support and pass my private members bill, Bill C-267, justice for victims of corrupt foreign officials act (Sergei Magnitsky law), which would provide the government with the tool it needs to take restrictive measures against those who are committing corruption in other countries, like Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and other places, where they are violating human rights, where they are using their positions of influence to garner their own wealth, and often, we see, as we saw with Sergei Magnitsky, where individuals are thrown in jail, tortured, and ultimately murdered because they tried to blow the whistle on corrupt foreign officials.

With this, I hope I get everyone's support for Bill C-267.

SENIORS

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition calling on Parliament to appoint a minister for seniors and to develop a national strategy for seniors, given that this demographic is about to be a very large part of the population in the next two decades.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to introduce a national seniors strategy and appoint a minister for seniors. People want to know they are being heard by their elected representatives, which is why I am proud to present this petition, standing by seniors across Canada who are calling for a national strategy to address the growing problems facing our seniors.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition, signed by Canadians from my riding. Petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and the impact of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impact to public health, especially the well-being of women and girls. As such, the petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

SENIORS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to present a petition asking that Parliament appoint a minister for seniors and develop a national strategy for seniors. I think it is very important that we do this, as we see the lack of leadership and the necessities for seniors in our communities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of the great constituents who reside in Shawnigan Lake in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. The residents of Shawnigan Lake are calling on the Government of Canada to protect the Shawnigan Lake watershed from a contaminated soil dump under the authority of the Fisheries Act. I salute their efforts.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

RADIO FREQUENCIES

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present petition e-406 to the House.

Many Canadians are concerned about radio frequencies. The petitioners are asking the Minister of Health to send a precautionary notice to all power utilities in Canada reminding them that they have the right to establish their own safety protocols. The petitioners are also asking the minister to encourage public utilities to consider less harmful distribution methods in some regions of Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 462 and 476.

[*Text*]

Question No. 462—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren**:

With regard to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what are the details of any studies the government has conducted with regards to the AIIB, including (i) title of study, (ii) subject matter, (iii) findings, (iv) file number, (v) summary of research conducted; (*b*) did any of the studies in (*a*) compare the human rights records, with other international banks such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank; (*c*) if the answer to (*b*) is affirmative, which studies, and what were the findings; (*d*) did any studies in (*a*) compare the environmental records of the AIIB with other international banks; (*e*) if the answer to (*d*) is affirmative, which studies, and what were the findings; (*f*) did any studies in (*a*) compare the social responsibility records of the AIIB with other international banks; (*g*) if the answer to (*f*) is affirmative, which studies, and what were the findings, (*h*) has the government received written assurances that the AIIB will comply with all of the standards set out by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD); and(*i*) if the answer to (*h*) is negative, which OECD standards has the government not received assurances that the AIIB will comply with?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), analysis was conducted internally to assess the feasibility of joining the AIIB as part of a memorandum to cabinet, which is protected under cabinet confidence. As well, Global Affairs Canada, GAC, produced a "Review of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Safeguards: Draft Environmental and Social Framework".

Both the analysis and the study identified potential risks in joining the AIIB at its inception, given the lack of a track record, and flagged areas specific to governance, safeguards, and transparency in procurement and hiring processes. Nevertheless, monitoring over time would be required to ensure that the AIIB effectively implements high social responsibility standards and safeguard policies that would be expected by shareholders.

With regard to (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f), the contents of the memorandum to cabinet are held in confidence and cannot be released.

An assessment was conducted on the AIIB's draft environmental and social standards. The standards cover the following areas: First, social standards and human rights, including social risks and impacts, vulnerable groups, gender, land and natural resource access, and cultural resources under social coverage; and safe working conditions and community health and safety, child labour and forced labour, labour management relationships in private sector operations under working conditions and health and safety. Second, environmental standards, including biodiversity, critical habitats, natural habitats, protected areas, sustainability of land use, climate change, pollution prevention, resource efficiency, greenhouse gases, quantification of greenhouse gas emissions.

There were no direct comparisons of human rights or the environmental record with the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank, or any other international financial institutions, IFIs, given that the AIIB only approved its first project in April 2016 and has not yet developed a record in these areas. Analysis had highlighted that the draft framework's labour provisions, related to forced labour and child labour, were different from those of other IFIs, including the African Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The following considerations were seen as factors that could facilitate the alignment of standards with IFIs with proven track records: considerable technical adviser support was given from existing IFIs, with the environmental and social framework drafted by a World Bank senior technical adviser with expertise in safeguards; diverse group of founding members, which would increase transparency and public scrutiny; co-financing with IFIs, such as the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank, which would likely require the AIIB to satisfy these IFIs' rigorous standards; and a formal grievance redress mechanism covering environment and social impacts was in line with a safeguards review conducted by the World Bank.

Overall, the draft framework was seen as meeting international best practice, recognizing that some clarifications and details need to be addressed before its finalization. It was also understood that Canada would be monitoring the implementation of the framework.

With regard to (g) and (h), OECD standards are intended to apply to member and non-member countries and governments wishing to adhere to such standards; they are not intended to govern the activities of international financial institutions. As such, written assurances have not been received from the AIIB on adherence to OECD standards.

Question No. 476— **Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford)**:

> With regard to the government's decision to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): (*a*) how much will the government be investing; (*b*) over what time period will the investment take place; (*c*) what percentage of equity in the AIIB will the government receive on its investment; (*d*) what are the details of any investment prospectus the government had received prior to announcing its investment; (*e*) what is the anticipated rate of return or dividends paid on this investment; and (*f*) does the government plan on ever selling this investment for a potential profit or loss?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at its first annual meeting in June 2016, the AIIB announced a formal process for admitting new members. Potential members have until September 30, 2016, to signal their interest in joining the bank. On August 31, 2016, the Minister of Finance announced Canada's intention to apply for membership at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, AIIB.

With regard to (a), (b), and (c), when the AIIB's governors approve new members, they will allocate available shareholdings and confirm other modalities of membership, such as investment amount and the time period over which payments will occur.

As per the AIIB articles of agreement, the total authorized capital stock of the AIIB shall be $100 billion U.S., divided into one million shares having a par value of $100,000 each. The original authorized capital stock shall be divided into paid-in shares, $20 billion, and callable shares, $80 billion. Each subscription to the original authorized capital stock shall be for paid-in shares and callable shares in the proportion of one to four.

Existing members have until December 31, 2016, to complete their domestic ratification processes and indicate if they are subscribing to their full shareholding allotment. Once all founding members have ratified the agreement, the full number of unclaimed shares available for new members will be known. As such, it is expected that the bank's governors will approve new members and allocate available shareholdings in early 2017. Canada's investment amount, percentage of equity, and other terms of payment will be determined based on parameters communicated to it at that time.

With regard to (d), Canada's investment in the AIIB has not yet been determined. No investment prospectus has been provided. As is standard with investments in multilateral development banks, the terms of the investment are defined in the articles of agreement.

With regard to (e), the AIIB's articles of agreement include a dividend policy. Article 18 states the following:

> 18.1 The Board of Governors shall determine at least annually what part of the net income of the Bank shall be allocated, after making provision for reserves, to retained earnings or other purposes and what part, if any, shall be distributed to the members. Any such decision on the allocation of the Bank's net income to other purposes shall be taken by a Super Majority vote as provided in Article 28.

> 18.2 The distribution referred to in the preceding paragraph shall be made in proportion to the number of shares held by each member, and payments shall be made in such manner and in such currency as the Board of Governors shall determine.

While this allows for the AIIB to provide dividends to shareholders, in practice the payment of dividends by multilateral development banks to shareholders has not been the norm. Rather, significant net income is often kept on the organization's balance sheet as retained earnings, increasing the equity base of the organization. The AIIB's practice in this regard is subject to a future decision by shareholders.

With regard to (f), the AIIB's articles of agreement include exit provisions. Should a future government decide to divest from the organization, article 39.2 dictates the terms of exit:

39.2 At the time a country ceases to be a member, the Bank shall arrange for the repurchase of such country's shares by the Bank as a part of the settlement of accounts with such country in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 3 and 4 of this Article. For this purpose, the repurchase price of the shares shall be the value shown by the books of the Bank on the date the country ceases to be a member.

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that if the government's response to Questions Nos. 374, 375, 378 to 391, 393 to 461, 463 to 475, 478 to 490 and Starred Question No. 377 could be made orders for return, they would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 374—**Mr. Kennedy Stewart**:

With regard to the Ministerial Panel examining the proposed Trans Mountain Expansion Project: (*a*) what is the complete and detailed list of all public meetings the panel has held to date, including the date, city, duration, and meeting format; and (*b*) for each meeting in (*a*), (i) which groups and stakeholders were invited to speak, if any, (ii) of the groups and stakeholders invited, which ones actually attended the meeting, (iii) approximately how many people attended in total, (iv) how many people had the opportunity to speak in total, (v) was there an opportunity for speakers to ask questions of and cross-examine other participants, (vi) was a transcript kept or recording made of what was said, (vii) how many speakers indicated they support the project, (viii) how many speakers indicated they are opposed to the project, (ix) how many speakers indicated they are undecided and neither support nor oppose the project, (x) what was the total financial cost of the meeting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 375—**Mr. Kennedy Stewart**:

With regard to the section of Budget 2016 entitled "Expanding Affordable Housing": (*a*) what is the complete and detailed list of all commitments made in the budget to invest in affordable housing, including the financial cost per fiscal year and department or agency responsible; (*b*) for each commitment in (*a*), what amount has already been invested or spent to date, broken down by the province or territory in which it was invested; (*c*) for each amount in (*b*), how many new units of affordable housing, if any, have been constructed as a result, broken down by the province or territory in which they were built; and (*d*) for each amount in (*b*), how many Canadians have benefited from these investments, broken down by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

*Question No. 377—**Mr. Kennedy Stewart**:

With regard to the Ministerial Mandate Letters sent by the Prime Minister in November 2015: (*a*) what is the complete and detailed list of all the top priorities assigned to each Minister, broken down by the Minister responsible; (*b*) which of the items in (*a*) have been completed by the government to date; and (*c*) for each item in (*b*), (i) on what exact date was the item completed, (ii) what is the item's financial cost, broken down by fiscal year, (iii) what performance measures, empirical indicators, or outcomes will the government be using to evaluate the item's effectiveness, (iv) on what future date, if any, will it be reviewed by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 378—**Mr. Mark Strahl**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 379—**Mr. Mark Strahl**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Environment and Climate Change Canada January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 380—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski**:

With regard to the Official State Dinner held at Casa Loma for the Mexican President on June 27, 2016: (*a*) what costs were associated with the dinner; (*b*) what is the breakdown of the costs including but not limited to the amount spent on food, alcohol, venue rental, private security firms, and transportation to and from the venue; (*c*) how many Members of Parliament were invited to the dinner; (*d*) how many current Liberal Members of Parliament, including Ministers, were invited to the dinner; (*e*) how many current Members of Parliament who are not members of the Liberals caucus were invited to the dinner; (*f*) how many Ontario Members of Provincial Parliament were invited to the dinner; (*g*) how many Ontario Liberal MPPs were invited to the dinner; (*h*) how many Ontario Progressive Conservative MPPs or Ontario NDP MPPs were invited to the dinner; (*i*) which Minister was responsible for deciding the guest list for the dinner; (*j*) since January 1, 2016 has any Minister or their staff been lobbied by any of the individuals or organizations on the guest list; and (*k*) if the answer to (*j*) is affirmative, what are the details of any meetings where lobbying occurred including date of meeting, location, attendees, and topics discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 381—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski**:

With regard to vehicles purchased, broken down by department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity, since November 4, 2015: (*a*) how many vehicles have been purchased, broken down by make, including, (i) Porsche, (ii) Lexus, (iii) Mercedes, (iv) Tesla, (v) BMW, (vi) Lamborghini, (vii) Ferrari; (*b*) what was the date and purchase price of each of the vehicles identified in (*a*); (*c*) what was the year and model of each of the vehicles identified in (*a*); (*d*) were the vehicles identified in (*a*) new or used when purchased; (*e*) were there any vehicles purchased for a price in excess of $50 000, or equivalent, not covered by parts (*a*)(i) through (*a*)(vii); and (f) if the response to (*e*) is affirmative, what is the make, model, purchase price, and date of purchase of each vehicle?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 382—**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Public Works and Government Services Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 383—**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 384—**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Shared Services Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 385—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski**:

With regard to Canadian government offices abroad and official residences of diplomats, what is the cost of swimming pool maintenance, gardening, landscaping, or other grounds maintenance since November, 2015, broken down by location and type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 386—**Mr. Tom Lukiwski**:

With regard to responses to Questions on the Order Paper tabled thus far in the current Parliament, and if responses were tabled when the Privy Council Office did not have the associated completed "Statement of Completeness" forms from all of the departments providing a response: (*a*) how many times did this occur; (*b*) for each question identified in (*a*), what was the number of the question and the date each response was tabled; (*c*) for each question identified in (*a*), which departments did not complete the forms; and (d) were completed forms submitted to the Privy Council Office after the responses were tabled and, if so, (i) for which questions, (ii) by which departments, (iii) on what date was each form received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 387—**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Health Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 388—**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 389—**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Canadian Heritage since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 390—**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher**:

With regard to clothing given by government departments or agencies for Ministers or their exempt staff, for each item: (*a*) what is the description of each item given; (*b*) what is the value of each item given; and (*c*) who was the recipient of each item?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 391—**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Natural Resources Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 393—**Mr. Bev Shipley**:

With regard to all roundtables or official consultations done by the government, for each event, broken down by department or agency, since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what was the date of the consultation; (*b*) all travel expenses associated with each consultation; (*c*) cost for venue rental; (*d*) cost of food and beverage services provided; (*e*) any other costs associated with putting on each event including but not limited to audio-visual, etc.; (*f*) purpose of consultation and or topic discussed; and (*g*) titles of government officials in attendance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 394—**Mr. Bev Shipley**:

With regard to travel claims submitted by Ministers and their exempt staff, broken down by Minister's Office, since November 4, 2015: (*a*) how many times were hotel or other commercial accommodation expenses claimed where the total cost, including taxes and other hotel fees, was over $500 per night, or over the equivalent of $500 CAD per night, if the expense was in a foreign currency; and (*b*) for each expense in (*a*), (i) what was the title of the individual who incurred the expense, (ii) what were the dates of each stay, (iii) what was the name of the hotel or other commercial accommodation, (iv) how many nights were the hotel or accommodation used for, (v) what was the total amount spent on each stay?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 395—**Mr. Kevin Waugh**:

With regard to expenses claims by a minister or ministerial exempt staff which were paid out, but then later paid-back to the Receiver General: what are the details of each such payment or re-imbursement, with (i) date of expense claim, (ii) date money was reimbursed to the Receiver General, (iii) amount of initial expense claim and payment, (iv) amount reimbursed to the Receiver General, (v) description of products or services for each claim, (vi) reason for reimbursement to the Receiver General?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 396—**Mr. Bev Shipley**:

With regard to federally owned or operated restaurants, cafeterias, canteens, or other food service provider, broken down by department, agency, crown corporation or other government entity: (*a*) what is the location and description of each; (*b*) since January 1, 2016, have any of these establishments served non-Canadian beef or pork; (*c*) in each instance where non-Canadian beef or pork was used, why was Canadian beef or pork not used; and (*d*) what directives are in place regarding the use of Canadian beef or pork in the establishments referred to in (*a*)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 397—**Mr. Kevin Waugh**:

With regard to all government contracts awarded for public relation services, since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity: what are the details of these contracts including (i) date of contract, (ii) value of contract, (iii) vendor name, (iv) file number, (v) description of services provided, (vi) start and end dates of services provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 398—**Mr. Kevin Waugh**:

With regard to grants and contributions under $25 000 provided by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada since November 4, 2015, for each contribution, what is the (i) recipient's name, (ii) location, (iii) date, (iv) value, (v) type, (vi) purpose, (vii) project number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 399—**Mr. Kevin Waugh**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Canada Revenue Agency since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts reference and file numbers,(iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contract values, (vii) final contract values if different from the original contract values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 400—**Mr. Blaine Calkins**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contract values, (vii) final contract values if different from the original contract values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 401—**Mr. Blaine Calkins**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contract values, (vii) final contract values if different from the original contract values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 402—**Mr. Chris Warkentin**:

With regard to the total amount of late-payment charges for telephone services, and broken down by late charges incurred by government department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity: what is the total amount late-payment charges and interest charges incurred in each month since December 2015 for services provided by (i) Rogers, (ii) Bell, (iii) Telus, (iv) other cellular or cable provider?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 403—**Mr. Chris Warkentin**:

With regard to the Canadian federal electoral reform dialogue hosting guide presented by the Minister of Democratic Institutions to the Sub-Committee on Democratic Reform on July 6, 2016: (*a*) what is the breakdown of all costs associated with the guide, including production and distribution costs; (*b*) how many copies of the guide were produced; (*c*) who were the recipients of copies of the book; (*d*) what are the titles of all individuals involved in writing and editing the book; (*e*) were any copies of the book distributed to Liberal Electoral District Associations or other partisan associations, and, if so, what is the list of such recipients; and (*f*) which non-governmental organizations or individuals who are not government employees were sent copies of the book?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 404—**Mr. Chris Warkentin**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Statistics Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 405—**Mr. Guy Lauzon**:

With regard to formal consultations on electoral reform conducted by the government since January 1, 2016: (*a*) what are the dates and locations of each consultation; (*b*) which Ministers, Members of Parliament, or government officials were present at each meeting; (*c*) how many individuals were in attendance at each meeting; and (*d*) were there any locations where consultations took place which were not fully wheelchair accessible and, if so, which ones?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 406—**Mr. Bob Saroya**:

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs Program for the Summer of 2016: (*a*) which organizations received funding; and (*b*) how much funding did each organization receive?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 407—**Mr. Bob Saroya**:

With regard to government advertising campaigns since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation: (*a*) what is the title or description of each campaign; (*b*) what is the time period over which the campaign took place, or is taking place; (*c*) how much is budgeted for each campaign; (*d*) how much was actually spent on each campaign; (*e*) how much was budgeted in traditional media for each campaign; (*f*) how much was budgeted for social media for each campaign; (*g*) which traditional media outlets were used for each campaign; and (*h*) which social media outlets or platforms were used for each campaign?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 408—**Mr. Bob Saroya**:

With regard to groups and organizations which received funding related to the re-settlement of refugees since November 4, 2015: (*a*) which groups and organizations received funding; (*b*) how much funding has been allocated to each group or organization; (*c*) how much funding was been delivered to each group or organization as of September 19, 2016; (*d*) what is the description of services each group or organization which received funding was expected to provide with the funding; (*e*) has there been any audits or assessments to ensure that the groups or organizations which received funding are spending the funding in the manner set out in the funding agreement; and (*f*) what are the details and findings of each audit or assessment referred to in (*e*)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 409—**Mr. Bob Saroya**:

With regard to claims by the government that the child care benefit will lift 300 000 children out of poverty: (*a*) what specific methodology and projections are used to make the claim; (*b*) how many children were in poverty as of January 1, 2016; and (*c*) how many children are expected to be in poverty, based on this claim and studies related to it, as of January 1, 2017, January 1, 2018, and January 1, 2019?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 410—**Mr. Guy Lauzon**:

With regard to responses or draft responses of questions on the Order Paper numbered Q-1 through Q-335 inclusively, which were submitted to PCO and subsequently returned for revisions: (*a*) which responses were returned; and (b) for each returned response, (i) to what department, agency, or crown corporation was the response returned, (ii) what was the number of the question, (iii) what was the nature of the requested revision?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 411—**Mr. Guy Lauzon**:

With regard to the consumption of alcohol on flights taken on government-owned Airbus and Challenger aircraft: since November 10, 2015, (*a*) on which flights was alcohol consumed; and (*b*) for each flight where alcohol was consumed (i) what is the value of alcohol consumed, (ii) what was the origin and destination, (iii) what was the flight date, (iv) what is breakdown of alcohol beverages consumed by specific beverage and quantity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 412—**Mr. Guy Lauzon**:

With regard to spending on photographers or photography services since November 4, 2015, and broken down by department or agency: (*a*) how much has been spent; (*b*) what were the dates and duration of each photography contract; (*c*) what was the initial and final value of each contract; (*d*) what were the events or occasions which were meant to be photographed as a result of each contract; and (*e*) what were the locations where the photography work was performed for each contract?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 413—**Mr. Michael Cooper**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Canada Border Services Agency since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 414—**Mr. Michael Cooper**:

With regard to the purchase of promotional products for handouts or giveaways at trade shows, conferences, and other events, broken down by department, agency, or crown corporation: (*a*) what products were purchased; (*b*) what quantity of each product were purchased; (*c*) how much was spent on each product; (*d*) at what events, or type of events, were the products distributed at; (*e*) what country was each product manufactured in; and (*f*) what is the relevant file number for each purchase?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 415—**Mr. Michael Cooper**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Federal Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 416—**Mr. Michael Cooper**:

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to China in August and September of 2016, excluding security and media: (*a*) who were the members of the delegation that visited China; (*b*) what were the titles of the delegation members; (*c*) how many of the delegation members were required to reimburse any expenses to the government; (*d*) what is the description and amounts of expenses reimbursed; (*e*) what was the total cost to taxpayers of the trip; (*f*) how much was spent on accommodation; (*g*) how much was spent on food; (*h*) how much was spent on other expenses, including a description of each expense; (*i*) what was the value of alcohol consumed on the Airbus flight to China; and (*j*) what was the value of the alcohol consumed on the Airbus flight from China?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 417—**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch**:

With regard to government procurement: (*a*) what are the details of all contracts for the provision of research or speechwriting services to Ministers since November 4, 2015, providing for each such contract (i) the start and end dates, (ii) contracting parties, (iii) file number, (iv) nature or description of the work; and (*b*) providing, in the case of a contract for speechwriting, the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) audience or event at which the speech was, or was intended to be, delivered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 418—**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Department of Finance since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 419—**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch**:

With regard to government expenditures on gala, concert or sporting event tickets since November 4, 2015: what was the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) ticket cost, (iv) title of persons using the tickets, (v) name or title of event for tickets purchased by, or billed to, any department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 420—**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch**:

With regard to materials prepared for Assistant Deputy Ministers from November 4, 2015, to present: for every briefing document prepared, (i) what is the date on the document, (ii) what is the title or subject matter of the document, (iii) what is the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 421—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to the Prime Ministerial delegation which travelled to China in August and September of 2016: (*a*) what were the contents of the itineraries of the ministers who were on the trip, including the Prime Minister; and (*b*) what are the details of all meetings attended by ministers on the trip, including (i) date, (ii) summary or description, (iii) attendees, (iv) topics discussed?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 422—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to spending by departments, agencies and crown corporations, since November 4, 2015: what were the total costs of rentals and purchases of individual staging, lighting and audio equipment, and production and assorted technical costs for all government announcements and public events, broken down by (i) date of event; (ii) location; (iii) event description; (iv) vendor name; (v) goods or services provided by each vendor; (vi) contract value, including cost of each good or service, if known?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 423—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to the National Energy Board's hearings into the Energy East pipeline, since August 29, 2016: (*a*) what specific actions has the government taken related to (i) security at the hearings, (ii) ensuring a balanced range of views; (*b*) what are the scheduled dates for future hearings; and (*c*) what are the governments intentions relating to the prosecution of those who disrupt such hearings?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 424—**Mr. Andrew Scheer**:

With regard to the province of Saskatchewan, since December 11, 2015: what is the list of grants, loans, and contributions awarded by the government, broken down by (i) recipient, (ii) city, town, or other location description, (iii) amount, (iv) file numbers, (v) project description or summary?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 425—**Ms. Rachael Harder**:

With regard to pictures and pieces of artwork in government buildings, since November 4, 2015, broken down by department and agency: (*a*) how many pictures, paintings, or pieces of artwork have been installed or put on display in government buildings, not including employees individual offices, cubicles, or other personal space; (*b*) what are the costs associated with each of such pictures, paintings, or pieces of artwork including, but not limited of cost of acquisition or rental of image/artwork, framing, mounting and installation; (*c*) how many pictures of the Liberal leader and current Prime Minister have been installed or put on display in government buildings; and (*d*) what are the costs and location associated with each picture listed in (*c*), including, but not limited to cost of image, framing, mounting, and installation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 426—**Ms. Rachael Harder**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Status of Women Canada since January 1, 2016, what are the: (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 427—**Mr. Chris Warkentin**:

With regard to privacy breaches since November 4, 2015, broken down by department, agency, crown corporation, or other government entity: (*a*) how many privacy breaches have occurred; and (*b*) for each privacy breach, (i) was it reported to the Privacy Commissioner, (ii) how many individuals were affected by each breach, (iii) what were the dates of the privacy breach, (iv) were the individual affected notified that their information may have been compromised, and if so, on what date and by what manner were they notified?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 428—**Hon. Kevin Sorenson**:

With regard to grants and contributions under $25 000 provided by the Innovation, Science, and Economic Development portfolio since November 4, 2015, for each contribution, what is the (i) recipient's name, (ii) location, (iii) date, (iv) value, (v) type, (vi) purpose, (vii) project number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 429—**Hon. Kevin Sorenson**:

What are all costs related to travel to Paris, France, paid by Environment Canada between November 4, 2015 and December 20, 2015, broken down by (i) accommodations, (ii) airfare, (iii) other transportation, (iv) meals, (v) other expenses, including a breakdown of each expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 430—**Hon. Kevin Sorenson**:

With regard to the conference attended by the Prime Minister at the Sun Valley Resort in Idaho in July of 2016: (*a*) what were all costs associated with attending the event, including a description or breakdown of each cost; (*b*) how much was spent on transportation to the event, including the costs of government aircraft; (*c*) what is the list of passengers on the government aircraft which transported the Prime Minister to the event; (*d*) how much was spent on accommodations at the event; (*e*) were any fees paid to the organization putting on the event, if so what are the amount and details of such fees; (*f*) what are the details of any other expenses associated with attending or travelling to the conference; and (*g*) what are the details of any memorandums, briefing notes or files held by either the Privy Council Office or Global Affairs Canada regarding the event, including the (i) date, (ii) title, (iii)subject matter, (iv) sender, (v) recipient(s), (vi) internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 431—**Hon. Kevin Sorenson**:

With regard to the visit by the presidents of the United States and Mexico to Ottawa on June 27 and 28, 2016: (*a*) what is the breakdown of all costs associated with venue rentals for the visit; (*b*) what is the breakdown of costs associated with security for the visit; (*c*) were any private security firms hired for the visit; (*d*) what were the contract amounts, companies used, and related file numbers for any private security firms hired; and (*e*) has any compensation been given to the City of Ottawa, the City of Toronto, or the Province of Ontario related to additional costs incurred by Ottawa, Toronto, or Ontario as a result of the visit?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 432—**Hon. Mike Lake**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Infrastructure Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 433—**Hon. Mike Lake**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 434—**Hon. Mike Lake**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Department of Justice since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 435—**Hon. Mike Lake**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Department of National Defence since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 436—**Mr. Ben Lobb**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Veterans Affairs Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 437—**Mr. Ben Lobb**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 438—**Mr. Ben Lobb**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Transport Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 439—**Mr. Ben Lobb**:

With regard to the disposition of government assets since November 4, 2015: (*a*) on how many occasions has the government repurchased or reacquired a lot which had been disposed of in accordance with the Treasury Board Directive on the Disposal of Surplus Materiel; and (*b*) for each occasion identified in (*a*), what was (i) the description or nature of the item or items which constituted the lot, (ii) the sale account number or other reference number, (iii) the date on which the sale closed, (iv) the price at which the item was disposed of to the buyer, (v) the price at which the item was repurchased from the buyer, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 440—**Hon. Deepak Obhrai**:

With regard to government expenditures on media monitoring and all such contracts which have been in place on or since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all spending, broken down by each department and agency, including (i) the nature, (ii) the scope, (iii) the duration, (iv) the contract for media monitoring, (v) the names of the contracted services provided, (vi) the file numbers?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 441—**Hon. Deepak Obhrai**:

With regard to fiscal years 2015-16 and 2016-17, broken down by province or territory and by month: (*a*) what was the total amount provided, as well as the amounts projected to be provided, to the provinces and territories through transfer payments; (*b*) of the amounts specified in (*a*), how much was specifically allocated for (i) health care, (ii) infrastructure, (iii) general revenue; (*c*) how much did each province receive in equalization payments; and (*d*) as of present, how much is each province projected to receive in equalization payments?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 442—**Hon. Deepak Obhrai**:

With regard to all contracts awarded by the government since November 4, 2015, broken down by department or agency: (*a*) how many contracts have been awarded to a foreign firm, individual, business, or other entity with a mailing address outside of Canada; (*b*) for each contract in (*a*), what is the (i) name of vendor, (ii) date of contract, (iii) summary or description of goods or services provided, (iv) file or tracking number; and (*c*) for each contract in (*a*), was the contract awrded competitively or sole-sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 443—**Hon. Deepak Obhrai**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by Western Economic Diversification Canada since January 1, 2016, what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 444—**Hon. Candice Bergen**:

With regard to the backdrops and podiums used by the government for the announcements from November 4, 2015, to present, for each backdrop purchased and for each podium purchased or rented: (*a*) what was the date of purchase or rental; (*b*) when was the tender issued for the backdrop or podium; (*c*) when was the contract signed; (*d*) when was the backdrop or podium delivered; (*e*) what was the cost of the backdrop or podium; (*f*) was there an announcement for which the backdrop or podium was used, if so, for which ones; (*g*) which department paid for the backdrop or podium; and (*h*) when were the backdrops or podiums used, broken down by event and date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 445—**Hon. Candice Bergen**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by by the Privy Council Office since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 446—**Hon. Candice Bergen**:

With regard to Access to Information Requests filed between May 1, 2016, and August 19, 2016, broken down by department or agency: (*a*) how many requests were received; (*b*) of those requests in (*a*), in how many cases were the documents produced within the statutory thirty-day time limit; and (*c*) in how many cases was there an extension?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 447—**Hon. Candice Bergen**:

With regard to government announcements by Ministers, or other government representatives acting on behalf of a Minister, broken down by department and agency, since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all announcements which took place in locations which were not wheelchair accessible, including (i) date of announcement, (ii) location, (iii) title of related news release, (iv) Minister or other government representative who made the announcement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 448—**Mr. David Yurdiga**:

With regard to Access to Information Requests, broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation: (*a*) what contingency plans are in place for delivering documents requested through Access to Information in the event of a postal disruption, particularly for individuals living outside of the National Capital Region; (*b*) does the government have any plans to allow documents requested through Access to Information to be sent through email rather than through the mail; (*c*) for those departments and agencies which do not yet allow online filing of access to information requests, what contingency plans are in place to allow Canadians to submit access to information requests in the event of a postal service disruption; and (*d*) for those departments which do not yet allow online filing for access to information requests, what is the anticipated date for when such departments will begin accepting online requests?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 449—**Mr. Gordon Brown**:

With regard to any focus groups administered by the government between January 23, 2016, and January 27, 2016, inclusively, as well as any focus groups administered by the government on March 22, 2016: (*a*) what were the specific topics being assesses or analyzed by the focus groups; (*b*) what are all costs associated with putting on these focus groups, including venue rental, incentives for attendees, food and beverage, and travel expenses; (*c*) which government officials or Ministerial staff were in attendance at each focus group; and (*d*) for each of the focus groups conducted, what were the results or findings?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 450—**Mr. Gordon Brown**:

With regard to classified or protected documents, since November 4, 2015, broken down department or agency: (*a*) how many instances have occurred where it was discovered that classified or protected documents were left or stored in a manner which did not meet the requirements of the security level of the documents; (*b*) how many of these instances occurred in the offices of ministerial exempt staff, including those of the staff of the Prime Minister, broken down by ministerial office; and (*c*) how many employees have lost their security clearance as a result of such infractions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 451—**Mr. Gordon Brown**:

With regard to briefings provided by departmental officials to Liberal Members of Parliament, other than Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries, since November 4, 2015, what are the details of these briefings, including (i) date, (ii) subject matter, (iii) location, (iv) titles of those in attendance?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 452—**Mr. Gordon Brown**:

With regard to fees collected by government departments and agencies, since December 1, 2015: (*a*) what is the total amount collected by the government; (*b*) what is the monthly breakdown of fees collected, broken down by department or agency; and (*c*) what is the monthly breakdown of fees collected by specific fee?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 453—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to chauffeured car and driver services, utilized by Ministerial staff including staff of the Prime Minister, broken down by department or agency, since November 4, 2015, and excluding trips where exempt staff were accompanying a Minister: (*a*) how many trips have been taken by ministerial exempt staff in a chauffeured vehicle owned or leased by a government department, agency, or other government entity; and (*b*) are there any policies in place regarding the personal usage of Ministerial vehicles by exempt staff?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 454—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to the 2016 census: (*a*) how many employees were hired to contact individuals who, according to Statistics Canada's records, had not completed the census; (*b*) what is the total amount spent on wages for the employees referred to in (*a*) and what is the total amount planned for this fiscal year; (*c*) how many individuals, addresses, or household census forms were still outstanding as of (i) July 1, 2016, (ii) August 1, 2016, (iii) September 1, 2016; and (*d*) how many complaints did Statistics Canada receive regarding data collection agents or agents hired to remind individuals to complete the census?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 455—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to projected spending for each department, agency, and crown corporation, what is the projected spending for fiscal year 2016-17, broken down by line object?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 456—**Mr. Arnold Viersen**:

With regard to the trip to Edmonton taken by the Minister of Democratic Institutions from February 25 to 27, 2016: (*a*) what are the dates, times, and locations of all government events attended by the Minister on the trip; and (*b*) what are the titles and file numbers of all press releases related to the government events attended by the Minister on the trip?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 457—**Mr. Dean Allison**:

With regard to the Zika virus: (*a*) what steps has the government taken to prevent the spread of Zika to Canada; (*b*) has the government had any communication with provinces or municipalities concerning their preparedness in the result of an outbreak in Canada and, if so, what are the details of that communication; (*c*) are there any special protocols in place regarding airplanes arriving in Canada from locations known to have high rates of the Zika virus; (*d*) does the government have any directives in place regarding spraying or fogging in the event of an outbreak and, if so, what are those directives; and (*e*) if there are any directives in place regarding spraying or fogging, do they include steps to protect the honey bee population and, if so, what are such steps?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 458—**Mr. Harold Albrecht**:

With regard to contracts under $10 000 granted by by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 459—**Mr. Harold Albrecht**:

With regard to the Canada Revenue Agency: (*a*) what are all of the 1-800 numbers which Canadians can use to call the Canada Revenue Agency; (*b*) for each 1-800 number, which taxpayers should use each number and what specific services are available; (*c*) broken down by month, since December 2015, how many calls have been received by each number; and (*d*) broken down by month, since December 2015, what was the average wait time or time on hold for callers to each number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 460—**Mr. Luc Berthold**:

With regard to contracts under $10,000 granted by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contract values, (vii) final contract values if different from the original contract values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 461—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren**:

With regard to the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN) tariffs, since January 1, 2016: what are the actual or anticipated costs that each department, agency, and crown corporation has or will pay on an annual basis in SOCAN tariffs for (i) background music, (ii) telephone music on hold, as set out in Tariff Number 15 in Volume 15, Number 26 of the Canada Gazette published on June 25, 2016?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 463—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren**:

With regard to all financial transactions between Environment Canada and the World Meteorological Association since November 4, 2015: what are the details of each transaction, including (i) the amount, (ii) the date, (iii) the sender, (iv) the recipient, (v) the purpose, (vi) whether or not the amount was for reimbursement for expenses incurred, (vii) if the response to (vi) is affirmative, what are the details of the expenses incurred?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 464—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren**:

With regard to all polls and focus groups conducted by the government since November 4, 2015: for each contract, what is the (i) name of the vendor, (ii) value of the contract, (iii) topic of each poll or focus group, (iv) location of each poll or focus group, (v) internal file number, (vi) date and duration?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 465—**Mr. David Anderson**:

With regard to the chauffeured car and driver provided for Katie Telford, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister: since November 4, 2015, according to the vehicle logbook, broken down by month, and except in cases where Katie Telford was also a passenger (*a*) how many times has that chauffeured car been used for the transportation of other PMO staffers; and (*b*) how many of the trips referred to in (a) were to attend official government business?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 466—**Mr. David Anderson**:

With regard to government advertising campaign in China since August 1, 2016: for each campaign, what is the (i) total amount spent, (ii) vendor, (iii) type of advertisement, (iv) internal file or tracking number, (v) dates and duration of ad campaign?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 467—**Mr. David Anderson**:

With regard to training provided for Ministers or their exempt staff since November 4, 2015: what are the details of all expenses, including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) location, (iv) total amount, (v) contract file number, if applicable, (vi) any travel expenses associated with the training?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 468—**Hon. Peter Kent**:

With regard to funding by government departments, agencies, and crown corporations: (*a*) which programs, groups, associations, or other entities were being provided with ongoing funding as of November 4, 2015, but were not receiving ongoing funding as of September 19, 2016; (*b*) for each former funding recipient identified in (*a*), what was the amount of funding being provided as of November 5, 2015; and (*c*) broken down by former recipient identified in (*a*), why is each one no longer receiving funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 469—**Hon. Peter Kent**:

With regard to Canada's trade: according to Statistics Canada, what was Canada's trade surplus or deficit, broken down on a monthly basis since January 2011?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 470—**Mr. Dan Albas**:

With regard to government travel, since November 4, 2015: broken down by Minister's Office, (*a*) which Ministers or exempt staff have rented vehicles, including, but not limited to, "car and driver services", "limousine services" or "car services", within Canada or elsewhere; (*b*) for each use identified in (*a*), what was the (i) date of the rental, (ii) pickup location the rental, (iii) drop-off location of the rental, (iv) nature of the official business, including events attended, (v) cost of the rental, (vi) vehicle description, including type and model, if available, (vii) names of passengers, if known, (viii) name of vendor, (ix) duration of the rental; and (*c*) for each rental listed in (*a*), was a driver provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 471—**Mr. Dan Albas**:

With regard to the use of taxi chits and Uber by the government: broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation, (*a*) how much has been spent on taxi chits for government employees since December 1, 2015; (*b*) how much has been spent on Uber or other ride sharing companies for government employees since December 1, 2015; (*c*) how much has been spent on public transportation for government employees since December 1, 2015; (*d*) broken down by ministerial office, including the Prime Minister's Office, how much has the government spent on taxi chits for ministerial exempt staff since December 1, 2015; (*e*) how much has the government spent on Uber or other ride sharing companies for ministerial exempt staff since December 1, 2015; and (*f*) how much has the government spent on public transportation for ministerial exempt staff since December 1, 2015?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 472—**Mr. Dan Albas**:

With regard to vehicles purchased by Environment Canada since November 4, 2015: (*a*) what is the total number of vehicles purchased; and (*b*) how many of those vehicles were (i) hybrid, (ii) electric?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 473—**Mr. Dave MacKenzie**:

With regard to contracts under $10,000 granted by Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency since January 1, 2016: what are the (i) vendors' names, (ii) contracts' reference and file numbers, (iii) dates of the contracts, (iv) descriptions of the services provided, (v) delivery dates, (vi) original contracts' values, (vii) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 474—**Mr. David Sweet**:

With regard to government funding allocated within the constituency of Flamborough-Glanbrook between November 4, 2015, and May 4, 2016: (*a*) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) date on which the funding was received, (iii) amount received, (iv) department or agency providing the funding, (v) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vi) nature or purpose; and (*b*) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (*a*), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 475—**Mr. Dave MacKenzie**:

With regard to government telecommunications: what is the total amount of late-payment charges incurred in each month since December 2015 inclusive, in respect of cellular telephone service and service for all other wireless devices other than cellular telephones, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) service provider?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 478—**Mr. Dean Allison**:

With regard to raw sewage since November 4, 2015: (*a*) how much raw sewage has been dumped in Canadian waters, broken down by which river, lakes, oceans, and other bodies of water the sewage was dumped in; (*b*) what studies, if any, have been done or are ongoing regarding the impact of dumping raw sewage; (*c*) what were the conclusions of any such studies completed since November 4, 2015; (*d*) what are the dates, titles, subject matter, and file numbers of any memos or documents related to the dumping of raw sewage; and (*e*) what are the dates, titles, subject matter, and file numbers of any correspondence between the federal government and provincial or municipal governments concerning raw sewage?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 479—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to government-wide advertising activities, broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation, since November 4, 2015: (*a*) how many advertisements have (i) been created in total, broken down by type (cinema, internet, out-of-home, print dailies, print magazine, weekly/community newspapers, radio, television, various social media platforms), (ii) been given an identification number, a name or a Media Authorization Number (ADV number); (*b*) what is the identification number, name or ADV number for each advertisement listed in (*a*)(ii); and (*c*) for the answers to each part of (*a*), what is (i) the length (seconds or minutes) of each radio advertisement, television advertisement, cinema advertisement, internet advertisement, (ii) the cost for the production or creation of each advertisement, (iii) the companies used to produce or create each advertisement, (iv) the number of times each advertisement has aired or been published, specifying the total number of times and the total length of time (seconds or minutes), broken down by month for each advertisement, (v) the total cost to air or publish each advertisement, broken down by month, (vi) the criteria used to select each of the advertisement placements, (vii) media outlets used to air or publish each advertisement, broken down by month, (viii) the total amount spent per outlet, broken down by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 480—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to harassment incidents since November 4, 2015, broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation: (*a*) how many harassment incident reports have been received; (*b*) how many individuals were the subject of complaints; (*c*) how many individuals were the subject of multiple complaints; (*d*) how many incidents resulted in formal disciplinary measures; (*e*) how many individuals faced disciplinary measures related to (*d*); (*f*) how many cases were subject to a formal investigation; (*g*) how many cases were investigated internally; (*h*) how many cases were investigated by external investigators hired by the government; and (*i*) how many cases were referred to the police?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 481—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to contract signed by the government with the firm MorneauShepell since November 4, 2015: for each contract, (*a*) what is the (i) value, (ii) description of the service provided, (iii) date and duration of the contract, (iv) internal tracking or file number; and (*b*) was the contract sole sourced?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 482—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio**:

With regard to the purchase of carbon offset credits by the federal government, broken down by department, agency, and crown corporation: (*a*) what is the total amount purchased in carbon offsets since November 4, 2015; and (*b*) what are the details of each individual purchase including (i) price of each purchase, (ii) date of purchase, (iii) dates of travel, (iv) titles of individuals on trip, (v) origin and destination of each trip, (vi) amount of emissions purchase was meant to offset, (vii) name of vendor who received the carbon offset payment?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 483—**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy**:

With regard to the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program: (*a*) how much has been invested in the federal ridings represented by (i) a minister, (ii) a parliamentary secretary, (iii) a member of the Liberal Party who is not a minister or parliamentary secretary, (iv) a member of the Conservative Party, (v) a member of the NDP, (vi) a member of the Bloc Québécois, (vii) a member of the Green Party; and (b) what are the details of all grants mentioned in (a) to any agency, organization, municipality or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality where the recipient is located, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 484—**Mr. Murray Rankin**:

With regard to Budget 2016: (*a*) what portion of the budgeted increase to the investment in Affordable Housing Initiative will be delivered to British Columbia in 2016-17, and in 2017-18; (*b*) what portion of the budgeted outlays for affordable housing for seniors will be allocated to British Columbia in 2016-17, and in 2017-18; (*c*) what portion of the $573.9 million budgeted for energy and water efficiency retrofits and renovations to social housing will be delivered to British Columbia in 2016-17, and in 2017-18; (*d*) how many rental units in British Columbia will be supported through this additional investment; (*e*) how many social housing providers in British Columbia are eligible to receive the additional investment to support rent subsidies identified in Budget 2016; (*f*) how many providers in British Columbia will receive a portion of the funds identified in (*e*); (*g*) what is the total number of rent-subsidized housing units in British Columbia that will be affected by the investment identified in (*e*); (*h*) what portion of the additional $208.3 million budgeted for the Affordable Rental Housing Innovation Fund will be used to encourage construction of affordable rental housing in British Columbia; (*i*) what portion of the additional $89.9 million budgeted for the construction and renovation of shelters and transition houses for victims of family violence will be used for that purpose in British Columbia; (*j*) what portion of the additional $111.8 million budgeted for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy will be delivered to communities in British Columbia; and (*k*) what portion of the $85.7 million in additional investment to support the construction of affordable rental housing funded through the social infrastructure commitment will be used for that purpose in British Columbia?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 485—**Ms. Jenny Kwan**:

With regard to the Syrian refugee resettlement efforts: (*a*) how much money has the government received in private donations and private sponsor funds since November 4, 2015, broken down by (i) date, (ii) total, (iii) description, (iv) location, (v) amount, (vi) spent, (vii) unspent; (*b*) does the government have any plans to spend the remaining money received from private donations or sponsorships since November 4, 2015, and, if so, what are they; (*c*) what are the specific dates, rationale, and details relating to the decision made to use hotels instead of Canadian Armed Forces bases to house Syrian refugees on a temporary basis; (*d*) what are the details of how the government notified settlement organizations of the decision to house Syrian refugees in hotels instead of Canadian Armed Forces Bases, including (i) individuals or organizations notified, (ii) method of notification, (iii) location of notification; (*e*) when did the government make the decision to change the initial 25 000 target for Syrian refugee arrivals in Canada to include privately sponsored refugees; (*f*) when did the government consult and report on Syrian refugee resettlement; (*g*) what topics were covered during internal government consultation on Syrian refugees, broken down by date; (*h*) what were the titles and topics covered in internal government reports on refugee resettlement, broken down by date; (*i*) what mechanisms exist to measure the application acceptance rate and resettlement efforts of identified vulnerable refugee groups; (*j*) in which immigration streams does the government measure identified vulnerable refugee groups; (*k*) from which countries does the government measure identified vulnerable refugee groups; (*l*) what vulnerable refugee groups has the government identified in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis; (*m*) of the first 25 000 Syrian refugees the government broken to Canada since November 4, 2015, when, broken down by month, were applications processed and when did these refugees arrive in Canada; (*n*) how many applications were approved before November 4, 2015; (*o*) when, where and which departments apart from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada contributed resources towards the Syrian refugee initiative, and what was the monetary value of those contributions; (*p*) from November 4, 2015, to present, how many Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) claims have been made, broken down by (i) month, (ii) nature of claim, (iii) total; (*q*) what has been the cost associated with the IFHP regarding Syrian refugee claims, broken down by (i) month, (ii) total; (*r*) how many social housing units have been used for Syrian refugee resettlement (i) province and city, (ii) month, (iii) temporary residence, (iv) permanent residence; and (*s*) how many Syrian refugees have been given temporary resident status, broken down by (i) month, (ii) total?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 486—**Ms. Jenny Kwan**:

With regard to the International Mobility Program, over the time period of 2006 to present: (*a*) how many applications were received for work permits, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (*b*) how many applications for work permits were approved, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month; (*c*) how many employers using the program have been subject to an investigation for compliance, broken down by (i) month, (ii) province; (*d*) how many investigations have revealed non-compliance by employers, broken down by (i) month, (ii) issues identified, (iii) industry of employer; (*e*) how many employers have had to take steps to be considered compliant following an investigation, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of actions required, (iii) industry of employer; (*f*) how many employers have received penalties for non-compliance as a result of an investigation, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of penalty, (iii) industry of employer; (*g*) how many investigations have involved an on-site visit, broken down by (i) month, (ii) total; (*h*) how many complaints have been filed, broken down by (i) employees, (ii) employers, (iii) industry, (iv) total complaints; (*i*) how many Citizenship and Immigration Canada full-time equivalent staff are currently assigned to conduct investigations for compliance; and (*j*) what is the budget assigned to this program broken down by position?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 487—**Ms. Jenny Kwan**:

With regard to Northern Iraq and Canada's commitment to address the Syrian refugee crisis: (*a*) what were the staffing levels for processing claimants, broken down by month from January 2012 to present; (*b*) how many individuals were processed, broken down by month from January 2012 to present; (*c*) if not processed in Northern Iraq, where are applications being sent, broken down by month from January 2012 to present; (*d*) what is the average processing time for applications in the region; (*e*) what is the average processing time for applications that are sent out of the region for processing; (*f*) what is the acceptance rate for applications originating from this region; (*g*) how many applications have originated from this region; (*h*) what was the cost incurred to the government for staffing related to refugee claimants from this area, broken down by (i) month, (ii) year; (*i*) what is the anticipated expenditure to send staff back to Northern Iraq, in total and broken down by month; (*j*) what is the anticipated length of time government staff will be sent back to the region; (*k*) how many cases are expected to be processed, broken down by (i) individual, (ii) family, (iii) percentage of total cases originating in the region; (*l*) what discussions occurred regarding the use of (i) the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees staff, (ii) the International Organization for Migration staff, to handle the processing of these cases instead of Canadian staff; (*m*) what other planned actions are there from government to process Northern Iraq refugee applications; and (n) for each of the actions listed in (*m*), what is their timeline?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 488—**Ms. Jenny Kwan**:

With regard to the legislative changes made by Bill C-31, which received royal assent on June 28, 2012, and all cessations of refugee protection since that time: (*a*) what level of funding has been allocated to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to carry out cessation applications, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year; (*b*) what is the target for number of cessation applications to be carried out on an annual basis; (*c*) how many individuals have had cessation applications brought against them, broken down by (i) total, (ii) year; (*d*) from what stream of refugee program did the individuals with cessation applications brought against them arrive in Canada; (*e*) how many cases are currently (i) before the courts, (ii) pending; (*f*) how many completed cases have resulted in deportation; (*g*) how many cases involve evidence collected prior to the passing of Bill C-31; (*h*) what is the cost incurred by the government to litigate these cases; (*i*) how many full-time equivalents are assigned to handle cessation cases, broken down by year since Bill C-31 was passed; (*j*) how long is the average cessation case before the courts; (*k*) what is the country of origin of individuals that have cessation brought against them; (*l*) in how many cases has the Minister intervened to stop proceedings, broken by (i) total, (ii) year; (*m*) where did the individuals who had cessation brought against them reside, broken down by (i) province, (ii) city; (*n*) how long did the individuals who had cessation brought against them reside in Canada; (*o*) at the time a cessation case is brought against someone, how many of the individuals (i) are married, (ii) were employed at the time cessation was brought against them, (iii) have children, (iv) have children born in Canada; (*p*) how is it determined that a cessation application would be undertaken; and (*q*) how many cessation cases are flagged when the individual(s) apply for citizenship?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 489—**Mr. David Sweet**:

With regard to the decision by the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs to stop all discretionary compliance measures related to the First Nations Financial Transparency Act: (*a*) what evidence was used to determine that the Act should not be enforced; (*b*) what efforts have been taken to encourage First Nations governments to voluntarily report their expenses; and (*c*) what percentage of the First Nations reported their expenses in compliance with the Act (i) prior to September 1, 2015, (ii) prior to September 1, 2016?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 490—**Mr. David Sweet**:

With regard to the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms, and Inclusion: (*a*) of the $15 000 000 budgeted for the office, how much is earmarked for the three divisions of the office including (i) human rights and indigenous affairs, (ii) inclusion and religious freedoms, (iii) democracy; (*b*) what projects approved by the previous Office of Religious Freedom continue to receive funding; (*c*) what projects supported by the previous Office of Religious Freedom have ceased to receive funding under the new office and for what reason; (*d*) what projects have been approved since the creation of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion to specifically promote religious freedom; (*e*) as of September 16, 2016, what projects receive funding through the Office, broken down by (i) organization, (ii) city and country where the project is located, (ii) intended beneficiary, (iii) intended outcomes; (*f*) what criteria does the office use to determine which projects receive funding; (*g*) what evaluations have been completed on the effectiveness of the previous Office of Religious Freedom and what were the findings of any such review; (*h*) what evaluations have been completed on the effectiveness of the new Office of Human Rights, Freedom and Inclusion and what were the findings any such review; and (*i*) when will the Office of Human Rights, Freedom and Inclusion be subject to a thorough review and what outcomes will be used to determine the effectiveness of the Office?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe it was the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan on debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is one area where Canadians can really see the difference between the prior Conservative government and what we have today. Today we witnessed real change when the Prime Minister was able to reach an agreement with the provinces dealing with the CPP.

This is a critical issue for many individuals in the workforce. They understand and appreciate that they want to be able to retire with healthier pensions. That is what this bill is all about. It is about providing additional pension money for people as they retire, and they justifiably deserve it.

This is what Canadians want. Why does the member believe that the Conservatives have lost touch with Canadians to the degree that they will actually be voting against this legislation, against what the provinces and the federal government agreed on, against what Canadians want to see? Why have the Conservatives lost touch with Canadians?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are voting against a payroll tax. We will always vote against higher taxes. Unfortunately, the Liberals believe that government intervention and raising taxes, spending billions of dollars running this country into debt is the way to get this country's economy back on track. Conservatives will always oppose that.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question for my colleague. I happen to know a couple in their late twenties who are working for their brother-in-law in a small business. Now, under the Liberal's Bill C-26, they are going to have to each contribute, as I understand it, $1,100, and the person who owns the business, who happens to be their brother-in-law, is going to have to match that money. If those folks were to invest in a savings plan, the TFSA or something similar, and the small business owner was allowed to use that money to expand his business, which would be better? Would it be better to put $1,100 of taxes into a CPP that will maybe pay something 40 years later, or save the money themselves? I wonder if he could give me an opinion on that.

● (1220)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the tough but fair question from my colleague. My colleague is exactly right. We believe in individual initiative. We believe that Canadians have enough intelligence on their own to make their own investment decisions. We believe that Canadians can chart a course for their own retirement. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to believe that Canadians have that intellectual capacity to make their own choices.

In the situation my colleague mentioned, it would be devastating for a small business owner to be forced to pay that amount of money when he could be reinvesting that money in his own business or using that money to put into his own investment portfolio.

Our choice is individual rights. Their choice is government knows best.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy today to rise and speak to the proposed legislation, Bill C-26. In order for me to explain my position on this bill, I want to say a bit about the great riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills.

While I was canvassing over a year ago, I had the opportunity to knock on a door in a good neighbourhood. An old lady opened the door. She was very dishevelled. She had bruises on her arms and her hair was a mess. I was still a candidate, and I asked her what she thought our government would need to do to better support Canadians. She said, “After I pay my rent, after I pay my medical bills, I don't have enough money left for food.” That is the plight of many retired people who live not just in my riding but all across Canada.

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to take part in the Red Cross Meals on Wheels program. Together with Red Cross, I went to different homes in my riding. We visited senior citizens who could not afford food. They were getting food from food banks and programs like the Red Cross Meals on Wheels program. I got to speak to them and really understand their plight, their difficulty in finding stability in their age of retirement, in their most vulnerable time.

The average age in my riding is 37. We have a lot of young families. Over the summer, I had the opportunity to knock on doors and get to understand what Canadians were most concerned about. I knocked on over 1,000 doors, and the number one concern, even from young people, was about what they are going to do when they retire. They wondered if they will have stability in their living and if they will have to downgrade their lives at that point, and what the government is doing.

Despite all the current benefits that are provided for retired people, we recognize that it is not doing enough to support Canadians in their retirement. Having understood the concerns of Canadians, the government has introduced Bill C-26. This bill seeks to boost how much each Canadian will receive from the Canada pension plan. The current system provides retirees with up to one-quarter of their earnings. Under the proposed system, this would increase to one-third, up to a maximum benefit of $20,000.

Seniors have for the most part spent their lives contributing to Canada's economy, by working hard, striving for opportunity, and building in their own way the Canada that we love. They have raised families in Canada. Their children will one day grow and continue to carry the torch of progress for this beautiful country.

This legislation will also support and benefit the next generation of workers. Young Canadians who enter the work force over the next few years will benefit the most from the enhancement of the CPP. Young workers visit me in my constituency office on a very regular basis, looking for employment, or they are starting their careers and looking for advice as to how to further their careers. I am very pleased to say that our young Canadians are very dedicated to the progress of Canada and to making sure that we build a strong nation. I am very happy to see that our government, through Bill C-26, will ensure that their future is also maintained in their times of vulnerability.

As I have alluded to earlier, many current retirees face troubling challenges in making ends meet. Recognizing this, our government took steps to improve the quality of life for seniors today. In budget 2016, our government provided a boost to the GIS, the guaranteed income supplement, to help seniors who are single with up to $947 annually. This ensures that the future of Canada is protected.

We will see over the next many years an increase in the number of retired people. As a government, if we do not begin to look to the future and make sure that Canadians are well taken care of after they have spent so much of their lives contributing to Canada's growth, then we do not succeed as a government. We need to ensure that our current and future workers are able to have stability in their workplace, and after they retire in the future.

● (1225)

We need to work hard to ensure that we all succeed as Canadians. Bill C-26 is not the only way we are doing it. There are many other ways. As we know, progress is not a one-step approach, but a multi-faceted approach through our many investments in infrastructure, our CCB, and our recent assistance for our youth. We have raised the bar to bring Canada to a level that ensures we progress as a nation.

I would like to thank our Minister of Finance and the provincial and territorial ministers for their dedication to improving the lives of Canadians with this historic agreement on expanding the CPP. As stated in the *Toronto Star*:

> The agreement...provides for the first substantive change to our national retirement scheme...The deal recognizes that the time has finally come to do something about retirement security.

I am very happy with the role our federal government has played in collaborating and working together with our provincial and territorial counterparts and our municipalities to ensure we are all on the same page, that we really understand the issues, so we can stand in the House and fight to ensure that the work we do as parliamentarians is effective and is what Canadians need.

I am very happy that here has been a lot of debate in the House and a lot of passion shown with respect to helping our seniors, not just the seniors of today but those of tomorrow, and their families.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sincerity in the presentation from the member opposite. One of the concerns I hear from seniors in my riding is somewhat simple in nature, but it is very important. When they walk into a Service Canada centre and ask for information, or help or look for a piece of paper they can take away to help them understand some of the programs and opportunities are available to them, they are told to go to a website. That does not work for a lot of seniors in my riding.

I wonder if the member would encourage the minister responsible for the federal public service to make things as easy as they can for seniors and provide perhaps a different level of service than is currently provided.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, we understand technology advancement is a great step forward, but we cannot forget about our seniors who often have challenges with using technology.

As the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erin Mills, I understand it. That is why I encourage the seniors who live in my riding to come to my office for assistance. In many ways, one of the roles we play as members of Parliament is to facilitate the services our constituents need.

I encourage my hon. colleagues to reach out to our seniors in our ridings to ensure they understand and know which programs are available to them, and to really be proactive in our approach for seniors.

● (1230)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for her thoughtful words. There are 11 million working Canadians who have no workplace pension plan. If we ask the food banks today, they will say that more and more working families are coming to them for support. When we combine these two facts, working Canadians without a workplace pension plan and working families accessing the food bank, we can understand that in the very near future a lot of these working Canadians will retire directly into poverty.

The member mentioned how the plan would help working Canadians who were going to be the seniors of tomorrow. Could she highlight and expand on that?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is 100% correct. Canadians are having a harder time, and will continue having a harder time, saving for their future stability post-retirement. In fact, a study in 2012 showed that almost two-thirds of Canadians were working more than 45 hours a week and were still unable to save. It is very troubling.

As we know, our government has to take a multi-faceted approach and the enhancement of CPP will be a great step for current and future seniors having stability in their retirement years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague expand upon the commitment the government made in its budget with respect to the guaranteed income supplement? It is a huge increase that will take tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty. She may want to add some thoughts on it.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, the GIS is a supplement for seniors. The eligibility age was 67, but it has now been reduced to 65, which will give more Canadians access to it. In fact, the dollar amount has been increased for the most vulnerable seniors, those who are single. They will receive a maximum of $947. This is a great step forward for seniors.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill C-26, the Liberal CPP tax hike.

Today marks the one year anniversary since the government was sworn in. In that context, it is appropriate, at the outset, to take a step back to look at the past year, because it really has not been a pretty one.

Over the past year, the economy has slowed and more and more Canadians are losing their jobs. In my province of Alberta, more than 100,000 people have been laid off in just the past year since the government came to office. The more than $1 billion surplus left by our previous Conservative government has turned into a massive deficit, with over $100 billion in new debt projected over the next five years and with no end in sight to the red ink. Taxes are going up for hard-working families. The tax credit for families for children's arts and sports is gone. The universal child care benefit has been eliminated. In addition, we can forget about the commitment to reduce the small business tax from 11% to 9%. It turns out that it is just another Liberal promise made and another Liberal promise broken in the long line of Liberal promises made in 2015 and broken in 2016.

Now, we have Bill C-26, a massive Liberal tax hike on hard-working Canadians. What it is going to do? It is going to take money out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians. How much will it take out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians? It will take as much as $2,200 annually out of the pockets of families.

Let us think about that. What is $2,200 going to mean for a young person who has just finished post-secondary education and is starting a career? It means $2,200 less for that young Canadian to pay down his or her student loan. What about a young couple that is trying to put money down on its first home so it can attain home ownership? It is $2,200 less for that young couple. What about the family that wants to save for its children's post-secondary education? It is $2,200 taken out of its wallet, per year. It is $2,200 less for Canadians to save and invest in TFSAs, tax-free savings accounts.

Speaking of TFSAs, let us not forget that it is the Liberal government that is responsible for reducing and rolling back the amount that Canadians can save in TFSAs, from $10,000 back to $5,500.

It is very difficult to swear, on the one hand, the government's assertion that this CPP tax hike is about savings when it is the same government that has rolled back the opportunity for Canadians to save in TFSAs. That is the government's record. The reason for that is this CPP tax hike has nothing to do with savings and everything to do with paying for the government's out-of-control spending.

What is this going to do? What impact is this CPP massive tax hike going to have?

The Department of Finance Canada projects that it will result in reduced employment, a reduction in Canada's GDP, reduced business investment, reduced private savings, and reduced disposal income for Canadians.

● (1235)

Those are not Conservative Party projections, those the Department of Finance's projections. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business projects that as many as 110,000 jobs will be lost due to this CPP Liberal tax hike. In the one year since the government was elected, it has dug Canada into a hole of more than $30 billion without creating a single job. Now, it wants to kill 110,000 jobs with this CPP tax hike.

What does Bill C-26 seek to achieve? What problem does it seek to solve? I would submit that this is really the million-dollar question. The fact is that Canada's retirement system is the envy of the world. According to the Department of Finance, the average Canadian senior is earning 91% of the median Canadian. That is well above the OECD average of 84%.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of Canadian seniors who are living on a fixed income has drastically decreased over the last many years. It was at 29% in 1970. It is now down to 3.1% today. Canadians are saving like never before, when it comes to planning for their retirement. In fact, since 1990, the percentage of income that Canadians are saving has doubled from 7.7% in 1990 to 14.1% today.

It is no wonder that just about everyone is panning this Liberal CPP tax hike, including none other than the hon. Judy LaMarsh, the cabinet minister who was responsible for presiding over the implementation of the CPP in 1964.

In closing, I say that there is not a problem for Canadians when it comes to savings, but the government does have a problem. It has a problem with increasing spending and increasing taxes. Frankly, Canadians have had enough. They cannot take it anymore. It is time to defeat this Liberal CPP tax hike and defeat Bill C-26.

● (1240)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from St. Albert—Edmonton for his usual passionate remarks. I have a couple of questions.

First, the hon. member told the House that the hon. Judy LaMarsh, who brought forward this plan, is against this. Judy LaMarsh died in 1980. I would like to ask if the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton went to a psychic, had a card reading, and somehow spoke to Judy LaMarsh from beyond?

Second, the hon. member said that this young person would suddenly see a contribution increase of $2,200, making it sound like next year, he or she would go into the workforce and $2,200 would magically come off their paycheque.

Given that contributions only start increasing in 2019 and are phased in over a multi-year seven-year period, can I ask the member at what year this $2,200 hike would come into effect, and what would the salary of this young person have to be in order to reach the $2,200 hike?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, as I was getting passionate in my speech, I meant to say that Judy LaMarsh would have opposed the legislation, not that she actually has said that she opposed the legislation.

In that regard, the quote that I was looking at, prior to making that mis-statement, is the following from Judy LaMarsh, who said:

> It (CPP) is not intended to provide all the retirement income which many Canadians wish to have. This is a matter of individual choice and, in the government's view, should properly be left to personal savings and private pension plans.

I would suggest this government could learn from the pronouncement of Judy LaMarsh.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment our colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton for his passionate speech about statistics. Here is one statistic that came out today. The unemployment rate in Calgary is double digits today at 10.2%, rising from 9.3% over the past four weeks. It has gone from 36% above the national average to 46% above the national average in just four weeks.

Could my colleague tell me what is happening in Alberta to cause these drastic numbers in unemployment?

● (1245)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the situation in Alberta is dire and unfortunately nothing that the government is doing in the way of policy is helping the situation.

After the Liberals were elected to government, the Prime Minister sat on his hands when President Obama killed the Keystone pipeline. Then the Prime Minister killed the gateway pipeline, which will prevent Alberta energy from getting to market. Now the Prime Minister is seeking to impose a massive carbon tax on the people of Alberta that even Premier Notley says is not acceptable at the present time. Now we have this massive job-killing CPP tax hike.

When it comes to helping the situation in Alberta, the Liberal government simply has all of the wrong priorities.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives love to call this a tax, so for semantics let us continue to call it a tax.

I am wondering if the member could tell the House of any other government tax that exists that pays retirement benefits at age 60 or 65?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the problem with the Liberal CPP tax hike is that they want to tell Canadians how to save and when to save. Our previous Conservative government provided Canadians with flexibility, including making voluntary CPP contributions. In addition to that, our government worked in a targeted way to support seniors who are most vulnerable by increasing the GIS.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in today's debate, particularly after my friend from St. Albert—Edmonton. It is always hard to follow him, but I will do my best. I would also like to take this opportunity, as so many other members have, to thank all of our veterans across this country and all of the members of the Armed Forces on this eve of Remembrance Day, this being the last time that we have this opportunity in this chamber before this year's celebrations.

The Canada pension plan amendments are something that are important for me to talk about because I think they are an example of co-operative federalism that has really succeeded. The Canada pension plan was originally started in the 1960s when we saw the fact that a lot of seniors were moving into poverty after they left the workforce. At the time it was unclear as to who had jurisdiction over pension plans. There was a feeling that this may be purely a provincial jurisdiction. In the era of co-operative federalism, the provinces worked together to adopt a constitutional amendment to allow us to set up the Canada pension plan and later allowed Quebec to have its own plan that was similar in nature to the CPP.

This year, we recognized another problem with the plan. We saw that based on what we had all seen over the last many years, we still had a number of seniors who were not poor in the years that they were working, they were solidly middle class, but they were moving into poverty as they retired from their jobs. We needed to see an augmentation to the amounts contributed under the Canada pension plan by both the employee and the employer, and to raise the wage ceiling under the Canada pension plan over time, in order to ensure that over one million Canadians when they reach retirement age would not become poor under the class of who constitutes poor Canadians.

That is something that is important, so what the federal government did was meet with the provinces. We went to all of the provinces and secured agreement among nine provinces in Canada to amend the Canada pension plan. That is not an easy thing to do. We have umpteen examples in Canadian history of federal-provincial negotiations that have gone awry, where the federal government was not able to convince the provinces to take the action that the federal government thought would be in the best interests of Canadians. However, in this case, the federal government and all nine provinces that participate in the CPP agreed to move forward. Quebec also agreed to move forward with a review of its own pension plan. I think this speaks to co-operative federalism and speaks about the success story we can have in Canada when the federal government and provinces work together.

I have also listened to the arguments brought forward by our friends in the official opposition as to why these changes to the CPP should not be made. I am someone who believes that there is a dual obligation in this country. There is indeed an obligation to take care of ourselves. I have had the luxury of having jobs that have allowed me to contribute the maximum to my RRSPs and indeed also to my TFSA every year. I believe in individual initiative. I believe it is the responsibility of individuals to take care of their own money and to contribute the best they can to provide for their retirement. However, as we know, not all Canadians can do this because they do not earn enough, because they do not have that ability, and other Canadians for whatever reason seem unable to save enough for their retirement.

As such, we have to come to a situation where there is a balanced approach. We have already decided over 50 years ago, long before some of us were born, that the Canada pension plan was a good idea, that there needed to be a national plan, which by the way has much lower administrative costs than private plans, to allow the government to help Canadians to save for their retirement.

That is not to say the government plays a nanny state or only role, but it is to say that we have recognized that the government has such a role. If this is truly the case, then the government has the obligation and the responsibility to look at the current situation in our country, to look at what wages are in our country, to look at the fact that Canadian households have the highest debt ratio of any households in, I understand, the G7 and to say we have a situation in our country today that is problematic.

● (1250)

Many Canadians are not adequately preparing for their retirement and many are not making use of their RRSP and TFSA contribution limits. Therefore, what are we to do to prevent having even more costs on the state in the future when we see more and more seniors joining the poor after they stop working? We have to take proactive measures. We need to take preventive action.

I am very proud that we increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10%. That will help bring many seniors out of poverty, but it is not a be-all and end-all solution, because the goal is for most seniors not to need that supplement because most of them, those who have worked their entire lives, should not be that poor.

I was talking about Remembrance Day. Veterans built this country. The last thing we want are women coming out of the armed forces and being poor, but I see that in my riding. Many World War II veterans, who are now in their nineties, are having trouble making ends meet. The president of the Legion in my riding even talked to me about how a number of Legion members have trouble affording medication and food. That is very sad, because the pensions they are living on are not sufficient. One thing we could do is proactively take steps to fix this.

In my previous life as a mayor, I was part of a municipal pension plan. It is true that pension plans in Canada are changing. We are moving from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. It is impossible for an employer in the private sector today to realistically start a defined benefit plan, because with changing markets, these have become a death knell for many employers in Canada.

I can say that in my old life as general counsel of a multinational corporation, it would not purchase a company that had a defined benefit plan, because a defined benefit plan was too risky in the private sector. Fewer and fewer companies have these plans and more and more are moving to defined contribution plans, the outcome of which they are unsure of. Most companies are without plans. There are workers all across the private sector who do not have pension plans when they retire.

There are two groups of workers. There are those who say they are going to save for their retirements and do their best to put money away, but are unable to do so for whatever reason. Perhaps their kids' educations, or their own rents or mortgages, are too expensive. Then there are others who are barely scraping by on the salaries they earn and do not have the means to put money aside.

I think we have all agreed that the government has this role, because I have never heard the official opposition say we should scrap the CPP entirely. All I have heard it say is that we should not increase the amount we are contributing now, because it is a payroll tax, a tax on employers and employees. It is not $2,200 a year, by the way, but I will leave that aside.

If we agree with the premise for having a CPP, then we need to look at it in light of what our economy is like today and the impact on people from changes in the market today. Indeed, fewer companies have pension plans, particularly defined contribution plans; more Canadian households are in debt; and average incomes and the cost of living are rising year by year, but the wage ceiling under the Canada pension plan has not been increased for many years.

We need to take stock of that and decide to update the plan to bring it in line with Canadians' situation today. That is not to say that plans allowing Canadians to save money for themselves are not good. It is not to say that Canadians do not have the responsibility to govern their own funds and to put money aside, but we still need to help those who are unable to do that. This, I think, is the right balance.

The right balance in Canada is finding that place where the state intervenes to ensure that the best interests of all Canadians are met. In this case, the interests of Canadians are met by the fact that it will eventually cost the state a lot more if we do not take these actions today to bolster the CPP, because it we do not, more and more people will need OAS in the future.

● (1255)

What I think we need to do is take stock of the fact that this is a necessary update—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for my colleague.

Why is Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio so good? Can he explain that to me?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for his question.

I would say that we managed the economy very well during the Chrétien-Martin years. It was during those years that things turned around. I am not criticizing the Conservative government that preceded us. I am not saying that that government mismanaged the economy. I am just saying that things started to improve during the Chrétien-Martin years.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the warm welcome my colleague from Mount Royal gave me at the justice committee. I am looking forward to working with him.

I appreciate that in his speech the member mentioned the fact that this agreement has come about with strong support from the provinces, which is key, and he went over the jurisdictional conundrums that come with pensions.

What our colleagues in the Conservative Party sometimes miss the point on is that our retirement system is based on three pillars. There are the workplace pensions, private savings, and the government's CPP and OAS. Two of those pillars are not doing so well, and now is the time to bring up the CPP. It is not going to have immediate effects. This is a long-term vision.

However, my question concerns the here and now. As the NDP's critic for seniors, I am concerned that there are so many seniors still living in poverty. The increase to the guaranteed income supplement was welcome, but there is so much more to do. I am wondering if I could hear the member's comment on what the government's actions will be in future years to take care of those seniors, because the here and now is desperate.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say how pleased I am that my hon. colleague is going to be working with us on the justice committee going forward.

This government, and all of us, on all sides of the House, are very much committed to seniors. The increase in the guaranteed income supplement is one step, but so is money for social housing for seniors. That is something in our infrastructure plan that we are committed to. That is not going to be the end of it. There are seniors who need home care and who are living in poverty. The $3 billion we talked about for home care for seniors would make an incredible difference. I would love to work with the hon. member to find better ways to ensure that we take care of our seniors, so that we agree with all parties to move forward with that.

● (1300)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues we are dealing with here is decisions that have been made in the past that were clearly out of touch with what the future was going to bring. We had Conservative governments in Alberta and Conservative governments in Ottawa that failed to see the end of the energy economy, and in fact they doubled down on it. At the same time, they neglected to diversify Alberta's economy, just as they are continuing to refuse to diversify the economy in Saskatchewan.

We also now are in a situation where being out of touch with what the future holds for us is going to be dangerous. We do not want to find ourselves in another situation like we are in today 20 years down the road. Could the member maybe talk about the importance of acting now to get those benefits in line?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to impugn blame to anyone. I do not think that is useful for me. I just want to talk about why, as the member said, we need to do something now.

I was lucky enough, as mayor, to recognize at one point that we needed to update our municipal pension plan. The amount of the maximum wage ceiling had been set at $54,000 for 20 years. As a result, management employees were not attracted to our city anymore because the pension would not pay them enough in retirement. Moreover, we saw that existing retirees were having trouble. We always needed to look at our plan based on existing circumstances, and update. I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to say that.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour for me to be here today to speak to the bill and to the amendments that have been put forward.

First, as many people have done, I would like to honour our veterans. I will be in Red Deer for the ceremony, and then I will be dropping in to all the Legions in the riding. I would also like to thank all those people who will be participating in wreath-laying on behalf of the federal government. A great friend of mine, a veteran from the Korean War, Smiley Douglas, has done this for me for many years. I certainly appreciate their great effort and commitment in presenting wreaths on behalf of Canada.

One of the other points that came up was this quote, which has been presented two or three different times. It says:

> It (the CPP) is not intended to provide all the retirement income which many Canadians wish to have. This is a matter of individual choice and, in the Government's view, should properly be left to personal savings and private pension plans.

That was from the Hon. Judy LaMarsh, the Liberal minister responsible for establishing the CPP in 1964.

Many people ask me how I got my start in politics. I talk about the political side and choosing a political party. The reality is that I got my start by trying to understand the things that were happening in this country when the Canada pension plan was being discussed back in the sixties.

I remember going with my father to meetings in town halls or in basements and the discussion that was taking place. My father was in his mid-forties at the time. He said that the pension plan was going to be great for him, but it was going to be awful for me, because I would end up having to pay this for the rest of my life and if I were a self-employed person, this would be the key approach. It turned out that I have not been a self-employed person, but a self-employed person pays twice as much. They pay both sides.

These are the kinds of things I learned. I recognize the importance of what will take place. That is something I certainly remember. My father passed away six weeks after I was elected in 2008. I think of him every time I walk into this chamber, but I also think of the lessons learned. Certainly the lesson on the Canada pension plan was ingrained in me.

We should really talk about what the government is looking for and what this omnibus legislation would do. It says that over the next 40 years, CPP retirement benefits will rise from an income replacement rate of 25% to 33% of employment earnings, and to finance these benefits, the government will hike the CPP premium rate from 9.9% to 11.9%, starting in 2019, which we might notice is not until after the next election.

The other thing to keep in mind as we continue to hear from the other political parties is that we have to help seniors. This will not be helping the present-day seniors. This will not be helping the majority of the people who are in this chamber because of the timing.

There are some things we can do to help seniors, and there are some things we can do to help people who are working so that when they are in their senior years, they have something to fall back on.

Something that was mentioned earlier by one of our colleagues was to teach some financial literacy to people so they understand. There must have been some financial literacy taught, as we have reduced the poverty rate for seniors from the 29% it was back in the 1970s to less than 4% now. People are looking at what they are doing, and they are recognizing the importance of dealing with issues themselves.

As far as financial literacy is concerned, I spent a career teaching mathematics. I always wanted to make sure that people understood how they could look after their money so they could deal with things themselves. It was understanding annuities, looking at the different tax credits so they could do their tax forms and probably help their parents finish these things off, and understanding the different investment instruments, how this would work, and what they could do for themselves.

● (1305)

I always use the concept that, if people didn't smoke and took that much every day and invested it, just think how much money people would have at the end of the day. Then, of course, we would be investing it back into the government. We would be paying our taxes and everything else that was associated with that. However, when they start realizing that would have been a way to maybe come up with $1 million for themselves, these are the sorts of things that I think are important. They are the sorts of things that people should recognize.

When we talk about this and when we take a look at what it is going to do, for those that would be at the maximum when this comes into force, it would be $2,200, $1,100 for the individual and $1,100 for the company. If a person happens to be the company, that is $2,200 that is going to come out of what they could have reinvested to help themselves. These are critical components that we have to recognize.

I have yet to hear anyone really talk about the self-employed and the plight they are in, especially when we look at what is happening in Alberta right now. Look at the situation we heard about earlier. Calgary has hit the 10.2% unemployment rate. Red Deer has been into the double digits for a number of months. Right now, when we start to talk about where we are going to go in the future, this is where the difficulty lies. The difficulty lies in the fact that people have no confidence. We do not know whether or not we are ever going to be able to move our natural resources to tidewater. We look at people who are throwing sand in the gears and it seems as though they are the only ones who are being heard.

The second aspect that we have to recognize here is the tax burden. We look at carbon taxes and we look at the different types of things. In Alberta, there was a price on carbon, and the way in which it was set was so that it was going to be put in to help businesses so that they could do their own reduction. If we make a general carbon tax for anyone, it is easy. Let the government deal with that. We do not have to worry about it. These are the kinds of things that could be done.

When we also consider the payroll tax and the costs that are going to be tied into that right now, where then is the confidence? The confidence is going to other countries. It is not like in 2008 and 2009 when even banks would not lend to each other. The situation now is that there is money and there are dollars available, trillions of dollars just with our seniors and our investors here in Canada alone, but we have to be careful. We have to recognize that if we continue to look at ways of discouraging entrepreneurs from doing the things that are necessary, we are certainly going to be in a terrible situation.

In closing, I would like to point out some of the concerns that people have. I could perhaps have gone through even a few more of the quotes that we have, but I will just close with this particular quote. It says:

> Whatever the reason might be to expand the CPP, it is not to eliminate poverty. The poverty rate among seniors is now as close to zero as we can get. ...a little over five per cent of seniors today still have income below the poverty line

This is a quote from Morneau Shepell, by the co-author with our Minister of Finance of *The Real Retirement*, in the *Financial Post* on June 5, 2016.

I had known it to be 3.7%. I do not know whether it already bumped up to 5% by the time they looked at it, but I know that we have done an amazing job and that we have all of the tools there for our seniors.

● (1310)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 11 million working Canadians do not have a workplace pension plan. It is also a fact that today many go to the food banks. As for the executives there, they say more and more working families are coming to food banks for support.

When we combine these two facts, we know, going forward, a lot of these 11 million working Canadians will retire directly into poverty. We have to take action now so that when people become seniors 10, 15, or 20 years down the road, we are ready to support them.

I did not hear my hon. friend mention anything concrete that is going to help these people who are going to become seniors in 10 to 20 years.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, 10 to 20 years, if we think about the investment, that is not particularly going to be helping people at this point in time. The major input and the major opportunities will be 30 and 40 years down the road.

However, we have looked at the damages that can be done over the next 20 years. When we have companies saying, "Where are we going to invest? How could we be sure that we are going to have something in the future", and they see this type of a payroll cost for their companies, the big companies are not going to be coming in.

However, more importantly, and the point I was trying to make, people who work for self-employed people are probably, in many cases, making more dollars per hour than the person who owns the shop and is the self-employed person. If we add this to the problems they already have, we are really going to see a problem here in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I meet with people in my riding, I realize that there are fewer and fewer workers who have access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan. These workers do not have the means to save for retirement.

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities is currently doing a study on poverty. Statistics Canada representatives appeared before the committee and stated very clearly that the poverty rate for seniors is cause for concern. We know that 30% of elderly women living alone live in poverty.

I am not reassured at all about the current situation of seniors. Too many seniors live in poverty; that is what they are telling me. Their retirement income is not indexed to the cost of living and they are growing poorer by the day. I find it difficult to understand how my colleague can be content with the situation of the past few years.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, there are so many other tools available instead of dealing with and causing problems for the economy.

I feel for the people who speak to seniors, and I do that in my own riding. Seniors will come and talk to me about the issues they have. However, the reality is that there are only 3.7% of seniors who are actually below the poverty line, and we have tools for that. Our Conservative government increased the GIS, and to their credit, the Liberals followed suit and increased it as well.

These are the kinds of things that we could target. We can target the support that we have for those who are in trouble, but only if we can keep the economy strong, and only if we can be assured that we are going to be able to keep businesses growing here in Canada.

● (1315)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend mentioned earlier that he was an educator and he talked about informing his students. I would like him to expand on that a little.

Many of the younger people in my riding that I am talking to are looking at ways of self-funding their retirements. They are not relying on government. They know that it is going to be a problem later on and they are self-funding. Could the member expand on that a bit?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we are able to teach young people and give them the tools they need so that they can invest. There are so many opportunities at this point in time.

The world is open to young people. When we take a look at the way in which they communicate and the opportunities they have, they need to have more financial literacy now and a different type of financial literacy than people like the member or myself would have. This is what is critical, but we have to make sure that we keep up the hard work to train people so that they understand what they have to do.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address Bill C-26, which amends the CPP in this country.

The changes that are being proposed today would not help today's seniors. The CPP tax hike that the Liberals are proposing would only help seniors 40 years from now and in the interim would damage the Canadian economy.

Being from Alberta, I know that our economy right now is in a shaky place. We have seen double digit unemployment rates and all sectors are being affected. This is not just an oil price problem. This is a problem across Alberta's entire economy. I particularly want to push back on the idea that Alberta does not have a diverse economy. For anyone who says that Alberta's economy is not diverse, I would challenge that person to come and visit my riding.

If there is something that starts in the ground it probably comes from my riding. I have a significant agriculture industry in my riding as well as a significant forestry industry and a significant oil and gas industry. All of these industries work hand in hand.

I met with a constituent during the campaign and when I asked him what he did he told me it was hard to explain. He said his family are traditionally dairy farmers. They have a herd of about 120 cows. He said he has a mechanics ticket and on the side he soups up Dodge diesel pickups. He has a lot of fun with that and it makes him about $12,000 a year. He said he also services a number of gas wells in the area.

This gentleman's story typifies Alberta in that its entire economy is integrated. If a person works in one industry, that does not necessarily mean that he or she only works in that industry. A lot of guys are doing multiple things. There is a lot of shift work in the oil and gas industry. People will work for two weeks at a time and then be off for a week, or they will work for 10 days and be off for four. They work a combination of such. A lot of people who work their oil and gas job will have a separate commercial interest going on when they have days off. When the number of oil and gas jobs is reduced, it affects every other sector of Alberta's economy because they are self-funding another project on the go.

A common saying in Alberta is “we're funding our farming habit one way or the other”. A lot of guys will either pick up a job servicing gas wells in their area or they will drive logging trucks. I know a number of guys who farm year-round and they drive logging trucks in the winter. They already have a big rig sitting in their yard so they get a commercial licence, insure the truck, and go logging. They bring in more income that way. These are just some of the things that show the diversity of the economy in northern Alberta.

Then we have all the spinoff that comes from the diversification of our economy, one being the service industry. We also have welders who work for all three of the industries. They will do some welding at one of the sawmills, some welding on one of the oil lease sites, and some welding work for a farmer. The hotel and restaurant industry will service all three of these industries. We have a lot of schools in the area that educate all of the children who live in the towns and whose parents work in one of the three industries.

Alberta is one of the best regulated parts of the country and because of that we tend to be on the cutting edge of new technology, whether that be in farming, logging, or the oil patch.

● (1320)

A number of the lumber mills that I visited said that they were the first in the country to have the technology. When logs come into the mills, they are scanned, a picture is taken of them, and the computer does an algorithm on the value in those logs. Whether they cut two-by-fours, or two-by-eights, or two-by-fives out of a log, it is all planned by the computer as they come through the gate into the mill. The company that provided the technology to the mills is able to go and sell it around the world.

It is the same thing when it comes to the oil patch. The development of the flare stack technology and the ability to create electricity off what used to be flared, was developed in Alberta. Now we go around the world and sell that technology.

People who say that Alberta should have worked harder to diversify its economy should check out what we are doing in engineering, in innovative farming practices, and in harvesting logs.

Our logging companies have a 100-year plan on how they will harvest the logs in northern Alberta. It is fascinating to watch.

Oil and gas is being depressed because of oil prices and a lack of pipelines. It is a huge problem for Alberta. The logging industry is under a couple of threats. The species at risk legislation and caribou are causing consternation with the logging industry, as well as the softwood lumber agreement. These are the other things that are causing instability in the marketplace. People are not ready to invest in things like that.

Also about a third of the canola crop is laying underneath the snow right now. This is causing a significant hardship for our farmers in the area. Our farmers typically do not have the margins to pay significantly, at the oil and gas level, so they typically pick up oil and gas workers as well.

All of these things are working together. The three major sectors in my riding have significant instability. They are unable to invest right now, because they are unsure of where we will go.

On top of all of these things, the Liberal government is now putting an extra burden on all of these employers and employees by bringing in a new CPP tax hike. This CPP tax hike is going to make it more expensive to hire people. It is also going to cost more for the current employees, which is what we are looking at in northern Alberta right now.

A lot of companies are surviving with a zero margin. If they can get their costs out right now, they are happy to come and do the work. In some cases, they are doing the work at a loss purely to keep their guys so when the price comes back around, they will have the good guys working for them.

What the CPP tax hike will do is drive the costs up even higher, making it more difficult for companies to survive through this economic downturn. It will do nothing for seniors right now. The entire reason why the Liberal government is bringing this in right now, as they have told us, is to help seniors.

This is not going to help them. It is completely preposterous for the Liberals to say that they will bring this in to help seniors, and then say that it will only help seniors 40 years from now. It is incredibly frustrating to watch the government, completely oblivious to the fact of what is happening in northern Alberta, throwing this on there and saying that it is doing it to help seniors. I am at a loss for words to say how frustrating this is.

I know many of my colleague have raised a lot of similar points and I hope we can continue to do this. I feel the government should reconsider its position on the CPP tax hike, go back to the drawing board and come back with something that will not be so detrimental to our economy.

● (1325)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am curious if my colleague from Peace River—Westlock believes the CPP itself is important and if it is, should we make it sustainable for 100 years like the logging industry? If he does not think it is, should we get rid of it?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, when I was first employed, I discovered that I was not allowed to take home all my pay. I was getting paid $5.90 an hour, which was minimum wage. I did the calculation on my hours worked and on how much I should be paid. However, I was told that I had to pay CPP, taxes and all sorts fun stuff, which was deducted from my wages. It was a bit of a shocker to me. However, retirement was not on my radar at that point either. It was something that cued me to look at this.

The system is in place and many people rely on it. I am not in any way advocating that we should get rid of it. What I am saying though is that it is just one of the tools that Canadians are using to fund their retirement.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the member talked about the first time he received his paycheque, I am sure this is why he became a Conservative. We have discovered that there is a lot of money being taken out of our pockets and this is what the trick is with the bill.

Members may not know that the gentleman is the father of two. I played with them on Wednesday, and they were very energetic. If the government proceeds with this attitude of taking more money from the pockets of the people instead of letting them make their own preferences and their own choices, what does he think this will do for the future of his children?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why I became involved and why I came here. I was not that into the whole what happens in Ottawa until I had children and had to look to the future. When we have children, suddenly the future becomes much larger in our field of vision, so that is precisely why I am involved.

What is the government doing for our children? It is saddling them with a massive debt that they will have to pay off. When I address the government, I do it often from the perspective of my children. Why do the Liberals not care about the children?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have good, strong national leadership that has led to the provinces and all regions saying yes to the bill. When we have provincial jurisdictions and Canadians as a whole saying yes to the bill, why is the Conservative Party is voting against it?

● (1330)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, Canadians as a whole are saying that the government is spending too much money. When the member says that the Liberals are bringing leadership, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business would argue otherwise, and it has said so repeatedly.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CRIMEAN TATAR DEPORTATION (“SÜRGÜNLIK”) MEMORIAL DAY ACT

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC) moved that Bill C-306, An Act to establish a Crimean Tatar Deportation (“Sürgünlik”) Memorial Day and to recognize the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 as an act of genocide, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to begin the debate on my private member's bill, the Crimean Tatar deportation memorial day act. It shows the terrible depths to which humanity can fall. It is a reason why the House is again taking up debate on a matter of genocide. It is not the first and, sadly, not the last time that we will consider events of the past and decide whether we will come to denounce them as genocide.

It is a topic on which Canada has been a world leader. We have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. That is a statute enacted after the Second World War.

Article II of the statute defines genocide as:

> ...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Canada has made several recognitions in the past. Most recently, the House passed a motion, proposed by my colleague, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, recognizing the ongoing genocide waged against the Yazidis by ISIS.

The recognition that is most relevant to Crimea was raised in 2008. The House declared the Holodomor as a genocide. It was the forced starvation of Ukrainians in 1932 and 1933. That historic act of recognition was the result of the hard work of my colleague, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. That legislation brought about Canada's first official recognition and denunciation of an atrocity committed by the Soviet Union and masterminded by Joseph Stalin.

It is therefore fitting that today we should discuss the terrible crime committed by the Soviet Union against the indigenous people of Crimea in 1944 and their relevance to what has happened in Crimea in the last two years. We cannot separate the deportation in 1944 from Russia's theft of Crimea from Ukraine 70 years later. The same evil ideology and disregard for the fundamental rights and freedoms of every man and woman is at work. It is a regime that tore more than 200,000 people from their homes, dropped them in a remote part of Central Asia and started a war with a peaceful neighbouring country in order to steal territory. That is why the preamble to this bill draws attention to the renewed persecution faced by the Crimean Tatars in occupied Crimea. It categorically states that Canada will never recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

First, we must turn back 70 years to the deportations.

In May of 1944, the Soviet army reconquered Crimea, which had been under Nazi occupation since 1941. The Soviet army was not a liberator for the Crimean Tatars though. It arrived bearing an order signed by Stalin condemning their entire nation to exile.

On May 18, 1944, Soviet secret police forces, the dreaded NKVD, began rounding up Crimean Tatars at their homes. They were packed onto cattle cars and sent on a long journey to Central Asia, thousands of kilometres away. Many left with little more than the clothes on their backs. Their homes, livestock, and possessions were all gone. Anyone who tried to escape was shot.

For many, the trains were deadly because many Tatar men were away serving in the Soviet military. The deportees were predominantly women, children, and the elderly. Many of the latter two succumbed to malnutrition and dehydration, or the diseases that quickly spread in the overcrowded cattle cars. Those who made it to their place of exile were greeted by nothing.

● (1335)

There was no food or accommodation for anyone. Lacking shelter, clothing, and virtually all necessities of life, it is estimated that almost 20% of all of the Crimean Tatars died in 1944 and 1945. Stalin intended to remove the Tatars from history, too. Following the deportations, towns in Crimea were renamed, mosques were destroyed, and books in the Crimean Tatar language or about them were burned.

Famously, their entry in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* was removed. What possible justification could there be for this action? Stalin accused the Crimean Tatars of treason against the Soviet Union, but tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars had just risked their lives fighting for the Red Army against Hitler. Eight were even decorated with the Soviet Union's highest award for bravery.

After 1944, that history was deliberately suppressed. The Crimean Tatars would remain confined to exile in central Asia for more than 40 years. Their homes were given to settlers from outside of Crimea, their language was banned, and their children were forced to study in Russian. Conditions remained harsh even after Stalin's death. In 1956, the Tatars were officially banned from returning to Crimea. In 1967, the Soviet regime rescinded its own false treason charges against the Tatars, but it maintained the ban on them returning to Crimea. It even denied that the Crimean Tatars were a nationality at all.

Only the collapse of the Soviet Union brought an end to their exile. In 1988, the survivors who had held on to their identity, language, and culture began moving back to Crimea. They did so because the Soviet Union was now just too weak to stop them. There were late recognitions by the Soviet Union and Russia that an injustice had been committed. That is true, but the Crimean Tatars have never been compensated by either state for the loss of life, property, and liberty that they suffered in exile.

I do not expect to find much disagreement in the House that the events I have described constitute genocide against the Crimean Tatars. Indeed, it was always clear that the Soviet regime intended to destroy the Crimean Tatars as a nation through exile and banishment. However, in turning to the present, we can see that 1991 was not the end of the Crimean Tatars' pain.

The country that the Crimean Tatars returned to in 1991 was the newly independent Ukraine. Conditions were poor there, with a very weak economy and limited employment or housing, but they were home in Crimea, and Ukraine was tolerant. They formed their own representative bodies, the Mejlis and the Qurultay, and some of their leaders were even elected to the Ukrainian parliament.

Earlier this year, I had the honour of meeting one the great Crimean Tatar leaders, Mustafa Dzhemilev, as did a number of my colleagues. Mr. Dzhemilev is a long-time member of the Ukrainian parliament and a former chairman of the Mejlis. He was deported to Uzbekistan when he was just six months old.

As a young man, he was expelled from university for joining illegal Crimean Tatar underground movements and was arrested for refusing to join the Soviet army. He spent 15 years of his life in Soviet prisons for peacefully resisting the Communist regime. At one point, he conducted a hunger strike for 303 days. He lived only because he was force-fed. Dzhemilev is celebrated as a dissident and freedom fighter by his people and by much of the world, but today he is exiled from his homeland again.

After the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Crimean Tatars are again under threat. Their elected representative body, the Mejlis, has been banned as an extremist organization by Russian authorities. Many of their leaders, such as Mr. Dzhemilev and his successor, Refat Chubarov, have been banned from Crimea. These stories of exile, return, and renewed pain are common to many Crimean Tatars.

● (1340)

I recently met another survivor of the deportation, Ayshe Seitmuratova. She was seven years old when the secret police came for her family in their village outside of Kerch. Ayshe grew up in Uzbekistan and tried to study her people's past. When she was a graduate student, the KGB seized her research documents and sentenced her first to house arrest, and then sent her to a prison colony in a remote part of Russia. She fled for the United States in the late 1970s. She returned when the U.S.S.R. collapsed, and opened a home to care for seniors in Crimea. She has remained in Crimea under Russian occupation, always a thorn in their side. She told me that at 80 years old, having survived deportation, exile, and prison, she is not afraid of the authorities. She has already seen everything that they can throw at her.

However, others who have tried to resist from within Crimea do so at great peril. The deputy chairman of the Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, was confined to a psychiatric institution and was only released after international pressure was applied. Another deputy is in prison. Other so-called activists have disappeared without a trace. Crimean Tatar media outlets have been closed, including the ATR TV network. Tatar language schools have been shuttered. Mosques have been vandalized. Gatherings to remember the 1944 deportations have been banned in every year of the Russian occupation, though many defy the authorities.

These acts of persecution and marginalization directed against the Crimean Tatars are an echo of 1944. They are being carried out by the regime of Vladimir Putin that no longer bothers to hide its nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Indeed, they are even rehabilitating Joseph Stalin, and doing so to torment his victims. What other explanation could there be for building monuments to the dictator in Crimean cities like Yalta and Simferopol? The chasm between Putin's plan for the world and the Ukrainian wishes for their country could not be greater. Tatars are now fleeing prosecution to other parts of Ukraine, and almost 10,000 have done so since the illegal annexation of Crimea.

In 2015, Ukraine's parliament officially declared the deportation of 1944 a genocide. They have issued a call for the rest of the world to respond, and I would like Canada to answer. I am pleased that in the short time since I introduced this bill, I have already received the support of the Canadian Association of Crimean Tatars, the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the International Council in Support of Ukraine, and many other individuals. Just this week, I received letters of support from Mr. Dzhemilev and Mr. Chubarov, along with the support of Ayshe Seitmuratova. I am especially honoured to have the support of the Crimean Tatars' people's representatives.

Now is the time for this House to take action to show our support for the Crimean Tatars. We have clear, irrefutable evidence of a genocide, planned and executed by Stalin's regime in 1944, one that did not truly end until the Soviet Union collapsed. We understand that these events are the textbook definition of genocide: acts committed with the intent to destroy an ethnic group through inflicting terrible conditions that would lead to the group's destruction. And we know very well what is happening to Crimean Tatars today in illegally occupied Crimea at the hands of Putin.

We are a loyal friend of Ukraine. It was a peaceful home to Crimean Tatars for more than two decades. Canada has never hesitated to make our nation's position clear. Whether it takes five months or 50 years, we will never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea. This House needs to make our position officially known to the world.

● (1345)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge that in our present day we do have recourse with international courts for present-day atrocities. It is the distant historical matters, such as my hon. colleague's motion is about, that really do rely on the political process. Given the nature and the scale of the crime that is surrounding this motion here today with the Crimean Tatars, does my friend not believe that we should be focusing our discussion on that historical atrocity? Does he also plan to table any reports or evidence that can go along with this documentation on the Sürgünlik genocide?

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the past, but it is absolutely linked to what is going on today in Ukraine.

It was a terrible thing that happened to the Crimean Tartars. The deportation was horrible, and they are still suffering. I truly believe that we have to link the past with the present to get the full impact of this and recognize that, indeed, it was genocide. We definitely have to keep both the past and the present in mind.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a third generation, proud Ukrainian and a member of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, I thank the member for the work he is doing.

Have other countries recognized the Soviet's atrocities as genocide besides Canada? I wonder if he could tell me roughly how many.

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, yes, other countries have. The forced famine in Ukraine, I believe, has been recognized by 13 countries. The genocide of the Crimean Tartars has been recognized by Ukraine. Canada is being challenged to be the second to recognize this genocide.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase the question I just asked. Because we are not dealing with present-day atrocities, which have their own recourse in international courts, but are dealing with a historical genocide, are there any supporting documents that will be going into the archives, along with this motion, on the history of this important event? Will the member be tabling any of those?

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Mr. Speaker, it is well known that this atrocity happened. We do not have to do too much hard digging. It is well recognized that these people were deported. It is well known that there was an attempt to eradicate them, essentially. It is a historical fact, and certainly there is a lot of documentation.

However, I think we really have to key in on the fact that this has not ended. It is still, now, going on. People are not welcome in Crimea. We have a member of Parliament who cannot go back to Crimea. This is scandalous and shows that history is repeating itself.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak to private members' Bill C-306, Crimean Tatar deportation, or "Sürgünlik", memorial day act.

Let us take a moment to remember this tragedy. In 1944, Soviet authorities forced the deportation of a vast number of minorities throughout the Soviet Union. This bill seeks to acknowledge the staggering number of deaths and the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars, forcibly removed from their homes on the Crimean Peninsula. This tragedy continues to haunt the collective memory of Crimean Tatars and further strengthens the attachment they still feel for their peninsula.

Canada strongly condemns the terrible discrimination and mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 under the Soviet regime of Joseph Stalin. The Soviet regime committed an affront to Canadians by committing an affront to the common human values that we all share, namely the fundamental right to live free from persecution and to forge one's own path in the world.

These fundamental rights and freedoms have been denied to a great many people, but rarely as brutally as to the Crimean Tatars. A day to commemorate the massive deportations of Tatars from the Crimean Peninsula to central Asia would raise awareness of a dark chapter in the history of humanity and give a voice to those who were killed during this terrible tragedy. That is why our government commemorated this day on May 19, 2016. We fully support designating a memorial day in honour of the Crimean Tatars.

History can guide our future endeavours. The tragedy of the Crimean Tatars underscores an important principle articulated by Lord Acton, who said, "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its minorities."

Canada is a great nation, a free nation, and its greatness is due in part to its Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which enshrines in law the protection of minority rights. As stated in subsection 15(1) of the charter:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

This principle of equality and protection for all, or human rights, seems so obvious to Canadians. Unfortunately, that principle has been violated in the past, and is still being violated in parts of the world today.

We are gathered here today as parliamentarians because we want to make our communities, Canadian society, and the entire world a better place. When we look around the globe, we see that too many tragedies are still taking place, and it seems that the universal protection of human rights and recognition of the inalienable nature of each individual's rights are distant notions in some cases.

At any given moment, countless human beings around the world are being punished and tortured simply for their religious beliefs. They are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. They are abused because of their gender and killed because of the colour of their skin. Too many governments commit acts of hatred and refuse to acknowledge the humanity they share with others.

Here in Canada, we know that we are stronger because of our differences and not in spite of them. We know that we are all equal and that we have basic human rights. In light of that, it is up to all of us to make Canada a strong advocate for human rights.

This government is known for its strong, unwavering commitment to human rights. Now more than ever, there is a need for human rights advocates, and Canada is in a better position than most countries to lead this fight. This government is being proactive and working hard to defend and solidify Canada's position on international human rights. We are building a safer world that is more stable and prosperous by interacting with it rather than withdrawing from the fight.

I would like to give a few examples. Canada now seeks clemency for all Canadians facing execution abroad. If Canada does not fight to protect the lives of each of its citizens, then the government has failed in its basic duty to protect them.

● (1355)

We announced our intention to ratify the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Torture is a scourge that must be eliminated. It has been shown time and time again that this barbaric practice is not effective and produces false information. It serves no purpose except to inflict suffering.

We also created the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion, because human rights requires a comprehensive approach and because our outreach efforts produce better results when we stand up for all rights abroad by combining all of our voices and skills.

We gave all of our heads of missions abroad the objective of defending human rights and the tools to achieve it. Their mandate letters also reflect the need to promote and defend human rights. Their actions will inspire many people throughout the world.

We are putting in place a new government-wide strategy to address the crisis in Iraq and Syria, which includes tripling the number of members in our training mission and investing $1.6 billion over three years in Iraq and the surrounding region. It should be noted that we have pledged $158 million of this amount to humanitarian work and support for stabilization in Iraq.

Daesh is a perversion of Islam, a vessel brimming with hate, and an affront to the entire world; together with our allies, we will fight this monstrosity. We are supporting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with new base funding of $15 million a year over the next three years.

We also reaffirmed our commitment to the empowerment of women by providing $16.3 million to women in the Middle East and North Africa. The world cannot be a just place when half the population does not have equal opportunity.

Thanks to the concerted efforts it is making right now, our government is getting results. We are making an important contribution. By focusing on promoting human rights and ensuring the rule of law and justice, Canada is paying tribute to the legacy of Crimean Tatars, a brave and resilient people whose strength of character is an example for everyone.

We must never forget their suffering and we must continue to commemorate May 18. However, it is not good enough just to reflect on this tragedy; we must take action. By promoting human rights, Canada is trying to prevent another tragedy such as this one from taking place in the future.

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as vice-chair of the international human rights subcommittee, I rise on behalf of my caucus in support of this motion and to speak to its intent.

Determining which historical events should be considered genocide, rather than, say, a crime against humanity or a war crime, is not a clear-cut matter, and no agreed upon formal process exists. For atrocities that are committed during the present time, we have recourse to international courts and tribunals, but these bodies typically do not involve themselves in distant historical matters.

To prosecute present day crimes, investigators amass evidence, build cases against individuals, make formal charges, and interview potential witnesses. In effect, the formal machinery of justice is set in motion. Sadly, no such machinery exists for genocides that may have occurred in the past. The process in fact is entirely political.

As we know, when accusations of genocide are made, the details are often hotly disputed, particularly when dealing with an event in the distant past. Over time, partisans emerge, and wield oftentimes radically different versions of facts.

Parliaments get involved, bills are passed, and resolutions are supported, declaring a particular event to be a genocide. Curiously, this is often done without investigations being conducted or reports being tabled, or even without first establishing an agreed upon definition of genocide. What one needs to do is secure a vote. It is a curious process, when we think about it, yet genocide is a profoundly serious matter.

When we seek to designate a particular event as a genocide, we are compelled to exhaustively research the subject. We should consult the very best legal and historical experts available. We should carefully weigh all available evidence and testimony.

Genocides are such a grave matter that we, all of us, have a responsibility to the past and to the future to get it right. We have an obligation to the truth that should transcend present political considerations. One thing a debate about genocide should never be is a cynical political outreach tool by partisan interests to woo important demographics within someone's country.

Genocide is defined in article 2 of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

We are debating the bill today due in large part to motivation on the part of the Parliament of Ukraine. In November of last year, the Ukrainian parliament recognized the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatars by the Soviet regime in1944 as a genocide, and established May 18 as an official day of commemoration. Subsequently, Kiev has been urging the parliaments of allied nations to adopt a similar official day of recognition. Here we are today.

While researching the bill, I noted that among mainstream independent historians, consensus does not exist at this time as to whether the events of 1944 constitute genocide. Let me be clear that what was done to the Tatars in Crimea in 1944 is a crime of abominable dimensions. Certainly the NDP will be supporting the bill.

My remarks should be interpreted more as a lament about process. It's a lament that we, the international community, do not have a less politicized way of determining what is and is not a genocide with respect to historical events. Parliaments are not the ideal places to determine such matters. This was in fact noted by Canada's current Minister of Foreign Affairs during another debate about genocide in this chamber last spring.

One curious thing I noted while reading the text of the bill is that it spends almost as much time enumerating the alleged crimes of the present day Russian Federation as it does those committed in 1944. In fact, much of the bill reads like an indictment of Vladimir Putin instead of Joseph Stalin, and this is unfortunate.

● (1400)

The scale of the forced expulsion of the Tatars of Crimea in 1944 was horrific, horrific enough to merit its own debate here. We should resist the urge to use a debate about a possible genocide that occurred in history as a pretext for a narrative against a regime we dislike in the present, no matter how awful that regime may be. The victims of 1944 deserve better. Their descendants deserve better. So let us take a moment and look at the history.

In April of 1944, Soviet forces regained control of Crimea from its German occupiers, who had controlled it for two and a half years. The re-conquest was hardly completed when the Crimean Tatars were deported en masse on the largely false accusation of having collectively collaborated with the Nazis. In a matter of three days, approximately 180,014 Crimean Tatars were deported from the peninsula. Adjusting for natural deaths, historian Michael Rywkin calculates that roughly 42,000 Crimean Tatars perished by May of 1949 as a result of the deportation. Other historians place the number considerably higher.

Social anthropologist, Greta Uehling, has stated this about Stalin's actions:

> The systematic erasure of the Crimean Tatars was holistic in nature. Crimean Tatar place names were changed to Soviet ones; mosques were turned into movie theatres (or worse); homes, livestock and gardens were given away; and mention of Crimean Tatars was deleted or abbreviated in reference works. Crimean Tatars were not allowed to reside in, or speak of, their homeland. It wasn't even possible to preserve a Crimean Tatar identity in personal documents.

Due to the sweeping nature of this ethnic cleansing, the remnants of the dispersed population are not considered a diaspora, but a population in exile.

In fact, the term *sürgün* is used by the Crimean Tatars to refer to the deportation. It means "expulsion" as well as "exile" in Turkish. By extension, *sürgün* refers to violent expulsion and the prolonged exile. Since 1944, the *sürgün* is at the centre of the Crimean Tatar's collective life and, consequently, central to their identity as Crimean Tatars.

In more recent times, the Tatars of the Crimea have almost uniformly opposed the Russian Federation's annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Since this time, according to Amnesty International, Crimean Tatars have faced repressive measures, from media outlets being shuttered, to activists being arrested, and disappeared. Tatars have not been allowed to publicly commemorate the day of remembrance of the deportation.

In April of this year, and confirmed by their court in September, Russia banned the Mejlis, the Crimean Tatar assembly, accusing it of extremism. As a result, anyone involved in one of the more than 250 local mejlis across Crimea risks arrest.

For Tatars, these circumstances are understandably associated with the events of 1944. Indeed, in the minds of Tatars of Crimea, a straight line can be drawn from today, all the way back to Catherine the Great's takeover of the peninsula in 1783.

Sadly, relations between the Crimean Tatars and the rest of Ukraine have been less than ideal through the years. One could even describe them as tense. It is striking to me that though the Ukraine was an independent state for 23 years prior to Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014, it made no effort over this time to formally recognize the 1944 ethnic cleansing as a genocide.

Better late than never, I suppose, because politics is politics.

To conclude, let me clearly stress once again: USSR dictator Joseph Stalin's forced expulsion of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 was one of the more heinous criminal acts committed during a century brimming with such crimes.

● (1405)

By my reading of article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, this—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-306. I have to thank my colleague, the member for Edmonton Griesbach for his hard work and research on the bill, and for the hard work that he has done with the Tatar community across Canada, and indeed even in Crimea.

It is unfortunate that these horrific events have occurred in history, but I think it is the responsibility of us as parliamentarians today to recognize these human rights abuses, to recognize these genocides, and to commit ourselves as parliamentarians to making sure that we are on the record in condemning those actions.

One of the greatest speakers to ever grace a Westminster parliament was Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who said that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

What we are doing in Bill C-306 today is looking at the atrocities that were committed and perpetrated by Joseph Stalin, NKVD, the Soviet Union, and all of their thugs in orchestrating this genocide against the Crimean people, but also relating it to how history is repeating itself today in the Crimean peninsula under the leadership of Vladimir Putin as he tries to systematically degrade and reduce the ethnicity of the indigenous people of Crimea, the Tatars.

I have had many opportunities to travel to Ukraine. I have had many opportunities to meet these great people, here in Canada and in Ukraine. The Tatars are just some of the gentlest, most beautiful people members could ever speak to. They represent no threat to anyone. They cherish what they have, yet through history, especially under Russian and Soviet rule, have been targeted and murdered through various acts carried out by Russia or the Soviet Union.

If we just want to look at what happened under Joseph Stalin and his Communist regime, it does not only include what happened in 1944. Shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviets denounced and refused to recognize the independent Republic of Crimea, of the Tatars. They then went out of their way to start using food as a weapon.

I am quite proud of the fact that this Parliament unanimously supported my private member's bill in 2008 to recognize the famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine and other areas of the Soviet Union, the Holodomor, as a genocide, and that we would have the last Saturday of every November as the national Holodomor Memorial Day.

It is very important that we recognize the fact that there was more than just the famine of 1932-33. There was the famine of 1920-21, 1932-33, and there was another one that was conducted around 1954. In the first two cases, the Holodomor of 1920-21 and 1932-33, the Crimean Tatars were targeted. They suffered greatly. In the Holodomor of 1932-33, where we saw roughly seven million people in and around Ukraine starve to death in about 15 months, what we witnessed on the peninsula and what has been clearly documented is that half the Crimean Tatar population were starved to death.

Their homes were raided and invaded. All their food stocks, all their farming livestock, all their produce that they had, anything that they had canned or put into storage was taken out of their homes, out of their villages, and they were forced to starve to death. It was a forced famine.

● (1410)

Let us move on to where we are today, looking at what happened in 1944. The mass deportation occurred in a time span of two days, when 32,000 NKVD agents of the Soviet Union loaded up every man, woman, and child and confiscated all their property. They put them into cattle cars, onto trains, and onto barges and deported them to gulags in Uzbekistan. More than 100,000 of them, almost 50%, starved on that journey. The rest were forced to work in forced labour camps in the gulags in Uzbekistan.

By every definition, that constitutes a genocide. Historians have written about this as being ethnic cleansing. This was targeted against the indigenous people of Crimea. They were targeted based on their religion. As was already noted in speeches today, the Russians took over their mosques and converted them into theatres. They took all their homes and handed them over to those who were faithful to the Bolsheviks and the Communist empire. Ultimately, what we have is a genocide.

Raphael Lemkin, the individual who coined the term "genocide", lived through and witnessed the Holocaust, where he lost 49 of his own family. He witnessed the Holodomor and spoke about the Holodomor at great length and the Russification of the Ukrainian people, which was exactly what was happening in Crimea. That helped inform his opinion on what constitutes a genocide.

Raphael Lemkin, who was a Russian subject before the Holocaust, got out of Poland and with some family members in Lithuania was able to get to Sweden, and ultimately to America.

In article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, as authored by Lemkin, it says genocide is "killing". There are different ways to look at it. It is being targeted because of one's "national, ethnical, racial, or religious group".

We are talking about the Tatars. Their religion is Muslim. They were very much a minority based on their religion. Their ethnicity, being the indigenous people, was Tatar, and again, they were the minority in the region.

There are five main things.

> Killing members of the group;

Well, they killed half of them.

> Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

Picking up everybody, throwing them onto trains and barges, and moving them to Uzbekistan is causing mental and physical harm, especially when they were starved along way and their physical conditions were greatly diminished.

> Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

That definitely was done by the Soviet Union.

There are two other parts, but as long as one of those five sections is met, and in this case, three out of the five are met, no one should question whether this was a genocide perpetrated by the Soviet Union.

We have to recognize the fact that history is repeating itself today in Crimea. What we see from Vladimir Putin and the Russian regime is a little more sensibility, as they have not gone out and just started shooting Tatars on the street, but many of them have actually had to leave the country, and as was mentioned, the leader of the Crimean people, Mustafa Dzhemilev, who is a member of parliament in Ukraine and who has been the president of the organization for the Crimeans there, has been forced into exile. We have seen that, also, with Refat Chubarov and other Crimean leaders.

The Russians went in and the first thing they did was shut down freedom of the press by shutting down the papers and radio stations. Then they shut down their political ability to work together at the Mejlis, their parliament. That was closed. Then the Russians made sure that they could no longer even go to their mosques to gather.

There is no freedom of association, no freedom of political affiliation, and no freedom of religion.

We need to recognize that Vladimir Putin is trying, again, to repeat history. As Winston Churchill said, we have to make sure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. This is our opportunity to take a stand and make sure that we keep Russia in check and do not appease them. We have to stand up for the people of Crimea and the people of Ukraine.

● (1415)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak. On this particular issue, there is a great deal of willingness to attempt to understand the situation. For me personally as someone who comes from Winnipeg, I appreciate that we have the Canadian Museum for Human Rights there. If members have the opportunity to visit this facility, they would see that the issue of genocide and a multitude of different types of human rights are well displayed. It is quickly becoming a world-class museum. It is one of the jewels that we have in Canada and it happens to be located, as a national museum, in the city of Winnipeg.

On issues of this nature, I can assure all members of the House and Canadians that we have a government that is truly listening and will continue to do so.

I rise in the House today to discuss Bill C-306,, an act to establish a Crimean Tatar deportation *Sürgünlik* memorial day.

On May 18 of every year, people around the world are reminded of the widespread suffering and exile inflicted on the Crimean Tatar population by the Soviet Union. Soviet oppression included the curtailment of Tatar cultural rights, the outright persecution of their intellectual class, and the deaths of thousands of Crimean Tatars as a result of sweeping purges and the collectivization of agriculture.

As a part of the widespread deportation that took place throughout the Soviet Union in the 1940s, the entire Crimean Tatar population, representing one-fifth of the entire population of Crimea, was forcibly expelled from the peninsula in 1944.

The deportation was undertaken as a form of collective punishment for alleged collaboration with the Nazis. Despite the fact that tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars had served in the Red Army and fought bravely against the Nazi occupation, in the three-day period between May 18 to 20, over 200,000 Crimean Tatars were given a mere 30 minutes to gather their loves ones and possessions before being loaded onto cattle cars, headed for central Asia, Siberia, and the Urals.

Tens of thousands would die en route, never to see their homes again. Those who survived the journey were faced with the prospects of forced labour, squalid living conditions, disease, and starvation as they began their new lives in these remote settings.

Owing to these conditions, large numbers of the Crimean Tatar population died both during transport and within the five years that immediately followed their resettlement. The great loss of life, disruption to their culture, and the denial of their return home was an atrocity that this government rightly condemns, and that we must never forget.

Somehow, exiled Crimean Tatars managed to build a life, but it was never complete, because it was culturally, spiritually, and emotionally disconnected from their homeland. Home remained Crimea and it remained as such in their hearts and minds, creating a renewed sense of national identity among the Crimean Tatars from their deep-seated connection to the Crimean peninsula.

In 1989, after nearly five decades, Crimean Tatars were finally allowed to return to their homeland, but the scars remain.

Stalin's actions in Crimea were an affront to the common human values we all share, the fundamental right to live free from persecution and to chart our own path in the world. These fundamental freedoms were denied to many, but few more brutally than the Crimean Tatars.

The world must never forget the tragedy that befell the Crimean Tatar population. That is why this government commemorated this day on May 18, 2016.

● (1420)

We fully support the creation of a memorial day for the Crimean Tatars. By recognizing this day, Canada pays tribute to the Crimean Tatars. We are reminded of the horrors they suffered, but also inspired by the indomitable will and the resilience they have demonstrated. Despite the unimaginable burdens inflicted, they persevered, and while they carry the burden of the past with them, they stand tall today and their culture thrives. They are unbroken, a people who demonstrate humanity's fortitude. They are an inspiration for all of us.

By acknowledging their tragedy, we also are reminded of the values we must fight to protect, the values robbed from them under the Soviet regime. Of particular note is respect for justice, and the need for rule of law. In a world where these values are increasingly under attack, they demand our protection. The only way we can deliver justice is to follow the very best standards of it. That is how we honour those who were viciously denied justice and how we demonstrate to today's despots our convictions, our principles, and our will.

Therefore, we must remember that when we look at the bill before us now, of course it is easy to issue a political declaration, but politicizing justice is not the answer, and it is not the Canadian way. Justice is not served when we presume to prejudge the outcome of a necessary and eventual investigative and judicial process. The victims of the Crimean Tatar deportation and their families deserve what was robbed from them, and that starts with the rule of law.

While we have various pieces of this tragedy, no independent international investigation has taken place into the events of 1944. The legal test to be met for genocide in international law is a high one and we support an investigation and the collection of evidence toward that determination. However, if we prejudge it now, we undermine the law. We can help repair what was taken only if we follow the legal path that was denied, which includes proving beyond a reasonable doubt that such atrocities were perpetrated as part of a campaign to destroy, in whole or in part, an identifiable national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.

We therefore take seriously the need to rely on factual historical evidence and expert determination on whether the deportation of Crimean Tatars meets the threshold for genocide as laid out in the 1948 genocide convention. For this reason, Canada, like our international partners, including the United States and the European Union, has opted over the years to mark this anniversary through official statements on the forced deportation.

Our government is committed to remembering this historical tragedy, and to protecting the rule of law. That is why when it comes to genocide, our government has sought the most rigorous application of the term according to the law. Horrifying situations such as this require a strong memorial and a testament to what was endured. Canada will do that. However, it is not for politicians, even with the best intentions, to change what is a uniquely legal term such as genocide.

Surviving Tatars and their families deserve the due diligence of a thorough investigation, done by an independent body. That is the proper way to make a determination of genocide. This approach is respectful both in preserving the integrity of the legal definition of genocide and to the historical memory and tragedy of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars.

Meanwhile, our government does not lose sight of the ongoing challenges facing the present day community of Crimean Tatars and of the responsibility of the international community, including Canada, to act in this regard.

● (1425)

Like the member opposite, I have had the opportunity to travel to Ukraine over the last little while, and one of the most touching moments I experienced was when I was in the city of Kiev and had a tour of the Holodomor museum. That is an issue I raised shortly after first being elected as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North. I understand deeply why Canadians as a whole look abroad at some of the horrific actions that have been taken and made by governments.

I believe Canadians, as a whole, want a government that follows the rule of law, to make sure that what we are doing is right and just. We understand many of the things that have taken place and the importance of investigations. We understand there is a need to act. There is a little girl in front of the Holodomor museum in Kiev, and I am pleased that a replica of it is now in front of the Manitoba legislature.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, November 14, 2016, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

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

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