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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 9, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 9, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the spring 2011 report of the Auditor General of Canada with an addendum on environmental petitions and the status report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 2011-12

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (A) for the financial year ending March 31, 2012, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House

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[*English*]

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2011-12

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, on behalf of my colleagues, part III of the estimates consisting of 95 reports on plans and priorities. These documents will be distributed to members of the standing committees to assist in their consideration of the spending authorities already sought in part II of the estimates.

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TOBACCO REGULATIONS

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages,

proposed tobacco regulations that will strengthen package labelling requirements for cigarettes and little cigars.

The proposed regulations present 16 new enlarged health warning messages that would appear on cigarettes and little cigar packages. The proposed regulations would also prohibit the use of the terms "light" and "mild" on various tobacco products.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the second Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum held in Tromsø, Norway, February 22 and 23, 2011.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to reintroduce a bill to ban replacement workers or scabs during strikes and lockouts.

New Democrats have always struggled for the rights of working people and this bill represents a critical piece of that struggle. It is essential for ensuring that the right to free collective bargaining cannot be undermined.

Some may say that this is the wrong time to introduce this legislation but I would suggest that the opposite is true. As we are still struggling to come out of the great recession, the need for labour and management to work together in a spirit of co-operation, involvement and trust is greater than perhaps at any other time in our country's history. However, nothing breaks that trust more quickly than a company's ability to hire scabs during a legal strike.

I would ask all members to support this bill at all three stages so that we can finally bring the Canada Labour Code into the 21st century.

The Budget

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

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CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-206, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (pension and benefits).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to re-introduce my bill, which will finally put a legal end to the potential for people who have been convicted of spousal homicide to derive a CPP survivor benefit from their heinous crime.

I had assumed that the long-established principle in law, that no one should be able to benefit from a crime, would also be enshrined in the eligibility criteria for government benefit programs. Imagine my surprise when I received the following correspondence which states:

I have a relative who killed his wife, served very little time for manslaughter, and is (and has been) collecting CPP survivor benefits for over 10 years. Since 1-2 women per week die at the hands of their partners, how many more men are collecting this? How is this legal?

I researched the file to verify that this could really happen and learned that there was no legal prohibition that prevents people who have been convicted of spousal homicide from collecting either the death benefit or the survivor pension. Clearly, that is a loophole that must be closed.

My bill would do precisely that. It would amend the Canada pension plan to prohibit the payment of the survivors pension, orphans benefit or death benefit to a survivor or orphan of a deceased contributor if the survivor or orphan has been convicted of the murder or manslaughter of the deceased contributor.

The integrity of the Canada pension plan is enormously important to Canadians. I know that I am not alone when I say that the very thought that someone convicted of spousal homicide could derive a monetary benefit from such a heinous crime is an issue of fundamental justice.

I trust that all members of the House will feel the same way and I look forward to the speedy passage of my bill.

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

* * *

•(1010)

[*Translation*]

WAYS AND MEANS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to put forward that I believe will receive the unanimous consent of the House.

That, notwithstanding the Order of Monday, June 6, 2011, upon adoption of the budget motion the Speaker shall not put the question on Ways and Means Motions Numbers 2 and 3 standing on the Order Paper; and, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, immediately following the adoption of the budget motion, the Speaker shall forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the Ways and Means motion tabled June 8, 2011.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a long-standing practice to adjourn the House for political party conventions and, therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 56.1, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on June 16, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, June 20; and on Thursday June 16, the hours of sitting and order of business of the House shall be that of a Friday provided that the time for filing of any notice be no later than 6 p.m.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Will those members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

And fewer than 25 members having risen:

The Speaker: Fewer than 25 members having risen, the motion is adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election as Speaker of the House.

I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Drummond.

The Budget

It is an honour for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. That is why I would like to thank the people in my riding for placing their trust in me and giving me the opportunity to sit here. I would like to tell them that I will defend their interests every day. I would also like to recognize the work done by Marc Lemay, who represented the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue for seven years.

As we can see from this budget, the government and I have differing views on the type of country that we want to build. However, since we share the same passion for our community and the same commitment to serving our constituents, I hope that the Minister of Finance will be so kind as to listen to my message and that of my community. On May 2, communities like the one I represent did not simply choose new members, they also sent a clear message to the Canadian political system. They said that we must change our old ways of doing things and do better.

In my riding, over 50% of people voted for the NDP so that families would be a priority and so that no one would fall through the cracks. Since I humbly accepted the mandate that they gave me, I can say that this budget does not defend the interests of families or the marginalized. This budget puts the interests of the most profitable banks, the big polluters and companies that are sending our jobs elsewhere first.

Up until the day before the election, I was working in a small health care centre as a clinical nurse in the intensive care unit and the emergency room. I would like to commend all the workers at the Centre de santé et de services sociaux des Aurores-Boréales who work hard every day to preserve one of the things that Canadians value most: a public health care system. I would also like to join with all the other NDP members in recognizing all the health care workers in our country.

The measure that the Minister of Finance is proposing, to forgive the student debt of doctors and nurses who work in under-served rural and remote communities, is more of a curse than a blessing.

First, it completely disregards many other health care professionals who work tirelessly for the good of our health care system, such as practical nurses, respiratory therapists, medical radiology technologists, medical laboratory technicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and all the others I have not listed.

Second, the Minister of Finance's offer again brushes aside experienced staff who have been the backbone of healthcare for years and who, each day, work an incredible amount of overtime, quite often mandatory, at the expense of their families. This measure can attract new professionals, but it will not attract experienced staff to these under-served communities that need them so much.

Third, this measure has the potential to drive a huge wedge between the communities that are eligible and those that are not. Imagine how difficult it would be to attract staff to an ineligible hospital that is an hour away from one that is eligible. Hon. members must remember that the shortage of health care professionals is a nation-wide issue, and every community should be eligible for help.

To conclude, I would like to say that this measure will not bring any new doctors or nurses into the health care system. It will move

them to clearly under-served areas, but it will be at the expense of many other areas that will not see their situation improve in the least.

This measure will not do anything to diminish the number of health care professionals who leave, completely burnt out, after a few years of practice. And it will not do anything to reduce the long wait times in Canada's emergency rooms.

Taking action on health care means taking action on the incredible amount of work facing our health care professionals. One of this government's top priorities should be poverty because, as we all know, being poor makes it very difficult to stay healthy. All of the international health organizations agree that socio-economic status is one of the major determinants of health.

In my riding, I am very pleased that the mining boom has breathed some new life into the region. However, it has also helped create an unprecedented housing crisis. The price of houses and housing in general has increased dramatically in cities like Rouyn-Noranda and this is causing even more poverty and precarious situations for many families. Furthermore, this crisis is having a devastating effect on students, who are having a hard time finding decent housing. It is even having a negative impact on college and university recruitment in Rouyn-Noranda.

●(1015)

Since we are talking about poverty, I would be remiss not to mention the seniors of my riding, who cannot get a good night's sleep because they are worried about their retirement income and because they can no longer make ends meet, since their income is not increasing.

When this government talks about increasing the guaranteed income supplement by a maximum of \$600 a year for single seniors—that is, by \$50 a month—it is ridiculing seniors living in poverty. In 1983, when I was born, an extra \$50 a month was not enough to get someone out of poverty, so imagine now.

My region has also had to deal with unprecedented crises in forestry and agriculture. I spoke with people in my riding who lost full-time jobs and now must get by with unstable jobs and no benefits. Consider, for example, the forestry workers of Tembec or small-scale farmers who have to try to compete with multinationals.

That is why I was hoping this budget would contain job creation tax credits for SMEs that create jobs in my region, instead of tax breaks for large corporations that do not need them and that come into my region and take over or destroy my small businesses, only to send the jobs elsewhere.

In closing, I also want to talk about the first nations peoples living in my riding. Many of them have spoken to me about their concerns over health care and education. Year after year, cuts are made to their health care programs and their post-secondary education programs. It is time for this government to restore its assistance to an acceptable level in order to help the first nations educate themselves and maintain good health.

The Budget

The people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue are proud of their region and would like this government to truly support them. However, this government has instead decided to support major polluters and abandon small rural communities that are stagnating in terms of their growth.

I hope I can count on the co-operation of all members of the House to adopt practical solutions that will make a real difference in the riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I am counting on our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that has been given to us as members of Parliament, to allow us to do our work in Parliament.

Some 4.5 million Canadians voted for the NDP. They voted to boost public pensions, to improve health care, to help families pay their bills, and to have an economy that generates new jobs and new opportunities. By voting for the NDP, Canadians have chosen an official opposition that keeps its priorities in the right place and does not hesitate to defend them. Our mandate is clear: we will propose practical solutions for families, work together to get results that will put the country on the right track, and oppose the government when it makes bad choices, and this budget is full of bad choices.

I am honoured to have been chosen to serve the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue and honoured to be able to work with all the hon. members of this House. We all come here with different skills and different priorities, but we can choose to work together in a constructive manner. Otherwise, it is regions like mine that will pay the price in this budget.

I am reaching out to this government to work co-operatively to make this budget truly serve the interests of all Canadians and naturally the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

• (1020)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome our new colleague here to the House of Commons.

I would like to reiterate that we have heard many members of the NDP say that they have positive things to say about our budget. I would like to give the new member a chance to talk about just one measure she liked regarding investments in research and development. She can choose any sector, but it must be something positive.

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Conservative budget allocates some money for research in the forestry sector. What worries me is that often, small businesses must spend huge amounts of money to be eligible for these funds. If someone is required to spend \$10,000 to receive \$5,000, he is no further ahead. What worries me is that it is difficult for small businesses to access this money because they are required to invest money in order to find someone to make the request for access to this money.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand from the hon. member's earlier comments that she was a health worker. In regard to health care, the Bloc has a position in which it would prefer to see tax point transfers as opposed to cash transfers going to public health in the province of Quebec.

Does the member have a personal opinion as to what she believes would be in Quebec's best interest?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, with respect to the \$4,000 measure to forgive student loans for nurses and family doctors, and in light of the fact that Quebec already has its own loans and grants program, I can say that these people will lose out, since Quebec has chosen to limit the number of loans and to give grants. As a result, nurses in Quebec will receive lower refunds, just because Quebec has chosen to give grants instead of allowing students to accumulate debt. This measure also puts Quebec at a disadvantage.

• (1025)

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome our colleague to the House and congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your new role.

The people of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, whom I represent, have indicated that there are three most pressing issues facing them today: first, affordability; second, retirement security; and third, health care.

My question is regarding retirement security. There was a lot of talk in the last Parliament about retirement security in the case of companies going bankrupt. I am surprised that there is virtually nothing in this budget about retirement security, including increases in the CPP.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on that particular issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, it is clear to me that the Canada pension plan must provide a stable solution for all Canadian seniors. Our seniors must not be living in precarious situations. The Canadian government must take action to ensure that pensions compensate Canadian workers who have worked hard their entire lives.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska has time for a very brief question.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member did not answer the parliamentary secretary's question about a positive measure in the budget. One measure is very important to the Quebec government and the general public, and that measure is the \$2.2 billion in compensation for harmonizing the sales tax.

I would like to know what she, as a member from Quebec, personally thinks about this measure. Does she intend to vote in favour of the budget so that it passes and so that this issue is settled once and for all? I would like to remind her that in April 2009, the Bloc Québécois tabled—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I must give the hon. member time to respond. She has less than 30 seconds.

The Budget

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the budget contains a measure to resolve the issue of harmonized sales tax in Quebec, but I also find it completely normal that it was included. We cannot support a budget just because it contains one positive measure. There are many other problems with this budget; for example, it does nothing to reduce poverty. That said, I am very pleased to see that the Conservatives thought to include this measure in the budget.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House for the first time on behalf of the people of Drummond. I want to thank my predecessor, Roger Pomerleau, for his excellent years of service. I also want to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment.

As an aside, I invite my colleagues to spend their summer vacation in Drummond this year. The 30th annual Mondial des Cultures is being held there from July 7 to 17.

I want to begin by thanking the people of my riding for the confidence they have shown me. I also want to acknowledge the democratic participation by a little more than 61% of the constituents of Drummond. This gesture is all the more significant considering the political cynicism that reigns across the country at this time. We certainly cannot boast about the turnout in the last election.

Why are people so uninterested in politics? Many people think their votes do not count. Since 2006, I have been encouraging people in Quebec to vote for the NDP. It is true that our chances at the time were slim, but at least I had one argument: every vote equals funding for the political party that best represents the wishes of the voters. In that sense, no voter ever loses and everyone's voice will always be heard. That is what I used to say and I often ended up convincing many people to vote as a result. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party is planning on abolishing this incentive for political participation, which just might discourage even more people from going to the polls.

Is that what the Conservative Party wants? Of course I do not think so. Then why eliminate the per-vote subsidy for political parties? The party in power could at least have a plan B for increasing voter turnout. It could consider proportional representation, for example. But no, there is nothing. It is abolishing a good formula that was working well and did not cost the public very much. What are the Conservative government's intentions? Does it want to muzzle the opposition? I hope not, because the opposition got 60% of the vote and needs to be heard. That is what Canadians want.

The Drummond riding is not lazing about when it comes to improving its environmental record. The number of environmental initiatives are increasing in the riding. I would like to mention the Mondial des Cultures again. This festival is celebrating its 30th anniversary from July 7 to 17, and all members are cordially invited to attend. Since 2005, the Mondial des Cultures has been implementing various measures to improve its ecological footprint, including things like giving away plants, planting trees, recycling, and so on. I have some great news to share about this year: these measures will allow the festival to offset 100% of the greenhouse gases emitted by all participants in this wonderful festival. Is that not fantastic? This is an excellent example of one environmentally

responsible action among many in my riding. This excellent, tangible action illustrates our desire to leave a green, healthy planet to our children and grandchildren.

Meanwhile, where is the Conservative government? What are the Prime Minister and his Minister of the Environment doing? Can my colleagues tell me? Of the 408 pages that make up the Minister of Finance's budget, only three measly pages deal with the environment. What a mistake. The Conservatives think they have a plan to stimulate growth and employment, but those things can no longer be separated from environmental considerations. On the contrary, everything is connected. They need to stop burying their heads in the sand.

What is more, a June 4, 2011, column in *Le Devoir* by Louis-Gilles Francoeur—who knows what he is talking about when it comes to the environment—ran under the following headline: *Climate change—as the urgency increases, North America ignores the problem.*

● (1030)

North America also includes Canada. He wrote in this article that the threshold of 32 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, or the peak emissions expected for 2020, which constitutes the ultimate limit that should never be surpassed, will likely be reached in 2012, nine years earlier than anticipated.

Last weekend, I was speaking to one of my constituents, Clara Hortua, who works with the Regroupement interculturel de Drummondville. She shared with me some wonderful news: she and her husband became grandparents a few weeks ago. You should have seen the look of pride and joy on her face. Do you think that Ms. Hortua wants to pass on a sick planet to her children? No. She wants us to do everything in our power to protect our planet.

Canada was required to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below the 1990 baseline. Instead, the Conservative government let the situation get completely out of hand and, in 2007, we experienced a 26% increase in greenhouse gas emissions, which was already a discrepancy of 33.8% compared to the target level set by Canada under the terms of the Kyoto protocol.

I would like to invite the Minister of the Environment to redo his homework. If he needs a good teacher, he can let me know; I am a teacher by profession. I would ask him to start by reading the Environment section of the NDP's wonderful campaign platform. He could, for example, make major investments in renewable energy. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the IPCC—estimates that, by 2050, renewable energy could meet nearly 80% of the planet's energy needs. Is this not great and wonderful? Would this not be an incredible step forward? It would be a courageous measure that would also create jobs and keep the economy going, a green, future-oriented economy. He could also implement a carbon pricing mechanism using a quota exchange system, a type of carbon exchange. We have been talking about this for years. What is Canada waiting for? Where is it? He could also invest in improving public transit. This has been talked about for a long time but nothing much is happening.

The Budget

In short, Canadians want environmental leadership. Canadians are asking the Prime Minister and his Minister of the Environment to sit down with the opposition and improve our environmental record. We cannot wait any longer. We want concrete action.

•(1035)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would once again like to welcome the newly elected hon. member.

At one point in his speech, I heard him talk about the plight of the poor, but at the same time, he is saying that we need more taxes, that taxes on the poor should be raised. He cannot have it both ways. Something must be done to improve the lives of the poor, and that is what we have done in our budget with measures like the guaranteed income supplement for seniors.

I would like to ask him to comment on the issue of the environment because we are investing \$870 million over two years in an air quality program. He read the budget, so I would like to hear his comments on just one measure in our air quality proposal that he liked.

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that yes, the government may be putting \$800 million on the table for the environment; however, how many billion dollars will be lost through tax cuts and subsidies to banks, major corporations and fossil fuel companies? That, we do not know. The government does not have money for the environment, but it has money to cut corporate taxes. That is not right; it is not responsible.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome you to your new position, we are thrilled to see you there, and to the member, that was a fine speech.

I am not noted for agreeing with Liberals too often, but Mr. Chrétien did something right when he took big money out of elections. He took money that came from unions and big business out of the elections. That took the brown bags away and levelled the playing field. Now it looks like the Conservatives want to go back to the bad old days of those brown bags. It is terrible for democracy in this country to see that happen.

The Conservatives say it is about raising taxes. We are not talking about raising taxes. We are talking about cutting the tax breaks that go to the big corporations.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I must say that abolishing the subsidy that political parties receive for each vote is a mistake. Our voter turnout in the last election—60%—was terrible. This subsidy is an incentive to vote. When my students got a mark of 60%, I was not overly congratulatory. I would tell them that they should do better. That is what we must do here. Furthermore, we run the risk of once again seeing big business exert major influence with the financing of political parties.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke passionately about the environment and economic growth. It is in that area where I wish to pose a question.

In my riding of Charlottetown, in fact in Prince Edward Island, we have become a leader in green energy, but our aspirations in that area have been limited by the refusal in the budget and in the throne speech to provide any support for a cable between the mainland and Prince Edward Island. This is something that was committed to by the Leader of the Opposition and has been committed to repeatedly by our party in various election campaigns.

Given the hon. member's passion for the environment and for economic development, I would ask for his comment on the omission of any commitment in the budget on this particular initiative.

•(1040)

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. It is unbelievable and absurd that the Conservative government did not include more environmental measures in its budget and that it is not providing more support for the initiatives in my riding of Drummond, for example, or in my colleague's riding. The NDP had a slogan, "Let's work together", but that is not just a slogan. It is a commitment that we made. We want to work together and reach out to the Conservative Party. We are offering our help, since we know that the party needs it. The Minister of the Environment needs our help, and we would be happy to help him improve his energy record.

[English]

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your re-appointment. I served with you in the 40th Parliament, you did an excellent job and I look forward to working with you and all parliamentarians in this 41st Parliament.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Northumberland—Quinte West. I would also like to congratulate him on his second re-election to the House of Commons.

As this is my first opportunity to rise in this august chamber in the 41st Parliament, let me say with great humility what an opportunity it is to represent the constituents of Westlock—St. Paul once again. I would like to thank them for putting their trust in me to represent them for a third straight term.

It is always an honour to represent such a rich and diverse riding that encompasses everything from agriculture to the men and women who work in the oil and gas sector and the men and women in two Canadian Forces bases, Edmonton Garrison as well as 4 Wing Cold Lake. It truly is an honour to work with each and every constituent and I look forward to representing them in this 41st Parliament.

Politicians are used to getting such strong mandates in Alberta, but to get such a strong mandate across the country to bring forward the Conservatives' plan for low taxes, jobs and growth really is an opportunity, not only for my party but for our country, to show what we can really do.

The Budget

I agree with members across the way who say that we need to do something different, that we need to do politics differently and to make sure that more than 60% of people vote. However, the way to do that is not through partisan bickering. It is not being opposed to everything. It is about constructive criticism and working with the other side. Whether in a majority or minority, we all have a mandate from our constituents to work together. Even though we have a very strong mandate on this side of the House, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the next four and a half years.

I would like to thank all of the volunteers who generously gave their time to work on campaigns, not only my campaign or those of my Conservative colleagues across this country, but everyone who donated their time, blood, sweat and tears to work on any election campaign. These people are truly the lifeblood of our democracy.

As Benjamin Franklin explained, "Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote." Every one of these people was well armed as each went to the polls.

I would like to take a minute to tell the people of Slave Lake, Alberta and all those affected by the devastating forest fires in my province and across the country that not only the thoughts and prayers of my family but all Canadians are still with them.

I was in Athabasca for three days where 2,800 people took 4,000 or 5,000 people into their community and housed them for three of four days. It truly was an amazing sight to see. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who took their time to donate generously to such a worthy cause. The people of Slave Lake are still in our thoughts and prayers.

Elections are quite a humbling experience, as we know quite well. As I travelled around my riding in the last election, whether I was in Westlock, Morinville, Legal or Clyde, people in my constituency wanted to know not only what I and the Prime Minister had been doing for the last five and a half years but what our plan was moving forward. They had a real recognition that Canada was faring very well on the international stage. They knew that we had a plan coming in to the recession and that we were coming out of it ahead of most other countries in the world, but they wanted to know if we have a plan going forward. They wanted to know what our plan was to help Canada come out of this fragile economic recovery.

Most of all, they were not concerned about platitudes. In the six-plus forums that I attended, people were not concerned about platitudes and political promises. They were concerned about real results for Canadians.

• (1045)

I was fortunate to be a member of a party that had already tabled a very comprehensive plan on March 22, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, a plan that I campaigned on very vigorously among my constituents. I talked to them about some important individual measures, but I was not just arguing that we had a plan to grow our way out of this economic recession by reducing taxes.

All too often it is said that these tax reductions are for the rich and for big companies, but many of these tax reductions affect companies in my communities. Small communities like Cold Lake and St. Paul in Alberta who have 4,000 or 5,000 people also have 20,

30 or 40 companies that would be affected by this, and these companies affect the number of jobs in the communities.

Canadians, Albertans and the constituents in my riding understood that. They understood that we needed to grow our way out of this. They understood that we could not penalize Canadians by taxing them more. They understood that we had to be restrained in the promises that we made to them, not only during an election campaign but also once we got back to this chamber. We cannot just promise to give more, because it has to come out of someone's pocket somewhere.

One of the individual items people who were very happy with our budget concerned the firefighter's tax credit. I sat and talked to the people in Mallaig about how important it was that we had this firefighter's tax credit, that it was not just about financial recognition for volunteer firefighters, who are really the only firefighters we have in my riding, giving countless hours, some 200 or 300 hours on call at the station.

I had the opportunity to be in Goodridge giving out medals to at least a dozen people who had served their community for over 25 years in the role of a volunteer firefighter. They said to me that the government had always promised this and had always talked about it. I was proud to be part of a government that not only promised it and talked about it, but actually put it in our budget. That budget did not get to go forward, but now we have had the opportunity to retable it and once again it is in budget 2011.

I am proud to recognize the hard work and dedication of our volunteer firefighters, not only in rural Alberta but across our country. This is not just about the financial benefit; this is about recognizing them for the hard work they do. If for no other reason, firefighters in my region should be one of the reasons members consider voting for this budget.

I also talked to seniors in St. Paul about the \$300 million for the guaranteed income supplement. I explained to them that it was not about helping seniors who already had big pensions. The seniors I spoke with wanted to make sure that the increased supplement would help the poorest of the poor seniors, those who did not have pensions, those who had not had the opportunity to contribute to the Canada pension plan as much as seniors today have or my generation will have. They wanted to make sure that this \$600 increase for single seniors and over \$800 for couples, affecting some 680,000 seniors in this country, would go through in the budget.

Once again, this is something that has been promised for many years by politicians but never really accomplished. Our government not only put it in our budget on March 22 but we have also kept it in the recent budget. If for no other reason, members across the way should think about those 680,000 seniors as they stand in the House, many of them for the first time, to vote on the budget.

The Budget

One of the predominant issues in my riding over the last five and a half years, especially in the Lakeland area, has been doctor recruitment, so much so that I actually met with a board of doctors and community volunteers who recruit doctors in our area, and municipal councillors, even some provincial MLAs, not all of whom wanted to sit on the committee. We talked about the things that we needed to do to make sure that we could get doctors in our rural communities so that we would not just be reliant on foreign-trained doctors all the time. The constituents in my riding deserve the opportunity to have just as good doctors and treatment by general practitioners as people in Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto do.

● (1050)

This is a very big issue, and when the Prime Minister saw to it and the Minister of Finance put the \$40,000 loan forgiveness for doctors in the budget of March 22, it was very well received.

Before I avoid the opposition questions, I would just like to say what a great privilege it is and how I look forward to serving under such a strong Conservative mandate.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. I hope he is not going to avoid the opposition questions. I think it would be a real surprise and a delight for us to have the Conservatives actually answer opposition questions. That is what we are looking for.

I would like to come back to the issue of firefighters, because no government has treated the firefighters with more disrespect than the Conservative government. We know, and the member knows, that six years ago in the House an NDP motion was brought forward to create a public safety officer compensation fund for our nation's firefighters and police officers. Conservatives voted for that NDP motion. That NDP motion was adopted by this Parliament. Now we have had five years of delay in the implementation of the public safety officer compensation fund.

What that means is that when firefighters or police officers pass away in the line of duty, their families are left destitute. That is a profound disrespect to the families of our nation's firefighters and police officers.

My question is very simple. When will the government act and put in place the public safety officer compensation fund to compensate the families of the firefighters and police officers who die in the line of duty?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his re-election to this House. I am glad to see that he is turned over a new leaf and is going to be such a positive force in this 41st Parliament moving forward.

What I do know about this item in the budget is the following. I talked to one of the firefighters and his son. The father had served for over 30 years as a volunteer firefighter in our area, as his son was serving now as well. When they talk about real measures that are getting done, they talk about our volunteer firefighters tax credit. They would hope, and I know, that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster would not use this as an excuse to avoid voting for this budget and taking a real step forward for volunteer firefighters in recognizing the great work they do for all Canadians across this country from sea to sea to sea.

● (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has made the decision to shut down the Canadian Wheat Board. The impact is going to be quite significant.

Given that the member is from the prairies, surely to goodness he recognizes that a vast majority of wheat farmers on the prairies support retaining the Canadian Wheat Board.

Can the member explain why the government is moving in a direction that goes against what a majority of the farmers on the prairies want to see, the retention of the Canadian Wheat Board?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, I do know that we have a strong mandate across this country.

We have a particularly strong mandate with each and every rural riding affected by the Canadian Wheat Board. Farmers have told me that they want an option; they want the same option as farmers in Ontario have when it comes to selling their grain and wheat.

I understand that the hon. member is from downtown Winnipeg. I can explain what it means to a farmer to have \$1 billion more income across the prairies. That income would not be from subsidies but from sales that farmers would make in having the ability to directly sell their grain and wheat.

That view does not come from me but from the many reports that have been tabled on the efficiencies of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Madam Speaker, it appears to me that the opposition have quite an aversion to trying to raise funds on their own to support their election campaigns.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague could just talk a little bit more about what it is like to travel around his riding, talk to people and have people tell him that they support what he is doing and give him a cheque for \$10 or \$20, as opposed to forcing taxpayers to support parties they do not believe in.

Could my colleague talk about what it means to actually raise money for our own campaigns?

Mr. Brian Storseth: Madam Speaker, as I went around my constituency, I found that people wanted to get rid of the per vote subsidy. They were hoping that we could do it within this four-year mandate of ours, because they do not believe that taxpayers should have to subsidize parties. They believe that party members should subsidize them.

It may be \$30 million, \$40 million or \$50 million, but if we put that money into the new horizons for seniors program or into programs that really affect every day Canadians and get real results for Canadians, that is what they expect and that is the strong mandate of this government.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be in this House once again, and an honour and a privilege to represent the good folks of Northumberland—Quinte West. I also congratulate the member for Westlock—St. Paul on his re-election.

The Budget

May I once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank all those who worked hard on our campaign to bring me back to this most august of places. What an honour and privilege it is. My commitment to all members and all citizens of Northumberland—Quinte West is to do my absolute best on their behalf.

Today, I will be highlighting the benefits of this government's sixth consecutive budget and what these benefits mean for the constituents of Northumberland—Quinte West, and all Canadians for that matter.

As members of this House will know, this government is committed to delivering a low tax plan to Canadians which will help foster job growth and economic prosperity, while supporting Canadian families and seniors.

We still live in uncertain economic times and I believe that this budget recognizes this uncertainty by taking appropriate steps to support Canadians and limit government spending.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will focus on four key areas: supporting job creation; supporting families and communities; investing in innovation, education and training; and preserving Canada's fiscal advantage.

In order to foster job growth, this government's budget will support job creation through extending the accelerated capital cost allowance by helping manufacturers make new investments in machinery and equipment; by providing a hiring credit for small businesses, which will be a one time credit of up to \$1,000, to encourage additional hiring; and by supporting youth entrepreneurs by adding \$20 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation.

This budget also includes initiatives that will support Canadian families and seniors. Canada's economic action plan will support seniors by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement to eligible low-income seniors who will receive an annual top up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across this great country. It will enhance the new horizons for seniors program by providing an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship, and social participation for seniors. It will also enhance the medical expense tax credit by removing the limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that could be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative.

With regard to Canadian families, the government's economic action plan will support families through targeted initiatives, such as the children's arts tax credit, which will provide up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, culture and recreational activities; the family caregiver tax credit, which will provide an amount of up to \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities; and by extending the eco-energy retrofit homes program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

This budget has targets and initiatives that will benefit all Canadians. However, there are also multiple aspects of this budget which benefit my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. During public consultations and throughout the election, I spoke to thousands of my constituents who wanted their voices heard in Ottawa and their priorities brought to the forefront of Canadian politics. I believe this budget is a reflection of their priorities and I

would like to outline parts of this budget that are of particular importance to my riding.

First and foremost, this government has committed \$20 million in funding over the next two years for the eastern Ontario development program. The EODP is essential for the funding and support of our local community futures development corporations. These CFDCs provide direct guidance and consultation to local businesses and help foster growth and prosperity in Northumberland—Quinte West.

Second, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, our government will support major economic sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing and the tourism sectors, with hundreds of millions of dollars in support for innovation, investment and market diversification.

● (1100)

Third, this government is committed to legislating a permanent gas tax rebate per municipality. This means a total annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for infrastructure priorities in Canadian municipalities. The rebate is also a sign that this government realizes the challenges that face low-income Canadians. As such, this rebate is an attempt to ensure that infrastructure costs are not downloaded to the local taxpayer.

Fourth, our government will establish a volunteer firefighter tax credit for firefighters who bravely serve our communities. This tax credit is of great importance to many of my constituents who live in communities that often rely on volunteer firefighters.

Finally, Ontario will see record-high major federal transfers totalling some \$17.7 billion, an increase of nearly \$7 billion from the former government. What is more, Ontario will see growing transfer support for health care with \$10.7 billion, a nearly 40% increase; and for social services, over \$4.5 billion, which is a 40% increase. The increased support will help hospitals, schools and other critical social services in Northumberland—Quinte West.

Canadians have asked and our government has listened. During the election, this government campaigned for a strong mandate from Canadians. We were always clear about what our budgetary policy would be if elected to serve the Canadian people once again.

The 2011 budget, the next phase of Canada's action plan, is a reflection of the strong mandate Canadians have given this government. The budget provides for a low tax plan that will encourage job growth while supporting Canadian seniors and families. As such, I would encourage all hon. members to support the Conservative government's 2011 federal budget.

The Budget

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, our colleagues across the floor, the Conservatives, talk a lot about the notion of “hard working” and people who work hard. When I met several hundred small- and medium-sized business owners, it became clear that they are definitely the ones propping up the economy. Giving tax breaks to big banks is not going to prop up the economy. The owners of SMEs work very hard and they are tired. They work 16 hours a day.

Our platform included a measure to give them huge support for job creation. We talked about \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 to allow them to create jobs and hire people, so they could consider the possibility of taking a few days off this summer. Furthermore, this kind of initiative is not very costly for the public purse, because it creates jobs and ultimately, those people will pay taxes within two or three years' time.

I would like to know how my hon. colleague can justify to small- and medium-sized business owners in his riding the fact that this government has not launched a massive hiring assistance program and is instead giving banks and oil companies tax breaks once again.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to this House.

My hon. colleague fails to remember or did not do enough research. He will find if he does his research on previous budgets that we actually lowered taxes for small and medium-sized businesses from 12% to 11%. For those businesses, we also increased the amount they could earn before they paid those taxes.

He will have also noticed, if he read the budget closely, that there is a hiring credit of \$1,000 so small and medium-sized businesses, particularly small businesses, could have a holiday from EI premiums. I have spoken to many small-business owners in my community and sometimes it is the smaller amounts that inhibit the creation of jobs. This is one extra saving that a small business could take.

The member also forgets that in one of our previous budgets, we included in employment insurance the ability for single entrepreneurs, most of whom are women, to now have maternal benefits, so they can better operate their businesses and plan for their families and future.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referred to the children's arts tax credit and within the same breath talked about how this budget would benefit all Canadians. However, since this is not a refundable tax credit, it means that people who are not paying taxes would get nothing from that tax credit. It seems to me that only those who are already doing well would financially benefit, but those who are not are left out to fall further behind.

Could the member explain how this benefits all Canadians?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome the hon. member back to the House. We both served in the previous Parliament.

The hon. member will recall previous budgets, some of which her party supported. However, since our government has taken office, we have lowered personal income tax to the extent that almost one million Canadians no longer pay federal income tax. What a benefit that is to many Canadians who are struggling to get by. In addition, we lowered the consumption tax, the GST, from 7% to 6% to 5%. Therefore, of the federal tax that they do pay, they now pay less.

I would like to talk about what this tax incentive does for the youth in our country to partake in arts and culture. Many families have two or three children. For example, for a family with two children, if the children play minor hockey, there is a tax benefit there and if they take art classes, there is also a tax benefit. Therefore, that family could have up to \$2,000 in tax benefit.

• (1110)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

As this is the first time I have stood in the 41st Parliament, I would very much like to thank the my constituents of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo who saw fit to elect me for a second time. I pledge my best to do a great job for our riding.

I would also like to mention the volunteers. Regardless of what party people support, Canadians owe a great gratitude to the volunteers who helped all members with our campaigns. They spent hours and hours over five weeks putting in signs, knocking on doors and answering telephones.

The last time I stood and spoke to the budget was on March 24. At that time, we had a minority government. Following a brief interlude, I am pleased to be back here with a strong, stable Conservative majority government and to move forward with phase two of our economic action plan.

First, it is important that we start by reflecting on the success of phase one. We had a plan and it worked. We had a global economic recession, the worst since the 1930s.

Yesterday I listened as the Leader of the Opposition asked where the job creation was. I will talk a bit about that and how phase one of the economic action plan worked. This will also lead into why phase two and the budget is so important.

If we look at Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, in the last 24 months 24 mills have reopened or have gone back to full production. The unemployment rate in Cariboo in April 2009 was 12.1%. In April 2011 it was 7.1%. Our unemployment rate in Kamloops was 10.6% in 2009. We are now down to 8.6%.

The Budget

Since July 2009, 540,000 jobs have been created. Therefore, when the Leader of the Opposition asks where the job creation is, that is where it is. What is it? It is businesses getting back to work, recovering and investing.

I will give a couple of quick examples. The Canfor mill in the community of Clearwater had been closed for the last few years. It was a very difficult time for that community. It has recently announced that it will be investing \$24 million in it and it will be reopening in the fall. That is fantastic news for the community. Why will it reopen? Because it knows that it will have a competitive corporate tax rate. It is reopening because it knows there is a continuation of the accelerated capital cost depreciation so it is able to invest this money into its mill with some benefits. It will reopen because of the trade and the increased opportunities it has for its products all over the world. It is a great success story.

Another mill, Savona, has recently reopened. The job creation is coming from this.

However, we still have some work to do in moving forward. I look at the community of Valemount and its mill, which closed and moved out. That community continues to struggle and has an unemployment rate that is much too high.

It is also important to look at the legacy left by some of the stimulus program. Again in the riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo affordable housing for low income seniors has almost doubled in a couple of years. That important legacy will last forever.

Approximately two weeks ago I was at the opening of the House of Learning at Thompson Rivers University. It is a fantastic building with a new library. It is looking at supporting the aboriginal community in terms of education. We are very proud of our university and a building that was not only a partnership with the federal government, but also the provincial government and some very generous donations from community members.

●(1115)

I invite everyone to visit this fantastic facility. We used pine beetle wood. We have a centre for dialogue that is built on the old pit house formation. Hundreds can sit down in a circle and have dialogue. It is a fantastic facility and I invite everyone to see the great work we have done with the economic action plan, phase one.

As I indicated, we introduced the budget back in March and it was about moving to phase two. Phase two is about the government not being able to afford continuing to stimulate the economy. We need to support businesses to be successful, to create the wealth in the country for the programs and services that we so desperately want.

I had gone through a comprehensive process before the prebudget consultation and when the budget came out, I was delighted to see that the 10 measures we specifically asked for were included in it. We have had five weeks on the election trail, which was another opportunity for me to find out if we had captured what people wanted and were we moving forward in the right direction. This is what I heard over the five weeks, which reaffirmed the prebudget consultation. The budget presented back in March was a budget for Canada, for Canadians and for moving forward toward success.

One of the things that was very important to my riding was the move back to balanced budgets and to look at finding some savings within government. I looked at what some of my companies had to do because they were struggling. I believe that 5% is a very doable number and will lead us back to a very strong fiscal position.

One of the things I was privileged to participate in is the Red Tape Reduction Commission. It started the work back in January. We have had 10 round tables across the country. There has been a number of sessions. It is comprised of representatives of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and six members of Parliament. We have finished our consultations. We are ready to start to move toward reducing the red tape burden on our small businesses. There are many fantastic ideas that I know will be successful.

There are so many great things to talk about and so little time. We have a moderate and modest blueprint to eliminate the deficit, ensure we keep taxes low and targeted investments that support jobs and growth and also improve the quality of life for seniors, families and children.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome back the representative from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I am pleased to hear that she has looked into the budget very thoroughly.

One thing troubles me about the budget, and I do not think it will come as any surprise because I spoke endlessly in the last Parliament. There are some 250,000 to 300,000 seniors who are living below the poverty line, most of those being women. They are living on \$1,162 a month. The increases proposed by the government, and I give it credit for doing something, is only \$50 a month. When a person is trying to survive on \$1,162, it does not go far enough. It is targeted to 680,000. Instead, it should be \$700 million to 250,000 to 300,000.

I have one other point I would like to make. The member talked about housing. Many seniors who are in assisted housing and receive any kind of an increase have it clawed back. I hope the finance minister will be talking to provincial ministers about that.

●(1120)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has raised a very important question around seniors who have worked very hard and who are struggling on guaranteed income supplement and old age security. That is why we increased that amount.

People diminish the amount and the value of it. When I talk to seniors, they say that it is a month's rent and they will now have money to buy presents for my grandchildren. Looking forward, one of the reasons we need to move this process forward and get the budget implementation act through is so we can start delivering those additional funds to seniors right away.

The other thing that is very important is the new horizons program for seniors and the additional dollars for that. I have groups that have really had tremendous benefit from that program.

The Budget

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the hon. member back to the chamber and congratulate her on her re-election.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West talked about the tax credit for firefighters. When I first saw that, I was very pleased. A former colleague, Rick Casson, the member for Lethbridge, did a lot of work on it. I worked with Rick on a couple of different initiatives, as well as the member for Malpeque. It looked like a pretty good thing.

The budget has a number of initiatives that look like roses, but there is a bunch of thorns around them. When I saw the tax deduction for firefighters, I thought it was a great step. However, when one gets into the details, one sees that it is a non-refundable tax credit.

There are 50 firefighters in my riding of Cape Breton—Canso. Firefighters who make less than \$22,000 are not eligible. They do the same job, they take the same risks, but they get no benefit. They have to choose between the \$1,000 honorarium deduction or this. Does the member see the injustice in that application?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, many in the House were incredibly supportive of the volunteer firefighter tax credit and were delighted to see it in this budget.

There are probably 16 volunteer firefighter departments throughout my riding, which I visited during the election campaign. They were, without question, absolutely delighted to see it included in the budget. I am pleased to be part of a government that is finally moving forward on this issue.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for coming back to the House to work alongside me on the finance committee.

I would like to take an opportunity to address the fact that in the last Parliament the Liberal Party was very much against what Mr. Rick Casson had put forward for the firefighters of our country, and this measure is going to help them.

Could she continue to talk about the need to proceed with this volunteer firefighter tax credit, given that the Liberals voted against it?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is providing misinformation in the House. The Liberals never opposed the volunteer firefighter initiative, not at all. She should stand and be honest.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member, but I believe that is a question of debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, all I can say is when I visited the volunteer firefighter departments, they were absolutely thrilled with our government moving forward on this initiative.

• (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I am rising on the last point of order. Though I know you ruled on it, I would like to take this

opportunity to say that if the Liberal Party would like me to table a list of the members who voted against it, I am happy to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: As I said, I believe this is a point for debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to extend sincere appreciation to the constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain who have re-elected me yet again, in 2004-06 and 2008-11, with the highest percentage of votes in Saskatchewan. I am humbled by their support and I will do my utmost to continue to deserve their support and will do what I can to represent them fairly and to the best of my ability.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who campaigned with me, the board of directors and of course my thanks to my wife Sally who has been a tremendous help and support on every campaign, an ever ready partner particularly on this campaign and during my stay here in Ottawa. I know that spouses make life here bearable and they certainly stand with us.

I must also mention the difficult circumstances in which the residents of Souris—Moose Mountain find themselves. Mostly throughout my riding after a very wet fall last year, we have experienced above average snowfall and rainfall and more rain that has caused flooding of farmland, damage to homes including on reserves, a heartbreaking loss of property and cattle. Land that was once seeded is now five feet under water. Areas around Estevan, including homes, have suffered much damage. It is a frustrating and dire situation. Many are tired and frustrated. Rural municipalities and villages are fighting water, doing their best, cutting roads and doing what they have to in order to preserve towns and villages.

This government, along with the provinces, has disaster relief programs in place, income protection and business risk management programs. I am hoping the programs will address these losses and provide a basis for recovery next year.

This budget sets the stage for Canada's future prosperity and a better future for all Canadians. The steps taken now will preserve jobs and continue Canada's economic growth into the future. These steps must, of course, be placed in context. Before the global recession hit, our Conservative government paid down nearly \$40 billion of debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years.

While other countries struggle with an ever-increasing debt that is spiralling out of control, Canada has one of the best fiscal positions in the G7. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire G7. The independent International Monetary Fund has stated, "Canada's overall fiscal outlook in the aftermath of the crisis stands out as among the best in the G20".

The Budget

Since July 2009, nearly 540,000 new jobs were created. For our future prosperity, it is important to do the right thing and take the right steps at the right time. First we paid down debt and then when the recession hit we made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs.

Now is not a time to spend, but rather a time to return to balanced budgets and the budget sets out a plan to do so by winding down the temporary stimulus spending, putting in place targeted spending restraint measures and reviewing government overhead costs in order to balance the budget by 2014-15. This is in stark contrast to the NDP and Liberal Parties that would increase taxes by billions. In the case of the NDP, campaign promises were made to the tune of \$60 billion. Both are just plain wrong.

Canadians have spoken loud and clear on this subject by electing a majority Conservative government.

With respect to the budget, Saskatchewan finance minister, Ken Krawetz, said, "We're pleased to see there was no deviation from the plan" and that the first budget was an "OK budget" and this one is as well. "It's not a spend, spend budget...but it's a cautionary budget. I think that's a good example for the province of Saskatchewan".

In particular, he welcomed tax breaks for specific groups such as the volunteer firefighters, family members who act as caregivers and families whose children attend music camp or art classes. He was most relieved with the commitment to keep increasing health care transfers to the provinces by 10% annually. We will not do what the Liberals did and that is balance the books on the backs of ordinary Canadians, RMs, municipalities and provinces.

We must also place this budget in the context of the previous budgets. We cut taxes over 120 times. We cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We increased the amount that Canadians can earn tax-free. We reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of the average family. We introduced a universal child care benefit, offering families more choices for child care by providing \$1,200 a year for each child under age six. Total tax reductions for an average family of four approximate \$3,000.

● (1130)

The new budget builds on this foundation with measures such as enhancing the guaranteed income supplement by up to \$600 for single seniors and up to \$840 per couple per year.

I am not sure whether the NDP will support this or not, but I would certainly encourage them to support this budget. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP, said to CTV news on June 6, 2011 that they were very happy and that this issue has been an issue that they have raised many times before and it is finally something that is being addressed.

Another measure is the new family caregiver tax credit for those who care for a dependent family member who is infirm. Here is what the Canadian Caregiver Coalition had to say:

On behalf of the millions of family caregivers across the country, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition (CCC) applauds the federal government for their recognition of the tremendous time and resources required of family caregivers.

This is the kind of initiative that should have been supported when the budget was handed down in this House in March. It is the kind of initiative that should be supported now.

There is also a provision to forgive up to \$40,000 in student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses serving underserved rural and remote communities.

As mentioned, there is the \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit. Here is what the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs had to say in a news release on June 6, 2011:

We were delighted...This measure will help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters across the country—

Of course we extended the eco-energy retrofit homes program.

I would say at this point that the NDP resistance should either collapse or capitulate. I would encourage the members to support this budget.

There are even more measures that include: a new hiring credit of up to \$1,000 for small businesses to support local job growth; a permanent annual investment of approximately \$2 billion in gas tax money to provide stable funding to municipalities; ongoing funding to the Canada periodical fund to continue to support the distribution of publications in Saskatchewan and across the country; and \$60 million to the CBC/Radio-Canada in 2011-12 to provide radio and television services, and this will certainly be welcomed by the many CBC supporters in Souris—Moose Mountain.

Finally, it is heartwarming and good to see our government's commitment to end the wasteful and inefficient long gun registry, and to ensure western Canadian farmers have the freedom to sell wheat and barley on the open market.

Something that is also well received is a commitment to limit Senate terms and to phase out direct taxpayer subsidies to federal political parties over the next three years.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation had this to say on June 6:

Eliminating the per-vote subsidy is a major victory in the fight against political welfare...this is major win for taxpayers and for democratic reform.

All in all, the budget contains positive steps that will move Canada forward in the right direction. It would ensure a strong economy. It would ensure that jobs are created. In fact the budget sets the stage for Canada's future prosperity and a better future for all Canadians.

The Budget

I would ask all members from the opposition to join with us to ensure the speedy passage of the budget and to show Canadians that indeed they are working together with this government to help all Canadians have a better life and better lifestyle.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear from the member across regarding his government's agenda, especially when it comes to the economy.

I would like to ask, as a fellow member of Parliament from western Canada, how that view truly reconciles with the plan to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board which supports the livelihoods of not just farmers but rural communities all across western Canada?

Further, how does the member feel about his government's cutback of western economic diversification which is absolutely critical especially in the diversification of rural areas across Manitoba and Saskatchewan in a very large way?

Instead of seeing a strong commitment to economic development in the west, what we are seeing are the most intense cuts affecting our area.

I would like to hear how that might actually oppose the government's agenda when it comes to economic development.

● (1135)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, this government's record of economic development and creating opportunities is stellar across the country from coast to coast to coast. There is no question about that. In fact, many of the initiatives that were taken were not supported by members opposite.

With respect to the Canadian Wheat Board, it is rather interesting that west of Manitoba farmers do not have an opportunity to sell their produce where they would like to sell it at the best or highest prices. For instance, anyone growing durum in Saskatchewan would have to sell through the Wheat Board at dollars per bushel less than they might in the United States.

It is simply a question of fairness. Those farmers who wish to continue to deal with the Canadian Wheat Board can so, but that should not prevent the farmers who want to deal with the issue on their own or through other agencies or bodies from doing so. This is something that should be encouraged.

I do not know of anywhere else in the world where farmers are forced to sell their product to only one source. It does not seem to make sense. In today's world, we need to give farmers the opportunity to do the best they can.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest and I have a question for him.

Government is giving a major tax break to corporations that already have a competitive tax rate and is proposing to balance the books through attrition, which means cutting the civil servants who provide services to Canadians. How is that not balancing the books on the backs of ordinary Canadians?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, with respect to not balancing the books on the backs of Canadians, we did not cut transfers to the provinces by \$25 billion like the previous Liberal

government or raid the EI account of \$50 billion to pay for the deficit.

When we are dealing with corporations it is not just corporations but the vehicle by which jobs are created so that everyone in the country can work. Here is what the Financial Executives International Canada had to say:

FEI Canada is pleased with the budget's proposed initiatives to eliminate the deficit by 2015-16 without raising taxes or reversing previously announced corporate tax decreases, measures which will foster economic growth for the benefit of all Canadians.

Also, Deloitte Canada said: "Canada's position as an attractive business destination for global enterprise—". It allows those who choose to proceed with planned corporate tax reductions. It sends a signal that Canada is a friendly place to invest, both foreign and domestic.

This is the type of thing that encourages investment, builds jobs, builds opportunities for Canadians and is something that the opposition should support.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, to the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain, my condolences to the farmers in your riding for suffering the ravages of climate change.

I have a brief question relating to the member's comment about political subsidies. I refer the member to page 184 of the budget which makes it clear that taxpayer support comes in three ways. I would ask why your government has chosen to pursue the very smallest and most fair application of public support to political parties?

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all members to direct their questions through the Speaker.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain has 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, it is a good first step. Certainly it goes into the millions of dollars and encourages members of Parliament and parties to raise money like everyone else. There are already provisions made to allow parties to receive money so they can exist. This requires a little initiative, a little effort, to raise money. I would encourage the member to get behind this particular proposal in the budget and support it.

● (1140)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate all returning and new members. I thank the citizens of Vancouver Quadra for electing me for a third time. I also thank my campaign team and all the volunteers who were so much fun to work with. I had the real pleasure of meeting with constituents from one end of the riding to the other in the last campaign.

The beginning of a new Parliament is always a critical juncture for Canada. It offers the governing party the chance to present a new vision, an exciting vision, a vision that addresses Canada's future. Unfortunately, the government has woefully failed to do that. In fact, it has presented its retreat budget that is complacent fiscally, disappointingly regressive socially and worrisome environmentally. It is a budget that promotes ideology over evidence in a number of ways.

The Budget

It is the government's responsibility to represent all Canadians, not just a select number of Canadians. As an opposition MP, it is my responsibility to hold the government to account, something that I will do rigorously on behalf of the constituents of Vancouver Quadra who elected me to do just that.

I do want to give credit where it is due. This is a budget that has incorporated some ideas, programs and proposals from the Liberal Party of Canada, and we are glad to see them in the budget. They were good ideas and here they are, perhaps a paler version than the Liberal Party proposed and perhaps in a slightly more regressive version but, nonetheless, things like the permanent gas tax revenue to municipalities, a small amount of relief for small businesses, home care, tax credits for volunteer firefighters and a bounce back of the eco-energy program, which the government has flip-flopped on several times already. However, it is a good thing that we have it for another year or two. I congratulate the Conservatives for listening to what that Liberals proposed.

However, the budget is absolutely not good enough. What I mean when I say that it is fiscally complacent is that the growth projections are outdated, there is no reserve in case things go sideways on the international stage and there are many risks that might happen.

The Asia Pacific Gateway, which is so critical to Canada's future, particularly to Vancouver Quadra in British Columbia, did not even deserve lip service in the throne speech.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Malpeque.

There is no long-term vision for prosperity in the budget and certainly no focus on the green economy, which any sensible government would see as being key to our future. In fact, the presidential candidate in France is running on the platform that if we do not address climate change and natural resource management we will not have the future prosperity that could be shared to have an equitable society.

The Conservative government does even give a nod to the importance of a green economy. Instead, there are tax cuts for large companies, like the oil and gas industry, tax cuts that are not required for competitiveness. There is very little evidence that these tax cuts will actually create jobs.

The budget is fiscally complacent and, unfortunately, socially regressive. This is a budget that contributes to inequality. I mentioned in earlier questions that the non-refundable tax credits leave out those very Canadians who need support the most.

What message is the government trying to send? Is the message that if one is not doing well financially, too bad? It will hand out some goodies but people should not even bother getting in line. That is the message that these regressive tax credits send, and that is very disappointing in the 21st century.

The budget fails to address the shameful realities faced by aboriginal communities throughout Canada.

• (1145)

I noticed an article in the paper today in which the minister responsible was patting the government on the back and saying that

for the first time there is a government agreement to engage aboriginal peoples on these issues. That is complete nonsense. The Kelowna accord was the fruit of a whole year of working with aboriginal organizations and representatives. It actually was signed by all the provinces and territories in Canada to deliver benefits and to address the shameful conditions in aboriginal communities.

These kinds of socially regressive policies are completely regrettable at a time when we are seeing the large companies receiving a tax break that they do not need for their competitiveness.

How about honesty, transparency and the use of evidence in this budget? Once again, unfortunately, we are not told what will be cut. The finance minister will not or cannot explain the \$11 billion in cuts. It is a "trust me" budget. In British Columbia, we actually call this kind of budget a "fudge it budget" because there is no clarity.

We know this not just about attrition. Attrition is fewer civil servants providing services. In Vancouver Quadra, we care deeply about the plight of sockeye salmon. There simply has not been enough research in the fisheries department over the years to know what is happening with our sockeye salmon. How will the constituents of Vancouver feel about being told that this budget is a great one because it will achieve its deficit targets through attrition, which means loss of researchers, loss of fisheries people and loss of the ability to actually identify the problem with our sockeye salmon and correct it?

The government is pretending that it is fat being cut. However, my constituents do not actually see it that way. I received a passionate letter from a constituent whose father is a veteran in his nineties. He served in the second world war, had an armed forces career all his life and is not getting the benefits that he is actually entitled to from Veterans Affairs. I gets worse. This gentleman has been homebound, not because he could not be independent, but because the very services he was promised in May 2010 were not provided because of cuts and attrition in Veterans Affairs.

I will just quote with regard to this situation:

This is a truly sad example of what budget restraints can do to the most vulnerable. To do to people who are old, disabled and who have served our country without hesitation when they were needed, is unconscionable. I am ashamed we are treating veterans this way. Please help bring the situation to the attention of the proper resources in Ottawa.

That is what these bland words of cutting fat and attrition really are. They really are affecting people. For someone to be homebound and not receiving services but who could be independent if the services that were agreed to were actually delivered is shocking and a sad situation.

The Budget

I also want to touch on ideology ahead of evidence. We have a minister responsible for these budget cuts who actually created a giant pork barrel in his own riding and who, according to the Auditor General, deliberately kept public servants in the dark about how the projects were approved. Millions of dollars were taken from a fund designed to reduce border congestion and approved for that purpose and then used for toilets and park benches in the minister's riding hundreds of kilometres from the border. That is shocking. That minister was then re-appointed. How hypocritical is that?

We have had many prime ministers in the past who fought for a future that would allow all Canadians to succeed and all communities and regions to thrive and prosper. The current government is one that is cutting the regional economic development programs that support communities and jobs and, instead, shovelling the money to the corporations that do not actually need it at this point.

Prosperity means nothing if it is not shared. We need to create prosperity and we need to share the prosperity so that all Canadians have a chance to pursue their goals, to have their lives work and to contribute to Canada. This budget does not do that and I will not be supporting it.

• (1150)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her election to the House.

She made reference to a real gap in the budget with regard to the investment in aboriginal people's programs and investments that their communities are depending on. As she pointed out, the reality that aboriginal people face is a very difficult one across our country.

Given the government's complete lack of not only leadership but investment in critical needs when it comes to education, health, housing, water and sewer services that are at third world living conditions in some of the communities I represent, would she not agree that, as the aboriginal communities grow, these issues will become more difficult and their lives will be more challenging under the watch of the Conservative government?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member pointing out the future of aboriginals as we go forward with a program like the government is proposing with a 45% cut in aboriginal housing. How can that be defended?

I have been to Iqaluit and a number of aboriginal communities and I know there is disappointment and despair in those communities. The government is doing nothing except patting itself on the back. It has cut the very programs and agreements that were intended to address this shameful inequality many years ago.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again it is a pleasure to welcome my friend back to this most august of places.

I understand many of the issues that she has raised. It was part of her party's platform and that is why she is here. I am here to put forward my party's platform as part of the government.

However, I somewhat bristled when she mentioned veterans and their plight. It was under a previous Liberal government that 3,500 allied veterans were removed from the veterans list. We reinstated them. There were 3,500 veterans who were stripped from the list. It

was a Liberal government that cut benefits to veterans. Some parts of the VIP program were taken from them.

She said that her constituent was having issues with Veterans Affairs. I can assure the member that when my constituents come to see me, I advise them of the appeal processes. I hold their hands and we walk right through the process. I would say that almost all the time, if they are dealing with legitimate issues such as benefits being taken from them that they are entitled to, we get them.

I wonder if she could explain to me why the Liberals took 3,500 veterans off the veterans list.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I will first note that the member may be here to promote his government's platform but I am here to serve the constituents of Vancouver Quadra.

I will read another quote regarding the situation with Veterans Affairs. It reads, "The problem seems to stem from the Veterans Affairs' staff being overwhelmed with excessive numbers of cases to handle". This constituent received approval for the benefits that were being proposed by the physiotherapist. Everything that could be done was done, except for delivering what was agreed. We are working on that, but because of the attrition and the cuts, there are impacts on individuals that are unacceptable. That is the government's approach to eliminating the deficit. It is mostly necessary because of the reduction of the tax rates for the large businesses that are already competitive.

• (1155)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to express my profound thanks and appreciation to the constituents of Malpeque for having demonstrated their confidence in me in this, my seventh, election. It is an honour and a privilege to have the opportunity once again to represent the riding of Malpeque in the House of Commons. As always, I am committed to taking their specific issues forward, to work on their cases and to aggressively put forward issues that I think would benefit Canadians.

The questions my constituents want answered, and which I attempted to find answers for during the election campaign, rise from the intentions of the government, outlined in its projected estimates and budget.

The new budget is basically the same as the old budget we were questioning when it was tabled, just a little bit worse. One thing I will admit the government is fairly famous for is changing language, trying to make things sound like something they are not.

The Budget

On page 218 of the budget tabled in this 41st Parliament is a table covering strategic review savings. Really, we have to be clear on this: strategic review savings are not really strategic review savings but serious cuts. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will be cut by \$31.9 million over three years, and that is only one of the agencies. All of the regional agencies are to be cut, the one in Quebec and the one in western Canada. Regional development is there to assist the regions, to give them the opportunity to have economic opportunity and prosperity for their citizens, and what does the government do instead of investing in those agencies and investing in people? It is cutting them, and cutting the one in Atlantic Canada by \$31.9 million.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is another very important department for Atlantic Canada and all of Canada, including central Canada and the B.C. coast. What is the government going to do to Fisheries and Oceans Canada in terms of cuts? It will cut \$84.8 million over three years. That is a department that is supposed to provide safety for the fishermen, to provide opportunity for them in terms of the fisheries industries.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is another extremely important department for the country moving ahead.

As people are being laid off, the government likes to talk about the jobs it has created, but what it does do not tell us is where full-time jobs have been lost. What we have in this country in their place are part-time jobs, lower paying part-time jobs, as a result of this Conservative regime over the last five years.

Instead of maintaining services under Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, giving people extra training and assisting them to get better education so they can improve their jobs and their pay scales, the government will cut \$495.1 million from the department over three years.

Industry Canada is to be cut, as well as Infrastructure Canada, which is very important. If we are to have a prosperous country, we have to design and develop infrastructure. What does the budget do? It will cut \$124.4 million.

It is absolutely unbelievable, but the government's language to Canadians is that these are strategic review savings. No, these are cuts to the very services and programs that Canadians need and desire so they can become prosperous individuals, and it is done in a time of deficit.

Yes, at one point in time, corporate taxes needed to be lowered, but when we lower corporate taxes we should not be borrowing money from our grandchildren to do so. That is what the government is doing, cutting services to Canadians and borrowing money from our grandchildren in order to give the wealthiest corporations in Canada greater tax cuts, \$4 billion in fact, so they can return greater profits to their shareholders.

● (1200)

The proof is in about the tax cuts over the last number of years. They did not create jobs and did not increase productivity, and the companies that received them from our previous government, and this one as well, did not make the proper investments from these tax breaks.

The fact of the matter is that corporate taxes in Canada are 25% below those in the United States, so our corporate tax rates are already very competitive.

The Prime Minister has claimed that his government will maintain the core services of Canadians. Therefore, the question remains, what are the core services?

When asked to define core services, the Prime Minister made reference only to health transfers to provinces and CPP benefits. Following that logic, obviously everything else is on the table. That is what concerns me.

Following the Prime Minister's own statements, there are likely few programs or services that Canadians will not see negatively impacted. The only issue is why does this Prime Minister and this government not have the integrity or the courage to tell Canadians what they intend to eliminate?

Let us take a look at some of the facts. In my province, Fisheries and Oceans is very important. Small craft harbour spending is critical to the safety of fisherman in that province. In the budget of March 22, it was announced that beginning this year, DFO will be cut by \$84.8 million. What will be lost? In the spending plans for DFO released on March 1, the budget for small craft harbours will be cut by 44% in the coming years.

On March 15, the then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made a commitment that \$72.4 million would be spent on repairing storm damaged harbours, of which \$6.5 million would go to P.E.I. However, as is so often the case on that side of the House, what the minister failed to say was that it was really not an immediate commitment but spending over three years. Furthermore, the minister also failed to tell us that only \$15 million would appear in the budget, and it is in this budget, for small craft harbours across the country. As well, the minister failed to say that \$14 million would be spent on storm damaged harbours this year and only \$1 million next year.

The question is this. Where is the missing \$57 million in that specific example? I raise that example to make a point. I believe my colleague talked earlier about fudging the numbers, and that is what this government is up to.

However, what is very serious for this country is the fact that the Prime Minister will not commit to what he means by core services. Canadians need to know. We need to have some answers from the Prime Minister on what areas he will cut.

I see some of my colleagues on the other side from the previous parliament's agriculture committee. We already know from the estimates that he is cutting \$418 million from agriculture programs.

Why will the government not in fact tell us?

The Budget

The last point I would like to make is critical to P.E.I. The Prime Minister went across the country and announced some mega energy projects. However, it was the Prime Minister who cancelled the third cable from P.E.I. to the mainland when he first became Prime Minister, a signed agreement between the previous premier Pat Binns and the previous Liberal Government of Canada. Just a few months ago, when he was dealing with the megaproject for a cable running across from the Churchill River to the Maritimes, the Prime Minister had an opportunity to make the commitment to reconnect P.E.I. to that cable, and he failed to do so.

What does this Prime Minister have against Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada? I ask his colleagues on the other side of the House to be honest with us and tell us exactly what will be cut in this \$11 billion worth of cuts to Canadians. Be honest with us and give us some straightforward answers.

● (1205)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be honest. I do remember the cuts made by the former Liberal government to the provinces and municipalities. It was very hard on health care distribution in our province of Alberta.

What I also am proud of is that we are part of a government that is increasing health, social and education transfers by 6%.

The member was the former agriculture critic for the Liberal Party of Canada. He created their agriculture policy, which was soundly defeated and rejected by western Canadian farmers.

Will he now stand up and admit that our government has a strong mandate from Canadians, particularly western Canadian farmers, given that we hold every seat on the prairies, to move forward with our mandate and changes to agriculture and agriculture policy?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, in his preamble, my colleague referred to cuts made by the Liberal government in 1995 when we were left with a \$42 billion deficit by the Mulroney government. The country was basically seen as bankrupt by stockholders on the New York Stock Exchange.

The members opposite should almost be kissing the shoes of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin every day for giving them the opportunity to come into government with a surplus. The only problem is that they have taken that surplus and driven this country into a \$56 billion debt. Instead of doing things for Canadians, the Conservatives are giving corporations tax cuts and taxing our grandchildren down the road. They should be ashamed of themselves.

If I have time, I would like to discuss the Wheat Board.

I challenge the member opposite. Call a plebiscite on the Wheat Board and we will support what farmers want. The fact of the matter is that an election is not a plebiscite on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think any member of this House would want to kiss the feet of any former Liberal leader.

However, I did want to come back to the point the member raised. He said that people in Atlantic Canada feel left out. Certainly, people in western Canada feel left out by the government. We have the government talking about massive cutbacks to our fisheries

programs. As the member knows, we have seen in Pacific Canada a virtual collapse of the sockeye salmon run.

We are seeing cutbacks in agricultural supports, and we know that Alberta has the lowest farm receipts of any province in the country. That is after a couple of decades of provincial Conservative rule and half a decade of federal Conservative rule. Where are the farmers faring the worst? They are faring the worst in Alberta. So what does the government propose? It proposes gutting the Canadian Wheat Board when we know full well that farmers have just voted to reinforce it and to have a board of directors that actually supports the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Conservatives are certainly not working in the farmers' interests. They are certainly not working in western Canadians' interests.

Could the member comment on the direction of the government?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing on the direction of the government from the Minister of Agriculture, no doubt encouraged by the Prime Minister, is an absolute affront to democracy, an affront to farm power and an affront to farm power in the marketplace.

The Canadian Wheat Board maximizes the returns back to primary producers from the international marketplace. That is why it is there. It was supported in the last election. Indeed, 80% of the elected directors are pro-Wheat Board. That tells us there is strong support from the farm sector.

However, rather than abiding by democratic principles and giving farmers a say, the government is looking at trying to violate the law, getting around the law and bringing something into this House and killing the Canadian Wheat Board. It is as simple as that.

I ask the members opposite, what is going to happen to producer cars? What is going to happen to the government guarantee under the Canadian Wheat Board?

The backbenchers on the other side, who never can speak for themselves in this House of Commons, have to accept their responsibility for taking away farm marketing power for primary producers in the marketplace. That is the albatross that will be hung around the Conservatives' neck if they continue with this silly decision to destroy organized marketing in this country.

● (1210)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time speaking in the 41st Parliament, first let me congratulate you on being appointed assistant deputy chair of committee of the whole. I also congratulate all the new members in this House.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Calgary East for sending me to this House again for the sixth time and with the highest majority that I have ever received.

The Budget

On a personal note, this was the most difficult election I have ever had. In the middle of the election I suddenly lost my brother in the U. K. The loss of my brother was a great shock to my family. He was very close to me and participated in all of my elections. It was with sadness that in the election, in which I received the highest majority, he was no longer with me. I am dearly going to miss him.

On another element of this election, it was quite interesting that in Calgary there was an intensive attack on me from the *Calgary Herald* editorial board. I must emphasize the editorial board because the *Calgary Herald* reporters were very nice in telling me that they supported me, but this editorial board has taken an anti-Deepak stand from day one. Whenever it can, it will take any opportunity to knock me for reasons only known to the board.

What is very interesting about the *Calgary Herald* editorial board is that it is the only media outlet in Calgary that is completely out of touch. The other media outlets had balanced reporting during the campaign, except for this editorial board.

I mentioned to the editorial board that it seemed quite strange to me that here we have a paper representing a multicultural city like Calgary, yet the *Calgary Herald* editorial board does not have a single visible minority on its board to give a different point of view. However, that is part and parcel of democracy in this country. I have moved forward because the people of Calgary East gave me a resounding mandate to come back. They not only gave me a mandate but a very strong mandate to this government as well.

Let there be absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind, despite what the opposition says, we received a very strong mandate from the people of Canada. They gave us a majority and told us that we had four a half years to run this country. Our budget reflects that mandate. Let us get on with business, let us start running this country, and get things going.

On the doorsteps of Calgary East I heard people comment on election costs and that there was a waste of \$300 million. There was no need for the election because the priorities of Canadians were different. Their priority was not playing politics.

What are the priorities of Canadians?

The first priority for Canadians are jobs. A good-paying job would take care of families and give the necessary security. Canadians want to see this economy move forward and this government has the best record in this economy.

• (1215)

I do not have to say anything, the OECD and everybody knows that.

During the crisis that took place, Canada stood out as one of the few countries that had sound economic management. The credit goes to this government contrary to what the member from the Liberal Party said, that it was the former Prime Minister. We can forget that.

I know the policies of the former Liberal government. If it had such good policies, its members would not be sitting over there at the end by themselves.

It was this government that addressed the issue at the time when there was a serious global recession. This government provided the

necessary economic stimulus package for the economic conditions to ensure that Canadians had jobs.

Having said that, the second stage of that economic action plan means we now re-entrench to ensure that the gains we made remain. That is why in this budget we have said we will be balancing the budget.

The most important thing is that we will be balancing the budget. Of course, that may require a few painful here and there cuts, but not too much. Most importantly, one must remember that during the recession, when it could have been very painful, this government stood on a phenomenal record.

Second, I heard from seniors in Calgary East about jobs. Seniors have worked for this country and brought us to where we are. And seniors are feeling the pinch of the recession.

This government has worked very hard. This government has a seniors minister. This government has brought in policies to ensure that seniors are taken care of. The budget presented in March, which these parties defeated, had strong programs for seniors. Now the opposition is standing up and saying they support seniors.

Our government has programs for seniors and things are happening, so why do the opposition parties always vote against the budget?

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver South.

Our government is investing in communities. It is very critical and very important that our communities are safe.

This government has a record of bringing sound bills that will not only fight crime but will also invest in crime prevention.

Who defeated these measures? Those guys. It is nice to know that the separatist party is not here anymore. It is good to know that.

Let us go back. This government is going to bring all of these very important key things to Canadians, all part and parcel of our moving forward agenda. This agenda will see bills coming forward that address the needs of Canadians.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, it is very important that we listen to what our constituents are telling us. I have had the great honour and privilege of listening to what my constituents told me on the streets. I will bring those values and views here to the Parliament of Canada, the Government of Canada, and to my colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a look at a national challenge.

As the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, I come from a rural region that relies on funding from economic development agencies. The government has made major cuts in this area, complicating the lives of those living in Canada's rural regions who rely on these funds to diversify their economy.

Why is the government abandoning the regions in their budget, particularly given that their campaign slogan was about our region in power?

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the hon. member on being elected to the House for the first time.

When we make an economic statement and a plan, it encompasses the nation completely. We have made business cuts, tax cuts to assist families and to stimulate the economy. The whole stimulation that will take place in the Canadian economy is going to benefit his region as well.

As part and parcel of this budget, a balanced budget will put Canada's economy in a sound position which will benefit the member's region as well.

• (1220)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome back the member for Calgary East. I have enjoyed his friendship and collegiality over the years. I know he would be disappointed if I did not make note of the contradiction he made in his comments. He first said the cuts were going to be painful and then there were going to be cuts, at which point he caught himself and said a few cuts here and there.

If we look at the budget's impact on Atlantic Canada, it is like *Edward Scissorhands* went through line departments. We are seeing cuts to Marine Atlantic, HRSDC, Fisheries and Oceans and ACOA.

Does my friend and colleague not see the disproportionate amount of burden that is being carried by the people of Atlantic Canada through the cuts in this budget?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his return to the House. He somehow survived the orange and blue waves, and I have to give him credit for that.

As I said, we did not do specific cuts to regions. We did not identify regions; we identified the country as a whole. The budget is giving a very strong statement about a very strong economy in Canada, and the member's region would also benefit extensively as a result of that.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on a very good presentation to the House.

In discussing the budget, an hon. member made reference to the firefighters tax credit. A point of order was made to attempt to straighten everyone out about the fact that Liberal members did not vote against the firefighters tax credit. I wonder if my hon. friend recalls our friend Rick Casson putting forward his private member's bill, Bill C-325.

Does the member recall that almost every Liberal, and I say "almost" because I have not counted them, voted against it. I wonder if the House would allow me to table the press release from the Hon. Rick Casson and, of course, the voting record of members, particularly of the Liberal Party. Would the member be willing to allow me to table that in the House, of course based on the Speaker's ruling?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member on his victory. I indeed want to thank him very much for having the historical record, saying it was my good friend Rick

Casson's private member's bill and it was the Liberals who did not vote for it.

With the Speaker's permission and if it is possible, we would like to table the press release and the names of Liberals who voted against the firefighters tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is there unanimous consent to table the said documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in the House today. I thank my colleague the hon. member for Calgary East and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for sharing his time with me.

This is the first time that I rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Vancouver South, who honoured me with their confidence and support on May 2. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to allow me just a few moments to thank them for the opportunity to serve as their MP. I would like to acknowledge that some of these members are up in the balcony today.

Vancouver South is one of the most diverse ridings in Canada, with over 75% of residents having ethnic backgrounds from around the world. Canada's largest Sikh temple and Vancouver's largest Chinese church are in Vancouver South. Our diversity is the cornerstone of our community and we are a jewel in Canada's crown of multiculturalism.

Vancouver South is also home to many families who can trace their ancestry back generations. These are families who helped to found and expand critical industries, such as lumber, mining and fishing. These are the people who helped build railways to unite Canada and to open the west to trade and growth. From this vibrant past, our families and our community continue to contribute toward building Canada's economic railway, as we continue to lead in a region for expanded trade for Asia.

Our diversity, our work ethic, our shared Canadian values are our strength and together we form a world-class city, one which *National Geographic* has recently designated as one of the top 50 destinations in the world.

As the member of Parliament for Vancouver South, it is a great honour for me to stand in this place today to speak in support of the budget, a budget that will provide stability, a budget that will provide more support and tax relief for those who need it and a budget that will help to diversify our economy, expand our competitiveness, create jobs and build the Canada of tomorrow.

Our government has taken real action to make life more affordable for families in Vancouver South and across Canada. Previous budgets have reduced the tax burden on families and helped save the average Canadian family over \$3,500 every year. Tax freedom day now comes 20 days earlier.

Families in Vancouver South and across Canada welcome the measures our government has presented in budget 2011. They represent significant changes, which they endorsed on May 2.

The Budget

Budget 2011 will build upon our achievements, with numerous new measures to support families. Our government has pledged to introduce a children's arts tax credit, a family caregiver tax credit and extend the eco-energy home retrofit program.

The new children's arts tax credit will give families real resources to expand opportunities for their children by supporting the cost of enrolling them in meaningful development programs. Parents will be allowed to claim up to \$500 incurred per child under the age of 16.

The family caregiver tax credit will help families care for dependent relatives. With 40% of Canada's population reaching the age of 65 in the next 15 years, this new \$2,000 credit will mean families will have the extra help they need to care for loved ones with dignity and respect.

We are extending the successful eco-energy retrofit program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills by making their homes more energy efficient. This is an important cost-saving measure for family budgets as well as an important tool to help protect our environment.

Families will also be supported by measures our government has introduced to help students. UBC president Stephen Toope has said that the measures in budget 2011 are in line with the growing consensus among Canadians that Canada's research universities play an integral role in advancing our economy and improving the social and economic well-being of all Canadians.

We are proud to be delivering for Canada's universities and colleges and especially to support Canada's students as they work toward a bright future.

For full-time students, like those at UBC, Simon Fraser University or Langara in Vancouver, the budget would allow them to earn more money without affecting their loans, doubling the in-study exemption of \$100 per week and giving them a tax break on certification fees.

• (1225)

As a student at UBC, I recall working three jobs to put myself through university and therefore I know first-hand what measures like these can mean to students.

For our seniors, we are taking important steps to lay a foundation to assist our aging population. Our Conservative government continues to recognize the important contributions Canada's seniors have made to the success of our country. Just as they have cared for us, this next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes important steps to care for and improve the quality of life for seniors in Canada.

Budget 2011 builds on our past support for seniors by proposing new measures that would enhance the guaranteed income supplement, expand the new horizons for seniors program and extend the target initiative for older workers. We are increasing the guaranteed income supplement to give low income seniors additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This change will help more than 680,000 seniors in Canada.

The new horizons for seniors program has helped thousands of seniors and seniors groups across Canada to become more active and engage in their communities, achieving a better quality of life.

I have visited and have engaged with many of these vibrant seniors groups in Vancouver South and across Canada. I am delighted to anticipate that this program will be expanded by an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors, as well as to expand support for victims of elder abuse.

In the recent election campaign, my own mother was forced to publicly share her private experience with senior abuse. This is a private and often overlooked crime that will only increase in frequency as our population ages. It touches families everywhere and in a variety of ways, but this budget builds on past steps that we have taken to address this important issue for our seniors.

We also understand that while some seniors choose to retire, a number of them wish to stay in the workforce. For them, our government is extending the targeted initiative for older workers by investing an additional \$50 million to provide older workers with assistance in upgrading skills and helping to facilitate their return to work.

We are also eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees, giving seniors who want to remain active in the workforce the freedom to make their own choice.

These investments are in addition to the \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief which our government has provided to seniors and pensioners since 2006. Our government is here for seniors, just as they have been here for us.

On May 2, Canadians were clear. They gave our government a mandate to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a prudent plan, a practical plan and a plan that provides tax relief, making a real difference for the hard-working families of Vancouver South and across Canada.

As a new member of the House, it is a privilege for me to serve and to express my support for the budget on behalf of the people of Vancouver South.

Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth, with nearly 540,000 new net jobs created since July 2009. Our economic recovery is the envy of the world and there is still more to be done. From the most esteemed economist to the doors of Vancouver South, Canadians have acknowledged that this government's economic action plan is working. They have benefited from it, they have supported it and they voted for it.

As His Excellency said during the Speech from the Throne just one week ago, "Let us move forward and build the 21st century, limited only by our ambition and our imagination".

I encourage all members of the House to support budget 2011. Together, with Canada's economic action plan as our guide, we can meet the important challenges before us and continue to build a strong and stable road toward a stable future, full of opportunity.

The Budget

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Vancouver South mentioned pension indexing on several occasions, saying that we should support the budget based on this issue. I would like to describe a simple scenario. A lady that I know quite well skips a meal every once in a while to save money, like many seniors in Canada. The help given to her through the indexing proposed by the Conservatives would allow her to perhaps buy a coffee or an apple instead of completely skipping a meal. If someone were to visit this lady, they could tell her that this indexing will allow her to have a coffee instead of lunch. I would like the hon. member to tell me that is the right thing to do for her.

• (1235)

[English]

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, this government has, in addition to these measures presented in budget 2011, built on top of the \$2.3 billion that we have already provided in annual tax relief for our Canadians.

We have removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. We have introduced pension income splitting. We have increased the age credit amount of \$2,000. We have doubled the pension income credit of \$2,000. In addition, we are increasing the guaranteed income supplement, as well as spending another \$10 million on the new horizons program.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Vancouver South has indicated that this budget will help diversify our economy.

In Prince Edward Island, in order for any economy to be diversified, we will need to attract industry. The only industries that we will be able to attract in the current environment are industries that are not heavily dependent on low-cost electricity. We have sub-sea cables in our province which are at capacity, are 40 years old and the government refuses to support them.

Does the concept of economic diversification include all the provinces?

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, both the independent International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast that Canada is ahead of the pack for economic growth within the G7 countries. All provinces benefit.

In addition, I would like the member to acknowledge and to recognize that the province of Prince Edward Island has been expanding its immigration and working with the provincial nominees program, which has brought investment and students from abroad. In Canada this is a \$5 billion industry and P.E.I. has benefited vastly from that.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Vancouver South on her recent election and I thank the people of Kootenay—Columbia for bringing me to the House.

As the member is well aware, as she said in her speech, job creation is very important for our country. As my son and many

others will be exiting from their combat mission in Afghanistan, could the member further explain how the helmets to hardhats initiative will benefit those who leave the armed forces in the future? This should be a very important item for our government as we look forward to ending our combat mission in July 2011

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, the helmets to hardhats program is an innovative, creative program that will benefit many of our service people who have served abroad and who we would like to honour.

This program will give them a viable road into job training, as well as jobs, when they come back from serving abroad and contribute to Canada in a very fast and direct way.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville, and I welcome him to the House.

I will take this opportunity to thank the wonderful constituents of my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country for their support in re-electing me for the third time as their Kelowna—Lake Country voice in Ottawa. I also extend my sincere thanks to all the hard-working and dedicated volunteers from my riding, especially those in the association who are here on the Hill this week for our national party convention. I especially thank my campaign manager and EDA president, Shari Matvieshen; my financial agent, Mark Thompson; and the rest of our team. I give special thanks to my incredible staff, Linda and Louise, in the riding, and, of course, they work with Steve and Lynne here in Ottawa. Without them I would not be able to do the job that I love to do. I thank them for doing such a great job to help our constituents.

Last but not least, behind every successful man is an astonished wife. I send special thanks to my best friend and dear wife, Cindy, and to our three lovely daughters for their unwavering support.

Today we talk about the budget 2011 that was tabled earlier this week, which is designed as a low tax plan aimed at creating jobs and growth in our economy. It contains targeted spending measures toward those who need it most, while maintaining the necessary fiscal restraint required during tough economic times. I believe it is a pragmatic, balanced approach and it is the right budget for the present time.

What does it do for me? That is often what I have heard from constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and I could tell my constituents the following: Budget 2011 helps low income seniors and caregivers looking after aging parents or disabled family members; it helps small business and local manufacturers create and maintain jobs; it helps homeowners and local contractors through the extension of the home energy retrofit program to reduce home heating costs; it helps Canadian armed forces veterans make the job transition to civil society; and it acknowledges the importance of volunteers in our community, especially our local volunteer firefighters, providing them with a much needed tax break on their expenses.

The Budget

I personally thank our firefighters from Oyama, Ellison, Joe Rich, Lake Country and Kelowna for their dedication to keeping our communities safe.

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with the presidents of both Okanagan College and UBC Okanagan who appreciated the additional post-secondary funding in budget 2011. Our colleges, universities and students will receive more breaks on tuition costs and funding for innovative research and development efforts which will support our forestry, agriculture and tech sectors.

Local municipalities will also be able to count on more funds targeted for community infrastructure projects and, very important, a permanent gas tax fund that will make long-term infrastructure planning possible.

Moreover, budget 2011 will build on our efforts to protect the financial security of families and individuals, including personal income tax savings of over \$3,000 for the average family of four, a \$1,200 per year child care benefit and pension income splitting for seniors.

It also renews our commitment to eliminate the federal deficit, which reflects a common theme that I heard on the doorsteps: we have to live within our means. Budget 2011 reiterates our commitment to do so while protecting critical funding to the provinces for health care and social programs. It works for Canadians because the initiatives contained in it are a direct result of the prebudget consultations with ordinary Canadians who, like my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country, offered sensible, practical solutions for the economy.

By far, one of the biggest concerns for my constituents remains to be the economy and maintaining and creating jobs. We all know that small, medium and large businesses create jobs and that the government creates the economic environment that spurs Canadian companies to create jobs. Our government's incentives for businesses will create the kind of highly skilled labour we want and need in this country.

Many of my colleagues have risen in the House to talk about the numerous positive aspects of budget 2011. I will take some time to share with the House why our economic action plan is so vital to economic growth and illustrate an example of exactly where the growth will come from. I think members will see quite clearly how this government's economic objectives are crucial to attracting the kind of investment we need to help Canadian companies grow.

A local reporter, Steve McNaull of the *Kelowna Daily Courier*, just yesterday filed a report that shows how innovative the Okanagan Valley has become. Steve writes, "While California's Silicon Valley is legendary as the home of the biggest tech companies in the world, like Apple, Facebook, Google, Intel, Hewlett-Packard and Oracle, the Okanagan's Silicon Vineyard is a burgeoning cluster with firms such as Disney Online's Club Penguin, web interactive video company HuStream and software developers QHR and Windward.

• (1240)

"As such, the smaller Okanagan tech companies are a little intimidated by the California giants. But they should not be, because tech is tech, business is business and California companies can be a

great source of investment, mentoring and partnership for Okanagan companies and vice versa".

Those are the great things happening in our country. For the past three years, a Metabridge conference has been held in Kelowna bringing together Okanagan and California tech types to network and pitch ideas. It is all about creating partnerships, opportunities and investment.

As former Facebook executive, Alison Rosenthal, pointed out:

There's a big talent crunch in the Silicon Valley and Western Canada can supply talent easily. We're in the same time zone and we're just a short flight away.

As Steve McNaull points out, Okanagan companies can look for investment and advice from California firms or angel investors like Ms. Rosenthal.

Companies are working hard in our valley with the support of initiatives, like the newly created Accelerate Okanagan, to help grow and attract investment. That is why our government's commitment to a low corporate tax, along with the willingness to invest in innovation, is so important. It is also why our expansion into new markets is critical, as I have heard over and over again while I had the opportunity to be a member of the international trade committee for the past five and a half years.

I would like to congratulate my hon. friend from Abbotsford on his appointment as the new Minister of International Trade. As he pointed out in the House earlier this week, international trade creates good paying jobs and spurs economic growth. That is why it is fundamentally a kitchen table issue.

Breaking down interprovincial trade barriers is equally important. That is why the Prime Minister is committed to reducing red tape and has taken a regulatory view to make it easier for Canadians to do business within our own country.

One sector that could benefit from this is the wine industry in the Okanagan and across Canada. We need to break down barriers, like the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. It is very archaic. It dates back to 1928 and prevents Canadian wineries from selling their award-winning wines directly to Canadians who reside outside of their province. It is incredible that today we cannot enjoy the fruits of the land from one province to the other. I do not see why Canadians should not be able to enjoy this wine. It is made in Canada. It is a product that is award winning internationally. That is why I have once again tabled Motion No. 218 to allow the consumer to purchase wine directly from the vintner to help our small wineries grow. I would appreciate the support of all members of this House on that so that we can move forward in working with our provincial partners.

The Budget

These measures, supporting investment, opening new markets and breaking down barriers, send the message that Canada is open for business, that we have the talent, the skills and the companies needed for success. That is how we are strengthening the economy and helping to create the jobs we need.

There are so many other stories in the Okanagan that reflect this kind of momentum. There is literally no limit to the potential. I strongly believe that the positive energy coming out of the Okanagan is reflective of the positive business-friendly economic strategy put forward by our government.

Opposition members need to get on board. It is unfair to Canadians when they try to suggest that our support for the economic backbone of our country's business is done at the expense of family, seniors and communities. This is so untrue and our record proves it. Not only have we done a great deal for families, seniors and communities since 2006, we have done it without jeopardizing our support for health and social programs. In fact, one can look at this government's record and see that it has not turned its back on anyone.

I come from a riding with one of the highest populations of seniors in the country, which is why I am so supportive of initiatives like increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which builds on the \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief our government has provided to seniors and pensioners, including removing our 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls and introducing pension income splitting as a couple of examples. The fact is that we have focused on seniors and provided for them in every budget since 2006.

By electing me, my constituents have handed me the responsibility to ensure their tax dollars are spent wisely and effectively. They have also given me the opportunity to build on what has been accomplished together with our government and our riding working together at all levels of government. After all, there is only one taxpayer. We have had an expansion of Highways 97 and 33. Our help has assisted our fruit growers. We have built a passport office, invested in affordable housing, helped the homeless and youth at risk, local green initiatives, transit expansion, and arts and culture. There are numerous examples. We are keeping our communities safe with crime initiatives like the organized crime task force.

I thank my cabinet colleagues who have taken the time to listen and who have not only understood but acted and delivered for Kelowna—Lake Country. I want to especially acknowledge this government's commitment to partnerships because, as a former municipal councillor for nine years, I know how important it is that what we do at the federal level respects what is done at the provincial and municipal levels. I believe that is why during the recession this government's stimulus funding was so successful.

I do believe that for my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country and for all Canadians great things are yet to come.

• (1245)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Kelowna—Lake Country back to the House and congratulate him on his re-election.

Earlier we heard speeches by the member for Calgary East and other people in the House who talked about how people voted

against the budget. For the record, the last time the budget did not come to a vote. The House fell before it. They can move away from that rhetoric.

I want to talk for a moment about the seniors that my colleague talked about in his riding. I am glad to hear that he is concerned about these particular individuals because many seniors in Canada are the poorest of the poor. They receive \$1,162 a month and the government will give them \$50 more. That is not even a half measure of what is needed. It should be targeted to 250,000 seniors and it should be closer to \$150 a month to do anything at all to raise them up.

I would ask the member to talk to the finance minister and carry the message that is necessary here on behalf of those seniors.

• (1250)

Mr. Ron Cannan: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague back and congratulate him on his re-election. I look forward to working together.

Seniors have worked hard to build the wonderful country that we have today. We often take for granted the freedom of democracy, the rule of law and what we enjoy. I read an email the other day from a 70-year-old person who was talking about work ethics and integrity and how people have a sense of entitlement.

Our government is providing the infrastructure, the groundwork, to allow individuals to build up. We are rewarding those individuals.

Our strong, stable, national Conservative government is investing in our Canada pension plan so that it is secure, and we will continue to build on that. As I mentioned, in 2006 we put billions of dollars into programs to help seniors, whether it was pension splitting or the 85,000 seniors that we have taken off the tax roll. We will give them another \$3,000 to add to their income before they are taxed. There is a lot of opportunities for seniors and a lot of wisdom gained from their volunteer sectors.

I thank the member for his concern for seniors. We will continue to work together to make a stronger and safer community for all.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my friend and colleague back to the chamber as well and offer my congratulations. I also offer my condolences as his Canucks lost last night to a strong and stable Boston Bruins offence.

I will give the government credit because there are a couple of roses in the budget but there are many thorns that we need to walk around.

The eco-energy program makes sense. We want to encourage some type of behaviour that will benefit the planet and help people to keep the costs of operating their homes down.

The Budget

I want to get the member's opinion on one of the tax cuts. A tax cut was given to those who register for sports, and I utilize that myself. My wife and I encourage our three sons to get involved in sports, not because we are looking for a tax cut but because we want them to get involved in sports. Does my colleague feel that there will be a big upswing in the number of young Canadians playing the piano or painting as a result of the children's arts tax credit?

Mr. Ron Cannan: Mr. Speaker, it is down to three games now. Some would say that the best offence is a good defence and the Bruins play a good defence. I will not take that away from them. We are looking forward to the next few days and we will cheer for Canada's team. Do not count the Canucks out yet.

I think the backbone of Canadians is that when things are tough we dig in. We have the strongest economy of the G8 nations and the best GDP to debt ratio. We continue to create more jobs than any other developing nation, but we are not out of the woods yet.

However, this is about helping Canadians of all ages. It is about fairness. Our campaign commitment was to help families. We encourage youth to participate in sports and keep active. The fastest growing problem in health care is youth obesity. We also want to create the other side of the element, that being arts and culture, music. It is important for a community to have a balanced approach. The Okanagan is one of the cultural capitals of Canada.

Our government will continue to invest to ensure that people of all ages in all spectres of our communities have the opportunity to expand their talents and gifts to become the greatest Canadians of all.

• (1255)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the federal budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance in this place on Tuesday.

Before I get to my comments, congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, for your appointment as our very capable Acting Speaker, and I thank my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country for yielding some time to me this afternoon.

As this is my first major address to Parliament, I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville for their confidence in me and in our government.

I would also like to thank my wife, Rhonda and my children, Sarah and Megan for their unwavering support of me during the campaign and now as a husband and father away from the family while we are all here in Parliament.

None of us would be here without our fabulous campaign teams and volunteers. While it can be dangerous to single out any one person for their help, I do want to pay particular thanks to my campaign manager, Jodi MacDonald for her tremendous efforts in our successful campaign.

Finally, congratulations to all members who were either elected or re-elected, and also to the thousands of women and men who placed their names on ballots for the same opportunity we all have to serve our communities as members of Parliament. No matter what party,

riding or area of the country, everyone should be thanked for participating in our democratic process.

Now to the budget. I feel like I have this budget memorized. Like all hon. members, I spent 36 days knocking on thousands of doors talking about this budget because it was presented already on March 22, and of course not implemented because of an election that no one wanted. However, given the results, it was not such an unnecessary election after all.

I want to talk from my community service perspective about some of the very positive initiatives in this budget. When I listened to my neighbours at the doors about the March 22 budget, there was very strong support for these initiatives. I consistently heard from people that this was a good budget in tough times, that it was reasonable and it was affordable. My constituents were clear that they wanted us to focus on jobs and the economy and I am delighted to report to them that this is still our number one priority.

I have served two terms on the Mississauga Arts Council board of directors in recent years and I cannot tell the House how thrilled I am about the new children's arts tax credit. Mississauga is home to the Living Arts Centre, and many times I see young people actively participating in music, dance, art and other creative activities. In almost all cases their parents or caregivers have paid a fee to the city of Mississauga to enrol their child in that program, allowing the family to claim up to \$500 a year to offset that cost. It is not only a cost saving for the family, but I suspect it will also make it more affordable for more children to enrol in these programs.

I have just completed a three year term on the board of Safe City Mississauga and was appointed its founding chair. Safe City is Mississauga's crime prevention association and we work very hard on local crime prevention initiatives. We have also been in touch and met with the National Crime Prevention Centre and are very well aware of our government's strong commitment to fund prevention initiatives across the country.

I was very pleased to see the increased funding in the budget for youth crime prevention programs of \$20 million over the next two years. I suspect that organizations like Safe City Mississauga might come up with creative local initiatives to help prevent youth crime and gang recruitment through this new and very important funding.

• (1300)

This budget provides increased support to students in post-secondary education. We know that in order to succeed in the 21st century's knowledge-based economy we need highly skilled and educated people to be the workforce of the future.

The Budget

Our government is helping full-time students by doubling the in-study income exemption, helping close to 100,000 students. We are also helping part-time students through eligibility changes to allow more students to qualify for a Canada student loan.

Mississauga is getting its first full community college this fall as a direct result of the federal infrastructure grant to Sheridan College through Canada's economic action plan. This new institution is a much needed new educational facility in our fast growing city.

In the last campaign there was considerable talk about corporate tax rates. I want to let the House know that those low rates are important, not just to create jobs in cities like Mississauga but to keep jobs there too.

My riding consists of many small business operators but also some large companies that employ thousands of people in very good paying jobs. I want those jobs staying in my community. These employers tell me that Canada's tax rates are very important in their business decisions.

Further, as a long-time member of the Mississauga Board of Trade I can say that it is its position that raising corporate tax rates will have a significant impact on Mississauga's business community. It has submitted many briefs on that tax rate issue.

That is why I am delighted to see that we have a new tax credit for new hires for small business and that this budget commits to maintaining one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the world.

As well, when knocking on doors I did encounter a number of older workers who had lost long-time jobs as a result of the worldwide economic recession. The very interesting thing that I heard from these people was not that they were bitter or blaming anyone, it was that they still wanted to work and make a contribution. They understood the very difficult situation that many firms found themselves in and some of the very tough decisions that had to be made.

Although these residents no longer had work, they were willing to do their part to retrain and re-enter the workforce. I will be thrilled to report back to those people and others that we are extending the targeted initiative for older workers to support training and employment programs.

I have also had the opportunity to speak with and meet many seniors at their doors or through a number of very active seniors' clubs and associations in my riding. We know that many seniors need our help and support because of low incomes and their need for support services.

I am very pleased that this budget makes the largest increase in the guaranteed income supplement in decades of up to \$600 more a year for single seniors and \$840 a year for senior couples. Our government is helping to lift thousands of seniors out of poverty through this very significant increase to the GIS.

In my previous life I had a very significant interaction with municipal government. This very important order of government does deliver many services that directly affect the lives of all of our constituents. Generally, however, there has been a view that the federal government does not have a direct relationship with municipalities. There are some that take the view that municipalities

are still children of the province and that any federal funding should go through the provincial parent.

I am very pleased that not only have we, as a federal government, continued to live up to our commitment to flow the gas tax money directly to municipalities for transportation and infrastructure, but that this budget commits to make that transfer permanent. If it is one thing I hear from municipalities, it is that they want long-term, predictable funding.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan may be the most democratic budget ever presented in this House. That is because the members of the Conservative majority government campaigned on it in the last election. Canadians who elected us knew exactly what they were getting when they gave us their confidence.

They voted for strength and stability. They voted for a measured approach as we continue to emerge from the worldwide economic recession. They wanted us to keep taxes low, invest in priorities, and they wanted us to be responsible. This budget achieves all of those goals.

● (1305)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome and congratulate my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville. Mississauga—Streetsville is the land of wide open spaces, rocks, fish and trees, oh, sorry, that is my riding, Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

The hon. member talked about the GIS. If a senior qualifies, it would be about \$50 a month. Of course, in Ontario with the HST, which the Conservative government played a very big part in implementing, with the extra taxes now on gasoline, home heating and electricity, that \$50 is more than eaten up for seniors.

Everyone in this place agrees that seniors should be able to retire with dignity and respect. How is this budget going to do that?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to talk with seniors about the increase in the GIS while campaigning door to door. Many constituents said they thought it was a significant increase. At one of the lowest incomes in the country, seniors would not belittle \$50 a month. It makes a huge difference in a low-income senior's life and there would be slightly more for a senior couple.

There is no question that we are all under increased pressure for costs, many of which are out of this government's control. If provincial governments decide to raise taxes, there is not much we can do about that.

As a government, we have made major commitments to seniors in many different ways. We have given them many tools and opportunities to save and support them in retirement.

The Budget

I look forward to our government continuing to have this focus. We have a very strong Minister of State for Seniors. I am very much looking forward to working with her and talking about how we can continue to help seniors across the country.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my congratulations to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for his election.

I was surprised to hear members talking about being the most democratic government in history, or some such phrase, and that people know what they are getting, and they are getting just that. The current government has been the least transparent government in terms of how the budget would be balanced. I think people are getting a pig in a poke and will find out bit by bit what services they would be losing.

In this democratic government, were Atlantic Canadians who counted on the emergency centre that has been closed and moved to Halifax aware of that when they voted for the government?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we campaigned on and told Canadians was that after we wound down the federal infrastructure program we would start to look for ways to reduce the costs of government. We were very clear with Canadians. I certainly was when I knocked door to door and my constituents were clear with me. They wanted to make sure that they were getting value for money and that government was spending every dime wisely.

I sat in the House yesterday and listened to the answers from the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans with respect to that one issue. He made it very clear that safety would not in any way be compromised by the centre being relocated. I believe it is being relocated to Halifax to serve along the Atlantic coast.

I take the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans at his word. He is doing his job, which is to review the expenditures of his department, as all ministers of the crown will be doing and that they were able to find some operating efficiencies in the department which will continue to allow us to have a low-tax environment and respect the safety, security, health and welfare of Canadians.

● (1310)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you on your election to the Chair. It is a big responsibility and a high honour.

I would like to make note that I will be sharing my time with the member for York South—Weston.

What an honour and a privilege it is for me to rise in the House, for the very first time, on behalf of the people of Scarborough—Rouge River. Above all today, I want to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for the confidence and trust that they have placed in me to represent and advocate on their behalf. I will fight for their priorities every day.

I also want to acknowledge the previous member for Scarborough—Rouge River, Mr. Derek Lee, for his 23 years of service to Scarborough—Rouge River. We do have different ideas about the country we want to build, but we share a love for community and a commitment to public service.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to congratulate all of my colleagues from Quebec and across Canada on their success in the election on May 2. I know that our team will do everything in its power to defend the public's interests in the face of this Conservative government's policies.

[*Member spoke in Tamil*]

[*English*]

For the few who may not have understood Tamil, I will translate.

Next, I am proud to say that as the very first member of Parliament in Canada from Tamil heritage, I am proud and humbled to have been able to speak in this respectable House in my mother tongue.

Many of us Tamils came to Canada fleeing persecution and a civil war. Canada embraced us with open arms, and we have been doing our utmost to contribute to the economic development and cultural fabric of this great country.

I know that the diaspora Tamil community in Scarborough—Rouge River, the greater Toronto area and around the world, will be proud to know that we have achieved this very important milestone to hear Tamil being spoken in the Canadian House of Commons. This is the next step in the development of the Tamil community in Canada. The barriers faced by children of Tamils and other immigrants shall be broken down and they will endeavour to reach higher roles of leadership in Canada.

[*Translation*]

We will be discussing the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance last Monday. This budget does not meet the expectations of Canadians. It offers no solutions to the problems my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River are facing. I know that the measures in this budget will not meet the needs of the people in my riding.

● (1315)

[*English*]

This budget fails to make life more affordable for the many families still struggling to recover from the effects of the recession. When speaking with my constituents during the election campaign, they clearly articulated the priorities for Scarborough—Rouge River.

They want more investment in local infrastructure, especially a more affordable and reliable local transit network that would cut the daily commute from over two hours each way.

The residents want the creation of more jobs locally in the community so that we all do not need to travel to downtown Toronto for work. We all know it is the small and medium-sized businesses that actually create local jobs and contribute to the community's economic development.

My neighbours want to see more investment in education, training and development of youth. Youth in high schools and their parents are concerned about the fact that post-secondary education is beyond their reach because of the skyrocketing tuition fees and the systemic barriers that visible minorities and people from lower-income households face with respect to the accessibility of post-secondary education.

The Budget

Some may say that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but I say that we, the youth, are the leaders of today.

Many young families are concerned about the fact that child care and elder care are neither accessible nor affordable.

Seniors are concerned that after paying into the system for much of their lives, they are now retiring into poverty.

The newer immigrants are concerned about access to settlement and integration services and the arduous process for having their foreign credentials recognized.

This budget does not address the reasonable and affordable proposals that the NDP made.

This budget does nothing to strengthen the CPP. It does nothing to provide relief for the family budget. It does nothing for the millions of Canadians without access to a family doctor. It fails to lift every senior out of poverty. It does nothing to reverse the \$50 million cuts to immigrant settlement service agencies. It does nothing to create good, reliable jobs in local communities. It really does not have a strong vision for investment in post-secondary education.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast voted for change in this election and over 4.5 million Canadians voted for New Democrats, to make this a truly historic election.

I would like to once again thank the constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River for contributing to this history by electing me. They chose many firsts this time: the first New Democrat to represent the constituency; the first woman to represent them; the first person of colour; the first youth to advocate for them; and, of course, the very first female Tamil member of Parliament in the world outside of India and Sri Lanka.

I thank the residents of Scarborough—Rouge River again for giving me this privilege to serve them and to be a member in the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about health care. We recognize the importance of health care in Canada and the importance of a health care accord. This is something which we in the Liberal Party of Canada believe the government should be acting on today, that the negotiations and discussions among the different provinces should be happening today in order for us to achieve the ideal health care accord.

Could the member speak about how she feels with regard to the health care accord and the importance of it being discussed today as opposed to being put off, as the Conservative Party seems to be doing?

• (1320)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I remind the House and all Canadians that it is the NDP that fought for the health care system we have in Canada today and that so many of us take for granted. It is the NDP that truly understands the need for good quality health care and that health care should be fair and accessible to all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the new member for Scarborough—Rouge River and congratulating her on the eloquence and content of her speech.

However, I always wonder a little bit when we talk about health care in Ottawa since this is an area of provincial jurisdiction, and we know just how sacred this jurisdiction is to Quebec. There are 10,000 public servants in Ottawa but they do not manage a single hospital. As a result, it seems to me that, in her speech, the hon. member should have been careful to add that these demands should be met in a way that respects provincial jurisdictions, namely by making financial transfers or giving tax points to the provinces so that they can meet the objectives that she just mentioned.

[*English*]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, health care is a provincial jurisdiction, but the federal government is responsible for the Canada Health Act and sets up the guidelines and tone as to the importance of health care. Also, the federal government directs the transfer payments to the provincial level for the administration of the health care, which is in the hands of the provinces to deliver.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on what I suppose is her maiden speech. It was very nice with lots of passion.

She talked very movingly about health care, so I want to ask her a question about it. In fact, it follows up on the last colleague's question on health care. We know it is a position, as we have heard enough times, of the government of the day to start to exchange cash for tax points in transfers. What is the member's position on replacing cash with tax points in transfers?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments about my maiden speech. Yes, it was my maiden speech and I am very excited and proud to have been able to give such a passionate deliverance as my inaugural speech in the House.

About the trade she is speaking of, as a new member I do not feel confident to speak on that matter right now and I will look into it. If the member would like to have a conversation in a couple of days, I will be able to give her a more thorough answer.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for the first time in the House, I would like to thank my constituents, the voters of Calgary Centre-North, who not only brought me into the House but also delivered a strong, stable Conservative majority government to our country.

My colleague spoke to the issue of post-secondary education and investment in the post-secondary education sector. It is very important to note our government's commitment to ensuring transfer payments are sustainable over the next six years. We have that laid out in our budget and it is a commitment we have made.

The Budget

I also note that in our budget we have several items which speak to post-secondary education, including enhancing and expanding eligibility for Canada's student loans and grants for part-time and full-time post-secondary students, investing \$9 million over two years to expand adult basic education and providing up to \$10 million a year in tax relief.

Will the member support this budget and these important measures?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is something that is very near and dear to my heart, and I congratulate the member for her election to the House.

The budget does not really propose much for post-secondary education. Sure, there are some allowances for loans for students and it makes it easier for students to qualify for loans, but that is not real investment in post-secondary education.

The NDP has been proposing for many years to create a Canada post-secondary education act that would ensure the principles of accessibility and affordability of post-secondary educations would be enshrined in legislation.

• (1325)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating all members of the House for their election to this chamber and congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to your post.

I want to say how honoured and humbled I am to be the member of Parliament for York South—Weston. I must thank all of my campaign volunteers who helped me talk to thousands of residents in every corner of my riding.

I intend to be a strong advocate for all 114,000 residents of York South—Weston. It is where I live. It is my community. Let me tell hon. members a bit about it.

York South—Weston is a working class riding in the northwest of the city of Toronto, an area of declining manufacturing. York South—Weston is the second poorest riding in Ontario. Over a quarter, maybe 32,000 men, women and children in the riding, live below the poverty line. Nearly a third lack a basic high school diploma. Nearly half the population rent; they do not own their homes. Over 57,000 people are visible minorities. Many constituent are disabled and, as deputy critic for disabilities, I hope to make their lives easier and more affordable. One in seven residents is a senior. Many are living in poverty too.

I live in the riding and have raised a family there. Unfortunately, I have watched as the jobs have left, which has added more stress to the community. It was not always this way. York South—Weston is the former home of manufacturers such as CCM, Moffat Stove, Massey-Harris, MacMillan Bloedel, Dominion Bridge, Ferranti-Packard and Kodak, and the list goes on and on. They have all left. Tens of thousands of jobs are gone.

The people who worked here earned family-supporting wages, lived in modest, comfortable homes and shopped locally, building the local economy; but now with the jobs all gone, unemployment is the major concern in my community. The unemployment rate in York South—Weston is habitually 25% higher than the national

norm. Youth unemployment is even higher still, and the few jobs that remain tend to be low-wage, precarious service sector jobs.

When the Conservative government took office in April 2006, Toronto's unemployment rate was 6.4%. Now, after five years of whatever the government has provided, it is 8.4%, or almost 25% higher. The unemployment rate of York South—Weston is higher still. Thus, the economic action plan has clearly not worked. Actually, it is better called the economic fraction plan because it will only help a small fraction of Canadians.

Decent jobs with decent family-supporting wages and benefits and permanence are the top priority for me and my community, but even those who do find jobs must find them outside the riding and must use public transit, which, in my riding, is city buses, to get to work. Some have told me at the door that they spend as many as four hours every day commuting, which is time taken away from their families. That is why I am so disappointed by the government's budget. It does so little to meet the needs of these people.

The government's budget, the economic fraction plan, part two, does not improve the financial security of the residents of York South—Weston, as the finance minister claimed in his budget speech. Previous tax cuts for wealthy corporations have done nothing for my riding. The next wave of tax cuts for these big corporations will not help us here. Manufacturers have continued to close and no new jobs have been created.

The government's previous efforts in fighting the effects of the global recession had little impact in York South—Weston. Its vaunted infrastructure renewal did not touch York South—Weston at all, but passed by. Today, the budget leaves it even further behind.

However, if one travels north a couple of hours to the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, one will be able to smell the pork on the barbecues there, where the average income is \$75,000 a year and \$50 million was spent on border protection. I do not think it is anywhere near the border. Yes, I suspect that part of the economic fraction plan did what the government intended, but it did not help us in York South—Weston.

• (1330)

We in the NDP proposed and recommended to the government a job creation plan to would provide strategic investment in small business, not the giveaways to profitable corporations that this budget favours.

We in the NDP proposed a national infrastructure renewal strategy to draw investment and jobs into our communities. Instead, the government is closing down its infrastructure program.

The Budget

We in the NDP proposed investing in education and training for high-tech, clean energy and conservation jobs for the workforce that we need in the 21st century economy. This is a missed opportunity in this budget. Residents in my riding want to create a green centre of excellence on the 53 acre former Kodak site, for good jobs in the 21st century economy. However, without a federal job creation strategy, without federal investment and a clear environmental plan, we will probably get the planned shopping centre and parking lot, which we need like a hole in the head.

We in the NDP proposed a national public transit strategy that would maintain and expand public transit across the country with a clear mechanism for sustainable, predictable long-term funding. Such a strategy would create jobs, increase productivity, clean the air and give working people more time with their families.

Instead, we get an elite business class train to the airport with fares of \$50 being talked about. It seems the business elite do not want to have to rub shoulders with ordinary York South—Weston residents going to work.

This budget does little to help the average Canadian family deal with the cost of living. We in the NDP believe that Canadian families should get a break from the HST on home heating and hydro costs. However, the government's budget fails to do that.

I spoke to one senior during the campaign who had just received her heating bill for the month of March. It was \$600 for one month, and tears were flowing because she could not pay it. A lot of that bill was the HST, and some of her tears were tears of anger over the unnecessary tax grab.

I heard the finance minister say yesterday that the HST was the province's problem. So I suppose he would have no issue with foregoing the 5% federal portion of her bill.

We in the NDP believe that seniors should not have to live in poverty. We proposed pension reform and significant increases to the guaranteed income supplement, but the government's budget measures fail to achieve these goals.

Seniors in York South—Weston are suffering the double whammy of pensions that do not rise and skyrocketing fuel and food costs. The rise in their pensions was \$3 last year. How do they pay a \$600 heating bill when their pensions go up by \$3, or even \$53 with the \$50 the government is proposing that they get?

We in the NDP want to meet the needs of Canadian families by providing funding for more family doctors and nurses, by proposing measures to make prescription drugs and home care more affordable. The government budget does not meet these goals.

Many residents of York South—Weston do not have family doctors and use the over-crowded emergency room instead, and there is only one, as the previous provincial Conservative government closed the other hospital as its legacy to York South—Weston.

The token gestures to families with kids in arts or sports programs do not help the parents who cannot afford to enrol them in the first place, and the thousands who cannot find affordable daycare have no help whatsoever in the government's budget.

We in the NDP want to work with the provinces and territories to establish and fund a Canada-wide child care program and an early learning program that would create new child care spaces, improve community infrastructure to support the growth in child care and promote a one-stop shop approach for family services.

When their kids get out of daycare and want to go to university or college, the burdens of skyrocketing tuition and crushing debt loads are making that impossible. We in the NDP proposed a special education transfer to help ease the burden, particularly on low income families, but the government's budget is silent on that.

While there are many things we in the NDP would do differently in the budget, I see the government has taken our family caregiver tax benefit proposal. This will help families caring for people with disabilities, a subject that I have a personal interest in. However, we must do more. We should be implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, accompanied by strategies for providing disabilities supports, poverty alleviation, labour market participation and access and inclusion. I hope all members of this House will support this initiative.

We in the NDP are asking the government to rethink its priorities in the budget. As York South—Weston residents will clearly attest, the budget is of little or no help on the real issues facing tens of thousands who live in poverty in Canada's richest city. The budget will not create jobs here, will not provide more daycare, will not lift our seniors out of poverty, will not make higher education affordable and will not make ordinary living more affordable.

● (1335)

The government makes quite gleeful pronouncements about its majority. Whatever the government, it should be concerned about all Canadians, not merely the wealthy in Parry Sound—Muskoka, but even the folks in York South—Weston.

Its economic fraction plan aims at only a fraction of Canadians, and certainly not those living in poverty.

I urge the government to rethink its priorities and establish priorities that can assist all Canadians, not merely a small fraction of the population.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have known my friend from York South—Weston for about 25 years, although he may not want to admit it is that many.

The Budget

One of the phrases that I do not like to hear but that is used quite often in this place is, "They just don't get it". Sometimes that is about the only phrase that applies.

I know we have some good people across the way. However, it baffles me that when the banks made \$22 billion last year and gave \$11 million in bonuses to their executives, seniors in this country are eating cat food. How do they square that circle?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, yes, I have known the member way too long.

It is clear that the government's priorities of favouring banks and large corporations over seniors, who feel they should be respected and treated with dignity, do not square in this budget.

Clearly, the idea of seniors continuing to live in poverty because of lack of government support is not one favoured by this side of the House, the NDP in particular. We should do everything in our power to insist that in this budget, at least seniors come out of poverty.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to welcome my new colleague to this House.

As I listened to his maiden speech, I did take a special interest in his comments regarding seniors, because although I have only been here for two and a half years, time and time again I have heard the NDP talk about wanting to support seniors and raise them out of poverty. Yet every time we put forward a measure to help seniors, the NDP votes against it. Here I would mention measures like pension income splitting, which actually helped us remove over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls; and measures like increasing the age credit amount by \$2,000 and doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000.

I would ask the member why on earth he is standing up now and claiming to be fighting for seniors, but with a party that continually votes against helping our seniors?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, clearly the member does not get what we are about.

The NDP is suggesting very strongly to the government that the quarter measures it is proposing or the half measures it is proposing in its economic fraction plan are not enough to raise seniors out of poverty. That is the issue before us today.

The issue before us today is not whether banks or corporations should have a lot more money, but whether or not seniors who have contributed all their lives and are now trying to retire with dignity should have an income that is large enough to allow them to live in dignity. That is what we are talking about. The government's proposal is only a fraction of that amount.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, the administration of health care is done by the provinces. In my history with the province of Manitoba, there have been many issues, such as hallway medicine and issues with emergency care, including lineups and wait times, regarding the public not receiving the types of services they want to see.

What role does he believe the federal government has to play with regard to that whole administrative aspect the provinces are responsible for?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes that one of the problems facing many Canadians now in the health care system is the lack of access to family doctors, which is crucial. That is facing many Canadians, and many in my riding of York South—Weston do not only not have access to family doctors but have access to only one emergency facility, which will be closing in the near future.

It is that which the NDP has tried to focus on with its proposals: to make sure that the government creates a mechanism whereby family doctors become available to each and every Canadian across this country.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my good friend and colleague from Wild Rose. Let me congratulate you on your appointment to the chair. I know you will do a great job in the House and with civility breaking out all over, it will be an easy job.

I would also like to thank the great people of Oxford for instilling their trust in me again to represent their interests in Ottawa, as well as my wonderful team of volunteers who were indispensable in making my re-election a reality. I would be remiss if I did not thank the great staff who represent me in my riding of Oxford and do a tremendous job. They make me look good and I appreciate that.

I am eager to move from the March 22 presentation of the budget to where we are now. It was derailed with an unnecessary election, and Canadians and the people of Oxford spoke on May 2. They gave us a clear mandate to move forward with budget 2011 when they made their wishes clear at the ballot boxes across this great nation, giving Canadians a long overdue strong Conservative majority in the House of Commons.

We on this side of the House will honour their directive by keeping our promises and commitments to secure economic recovery for all Canadians today and for generations to come. On this side of the House we plan to continue to do this by supporting job creation, strengthening our families and communities, investing in the economy of tomorrow by providing increased support for research and technology, and by working diligently to preserve Canada's fiscal advantage to keep it on the right track to balanced budgets by eliminating ineffective spending, limiting spending growth and closing unfair tax loopholes.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan would keep taxes low to promote jobs and economic growth while supporting Ontario families and seniors.

Let us talk about the unnecessary election triggered by the opposition that kept much-needed cheques out of the pockets of struggling Canadian seniors. We believe this to be an injustice to Canada's backbone and we will do everything within the parliamentary limits to ensure that Canada's seniors are treated with the respect they deserve.

The Budget

Our first step is to ensure support for seniors in the next phase of the economic action plan. The plan builds on the support in place for seniors by announcing new measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for older Canadians, including those living in my riding of Oxford.

A new guaranteed income supplement top up benefit targeted to the most vulnerable seniors effective July 1, 2011 will be available to seniors with little or no income other than old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. These seniors will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. Single recipients with an annual income other than OAS and GIS of \$2,000 or less and couples with an annual income of \$4,000 or less will receive the full amount of the benefit.

There would be a provision of \$10 million over two years to increase support for the new horizons for seniors program, which provides funding to organizations that help ensure that seniors, including those in my riding, can benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their communities through active living and participation in social activities.

The residents of Oxford are not strangers to the new horizons for seniors program. Most recently, the South Gate Centre in Woodstock, the Town of Tillsonburg Non-Profit Housing Corporation and the Victorian Order of Nurses-Oxford Branch received funding under this program to improve the quality of life for seniors across Oxford.

However, we did not stop there. We also introduced \$50 million over two years to extend the targeted initiative for older workers program until 2013-14. This is a federal-provincial-territorial employment program that provides a range of employment activities for unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities with populations of less than 250,000 to help them stay in the workforce. That is up to \$840 million in new financial support for needy Canadian seniors. That is a budget I can throw my support behind.

Many families in Oxford will also be able to benefit from several important initiatives in this budget. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for people to make improvements to their homes and make them more energy efficient. This would save them energy costs over the long-term as well as benefit the environment.

● (1345)

Two important tax credits would allow families to receive a tax receipt for expenses related to providing care for family members as well as extracurricular activities for their children.

The family caregiver tax credit would provide \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities, including for the first time spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

The new children's arts tax credit would enable hard-working families to claim up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

The rural areas in my riding rely on the excellent service of our volunteer firefighters. I am so pleased that the constituents in my riding who are volunteer firefighters will now be eligible to receive a \$3,000 non-refundable tax credit. I have heard from many constituents expressing their support for this tax credit.

Seniors are the backbone of our great nation and students are our bright future. We want all students to succeed in the global economy with the help of the best education possible.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes several measures to help students acquire the education and training they need to prosper, such as student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in rural and remote areas. Practising family physicians will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. Nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.

We will also be extending tax relief for skills certification exams, making all occupational trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief through the tuition tax credit.

In addition to these wonderful initiatives to further aid Canadian students, we are doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week. This initiative will benefit over 100,000 students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their loans.

We understand that family support and involvement is key to any undertaking, whether it be professional or personal. That is why we are increasing the family income threshold for part-time Canada student loan and Canada student grant recipients, bringing the eligibility thresholds in line with the thresholds used for full-time students.

The residents of Oxford and all Canadians can look forward to \$15 million in ongoing funding to the Canada periodical fund, which supports the distribution of publications in Ontario and across the country. I know that many newspapers serving Oxford and the rest of rural Canada will applaud this initiative as they have been recipients of the funding in the past.

Municipalities across Canada can rest assured that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes legislation to make the gas tax funding for municipalities permanent. Canada's government will be putting into law the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns to support infrastructure projects. Over four years the municipalities of Oxford will receive a staggering total of \$25,216,242.

I like many Canadians understand that farmers feed cities and that is why the initiative for the control of diseases in the hog industry will be extended by an additional two years. The government will be providing \$24 million over two years to enable the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete initiatives directed at national biosecurity standards and best management practices that will benefit hog producers across the country.

The Budget

There is so much more that I could say about the whole budget. I just wish that the budget had stood on March 22 to reach the stage that it is at today before the House, so that Canadians would have had the benefit of all of the good things in this 2011 budget.

● (1350)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned with the fact that the Conservatives intervening on the budget seem to have missed the essential points; that is, inequality in this country is now at its worst level since the 1920s. That inequality lever has to be rolled back to before the Great Depression. Tory times being tough times, the Conservatives have succeeded in their time machine in bringing us back to before the Great Depression, before we actually had the system of social programs in place.

We have also seen over the last few years the catastrophic collapse of our manufacturing sector. One quarter of a million jobs in the manufacturing sector, good family-sustaining jobs, have been lost on the Conservatives' watch.

I myself come from British Columbia. We have seen what the softwood lumber sell-out that the Conservatives brought in has done to softwood lumber communities across the west. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost.

My simple question to the member is this. Why do the Conservatives not acknowledge their mistakes, fess up, and work with the NDP to get a better budget?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I took it more as a comment than a question, but I would respond to my colleague across the floor that there have been 540,000 new jobs created in Canada. I do not know where that member has been and I understand that parts of this country are still lagging behind as a result of the great global recession, but that recession was not built in Canada. It came from across the world and most nations are suffering far more than we are. We are as strong as we are because of the policies of this government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member talks about job creation, there is a big difference between the Conservatives and the Liberal Party of Canada. The Conservatives have prioritized corporate tax breaks. They are looking at the richest corporations in the country to generate job growth, whereas the Liberal Party of Canada sees and values and recognizes the potential of small businesses, and how they can put more jobs into the economy. The government has made a decision, by prioritizing that particular tax cut, to take away other opportunities to spend or use those tax breaks in different ways.

Would the member not recognize that if we want to generate and create jobs in Canada from coast to coast, the best way to do that is to invest in small businesses as opposed to giving large generous corporate tax breaks to the largest and richest corporations in the country?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, within the budget there are provisions to encourage employment growth in small businesses. However, I would suggest to my friend that he might go into many of those places that he calls small businesses. They are also corporations. Many family farms across this country are now corporations. I know a number of those people are very pleased to

see the corporate tax rates go down, so they can then purchase equipment and purchase all kinds of things from the local economy. Corporations are not just what he might perceive as some huge international thing. Many small businesses in this country are incorporated and they enjoy this type of budget.

● (1355)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the other question I wanted to ask the member is, what would he say to seniors living in British Columbia?

What the Conservatives did was impose the HST, which is a massive tax shift. That is what they love to do. They love shifting taxes from the wealthy, very profitable Canadian corporations, to ordinary people. Seniors are paying \$2 a day more because of the HST in British Columbia and this budget actually gives them back \$1.15. So they took \$2 away and they give \$1.15 back.

Why do the Conservatives not just admit that they made a mistake with this budget and work with the NDP, so we can have real progress for seniors in this country and lift every senior in the country above the poverty line?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the problem with my friend is that he has such a short memory. A little while ago, we reduced the GST on everything, from 7% to 6% to 5%, and my friend voted against that. That was on everything.

I do not know where he has this problem of thinking that we increase things. His party opposed to it and when the GST in Canada was reduced, the province of Nova Scotia, with an NDP government, raised it another 2%.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak today on the next phase of our Conservative government's economic action plan. Our government's action plan is the right plan for challenging times and it is critical to securing the economic recovery that had started through our previous budgets.

Before I speak to the budget, I would like to first take this opportunity to thank the voters of Wild Rose who re-elected me to this place in the May general election. As all of us who serve in this place know, it is a tremendous honour and a great responsibility to represent Canadians in their federal parliaments. I am humbled by the trust that my constituents have placed in me by returning me as a member of a Conservative team that is dedicated to balancing the books, cutting costs and waste and working for the well-being of all Canadians.

The people of Wild Rose have my pledge that I will continue to work hard for them at all times and always in the best interest of our great nation of Canada to ensure the confidence they have shown in me has not been misplaced.

Our government's good work on behalf of all Canadians is evident today as we continue debate on budget 2011. A global economic crisis that started outside our borders three years ago nevertheless impacted our country and brought with it significant challenges for Canadians. Our government met those challenges head on.

Statements by Members

The economic action plan was designed to lead Canada out of the worst recession in generations. The temporary stimulus measures of the economic action plan had their intended effect. The projects created jobs in a time of recession, while making investments in local infrastructure that would benefit our communities for years to come.

In my riding these investments were needed since years of rapid growth in Alberta had left municipalities in a crunch to keep pace with infrastructure requirements. In Wild Rose the action plan has created jobs, while benefiting the town of Canmore with a new pedestrian underpass. Banff has opened a very popular Legacy Trail. The town of Olds has renovated its sportsplex. Airdrie and Cochrane are completing major upgrades to arterial streets. These are among many other examples.

The action plan did the job it was designed to do. As a result, Canada has weathered the global recession in a stronger position than nearly all major economies.

Our economy has grown for seven straight quarters, with 540,000 new jobs created since July, 2009—

The Speaker: I will stop the member there as it is time for statements by members. The member will have seven and a half minutes left to conclude his remarks after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

VICTORIANVILLE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my home town, Victoriaville, is currently celebrating 150 years of history. The first person to build in Victoriaville was Louis Foisy, who, in 1861, asked to have the town of Victoriaville incorporated. He was a merchant, innkeeper, postmaster, church warden and, naturally, the first mayor of Victoriaville.

Victoriaville was once the furniture capital of Canada and, over the years, other industries have flourished there, including textiles and agriculture. The famous hockey sticks were also made there. Economic diversification helped many SMEs get a start there, and Victoriaville was known as the cradle of sustainable development thanks to the visionary Normand Maurice, the father of recycling in Quebec.

I commend the builders of Victoriaville—as well as those of Saint-Valère and Chesterville, which are also celebrating their 150th anniversary this year—for having left us an economic, cultural and community legacy that is so dynamic, vibrant and modern.

I would also like to invite my colleagues to come and visit us this summer to see the Laurier Museum, attend the cheese festival or simply partake in one of the many activities associated with the 150th anniversary of these municipalities.

• (1400)

[*English*]

BULLYING

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley is proud of our children, as is every riding across the country, but in recent months our children have faced a new and dangerous threat, a threat that is taking the lives of our children.

In Nova Scotia over the past several months four children have lost their lives due to cyberbullying and Internet intimidation, two of them, sadly, in my riding. As adults and leaders of our country, it is our responsibility to keep our children safe.

For parents out there, please supervise what children are sending to others on the Internet and supervise what they are receiving on the Internet.

For the children of our country who are feeling alone, bullied and intimidated, do not stay silent. Children are not alone and should tell a parent or a teacher. They are there to help.

I look forward to working with all colleagues in the House from this and the other side of the aisle as we deal with this new and dangerous threat.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SENIORS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his recent budget, the Minister of Finance is helping only a third of seniors living below the poverty line. The government is making a minimal effort. Unfortunately, it is much too little. The NDP called on the government to help all seniors living below the poverty line. To do so, the budget should have allocated \$700 million, not \$300 million.

It is unacceptable in a society like ours to abandon those who built our country's economy. It is unacceptable that in 2011 we are unable to find the necessary resources to lift all seniors out of poverty.

On behalf of all seniors in need and especially those in the riding of Drummond, today I invite the Minister of Finance to immediately increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$700 million in order to allow all seniors to live in dignity.

* * *

[*English*]

PICKERING—SCARBOROUGH EAST

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the people of Pickering—Scarborough East for the trust they have bestowed upon me and my volunteers for making it happen.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the francophone voters in my riding for their support.

[English]

After 18 years, the constituents of Pickering—Scarborough East have chosen a representative from a party which advocates for a real change in the community. Energized by the wisdom, determination and true leadership of our Prime Minister, the people of Pickering—Scarborough East have chosen the path toward maintaining a strong economy, creation of jobs and low taxes.

Being part of the community where the beautiful Rouge River binds together two cities, Toronto and Pickering, I am very proud about the preservation of our green spaces for future generations, the Rouge park, which will be the first urban national park. It will be a great benefit to many people in the GTA.

I also thank Canada, the greatest democracy in the world, for allowing me, a humble emigrant from Romania, to become an accomplished engineer and to serve my country as a military engineer in the Canadian Forces, including the mission in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, it is a good feeling to be able to give back to society. I am here to serve.

* * *

AUDREY-ANN MURPHY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we mourn the passing of our friend Audrey-Ann Murphy, who had worked with me for 14 years both in election campaigns and in my office.

Audrey-Ann took pride in helping people, never wanting any attention for herself. She was modest, hard-working and viewed her work with a sense of a honour.

A note from constituents yesterday said, “We left your office feeling that Audrey-Ann was a person who could take on any task and get the job done”. They were right.

She could be loud and boisterous and was certain to tell people what they perhaps did not want to hear, but sometimes needed to hear.

I want to thank Audrey-Ann for being a friend to me and for working so hard for our constituents. I will miss her booming voice, her candour and her counsel. To her husband Graham, daughter Jessica, parents Alvin and Violet, sister Frances and Auntie, and her extended family, I share their loss and will miss her terribly. We loved her dearly.

* * *

WINNIPEG SOUTH CENTRE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise for the very first time in the House of Commons as the very humble servant for Winnipeg South Centre.

I give special thanks to my campaign team, my incredible family and the wonderful voters of Winnipeg South Centre.

I was so privileged to be visited by students from Churchill High School on the first day of this session and I want to thank each of them: Connor Boyd, Eason Cerasani, Randy Clark, Jase Falk,

Statements by Members

Brittany Fulford, Tiffany Jackson, Caelin King, Stuart Maddocks, Christopher Mantyka, Giorgia Skorletos, Calder Thorsteinsson, Chantalle Young and their three wonderful teachers, Susan Chodirker, Ross Penner and Dominic Zagari.

It is a privilege to share this House with the leaders of tomorrow.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this first opportunity I have to thank the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île for choosing me to represent them in the House of Commons.

I am also rising today to voice my concern about Canada's future, particularly in terms of the environment. This government continues to cut millions of dollars from the fight against climate change and is still refusing to meet its international obligations. Canada's per capita level of greenhouse gas emissions is among the highest in the world.

Even the largest energy company in Canada, Suncor, has described the government's approach as ineffective and has said that this approach will result in increased costs for consumers in the long term. On Monday, this same company called on the government to adopt stricter measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This government's attitude continues to marginalize Canada within the international community because of its poor environmental policies. The government must therefore recognize the urgent need to invest in the fight against climate change rather than granting tax breaks to companies that pollute our environment.

* * *

[English]

FLOOD PREVENTION

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know all parliamentarians join me in expressing our sympathy to the flood victims who are dealing with the devastating flooding that has gripped Canadians.

We want to express our thanks to all municipal leaders, firefighters, emergency measures staff, the countless volunteers and military personnel for their tireless efforts this spring.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for his commitments to this year's flood fight.

Flooding has been a challenge for Manitobans, including those in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake. Flooding is impacting the north Red River, Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, the Shoal lakes and Lake Winnipeg.

Constituents in my riding have legitimate questions about the management of flood control infrastructure in Manitoba, such as the Jenpeg, Fairford and Shellmouth dams and the Portage Diversion, which are operated by the province of Manitoba. These structures have created intentional flooding.

Statements by Members

While we cannot prevent natural disasters, the Manitoba government needs to look at long-term flood prevention strategies which help communities north of Winnipeg. The province of Manitoba needs to be grateful for the sacrifices made by flood victims, gracious in how it treats them and generous in how they are compensated.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this, my first occasion to rise in the House in this session, I want to thank the constituents of the great Kenora riding for re-electing me. I will continue to be a strong voice for Kenora in this government.

Three years ago, on Wednesday, June 11, the Prime Minister stood in the House and asked for forgiveness from aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential school system. This apology was an historic event and was a significant step toward reconciliation with aboriginal peoples.

We will continue to work closely with former students, their families and their communities to build a new relationship based on the knowledge of our shared past and renewed respect for each other.

This anniversary is an opportunity for all Canadians to remember and reflect on the lessons taken from the Indian residential school experience.

We must all renew our commitment to work together to build a better future and to make a meaningful and sustainable improvement in the lives of aboriginal people throughout Canada.

* * *

BEACHES—EAST YORK

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this chamber today to speak for the first time as the member for Beaches—East York. I am incredibly proud to do so and I am incredibly grateful to the people of Beaches—East York for the privilege to serve as their representative in the House.

On May 2, the people of Beaches—East York said to me, “Go forth to represent the values and priorities of this community in the House of Commons. Do your utmost to build a generous and compassionate country—a country worthy of those who have gone before us and of those that we have brought into this world”.

I look forward to that challenge and to working along side all those in the House who share in it.

There are many to whom I owe thanks, but most certainly we only get to this place with the support of those who love us. Therefore, I reserve my deepest thanks for my parents and my kids, Emily, Hannah and Rory, and my wife Donna who does the heavy lifting back home so that I might be free to do my best for Beaches—East York in this House.

● (1410)

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of his 90th birthday tomorrow.

The Duke of Edinburgh supports Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her work and duties, but also serves as the president or patron of more than 40 Canadian organizations. I wish to highlight the Duke of Edinburgh's honorary military positions within the Canadian Forces.

He is Colonel-in-Chief of the following: the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa; the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada; the Royal Canadian Army Cadets; The Royal Canadian Regiment; the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment); and, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada.

During more than 20 royal tours, the Duke of Edinburgh has actively promoted the Canadian armed forces and His Royal Highness has travelled throughout Canada meeting people from all cultures and regions.

On behalf of all Canadians, I wish the Duke of Edinburgh a happy birthday.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CLAUDE LÉVEILLÉE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that we learned today of the death of one of the greatest singer-songwriter-composers of his generation, Claude Léveillé.

A pioneering crafter of Quebec song, this great artist has left behind lyrics and melodies that will forever resonate in the collective memory of Quebecers. We will remember this intense songwriter, with his deep voice, seated at his piano, singing to us about his loves, his *Frédéric*, his nostalgic piano tunes, his inner self, his freedom.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Léveillé, and I pay tribute to this legend who made such a huge contribution to enriching Quebec culture.

And the member sang a Claude Léveillé song:

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: “Je me fous du monde entier...”

* * *

[*English*]

DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL CROSSING

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, re-tabled by our finance minister this week, our government committed to take continued steps with the state of Michigan, the U.S. and Ontario governments to advance the construction of the new DRIC bridge at the Windsor-Detroit gateway and trade corridor.

Oral Questions

We are pleased to see the governor of the state of Michigan has given his support to the plan and is currently moving forward with legislation.

While our Conservative government has demonstrated a strong, ongoing and active commitment to this infrastructure priority, including in our budgets, opposition members have not. Canadians expect and want action not talk.

I call upon all members of this House, especially New Democrats, to support and vote for our plan. We encourage our counterparts in Michigan to help us move this project along quickly for the shared economic, trade and security benefits of our two nations.

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM WEEK

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being Tourism Week, I would like to take a moment to recognize the important contribution made by Canada's tourism sector.

From coast to coast to coast, tourism is a \$64 billion enterprise. This important industry contributes to the growth of new businesses of all sizes and employs over 650,000 Canadians.

My riding of Ottawa—Vanier—and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents for placing their trust in me for the seventh consecutive time—has over 700 businesses related to tourism, with more than 6,000 employees.

Canada is blessed in its natural beauty and its cultural diversity.

I wish to thank all employees in the tourism sector. Their warm hospitality will be felt again this summer when it comes time to welcome the millions of visitors from our own country and around the world to Ottawa and the rest of Canada.

* * *

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after serving a decade in the role, Sheila Fraser has retired from her position. On behalf of all Canadians, I thank Ms. Fraser for her dedication as Auditor General of Canada.

Whether it was conditions on reserves or the sponsorship scandal, nothing slipped the unflinching eye of Ms. Fraser.

As the Prime Minister said:

She has made an outstanding contribution in support of Parliamentary decision-making, increased accountability and transparency, and strengthened management of the public service. Ms. Fraser's service to Canada and Canadians exemplifies the very best of public service.

I fully agree with that.

I would invite all members to join me and thank her for her commitment, dedication and great service to this country.

●(1415)

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honour the lives of two Sudbury miners who were killed last night as a result of a tragic workplace accident at the Stobie Mine in my riding of Sudbury.

Both men were dedicated family men whose lives were taken from us far too soon. My thoughts and prayers are with their families, friends, co-workers and other members of my community as they try to cope with this shocking and devastating loss.

This is also a heartbreaking reminder of the danger miners put themselves in every day. We can only hope that the investigation into this accident leads to a safer workplace for workers, especially in the mining industry.

I believe I speak for all members of Parliament and extend our condolences to those mourning this very tragic loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

* * *

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the voters of Brampton West who elected a Conservative federal member for the first time since 1988.

There are few actions more despicable than committing a sexual offence against a child. I have just learned that an individual convicted of unspeakable crimes against children has been sent to a halfway house next to a school. This is unbelievable but, sadly, not uncommon.

Our government took action to protect children from sex offenders by strengthening the National Sex Offender Registry. However, more must be done.

Our government will ensure that those who commit crimes against children are punished by imposing strict mandatory minimum sentences. Anyone who commits a sexual offence against a child will never get a criminal record suspension.

These measures could already be in place but they were opposed and delayed by the NDP. As the father of two young children, I call on the opposition to support our legislation to protect children from sexual abuse when it is introduced.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General explained at length how lucrative it is to be friends with a Conservative minister. For example, the former industry minister sat down with two friends to share tens of millions of dollars. There were no witnesses, no documentation, no records. The auditor himself said that he has never seen anything like it and that he is scandalized. Is this sponsorship scandal 2.0?

Oral Questions

How is it that, with such a poor track record, this same minister is now responsible for budget cuts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, these municipal projects were actually approved by the federal government and the municipalities. All of these projects were announced publicly and appear on the website. However, the Auditor General made several recommendations to improve the process in the future and we accept all of those recommendations.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, considerable sums of money were divided and allocated by the three wise men of Deerhurst.

There has been no accountability, no transparency and no rationale for decisions, which for the most part were completely unrelated to the stated objective.

This is truly the Liberal way of Chuck Guité and Alfonso Gagliano.

How could the Prime Minister give carte blanche to the minister? How could the minister choose 32 projects by himself without providing the slightest rationale? And how is it that he is still here?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP member's statements are entirely false. The reality is that these 32 projects were published. They are on the website. Every dollar was accounted for by this government. As I said before, the Auditor General made several recommendations to improve the process in the future and we accept those recommendations.

• (1420)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was the interim Auditor General himself who explained that the Conservative government kept Parliament completely in the dark and that the Conservatives misled Parliament not once but twice. The government approved millions of dollars in funding for border infrastructure but this funding was diverted to boondoggle projects hundreds of kilometres from the nearest border.

We want a clear answer to just one example. What does the restoration of a steamboat in the minister's riding have to do with the G8 summit or border infrastructure?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that program was announced publicly. The projects were published. In fact, we held debates on this issue several times here in the House of Commons. That being said, the Auditor General recommended changes to the estimates process to improve transparency, and the government will accept those recommendations.

* * *

[English]

TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General revealed today that Treasury Board allowed the former minister of industry to set up a \$47 million slush fund for pork barrel projects in his riding. Here is how it went down: there was the minister, there was a mayor and there was a hotel manager who dished out the loot. There was no oversight, no documentation

and no questions asked. This is just one step up from cash in a brown paper bag.

Is this how the minister will plan to run the Treasury Board?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so much for the civility that the Leader of the Opposition promised Canadians.

At the outset, I want to thank the outgoing Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, not just for this audit but for her outstanding years of public service to Canadians.

I completely reject the premise of the question by the member opposite. The decisions for the funding of these 32 public infrastructure projects were made by me in my time as minister of infrastructure, not by the current president of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing civil about the abuse of taxpayers' trust. The Conservatives misled Parliament. They told us that they were requesting money for border infrastructure and they fuddled it off for pork-barrel projects, such as gazebos, steamboats and everything else the minister could think of. This is the kind of rum bottle, pork barrel politics that Canadians are fed up with.

Will the minister apologize to the taxpayers for this abuse of our public trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Timmins—James Bay is making it up as he goes along. In fact, not one of the 32 projects was a steamship.

* * *

BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. He cannot get around the fact that, in November 2009, the supplementary estimates tabled in Parliament included a request for approval to spend \$83 million for an item entitled, "border Infrastructure fund related to investments in infrastructure to reduce border congestion".

The simple fact is that the government used that money for a completely different purpose. Huntsville is 300 miles away from the closest border in Niagara Falls. How does he explain this bait and switch?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the Liberal Party had looked at the border fund he would have realized that it is frequently used for projects that are not in border communities.

In any case, this program was announced publicly by the government. It was well-known by Parliament. In fact, it was debated several times here in the House of Commons.

The Auditor General, like the leader of the Liberal Party, has made observations on the transparency of the estimates process. There are some improvements that could be made there and we will accept those recommendations.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also commented on an issue of importance to Canadians, namely the condition of aboriginal communities on reserves. I have a simple question for the Prime Minister.

Is he prepared to show some humility on this issue by acknowledging that his government completely and unilaterally cancelled the Kelowna accord, which would have had a positive impact on the conditions noted by the Auditor General today? Will he—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party should show some humility on this because it did nothing during 13 years in government. Our government has worked with the aboriginal communities. We have made significant investments to improve conditions on the reserves. A lot of work still needs to be done and I hope during this Parliament we will have the support of the Liberal Party to make these significant investments in these communities.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the lack of transparency continues. My colleague from Markham—Unionville has just received a message from the immigration department in Toronto, which reads:

As we are not currently processing any parental sponsorships at this time...this case will be finalized once we get the go-ahead from Management to start working on parental sponsorships again.

If the government is not processing sponsorships for parents coming in from other countries, why does it not have the human decency to tell Canadians and applicants that is what it is doing, instead of this subterfuge it is putting forward?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the leader of the Liberal Party that he is wrong. Through our government plans, we have actually increased the number of newcomers through family reunification this year. We have increased it over the last number of years.

He and his party have their facts incorrect. When it comes to family reunification, it is this government, this party, that is on the right track.

* * *

G20 SUMMIT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the G20 was announced for downtown Toronto with just four months warning. Toronto businesses were given little notice and almost no information. Toronto shop owners lost millions from the G20 but the government dragged its heels on compensation and then wrapped the process in red tape. A year later, they are still waiting.

When will Toronto businesses be fully and properly compensated for damages and lost revenue from the G20 calamity?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me take this occasion to congratulate my friend, the member for Parkdale—High Park, on a very impressive win. We are very pleased to see her back in Parliament. No one in this place is happier than I am.

The government has a standard plan to provide assistance to those people who suffered damages through no fault of their own. With respect to the city of Toronto and the G20, that applies. I would be very pleased to work with her to expedite the consideration and finalization of any of these initiatives.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it came to spending \$14,000 for glow sticks, Conservatives said, “full steam ahead”; \$300,000 on bug spray, a green light, but for close to \$50 million, what did Toronto get? Broken glass, a fake lake and the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history.

The message is clear. Toronto is at the bottom of the government's priority list. Again, why is the government refusing to fairly compensate Toronto's small businesses?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member opposite on his election to Parliament. We are certainly very committed to work with members opposite and small business people in the city of Toronto to ensure that all compensation that is fair and reasonable and meets the guidelines that the department has in place is paid in as expeditious way as possible.

With respect to the budget, we had men and women of the Canadian Forces, who were out in Muskoka on evenings where there was a considerable amount of potential harm, and that is where that expenditure came down.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General reported on the abject failure over the past decade by the current and former federal governments to address 15 of her most critical recommendations for first nations. In fact, today's audit reveals worsening conditions for first nation reserve housing, schools and drinking water, a disparity, in the words of Sheila Fraser, unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada.

Will the government today commit to expedited action on the needed laws, measures and dollars to right these wrongs?

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government always takes the Auditor General's advice very seriously. The Auditor General's report focuses on what has already happened. We are looking to the future, developing partnerships with aboriginal people across Canada. We have made progress and we are achieving concrete results.

We recognize that more needs to be done. We are in a new phase. This morning the National Chief and I announced a joint action plan on priority areas: education, good governance, economic development, negotiation and implementation.

We have a plan. We work in collaboration and we are results-oriented.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General explained today in her report that the state of the first nations reserves is at a point of no return.

If a reserve has a serious mould problem threatening the health of the community, what does the government do? It sends a pamphlet. Such absurdity has been going on for eight years.

The Auditor General is asking that these problems be addressed through sweeping changes.

What can the government tell us about its plan to resolve these structural problems on the reserves?

[English]

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I explained previously, we have announced a joint action plan with the national chief this morning.

We are moving from reconciliation, where we have made major progress, into a prosperity agenda. We have agreed on joint priority areas and we will work in collaboration with willing partners because we take the business of getting results very seriously.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives talk tough, today's AG report reveals that the RCMP is crippled by underfunding and it does not have enough resources to fight organized crime.

Communities across Canada, both urban and rural, are struggling against organized crime and gang violence. I have seen it in my own community. The RCMP is supposed to be there to protect Canadians and stop these criminals.

Could the minister explain how underfunding the RCMP is making communities across Canada a safer place for families?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the NDP members have an interest in criminal issues. It remains to be seen whether they will support some

of our initiatives that we need to proceed with in order to make streets safe, including the member's riding.

I read with interest the Auditor General's comments regarding national police services and we fully accept recommendations made by her in the report. I have asked the RCMP to put together a management action plan to address the recommendations made by the Auditor General.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have forgotten about my former colleagues in the Canadian armed forces reserve. Nearly 10 years after the government began implementing a plan for buying back pensions, the plan is only 4% complete. Reservists will have to wait up to seven years to get information about their pension.

What is more, the defence department tried to fix the situation, but it still became worse.

Will the government recognize that it failed on this issue and fix the problem once and for all?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our reservists are a key part of our Canadian Forces. And not just the forces' past, but also their present and their future: 20% of our forces deployed in Afghanistan are reservists. Our government was proud to be the first in 40 years to implement a new pension plan for reservists in 2007.

* * *

[English]

LIBYA

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's contribution to the mission in Libya was authorized by Parliament within a clear United Nations mandate: to protect civilians, to enforce a no-fly zone and to obtain a ceasefire.

In light of contradictory public comments by the Minister of National Defence and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs will the government confirm that our mandate remains unchanged and that Canada's engagement does not include effecting regime change in Libya by force?

● (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the motion that the government will put forward next week will be to renew the current existing defence mandate, which will be to protect civilians. We will continue to work within the United Nations framework in that regard.

We will continue with the current military mission that we sought approval for from Parliament.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, part of this issue is around diplomacy.

Today's meeting with the Libya contact group brings together different ministers, top diplomats from around the world, including the United Nations, the Arab League, the African Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It should be an opportunity for Canada to show leadership in diplomacy.

Will the government commit to expanding regional diplomacy so we can see an end to the crisis in Libya?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that Canada can play a robust role with the Libyan contact group. My cabinet colleague is representing Canada at that very important meeting today.

Diplomatically we have to work with our partners in the United Nations, our Arab partners in the region, to not just effect a military mission but also to be diplomatically engaged on humanitarian and development efforts.

Canada, as well as our allies, should have greater engagement with the transitional council in Benghazi.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in certain areas of Libya, food and medication are becoming scarce. So far, barely half of the humanitarian aid requested by the UN has been delivered.

Will this government commit to proposing an increase in humanitarian aid as an integral part of its proposal to extend the mission in Libya?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Libya is concerning. The situation continues to be volatile, which greatly limits humanitarian access to the country.

In response, Canada provided food for one million displaced Libyans, tents and supplies to 90,000 Libyans, as well as medical supplies and care.

We continue to work with our international partners to monitor the humanitarian situation as it develops.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether it is trying to de-staff lighthouses or refusing to put money into search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador, the government seems willing to put the lives of people at risk. Fishers and oil workers in particular work in a risky environment and the last thing they need is to worry about their safety because of this move.

The location and the knowledge of the 12 people who work at the safety centre are instrumental in avoiding tragedies. It is not a call centre.

How can the government waste millions on fake lakes and gazebos and then cut money from lifesaving search and rescue?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are acting on the strong mandate that we received from Canadians to implement our budget proposals and deficit reduction measures.

I have been very clear all along that safety and operational needs will not be compromised by the consolidation of these call centres. All vessels and helicopters will stay where they are. Coast Guard

employees will continue to live up to their reputation of excellence while performing their duties.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the throne speech is a window on the government's priorities. In last Friday's throne speech, not a single word was said about bilingualism, official languages or Canada's linguistic duality. People can draw whatever conclusions they wish. My question is for the President of the Treasury Board, who will be the one to slash public services.

Since the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality is his government's initiative and was just created in 2008, is he willing to promise here today that his government will not cut contributions to official language minority communities identified in the roadmap?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our roadmap for official languages is a five-year agreement. Our commitment to official languages has been clear since our government's first two terms, and remains clear for the third.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Ottawa—Vanier on his re-election to the House.

* * *

USER FEES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President of the Treasury Board raised the possibility of charging new user fees, but he is hiding the details.

Does this mean there will be processing fees for employment insurance and pensions, or a filing fee at the Canada Revenue Agency—a tax on taxes, in other words? Let us be frank: a user fee is a tax, is it not?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, none of that is part of our plan. Indeed, Canadians gave us a strong mandate to keep taxes low, to balance the budget by 2014-15 and over the next year we are going to get the waste out of government and conduct a strategic and operating review of all programs.

The purpose of this exercise is not to look at new user fees. In fact, we will find savings so we can pay down the debt and invest in the priorities of Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if this government is so proud of its record in terms of the fight against HIV-AIDS, why is it refusing to participate in the UN summit currently taking place in New York? After 30 years, we still have a long way to go to eliminate this disease. By refusing to take action, this government is playing with the health and lives of millions of people in Canada and around the world. This is another black eye for Canada on the international stage.

Can the minister tell us when she intends to show some leadership on this issue?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work our government has accomplished in helping combat HIV-AIDS not only in Canada but also in the developing world.

The Canadian HIV vaccine initiative, led by our government along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlights Canada's world-class HIV vaccine research expertise and this initiative will help our government advance the science for the development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so proud of her work on HIV-AIDS, then why is she hiding from this major meeting? This international gathering is about the future of the fight against HIV-AIDS, but the minister has effectively removed Canada from any leading role in fighting this global epidemic.

If the Prime Minister can find time in his schedule to fly to Boston to watch a hockey game, surely the minister can find the time to go to New York to help fight AIDS.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, Canada is a world leader in establishing the HIV vaccine initiative globally in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This is not just with Canada but many other countries are involved in the same project.

In addition, last year alone our government provided \$42 million in HIV-AIDS research funding through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which partners not only with Canadian researchers but also the global community.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Canada Post are presently renegotiating their collective agreement. During this negotiation, Canada Post went ahead and terminated both disability and long-term illness insurance, which workers are entitled to receive. Without it, they will be left with no source of income. What a shame.

Canada Post has no compassion. Will the minister responsible for Canada Post tell it to be humane and restore the benefits workers received before the cancellation? What a shame.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, right now both the union and management are sitting at a negotiating table trying to sort out their differences, trying to get a deal, so the Canadian public is no longer affected either by rotating strikes or infrequent mail delivery. I urge him to work with me in order to encourage the parties to come to a deal.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we do not make cuts to disabled people and people who are ill.

[Translation]

The Canada Post Corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers agreed to allow me—as the official opposition's labour critic—to visit the distribution centre in Laval and the Léo Blanchette plant in Montreal. On Thursday, they did an about-face and refused to grant me access to the facilities.

Can the minister responsible for Canada Post tell me if they have something to hide?

● (1445)

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has indicated to the member that it is willing to provide the tour once the logistical arrangements can be made. The member knows that we want to work with all parties to ensure Canadians get the best service possible. I look forward to the member seeing the facility and working with Canada Post to ensure that tour occurs when the logistics permit it.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I rise for the first time in this House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents of Richmond Hill for the confidence they have placed in me.

Canada has played a leadership role at NATO in the defence of innocent civilians in Libya. We have had reports of the good work of our air force and the work of our sailors on *HMCS Charlottetown*. As we prepare to debate the extension of the Libya mission, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence tell us what the cost of Canada's commitment to this mission has been?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has indeed taken a leadership role in helping to protect innocent civilians in Libya from the Gadhafi regime that continues to attack them. The member is correct about a forthcoming debate. He will be interested to know that the cost to date, as of June 2 of the mission, was \$26 million. The incremental costs associated with this mission in coming months will be approximately \$10 million per month.

Oral Questions

We are extremely proud of the work of Canadian forces members who have been so courageous in reducing the ability of the Gadhafi regime to threaten its own people.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everywhere Canadians turn these days they are getting gouged. The latest proof is an OECD report which shows that Canadians pay some of the highest cellphone fees in the world. In fact, our roaming rates are more than double the OECD average.

Does the minister understand the effects this is having on Canadian cellphone users? When will this minister act?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important to ensure that there is healthy competition in Canada. The right decisions will be made in due course, but we want the services offered to be acceptable to Canadian consumers, and that requires healthy competition.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cellphone companies are taking advantage of the government's slack regulations. A Telus executive even admitted Telus could cut its roaming charges in half and still be profitable. Canadians are paying double what our neighbours to the south are.

Will the minister commit to taking the necessary steps to stop this unjustifiable gouging by cellphone companies?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to provide good competition for the consumer. Down the road, we want consumers to have the choice to pick the cellphone they want. For this, we hope to have the support of the opposition parties to move forward on reforms to come.

* * *

[Translation]

PERSONAL DEBT

Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 2004, personal debt in Canada has increased by 40% and is at an all-time high. In Quebec alone, between 15% to 20% of credit card holders can only make the minimum payment. Families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. They need help. However, the Conservatives have decided to help someone: the big banks. In the meantime, the Government of Quebec is taking action to protect consumers.

Where is the leadership from the federal government?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for some years now we have heard the concerns expressed, and we have certainly expressed them, with respect to the level of consumer debt. That is why we have taken several steps. Three times we have intervened with respect to the insured residential mortgage market, including this year.

We also created the code of conduct in co-operation with small business in Canada and small retailers. They have praised that code of conduct with respect to credit cards because it is working.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec has just announced concrete measures to protect families and consumers. Similar measures could be taken by the Conservative government. It could choose to defend families against the voracious appetite of the credit companies, cap credit card interest rates, give financial authorities the power to prohibit excessive fees, and abolish transaction fees that are unfair to consumers and businesses.

When will the government finally take care of consumers?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): As I said, Mr. Speaker, the code of conduct that we developed was done together with small business and consumer groups. It was welcomed by small business and consumer groups.

Unfortunately, the opposition NDP voted against the code, but I gather from the question that I have just heard from the learned member of the NDP that this position will be changing and that he will be supporting our policy on the code of conduct.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, conceivably they could be done through a telephone conference call, but G8 and G20 summits are held, supposedly, to demonstrate to the world collective leadership forged from the rule of law and global stability created by fiscal prudence and respect for democratic institutions. Canada's G8 and G20 legacy? It was a showcase of unfettered and unaffordable spending, self-indulgent decision-making, and deception of democracy and institutions of democracy to arrive at that lavishness. It was quite a beacon to the world.

If the government could do it all over again, could it show some contrition and tell Canadians now that it would do it very differently?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the initial authorizations for funds to these unprecedented back-to-back summits was some \$1.1 billion and we learned from the Auditor General today that they came in almost 40% under budget.

The real lasting legacy of the G8 and G20 summits in Canada is the leadership of the Prime Minister. Canada has a lot to be proud of for the summit resulted in the launch of the maternal, child health initiative, a multi-year initiative plan that will literally save thousands and thousands of lives around the world thanks to the leadership of the Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to today's Auditor General's report of first nations on reserve, under the Conservative watch the education gap has widened, the housing shortage has increased, and half of the drinking water systems on reserves still pose a significant risk to their communities.

The minister just said he is interested in real results. Will he tell the House when 100% of first nations will have adequate housing, when 100% will have safe drinking water, and when 100% of aboriginal youth will have the same educational opportunities as the rest of Canadians?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments made by the Auditor General. He said that the first nations are going to have to work closely with government to address some of these impediments and some of these fundamental issues. He said that the openness is there on both parties to deal with some of these fundamental challenges because if we are going to significantly improve the condition on first nations reserves, we need to do this.

I agree with his commentary. That is why we announced a joint action plan with the national chief this morning.

* * *

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives promised that there would not be any political interference in the \$35 billion program for the shipbuilding industry, but the cat has been let out of the bag. Several prominent Conservatives met with lobbyists from Vancouver Shipyards and Irving Shipbuilding last fall. That can only lead to political interference.

Why did the Conservatives break their promise?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the member that this is an arm's length process that is actually managed by the shipbuilding secretariat. It is the one that will be evaluating the bids and determining the winners based on the merits of the proposals. In fact, the federal cabinet will not be involved in this decision.

The procurement is also under the careful watch of two high level interdepartmental governance committees, a fairness monitor, an international third-party benchmarking expert, and an independent validation oversight firm, KPMG. So far, the fairness monitor has told me that the process has proceeded fairly.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot say we are going to have an open and transparent process while at the same time many of her Conservative colleagues are meeting with lobbyists when it comes to the shipbuilding industry.

The NDP has advocated for many years for a national shipbuilding strategy based on openness and transparency, and on

the best business case plan. We cannot have Conservative members of Parliament meeting with lobbyists when the minister herself told a CANSEC meeting that lobbyists were to back off.

My question to the minister is quite clear. Why the different messaging here? Is she now going to tell these Conservative members of Parliament to butt out of the system and have a true and open policy?

• (1455)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I can reassure the member that this is an arm's-length process.

It is managed by the shipbuilding secretariat. It is in fact the one who will evaluate the bids based on merit and announce the winners. The federal cabinet will not be involved in this decision.

I can reassure the member by providing him with the quote from the independent fairness monitor that is overseeing this process. He said that so far decisions are made objectively, free from personal favouritism and political influence, and encompasses the elements of openness, competitiveness, transparency and compliance. We will keep it that way.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June 11 is the third anniversary of the historic apology to aboriginals for residential schools. It was one of the many steps that this government has taken on a path of reconciliation with aboriginal Canadians.

Could the minister tell this House what the latest step is in developing the constructive and mutually beneficial relationship?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the steps he has taken to improve the lives of Canadians living on reserve.

Today I was proud to announce, with the national chief, a joint action plan with my department and the Assembly of First Nations. This is a practical, focused plan to improve the lives of first nations people across Canada.

The action plan is a prosperity agenda that targets four shared priorities: education, good governance, economic development, and negotiation and implementation. We are embarking on a new phase.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government was required to submit two greenhouse gas emissions reports in the last month, one to the UN and one to Parliament.

The government told the UN that its climate change policies are up to 10 times more effective than what it told Parliament. The government is telling the UN one thing, while telling Parliament another.

Will the minister tell us which report is accurate and who ordered the changes?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two reports are based on two different compilations of data. With regard to the inventory report to the United Nations framework convention on climate change, we reported that in 2009 the oil sands contributed 6.5% of Canada's total emissions. As reported, this fact is accurate.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the climate change conference in Bonn, government representatives announced, and I quote, "Now that we've finished our election...Canada will not be taking a target under a second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol."

Once again, Canada is trying to hamper the efforts of the international community.

Why did the government go to Bonn? To fight climate change or simply to collect fossil awards?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the assumption in the question is absolutely false.

The only way to achieve real reductions in global emissions is to have a treaty that covers all emitters. The Kyoto protocol fails to do that. Therefore, Canada will not be party to a target under a second commitment period under the Kyoto protocol.

The Cancun agreements based on Copenhagen, on the other hand, form a solid basis for an effective global post-2012 regime that will include all major emitters.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the recent Speech from the Throne Canadians heard that our strong, stable, national Conservative majority government will address the problem of violence against women and girls.

Could the Minister for Status of Women tell this House what our government is already doing to address this issue?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since taking office, our government has invested more than \$30 million in projects to end violence against women and girls all across this country, in addition to the \$10 million we are investing to address the very difficult issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women. To date, we have increased funding to end violence against women and girls to its highest level ever.

We have raised the penalties for violent sexual crimes and we have raised the age of sexual consent from 14 years old to 16 years old to protect girls from sexual exploitation by adult predators.

Oral Questions

We will continue to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

* * *

• (1500)

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government had no problem finding a whopping \$668 million for the G8 summit and it had no problem finding \$50 million for perks in the minister's riding but it cannot scrape together the \$700 million to ensure every senior in this country can be lifted out of poverty.

Will the minister stand in the House and explain to our seniors why gazebos are more important than food on the table and living in dignity?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is the one that has been doing the most to help seniors afford the necessities of life and go beyond that. That is why we increased the age credit, not once but twice. We introduced pension income splitting for seniors. We have launched a whole program to help fight financial abuse.

Unfortunately, the hon. member and her party voted against every one of these initiatives to help our seniors.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister and has to do with the 2011 budget implementation bill.

[English]

The budgets of 2009 and 2010 in the Budget Implementation Acts, as we all know, became omnibus bills in which unrelated measures were included.

I would be very grateful if the Prime Minister could stand today and assure this House that there will be no hidden Trojan Horse efforts to undermine other legislation when we see the budget implementation bill next week.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on her election to the House of Commons. I regret that it means we do not have with us any more our dear friend Gary Lunn. I do not know what the member opposite has against munchkins but I am a member of that brotherhood.

We like this budget so much we introduced it twice. I can assure the hon. member that the budget implementation act will, of course, reflect items from the budget that are referenced in the budget.

The GIS payments for seniors, in particular, are very important. We want to get those cheques out in July.

*The Budget***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Clyde Jackman, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first opportunity to ask this traditional question, I want to assure the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons that he will have our full co-operation in standing up for our parliamentary institutions.

That said, could he inform the House as to what business we can expect next week?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome everyone back and congratulate all members on their election or re-election. I would also like to take this opportunity to specifically congratulate the member for Outremont and the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie on their appointments as House leaders of their respective parties.

I am pleased to answer the first Thursday question of the 41st Parliament and to outline to this House our government's agenda as we carry out the strong mandate Canadians gave us on May 2.

[*English*]

Today, we will continue to debate the budget, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Monday, June 13, will be the final day of debate on the budget, followed by votes on the NDP amendment and the main motion. Under the order adopted this morning, we will also vote on a ways and means motion that night, which will allow the government to introduce a budget implementation bill which we will hope to debate later in the week. That bill will contain some positive measures of the low tax plan for jobs and growth, including an increase to the guaranteed income supplement for Canada's most vulnerable seniors. I look forward to the opposition party's support to pass this bill in a timely manner.

On Tuesday, the House will debate a motion regarding Canada's involvement in the NATO-led mission in Libya.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

The House will be adjourned both this Friday and next Friday, June 17, for the Conservative and NDP conventions, as is the customary practice of the House for political party conventions.

[*English*]

STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous support for the following motion. I move:

That the Standing Orders be amended by replacing Standing Order 104(2) with the following:

104(2) The standing committees, which shall consist of twelve members, and for which the lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in section (1) of this Standing Order, shall be on:

- (a) Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development;
- (b) Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics;
- (c) Agriculture and Agri-Food;
- (d) Canadian Heritage;
- (e) Citizenship and Immigration;
- (f) Environment and Sustainable Development;
- (g) Finance;
- (h) Fisheries and Oceans;
- (i) Foreign Affairs and International Development;
- (j) Government Operations and Estimates;
- (k) Health;
- (l) Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities;
- (m) Industry, Science and Technology;
- (n) International Trade;
- (o) Justice and Human Rights;
- (p) National Defence;
- (q) National Resources;
- (r) Official Languages;
- (s) Procedure and House Affairs;
- (t) Public Accounts;
- (u) Public Safety and National Security;
- (v) Status of Women;
- (w) Transport, Infrastructure and Communities; and
- (x) Veterans Affairs.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Budget

The Speaker: Before statements by members started, the hon. member for Wild Rose had seven minutes and 30 seconds left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying earlier, our government's economic action plan worked very well to both stimulate the economy and to improve local infrastructure in our municipalities all across the country, especially in my riding of Wild Rose.

However, dealing with the extraordinary consequences of the global financial crisis forced governments worldwide to run budgetary deficits to keep their economies running. Where Canada has proved to be the exception is in how quickly we plan to return to balanced budgets.

In this next phase of the action plan, our government is committed to taking the steps necessary to balance the books. I can say that this is a priority for my constituents. During budget consultations held all across my riding of Wild Rose and during the election, constituents told me time and again that they were eager to secure the economic recovery and balance the books.

This budget responds by committing to balance the books earlier than originally forecast. We will find savings and efficiencies and reduce expenses through a strategic operating review. This important measure will find savings of \$4 billion and help to eliminate the deficit a year earlier than planned. It is important for Canadians to know that this return to balanced books will not be at their expense.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, our Conservative government will maintain transfers to provinces and individuals. Pensioners will not be penalized. Health care, education and our military will be supported. Contrast that with the way in which the previous government gutted provincial transfers and nearly dismantled our country's military capabilities in order to generate its artificial surpluses of the 1990s.

This government will not download the pain of its tough choices on Canadians. This government will not raise taxes. As the private sector revs up again as the engine of growth, our government is forging ahead in a way that meets the needs of Canadians now while creating the right conditions for Canada's long-term economic prosperity.

Some very important measures contained in budget 2011 allow us to do this. For example, we are supporting job creation by helping businesses and entrepreneurs to succeed through a temporary hiring credit for small business that will encourage additional hiring by this vital sector. We are extending the work-sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers to help Canadians stay in the workforce.

The accelerated capital cost allowance for investments in machinery and equipment has been extended for two years, which is of great benefit to Canada's manufacturing and processing sectors.

Furthermore, this budget supports families and seniors. Through our economic action plan, we have enhanced the guaranteed income supplement for vulnerable seniors who rely on old age security and the GIS for their income. The new top-up benefit of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples will improve financial security for more than 680,000 Canadian seniors.

The budget also introduced a family caregiver tax credit and a children's art tax credit to support Canadian families. The caregiver credit will help Canadians who care for infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and children.

In my riding of Wild Rose, there are many rural towns and villages. Budget 2011 strengthens these communities by improving the services Canadians need wherever they choose to live.

Rural and remote communities often have challenges attracting health care workers. To help address this, we are forgiving up to \$40,000 worth of Canada student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurses who choose to work in underserved areas.

In my hometown of Olds, Alberta, I served for a time as a volunteer firefighter. I can tell members firsthand that the volunteer firefighters in my riding and in communities all across the country are sure to appreciate our new tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service. These are the men and women who selflessly serve and risk their own safety to keep their neighbours safe. It is important to recognize the service they provide to protect the lives and property of Canadians.

A few years ago, our government doubled the gas tax transfers for communities. In Wild Rose, total tax dollars going to our 16 communities immediately jumped from \$4.2 million to over \$8 million. These are funds that municipalities use for their infrastructure priorities, such as the improved water treatment plant that the town of Cochrane invested in with its enhanced gas tax transfer.

● (1510)

Budget 2011 will make the enhanced gas tax transfers permanent for communities, giving them the ability to budget and plan with certainty and help address the priority infrastructure needs of their residents.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention how the action plan benefits some other key sectors in my riding, namely agriculture and forestry. For example, the budget provides \$50 million for a two-year agricultural innovation initiative that will support increased commercialization of agricultural innovations, and it strengthens food safety with an additional \$100 million over five years for improved food inspection.

For our riding's thriving forestry sector, there is a \$60 million innovation fund to help forestry companies tap new business opportunities abroad.

The Budget

Canadians have given our Conservative government a majority mandate so we can stay focused on improving the economy. While Canadians are encouraged by the bright light we now see at the end of the economic tunnel, we are also prudent enough to know that this light could yet be an oncoming freight train, given the uncertainty and fragility of the global economic recovery. That is why our government is committed to nurturing this recovery cautiously and carefully.

In the recent election, Canadians ensured that the obstruction and delays that opposition parties routinely employed in past years will not be a barrier this time to implementing the measures contained in the economic action plan.

In closing, I invite all opposition members to join with us in voting in favour of this budget and show the same commitment our Conservative government has toward achieving the priorities Canadians made very clear on May 2.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned consultations that he had with his constituents, both earlier in the spring and during the election campaign. I am curious to know whether any of those consultations led to any conclusions or advice regarding the discontinuation of the political subsidy for political parties.

• (1515)

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, that is actually something I heard about time and time again during consultations with my constituents over the last couple of years and certainly during the election campaign.

Many of my constituents, in fact I would say the vast majority of them, wanted to see an end to the per vote subsidies going to parties. They knew it was inherently unfair to have a tax on voting and that their tax dollars were somehow going to parties they might not necessarily support. I know I heard that many times in relation to the Bloc Québécois, in particular. They really had an issue with the fact their tax dollars were going to support a political party that wanted separation from this country.

I am very happy to see we have been able to bring forward that measure in this budget, because it will address a huge concern of many Canadians.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the creation of jobs and other things in the budget.

As we know, young people in Canada depend on the Canada summer jobs program to find high-quality jobs during the summer to support their education financially. For too long the funds dedicated to this program have been too low to meet the demands of employers in our country's communities.

These funds prepare our youth for their integration into the workforce.

[*Translation*]

A number of organizations in my riding that want to hire students are not able to do so, because of a lack of funding. The Canada summer jobs program does more than just provide financial support for young people; it provides support for families. When young

people are unable to find high-quality jobs, they are forced to ask their parents for money.

[*English*]

Her parents are then stuck with supporting both their own elderly parents and their young children. This does not help families as the Conservatives promised to do—

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to stop the hon. member there, as I have to leave enough time for the member for Wild Rose to respond.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, there was not really a question there but, obviously, I can speak to some of the issues the member was trying to address.

Certainly, with regard to the summer jobs program, our government has increased the funding for that program by \$10 million.

I also would encourage him to read the budget; it sounds as though he probably has not. I certainly heard in that budget a number of measures in support of jobs for Canadians, be they young Canadians or otherwise. There is the tax credit we are providing for new hires by small businesses. These are things that will provide an opportunity for the private sector in this country to grow this economy and create the jobs that people need. It will do all of those things, increasing economic growth and creating jobs for young and other Canadians.

I would encourage the member to have a good look at the budget and read it thoroughly, because I think he will find it is something he can support in the best interests of all Canadians, if he were to choose to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech.

The Speech from the Throne and the budget are indicative of how concerned the government is about helping communities hit by disasters, be it flooding or forest fires elsewhere in Canada. I would like some specifics on this.

My riding of Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia was hit by devastating high tides in December. Yesterday and the day before, the Prime Minister spoke about mitigation measures for flooding, be it in Richelieu or Haute-Gaspésie.

How can the budget help the affected communities?

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made some comments on looking at measures that can be put in place. We look forward to seeing those measures as they come forward.

In the meantime, as I highlighted in my speech, there are the gas tax transfers going to municipalities, which I think all communities need to recognize as something that can help them improve their infrastructure. We have doubled those transfers and made them permanent so that communities can plan and count on them as a dedicated fund that is there for their community infrastructure priorities.

The Budget

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I am pleased to announce that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

I want to take this first opportunity I have to thank the people of Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for the confidence they have shown in me. It is a very nice region in the Lower St. Lawrence, near the majestic river.

I would like to inform the House that one of the key promises on which I was elected was to create a round table for provincially and federally elected officials from the Lower St. Lawrence. In the Lower St. Lawrence region, we have three federal MPs: two New Democrats and one Bloc Québécois colleague. At the provincial level, we have four MNAs: three from the Parti Québécois and one from the Liberal Party. A round table is essential for ensuring that in a region like the Lower St. Lawrence, we are speaking with one voice when we need to present our claims or requests either in Quebec City or in Ottawa. This concerted effort is also essential in dealing with a major challenge in my riding and several other ridings, namely regional economic development.

Regional economic development is essential for these regions. Unlike major centres, these regions do not necessarily have the density to allow the same type of economic development. Federal and provincial government assistance is needed to facilitate the development of essential projects and to help boost the economy.

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be so essential for this government since the budget plan it presented proposes reducing funding for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec by 31%, from \$430 million to \$296 million. It is bit hard to understand, especially when the budget plan mentions with regard to support programs for industries, the regions, science and technology that:

The industrial, regional and scientific-technological support programs sector comprises those departments, agencies and Crown Corporations that deliver programs which foster economic growth and job creation....

The problem with this government is that it does not make the distinction between straight-up expenses and investments. Investments are needed to ensure profitability and a return not only for the people of the riding or the region, but also for the people of Quebec and Canada.

The total budget line mentions a 31% reduction in the budget of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, but the program to support technology, the regions, infrastructure, and science will be cut by nearly 33%, falling from \$15 billion to \$10 billion. This clearly reflects priorities that are retrograde and harmful to the future economic development of the country.

The budget is contrary to the interests of my region, for example in regard to forestry, which is very close to my heart. I used to work in forestry as an economist and researcher. In the depths of the great recession, when the government thought it was great to give the automotive industry more than \$10 billion in loan guarantees and

subsidies, the forestry sector got a mere \$170 million. Once again, the budget does not help forestry workers because it provides only \$60 million, largely for research and development that will only benefit us in the long run.

The people in the forestry sector, the workers and communities, need help now. They do not need meaningless grants. They need assistance to make the transition from outdated market niches that are uncompetitive to new areas where they can compete. The forest industry needs this government help, as do the union members and communities that depend on forestry.

Since 2004, more than 75,000 people have lost their jobs in the forest industry. In Quebec alone, more than 20,000 people have lost their jobs. Two hundred and thirty-five mills have closed their doors. In many remote communities, forestry is the main economic activity. It accounts for 3% of Canada's GDP and 12% of its manufacturing GDP. We cannot allow it simply to wither away, as is currently being done.

• (1525)

In 2008, the former member for Pontiac promised a national summit on the future of the forest industry in Canada, in which the companies, unions, communities and first nations were to take part. Since then, though, all we have heard from this government is complete and utter silence.

In view of this silence and the negative decisions regarding the funding of regional economic development for Quebec and other regions of Canada, which have just been left hanging, and in view of the fact that the government continues to ignore the issues that are damaging forestry and the communities dependent on it, I cannot vote for this budget.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member on his very humanistic approach to a budget with many negative aspects. Although we are very pleased with the \$2.2 billion for Quebec, we cannot help but notice that the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has put his finger on a problem.

The forestry industry remains a major problem for many communities in Quebec. I know that the hon. member has a lot of expertise in this area. I would like him to talk more about the amounts promised in this budget. How will this create a problem? We have heard a lot about the support the Conservative government has given to the manufacturing and automotive industries, among others. I am very worried about the difference in the amounts allocated to the forestry industry, some tens of millions of dollars here and there to various regions of Quebec. The riding of Gatineau is also affected by this problem, as we saw with the Bowater mill. The same thing is also happening in Pontiac and Papineau—Mirabel—Argenteuil.

Could the hon. member talk about some of the solutions that this government could have proposed?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Gatineau. It is indeed a very relevant question.

We do not necessarily need to limit our discussion to this budget; we could talk about all of the budgets presented by this government since it was first elected in 2006.

The Budget

The forestry crisis has been affecting all sectors of Quebec, the forestry sector overall, since at least that time. I mentioned over 20,000 jobs lost. Early on, loan guarantees could have been granted. The problems experienced by companies like AbitibiBowater, Fraser Papers, Domtar and others could have been avoided if the government had done what it did for the auto sector and had granted loan guarantees to allow those companies to borrow money at market rates. Given the financial difficulties they faced, they had to borrow at absolutely outrageous interest rates—between 15% and 20%—which made it impossible for them to become profitable again.

The government wasted no time signing a softwood lumber agreement that prohibits loan guarantees. The London court issued a ruling on that. Therefore, this eliminated one possible way of helping the industry.

Now the industry itself is realizing the problems that exist. It needs to distance itself from areas like pulp and paper and softwood, that is, areas in which it is becoming harder to compete internationally, and it needs to find new niches. The industries are now ready to do so, but the help just is not there. This would require changes—

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

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I posed a question a little earlier for one of his NDP colleagues and I would very much appreciate an answer. My question was in regard to the way in which the government finances health care.

Some would argue that ultimately we should have cash transfers toward health care, much stronger in terms of that sort of argument, versus tax point transfers, something for which the Bloc has been a very strong advocate, believing that Quebec's interest would be better served by tax points. That would be the argument of Bloc members.

I look to the new member for the riding in Quebec. What does he feel is the most appropriate way to finance health care in the province of Quebec? Would it be through cash transfers or tax points?

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I have worked in health care and health care public policy. Funding through cash transfers is allowed and has been the federal government's policy. This allows accountability regarding federal spending. Tax points are another way of doing things. However, greater decentralization might be better. Considering the current role of the federal government with its Canada Health Act—whose five principles or pillars were supported by the former Bloc leader in 2009—we think it is important to maintain the minimum standards derived from these five principles under the Canada Health Act. Accordingly, we support cash transfers.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry. First of all, I want to thank

the people of my riding for the confidence they showed in me. I will defend their interests every day. I also want to thank my family, my friends, my precious volunteers, the staff of Baie-Saint-François school and my dear students, who encouraged me throughout the election campaign.

Communities like mine did not just choose a new member of Parliament. I humbly accept, of course, the mandate they have given me to work constructively for the NDP and with all the members of this House to achieve tangible results.

I have talked with people who cannot get to sleep because they are so worried about their retirement income. Our seniors cannot make ends meet any more because their income has stopped rising. Beauharnois—Salaberry is in the Montérégie region, which holds the North American record for the greatest increase in the number of seniors. Some of them want the guaranteed income supplement increased and they want it made automatic. Many did not know they were entitled to it until they heard about it from friends.

The government should therefore be fairer and more transparent in its delivery of guaranteed income supplement benefits and it should ensure that our seniors no longer live under the poverty line. All socio-economic areas will feel the effects of our aging population, including health. According to figures from Quebec's health department, hospital visits in Quebec have increased by 3.5% since 2010 and the number of patients aged 75 or older has increased by nearly 6%. In case the government has not noticed yet, there is a shortage of medical care all across the country.

I have spoken with people in my riding who cannot find a family physician, who wait in emergency rooms for more than 17 hours, on average, or who wait months to see a specialist. Specialists are very hard to find in Beauharnois—Salaberry and it is hard to attract them there.

Finally, has the government ever taken an interest in the tough lives of nurses? When will it make the necessary investments to deal with the shortage that forces them to work overtime in order to ensure that patients have continuity of care? This is very worrisome. The Conservatives should strengthen the public health care system instead of trying to privatize it, which not only widens the gap between rich and poor but also leaves our health care professionals overburdened. Increasing the number of doctors and nurses in the system, as proposed by the NDP, is a social investment that absolutely must be made.

The people of Beauharnois—Salaberry are also very critical of the government's lack of leadership on social housing. There has been a housing crisis in Quebec since 2000, and the situation has hardly improved at all for large and low-income families. The vacancy rate in several municipalities in my riding was around 2% in 2010. The government knows very well that this rate should be at least 3% in order to have a balanced rental market. Otherwise, there is a housing shortage.

The Budget

There is a need for hundreds of new units for the riding, which is one of the poorest in the region. Access to affordable, safe, clean housing is an important factor in someone's level of health and it has a direct impact on the reality of homelessness. However, the government seems completely indifferent to this reality, since the latest budget does not include any investments in social housing. This is the first time in 10 years that the federal government has not allocated any money to this area. For Quebec, that is a loss of \$85.6 million compared to the last two years, which is the equivalent of 1,200 affordable housing units.

Furthermore, the Minister of Finance has once again refused to increase the budget allocated to fighting homelessness, which has not been indexed in eight years. Yesterday, I spoke to representatives of the PACT de rue organization. They told me that the government needs to create a homelessness policy in order to develop an overall vision of the phenomenon and take concrete action. The fight against homelessness must be considered a collective responsibility. The Réseau solidarité itinérance du Québec has developed a platform to advocate for and defend the rights of the homeless who are excluded from society and marginalized. This year, the Nuit des sans-abri will focus on the right to a decent income, which includes improved access to employment insurance. It will also focus on five other rights, including the right to occupy public spaces.

Our community organizations are very proactive in the fight against homelessness.

• (1535)

For example, over 30 local organizations implemented a housing service for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 who run away from home or are forced to leave home, in order to help them reintegrate into an environment that has been deemed acceptable.

Since April 1, 2008, the number of youth who have benefited from the program has doubled from 14 to 30 per year. It would be to the government's advantage to focus on prevention measures for youth rather than focusing on its tough on crime agenda and investing in prisons.

I have spoken with other people who have lost their full-time jobs and now have to deal with unstable part-time jobs with no benefits. The Conservatives' lack of action in this regard is exasperating to many families in my riding. In just seven years, over 2,200 jobs were lost in Beauharnois—Salaberry. Yesterday, the Rio Tinto Alcan recasting centre in Beauharnois contacted me to tell me that 10 more jobs may be lost in the coming months.

The number continues to grow since the government decided to close the border crossing in Franklin in April.

In so doing, not only has the government eliminated jobs and decreased civil security, it has also negatively affected tourism in the region and thus the region's economy, since visitors will no longer come to this area, which is well known for its magnificent orchards.

People in the community have not yet managed to wrap their heads around this decision, particularly since the American government is planning to add more border crossings. The government should talk to the Americans before hurting the economy of its own people.

Here is an example of a third situation in which the Conservatives' choices leave something to be desired. Last Saturday, I met with one of the employees responsible for visitor activities at the Lake St. Francis National Wildlife Area. She indignantly explained that the Canadian Wildlife Service, which falls under Environment Canada, cut over 60% of their budget. Rather than receiving the \$24,000 it usually receives every year, the park is expected to provide the same visitor services and educational services, do the same monitoring and maintenance and produce the same outcomes with only \$10,000 over the coming years. It borders on the ridiculous.

Is the government aware that the team that works at this national wildlife area provides environmental education through water activities that do not leave an environmental footprint, creates good jobs, develops positive and lasting relations with the Mohawk people on the Akwesasne reserve, and helps to promote tourism in the region? If so, how can it choose to take funds away from an environmental protection organization that does so much good for our region? The government's attitude is unacceptable and disrespectful.

Finally, in my riding many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing major polluters instead of standing up for the environment.

People who live near the U.S. border along New York State have been waiting for three years for the government to intervene in the Westville dump issue. People are worried because the landfill site is being expanded to six times its current surface area, which could end up depriving 100,000 people of drinking water in the event of an environmental mishap.

The dump is just above a water table that supplies the Upper St. Lawrence area. It is easy to see how the project might have disastrous consequences for people in terms of health, property value and contamination of farmland and ranchland.

In 2008, a coalition against this landfill project was formed and more than 6,000 people signed a petition. The government still has not taken charge of the situation or defended the interests of the people of my riding.

We are an official opposition that has its priorities in the right place and does not hesitate to defend them. We will propose practical solutions for families and we will oppose the government whenever it makes bad decisions. We will work together to achieve tangible results that will put the country on the right path. I will stand up for the well-being of all my constituents.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for her win and also for speaking to her concerns so eloquently.

In my province of British Columbia the former NDP provincial government did not add a single new doctor space to the UBC Faculty of Medicine in an entire decade. With support from our government in transfer payments for health care, today British Columbia has doubled the number of new doctors being trained.

The Budget

Will the NDP acknowledge the increased health care transfer in our budget and will it support it?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, the NDP has always advocated for more doctors and nurses in the public health care system. No action has been taken since we first called for this. People are still lining up to get a family doctor. Nurses are still being forced to work overtime. Clearly the NDP is in favour of increasing the number of family doctors.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, picking up on the previous question, the NDP has been in government in Manitoba for the last 11 years.

Many rural communities in Manitoba do not have doctors. In fact, they have not had doctors for years. There has been a lot of talk in Manitoba for years that we need to get more doctors into our communities. There is a sense of disappointment, whether it is in rural Manitoba or even in north end Winnipeg, where it is difficult to find a GP. It seems that the provincial government has not been able to meet the needs.

To what degree does the member believe the federal government and what specifically does she think the federal government could do to ensure that there are going to be more doctors for our communities?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. As I mentioned, the opposition—the NDP—is in favour of federal investment in health care to increase the number of doctors and health care professionals.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry on a very fine presentation today. I am sure her constituents will be impressed by her ability to represent them in the House and also by her knowledge not only of the issues but of the many issues in her own constituency that she can bring to the floor of the House.

In terms of generating more doctors and nurses in Canada, the NDP policy has talked about increasing the number of students in professional schools as well with federal support.

In terms of nurses, I wonder if the member could comment on the fact that nurse practitioners can also play a role as part of the medical team to present primary health care in clinics throughout her riding and throughout Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. Nurses are a key part of the health care system, and their work of providing care to patients is very important. The more opportunities we give them, the better they will be able to do their job and provide numerous services to patients.

• (1545)

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the name of my riding is so difficult to pronounce. I would like to congratulate

the NDP member on her speech. She and I have many of the same values and social concerns. However, I am wondering how we can reach the fundamental objective of increasing the number of family doctors and nurses in the public health care system. I would prefer a public system to a private one, but what can we do when the provinces are usually worried that the federal government is infringing on provincial areas of jurisdiction? This is especially true of Quebec, which is quite clear that it does not want any infringement on its areas of jurisdiction.

How can we inject more money into the health care system, as the NDP wants, given Quebec's concerns about respect for its areas of jurisdiction?

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. The NDP is very concerned about respect for provincial jurisdictions. However, there is the Canada Health Act to consider. Any funds invested in health care will be allocated at the discretion of the provinces. We want to improve the public health care system. We are proposing an increase in the number of doctors and nurses, which could only improve the system and relieve the pressure in emergency rooms.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Huron—Bruce.

As this is my first opportunity to speak in the House during the 41st Parliament, I would like to take a moment to thank the voters of Palliser for the trust that they have placed in me by re-electing me to this place. I am humbled by the many opportunities I have had to serve the communities of Saskatchewan as a principal, a mayor, a consultant, a director of education, a director of provincial examinations and now as an MP. I am proud to serve with this government and will continue to work to make things better for the residents of Palliser and Canada.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his election and I would be remiss if I did not take the time to congratulate all other members of the House who are serving for the first time or who have been re-elected.

I welcome this budget which will form the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a good budget for Saskatchewan and the riding of Palliser and it will bring benefits to my constituents. This budget is an important step in ensuring that Canada's government is supporting Canadians as we work our way out of the economic crisis and into a period of sustained economic growth.

Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth thanks to our action plan and its parts. These parts benefit the measures that have been added to things like 540,000 new jobs to the Canadian economy and all measures point toward this trend continuing. Although the recession of 2008-09 set back the economies of Saskatchewan and Canada, the measures that our government took to deal with these problems put Canada's economy on the right track.

The Budget

In my riding, the economic action plan helped convince Thunder Creek Pork to create 200 much needed new jobs for Moose Jaw residents. Our government also worked with Premier Brad Wall and the government of Saskatchewan to develop the global transportation hub, which has already created 800 new jobs for the people of Saskatchewan and will create many more in the years to come as companies relocate their facilities for centralized distribution.

More importantly, however, the economic action plan took important steps to save jobs and protect the finances of Canadians. Measures such as the tax-free savings account helped give Canadians the confidence they needed to invest adequately and to help ensure their profits went to their pockets and not to the pockets of government.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan builds on the successes of these measures and introduces a number of new ways in which Canada's government can help Canadians help themselves. Measures such as the fitness tax credit demonstrate that our government is working to help all Canadians help themselves by encouraging good and healthy lifestyle choices. Our budget demonstrates our commitment to getting things done for all Canadians and I am encouraged to see that this will continue both now and in the next four years.

Let us take a minute to talk about agriculture. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also provide benefits that will promote sustainable agriculture. Programs such as a \$50 million two-year agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and increased commercialization of agricultural development will benefit agriculture-related businesses across Canada, including those in Saskatchewan.

In Moose Jaw, Thunder Creek Pork will benefit from the initiative for the control of diseases in the hog industry, which will be extended for an additional two years. There will also be \$24 million provided in order for the Canadian Swine Health Board to complete initiatives directed at national bio-security standards and best management practices that will benefit hog producers across the country.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will also work to strengthen food safety by providing \$100 million over five years toward targeted investments for inspector training, additional science capacity and electronic tools to support the work of front line inspectors.

I am sure that my constituents in Palliser will welcome the action that our government is taking to build on the support in place for seniors by providing new measures to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities for older Saskatchewanians and all Canadians.

• (1550)

In this budget we are taking action to support seniors through the expansion of several programs, such as the guaranteed income supplement, which we are topping up by \$600 per year for single seniors and by up to \$840 per year for senior couples.

We are also proposing to expand the new horizons for seniors program, which would receive an additional \$10 million over two years to provide funding to organizations that help ensure that Saskatchewan seniors can benefit from activities that improve their

quality of life through active living and participation in social activities.

Also in support of seniors, we are proposing to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to ensure that federally regulated employees across Canada will be able to choose how long they wish to remain in the labour force, based on their individual circumstances.

We are working hard to support justice and public safety. Through the budget, the government is working with the provinces to invest \$20 million in youth crime prevention programs, including several programs in Saskatchewan. In these programs, we are proposing to promote community-based educational, cultural, sporting and vocational opportunities for youth to encourage them to make smart choices and encourage them to resist pressure to become involved in gangs.

Although our government continues to plan to end the long gun registry, in the meantime we will continue to waive licensing fees of up to \$80. I can assure residents of Palliser that we will not rest until this registry is repealed. I look forward to seeing legislation to do this being introduced in the future.

As a supporter of victims' rights, I am proud that we will continue to support this position by providing \$26 million over two years to help the federal victims ombudsman, which will help provide access to justice and encourage participation in the justice system by victims, including victims from Saskatchewan.

As an individual who has been deeply involved in the education system of the province, I am proud that the government is taking real action to improve the financial stability of Canadian students so that they can take steps to better their own prospects. Through our budget, our government is proposing to enhance and expand access to eligibility for Canadian student loans and grants for full- and part-time post-secondary students. Post-secondary students from Saskatchewan and across Canada will benefit from several steps that our government is taking in order to increase the tax exemptions that students are eligible for.

I understand that the government is working with the province and territorial partners to put its proposed improvements into place as quickly as possible so as to have the benefits flowing to students in the 2011 academic year.

As someone who knows the benefits that higher education can bring to people of all ages, I applaud the steps the government is taking to make education more affordable to all.

The Budget

I am proud to be part of a government that is reducing the tax burden on Canadians. Since being elected in 2006, our government has lowered the tax burden on individual Canadians by an average of \$3,000 per person. In Saskatchewan, the measures proposed in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide taxpayers with approximately \$60 million in tax relief over 2010-2011 and the following five fiscal years, including over \$13 million through the family caregiver tax credit and almost \$19 million through the new children's arts tax credit.

I am encouraged to see that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes steps to improve the fairness and neutrality of the tax system. Improving the integrity of our tax system means lower tax rates for all. All members of this House can agree that lower tax rates are better for Canadians.

In conclusion, with these important improvements to all aspects of Canada's interactions with government, I am proud to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting this important budget.

I look forward to hearing from all members about their thoughts on the budget.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the member on his speech.

I paid particularly close attention to his comments on the parts of the budget concerning seniors, because I too care deeply about seniors. I think this is true of all of my colleagues in the NDP, since we ran a very strong campaign on this very issue and 59 ridings in Quebec voted for the NDP platform. I have a few questions about the government's position in the budget regarding the guaranteed income supplement.

The member made a point of telling us he is happy about the \$600 a year increase. I will address only the increase he mentioned for single seniors. Based on my calculations, we are talking about \$50 a month, and that bothers me. Yesterday evening, I took part in an event with people from the Alzheimer Society, and I spoke with many seniors about the budget. They asked me if it was some kind of joke, since \$50 a month does not even cover the increase in the price of gas, for example. The member talked about amending the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to allow seniors to retire whenever they want, but they will not have a choice. I understand that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms needs to be amended, because right now, they will not be able to retire and collect a pension, because they will be forced to work.

How does the member respond to the comments I heard from seniors yesterday evening?

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that we have, as a government, supplied more help for seniors than any other elected body that has sat in this House. There have been decreases in terms of shutting down the expansion of sales tax; it started at 7%, then went to 6% and then to 5%. That number affects all seniors.

The CPP has been directed to help seniors, and it has, because all of us pay into the program. The additional \$600 and \$840 particularly will help seniors as they move forward. This is not meant to be all of their funding, but it will be a start for funding. My constituents are most pleased with that increase.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Given that the member is from Saskatchewan, I am sure he has the pulse of the community in terms of what the wheat farmers in Saskatchewan are saying with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board.

My understanding is that support for the Canadian Wheat Board is well in excess of 65% across the Prairies and is even greater in Saskatchewan, yet for whatever reasons, reasons that many would suggest are of an ideological nature, the government has made the decision to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board, even though a majority of the wheat farmers in Saskatchewan, a good number of whom I suspect supported him, would not want to see the Wheat Board go away.

Does the member see the value in allowing the wheat farmers to determine whether or not the Wheat Board should remain?

● (1600)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is not going to disappear. The idea of the Canadian Wheat Board is that it will take its place as an independent agency like every other agency that buys grain. It is not going to disappear; it is going to be matched up with other operations that purchase grain.

The constituents in Palliser were very vocal and very pointed in their direction. They said they did not want a monopoly. Currently the Canadian Wheat Board has a monopoly: either the farmer sells through the Canadian Wheat Board or the farmer does not sell wheat and barley.

The farm folks do not think that is right. They produce it and they should have the right to say where they market it.

We are of that same mindset, and that is the direction I am sure we will move with the agriculture sector.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too congratulate the member on his re-election.

This is my first opportunity to address the House since my last election. First and foremost, I would like to thank the constituents of Huron—Bruce for putting their faith in me in yet another election. These elections are hard work, and it is an honour and a privilege to serve such a great riding as Huron—Bruce.

As well, I note that we were able to achieve some historic results in the last election, receiving the largest number of votes ever in the history of Huron—Bruce's riding as well as the largest margin of victory. Certainly the government's actions over the last number of years have made a significant impact on the voters in Huron—Bruce.

I would be remiss if I started my speech without thanking my wife, Andrea, for her support during the three elections I have participated in. As well, I thank my parents and my in-laws. They provide tremendous support.

The Budget

I would also like to thank the great number of volunteers who help day in and day out, year in and year out, to carry on these election campaigns. Volunteers are important not only for our party but for the other political parties. They help carry on the democratic process, so we certainly owe a big thanks to all those who have volunteered.

I would like to highlight some aspects of the budget.

Much of the budget presented June 6 was also captured in the budget that was presented on March 22. We have heard much debate in the last number of days, but I thought it would be important to highlight a few pieces in the budget that would have an impact on rural Canada, rural Ontario and even perhaps the riding of Huron—Bruce.

First and foremost would be the commitment again to the energy retrofit program. This has been a popular program coast to coast and certainly in the riding of Huron—Bruce. It provides a great number of economic opportunities. It allows citizens in Huron—Bruce to upgrade their homes, whether through insulation, windows, doors, a new furnace or what have you. It provides them an opportunity to make their homes more energy efficient.

The other opportunities it provides are economic. We have a few manufacturers in the riding of Huron—Bruce. An example is Dashwood Industries, which manufactures certified and approved windows that would go into retrofitted homes from coast to coast. I would encourage all Canadians who are thinking of using this program to make sure they ask their contractors to install Dashwood Industries windows. As well, MDL Doors provides a great quality product and is located outside of Brussels, Ontario. It would provide insulated doors for homes.

These are great opportunities, and the economic spinoff always follows through to the individuals who audit the households as well as to the contractors who provide the work. In spite of the fact that it has been a wet spring, a program such as this is going to be another stimulus to the construction industry and is certainly welcome.

We also know Huron—Bruce is a very significant agricultural riding, and this government's commitment to agriculture in many consecutive budgets has certainly been appreciated.

There have been a few highlights in this budget for new money in agriculture. Foremost is the \$100 million investment over five years to the CFIA to help implement the Weatherill report that came out of the listeriosis outbreak a couple of years ago. This investment will help the CFIA to fully implement the recommendations in that report.

As well, there is \$50 million over the next two years for innovation and research in agriculture. We know the agricultural community welcomes these dollars. It realizes the importance of innovation and research in continuing to push along the agricultural products we produce in Canada. The riding of Huron—Bruce welcomes those dollars for innovation because we know we have taken great advantage of those investments, as our yields certainly indicate.

There is also about \$24 million over two years committed to the hog industry. These are vitally important dollars that are going to

address some issues around disease. The circovirus issue a number of years ago caused great strain to the hog industry, so added dollars to help the hog industry in Canada are certainly welcome.

•(1605)

From my perspective, the budget delivered a couple of days ago addresses these issues and will help push agriculture forward.

Also vitally important to agriculture are our export markets. It is important that we continue to push forward with our international bilateral free trade agreements.

The minister has been working hard on two vitally important trade agreements, the Canada-EU trade agreement and the Canada-India trade agreement. These will give farm exporters the opportunity to provide their goods tariff-free to nearly two billion people. They have a combined GDP of nearly \$20 billion.

These are certainly welcomed by the agricultural community, especially in Huron—Bruce. The white bean capital of the world is located in Hensall in my riding of Huron-Bruce. It is the white bean capital of the world due in large part to the producers and the heads of co-ops. These agreements provide us with a great opportunity with respect to trade.

Our government has completed eight bilateral free trade agreements since 2006. We have more than 50 on the go right now that would provide Canada with a great competitive advantage on the world market. In addition to that, we are working closely with the countries to educate them on the great regiment that our producers and our processors maintain in Canada to produce world-class food and commodities.

The Conservative government's 2011 budget addresses a great number of these issues. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Trade have worked very hard abroad to continue to open these markets.

There are a great many manufacturers in Huron—Bruce. Another important aspect in the budget for manufacturers is the two year extension of the capital cost allowance that will allow manufacturers to do an accelerated 50% straight line depreciation on new plants and machinery. This is important because it will allow our manufacturers to continue to make investments in plant and plant machinery to continue to make Canada more competitive. This is an area we need to address. The government is committed to reduce tariffs on machinery bought outside of Canada. This is a tremendous opportunity.

I worked in the automotive parts manufacturing sector for many years at Westcast Industries. This company has really taken advantage of the opportunity in recent years to upgrade its machinery to make its products more competitive so it can produce a product at a lower price, which allows it to add more employees. The manufacturing community coast to coast appreciates this and I certainly appreciate this because it helps manufacturers in the riding of Huron—Bruce.

The Budget

In addition, we have provided a hiring credit for small businesses. It will help offset the employment insurance premiums that small and medium-sized businesses will pay when they hire new employees. This will help about half a million small businesses from coast to coast. The economy is recovering. Canada has come through the recession better than any other developed nation. This is another way to help businesses create new jobs and not impede the hiring of new employees. Canada was built by small business. The backbone of rural communities such as Huron—Bruce are agriculture and small business. This is another tool in the tool box of small business to allow it to be competitive and not afraid to hire new employees.

Huron—Bruce is a beautiful tourist community located along the coastline of Lake Huron. It is a place where people come to retire. The commitment in this year's budget to add another \$300 million to the guaranteed income supplement is welcome and appreciated. This will increase the income of low income seniors, and they will appreciate that. They appreciate a government that looks out for seniors.

The government brought in pension splitting in past budgets and that has also been a great tool for seniors to make their retirement dollars spread forward.

The budget document is 375 pages. I could on for days, but I realize I only have 10 minutes.

•(1610)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget speaks of a plan for responsible spending to deliver programs and services more efficiently. Does this mean the hon. member will guarantee that the government will stop its own wasteful spending, such as the quarter million dollars in speech writing services spent by the previous minister of transport? Will the member guarantee it will cut its own pork before it cuts essential services of Canadians?

Why does the government insist on telling Canadians that we need to cut services when it will not cut its own wasteful spending?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the member will note that my speech was not written, so I have no dollars invested in speech writers. This comes from the heart.

I would ask the member opposite how he feels about the per vote subsidy and if he is willing to look at that as a possible opportunity to reduce partisan spending. That would save Canadian taxpayers \$30 million year in and year out. I would offer that up for that hon. member, to take a long hard look at that and perhaps support our commitment for saving taxpayer dollars.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member inform the House of his and his party support or lack thereof for the proposal to create a two-tiered guaranteed income supplement program?

The member must be aware that under the current terms and conditions of eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement program, the GIS program, senior citizens would have to earn a baseline income of approximately \$16,000 a year or less. There are various grades and scales to that, but that is the baseline. However, the government's proposal is to reduce this, to create a second tier of

benefits, a two-tiered program whereby any senior citizen making \$7,000 a year or less would be the only ones eligible for the top-up the government is proposing.

Is the hon. member and his government suggesting that those senior citizens who make anywhere between \$7,000 and \$16,000 are living in the laps of luxury?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hyperbole. I also remind him that a couple of months ago, when his party was on this side of the House, it had an opportunity to make an investment of \$300 million for our low income seniors. That member voted for another option for the \$300 million. He voted for a wasteful, unnecessary election. He voted for election signs.

This side of the House voted for seniors and low income seniors specifically on this initiative, yet he has the audacity to get up today and ask about this government's commitment to low income seniors.

He had better look in the mirror tonight when he goes home and ask himself this question. Was the \$300 million better spent on low income seniors or on his wasteful \$300 million worth of election signs?

•(1615)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, it is great to hear that the member opposite extolls the virtue of the eco-energy program because it was the Conservatives that cut it initially and our party fought to keep it. If it is such a job creator, which it is, and so good for the environment, we do not understand why it was cut in the first place.

We welcome the government's decision to put that back in the budget. However, we are mystified by the fact that it is only in it for one year.

Is this a good job creation program for just one year or is it a good job creation program? That is the question I would like to ask the member opposite.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, what I would offer for the hon. member are the copies I have in my office of the last three budgets. In there are dollars allocated to the eco-energy program.

I know the member is new to the House. That is fine. The fact is when his party sat over there, it voted against it each and every time.

He may be mystified as to why we put it back in. I am mystified as to why his party has always voted against it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Rivière-du-Nord.

The Budget

On May 2, the voters of LaSalle—Émard entrusted me with a great responsibility, and it is a privilege for me to be their member of Parliament. It is an honour to rise for the first time in this House on behalf of the people of LaSalle—Émard. First, I would like to thank my constituents for trusting in me. I would also like to commend them for daring to vote for change. I want to highlight their courage and their belief that we can change things and do better, and that it is possible to do politics differently. I will be listening to their concerns. Every day I will defend their interests, and I will be pleased to work for them for the next few years.

[*English*]

What an honour it is for me to rise in the House for the first time on behalf of the people of LaSalle—Émard. Above all, today, I want to thank my constituents for the confidence they have placed in me. I will put their priorities front and centre every day. I will be listening to their concerns and working to make their lives better. It will be a pleasure to be at their service.

[*Translation*]

Communities like mine did not simply choose a new member of Parliament. On May 2, they sent a clear message: we can change things; we can do better. That is the message sent by 1.5 million Quebecers out of a total of 4.5 million Canadians across the country. They all came to share the NDP's vision for a better Canada, a Canada where families are a priority and where no one is left behind, a country Quebecers can identify with, and a country that reflects their progressive values.

I am proud that my constituents are participating in this wave of change, and I humbly accept the mandate they have given me. I accept their mandate to stand up for families and make them a priority. I accept their mandate to work constructively with all members of this House to get concrete results, because the challenges we spoke of during the campaign are the same challenges that my community faces.

I listened carefully as the government members presented their budget. I would like to remind my distinguished colleagues in the government that the economy is a means, not an end. I am here to speak for all the people of LaSalle—Émard, but especially those who are without a voice, who cannot benefit from tax cuts, who cannot find affordable housing or stable, well-paid employment, or who cannot find a family doctor.

I am here to lend my voice to those who are not as fortunate as we are in this House. I am here for those who have been left behind by our society, those who are the most vulnerable. I hope to make my colleagues on the other side understand that they are here for all Canadians, whatever their origins or standard of living. The values we embody are those of social justice, sharing and mutual assistance. That is why I find it difficult to see any reflection of myself in this government's program. Their priority is big business, to the detriment of small businesses and the people of my riding.

• (1620)

[*English*]

I remind members that the economy is a means, not an end. It is a way to organize our society. I believe the role of government is to

ensure that all Canadians have a chance to succeed. I believe we are at the service of all citizens, from all walks of life.

During the campaign, I had the privilege of meeting many of my constituents. It was really amazing to see people open their doors and share with me their concerns and their hopes. I had the pleasure of meeting many new Canadians. They talked to me about the difficulties of bringing their loved ones to Canada and of gaining Canadian experience so they could contribute fully to our economy.

Since being elected, I have received numerous requests from immigrants who want to find their way through the morass of immigration regulations. I salute their perseverance and patience. I will do my best in helping them to find their way.

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, people opened their doors to me. They told me their hopes and fears. I spoke with people who are worried about their retirement incomes and with seniors who can no longer make ends meet because the cost of living keeps rising while their income does not. I spoke with people in my riding who cannot find a family doctor or have to wait months to see a specialist. I spoke with others who had lost full-time jobs and have to get by now on short-term jobs with no benefits.

A freeway completely surrounds one section of the eastern part of my riding of LaSalle—Émard. The vehicular pollution has a direct effect on the health of these people. Vehicles are also a major source of greenhouse gases. I hope the budget will address the need to reduce greenhouse gases. Our health and our future are at stake.

Protecting the environment is a challenge but a promising one. It is a question of health and well-being. Our country is known for its vast territory and we need to recognize that more often and protect that territory. We have unparalleled wealth in our lakes and rivers. Unfortunately, this natural wealth is more and more often being exploited with no regard for the long-term implications.

That is why we need to immediately recognize that environmental protection and responsible economic growth are not incompatible. I hope to be able to count on the co-operation of all members in the House to adopt practical solutions that will bring real change.

Instead of handing over a blank cheque to large corporations, we propose investing in green technology in order to protect our environment for future generations. In addition, by investing in technologies of the future, we will be offering new opportunities and interesting, well-paying jobs to youth.

The Budget

[English]

Four and a half million Canadians voted New Democrat and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted to strengthen public pensions. They voted to improve public health care. They voted to help families make ends meet. They voted to grow our economy with new jobs and opportunities. They voted for concrete measures to protect the environment. They also voted for that stronger Canada with a proud place for Quebec.

• (1625)

[Translation]

The extraordinary team that is now the official opposition will be the voice of those Canadians who put their trust in us. The team is dynamic, unified and ready to work with others—that is guaranteed. We are here to serve the people. We will work to bring forward proposals that will meet the expectations and needs of our constituents, and that is what I want to promise to my constituents in LaSalle—Émard.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's statements with respect to investment in green technology and economic diversification. She also spoke quite passionately about bringing forward projects that will be of interest and benefit to her constituents.

I have risen on this point a couple of times in the chamber earlier today, but I would just advise the member that in my riding of Charlottetown and in our province of Prince Edward Island, we are leaders in the generation of wind power. Our aspirations in that regard have been severely limited by the refusal of the government to fund a subsea cable to the mainland to allow us to sell that power to the Atlantic grid. It is a prime example of a green energy initiative and economic diversification, and it is something on which our province is being held back.

Would the member comment with respect to green energy and economic diversification for all provinces?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for giving me a very fine example of the green energy the opposition members would like to encourage. We have to ensure that these green energies are distributed where they should be and promote their development, whether in the Montreal area, where my riding is located, or elsewhere in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on being elected and on her comments today.

One of the reasons that Canadians gave the Conservative government a strong mandate in the election on May 2 was the fact that we are keeping taxes low. This morning one of my colleagues from across the way talked about a carbon tax, which is very disheartening. It is something that Canadians do not believe is effective and will penalize Canadians.

Why does my colleague want to increase taxes on Canadians?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, we would discourage giving tax credits to corporations and instead have them distributed better to all taxpayers. We must not favour one single sector.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard on her passionate speech. I know her remarkable character and I know that the people of LaSalle—Émard will be extremely well represented by her. I heard our Conservative colleague say:

• (1630)

[English]

“A strong mandate was given by Canadians.”

Although I do not deny the fact that a majority of Conservatives were elected, 60% of the population did not vote Conservative.

[Translation]

That being said, the hon. member represents a riding where there are several pockets of poverty. In her opinion, what could the Conservatives do to improve life for the less fortunate in society? The homelessness partnering strategy has a strong presence in Montreal and in the Outaouais region. What can be done to help the less fortunate? Does helping them necessarily mean increasing taxes?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question and thoughtful comments. The various programs that were mentioned do not necessarily mean tax increases. It is simply a matter of re-investing in certain sectors that have been neglected, especially social housing, which would be a great help. When people can find affordable housing, the financial burden on them is reduced and this helps them live a better life.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank the people of Rivière-du-Nord for their support in the last election. I will defend their interests every day.

Public finances must be sound, the budget must be balanced, the public debt must be reduced, government arrogance must be combated and controlled...

Where does this quote come from? From Marcus Tullius Cicero, in the year 55 BCE. The Conservatives have not invented a thing with their rhetoric.

This week in Saint-Jérôme, the Café de Rue SOS, a little storefront café that welcomed vagrants, people with various drug problems, the poor and the undocumented of this world, had to close its doors. It was not because people were not eager to go there and get their only meal of the day. No, it was because its grant dried up and there is nothing for it in this budget. There is nothing to increase assistance for the homeless. They are forgotten. For this government, they do not exist.

The Budget

While the business world, including the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Conseil du patronat, were happy this week with the government's budget, those who have been overlooked were left to nurse their hunger, and they are very hungry. They can be certain now of sinking a little further into poverty and exclusion every day. There is nothing in this budget for them.

This government's whole approach to the budget is based on an illusion so cleverly maintained and so often repeated that it assumes the allure of truth. The illusion is that by reducing taxes on big business and becoming, as Minister Flaherty promised, the G8 country where companies pay the least tax—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. It is the practice in the House that we do not use the names of members.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance promised to make Canada the G8 country with the lowest corporate tax rates. That was supposed to lead to incredible wealth and more jobs, and this wealth was to be enjoyed by everyone. I am sorry to challenge this claim, but the reality is totally the opposite.

On April 6, an article in the *Globe and Mail*, based on data from Statistics Canada, demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that companies have not used the tax cuts to create jobs or to improve conditions for workers. And they have not invested in better machinery to make their companies more competitive, either. No, they have not. In fact, for two decades, companies have continued to invest between 10% and 13% in machinery. Tax cuts have not improved our ability to compete.

The numbers tell us that the tax cuts were essentially spent on bonuses for the companies' top executives and used to inflate the available cash flow. For what? For hedge funds. These are the same hedge funds that caused the 2008 financial crisis. They are in the process of creating another crisis for us, another bubble that will burst in our faces. In reality, the money that has been handed over to the corporations in the form of tax cuts since 2005 has not been invested in our collective wealth. Yes, wealth has been created, but only for Canada's privileged few.

Meanwhile, public services are deteriorating. The government is telling us that it does not have the money to fund them better and that, on the contrary, it needs to make more cuts. The government is announcing \$17 billion in cuts. Bravo. The Conservative government says that it is very proud of Canada's economic action plan. I am ashamed of it. It does not include anything for unemployed workers or homeless people and it does not contain any measures for social housing. Quebec alone has a shortage of 50,000 social housing units. I did not see any measures in the budget to address this issue.

People who are living in poverty desperately need this social housing. What are we going to do? The government is proposing to do nothing. Ordinary people are struggling to make ends meet and the government is proud of abandoning part of the population to its fate. I saw that the hon. Minister of Finance was proud of his budget and that he abandoned people to their fate. Bravo. However, ordinary people are having trouble making ends meet.

I would like to remind the House that in 2006 and 2008, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights admonished Canada twice for its lack of effort to combat persistent poverty, and I quote:

...the minimum wages in all Provinces and Territories of the State party are below the Low Income Cut Off and are insufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent standard of living.

There is nothing there.

We are wondering mainly about the persistent waiting lists for social housing, which are still very long, particularly in the Montreal area. The number of food banks in this area, as well as in my own riding, is increasing. In Canada, 2.3 million people are affected by food insecurity. They are hungry. What are we going to do for them? Nothing is planned. In Quebec alone, 300,000 people are going to food banks each month. What is planned to help them? Nothing. That is the reality in Canada. It is also the reality in Quebec and in the Rivière-du-Nord riding. It is the result of government policies, those of the Liberal and Conservative governments that have been in power over the past 15 years. This has not changed. Rather than supporting our people by improving social policies, the Conservative government is completely abandoning the notion of social justice.

When I return to my riding this week, how could I explain to my 81-year-old mother that I voted for a budget that gives her an extra \$1.68 per day to pay her bills? I cannot vote for that because it is unbelievable. We are talking about \$1.68 to pay for hydro, food, gas and medication. I would be ashamed to vote in favour of this budget. It is simply disgraceful and disrespectful of the reality facing my mother and other seniors across Canada.

• (1635)

For these reasons, I will not vote in favour of this deceitful budget. The hon. members of the government should redo their homework and make amends to the poor. They forgot the poor. They have forgotten them.

This budget was written behind the closed doors of the major banks. The Minister of Finance and the corporate bigwigs wrote a budget. Bravo. Next time, I encourage the Minister of Finance to take to the streets, to come to Café de Rue SOS—if we can manage to save it—to write the budget with the homeless, people without documentation, the injured and people who have problems. We will sit down together and come up with a social justice budget instead of a plan to make the rich richer.

• (1640)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to welcome our new colleague.

The Budget

He is somewhat mistaken. I know he was not here in the previous parliamentary session. We presented a good economic action plan for Canada, which allocated large sums of money to stimulate the economy, because of the global crisis, and which gave hundreds of millions of dollars for social housing and hundreds of millions of dollars for poor people and the homeless. I know he missed all that, but I am telling him now, to bring him up to date. Furthermore, it continues to this day, since these developments and the construction of many housing units are still under way.

I would like to read the member a quote and I wonder if he could tell me what he thinks of this situation. I am quoting the FADOQ network:

...the FADOQ network notes that the many actions it has taken and the repeated pressure it has put on elected officials for the past several years in order to increase awareness about the problems facing the most vulnerable seniors are beginning to produce results...After more than a year of constant advocating to improve and simplify the guaranteed income supplement...the network...is pleased to see that today's federal budget contains some of the improvements it demanded.

Clearly, it is satisfied with our budget. What does the member have to say to that?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, can the hon. member tell me what our seniors are supposed to do with \$1.68 more a day? Is that enough to make up for the increased cost of heating, electricity, basic food items and gas? What could anyone do with an extra \$1.68 a day these days? Buy half a loaf of bread or half a litre of milk? Would the member like me to go tell my mother that she is giving her \$1.68 a day? Does she really consider this enough of an improvement?

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the course of campaigning in my riding, I cannot tell the member the number of times that I would knock on the door of a senior and the comment I would hear was, "Everything is going up except my cheque".

It seems to me that the incentives that are targeted toward seniors are very specific and yet the problem is much more widespread. I would ask my colleague to comment on that, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, there is the problem of income for seniors, and there are the problems of essential services, such as health care and home care services. Seniors simply do not have all the support that a government or a society should be giving them. Massive cuts were made under the Liberals, particularly to health care funding. The huge federal deficit was offloaded onto the provinces. Then, that deficit was offloaded onto the hospitals. Now, our hospitals are in debt. A 16-hour wait in an emergency room is a long time for a senior. I think that the whole philosophy needs to change. We need to look for financial resources where they exist. Now, they are being used for speculation on the economy, which is plunging us into successive crises. We must use these margins and redistribute wealth in Canada, so that Canadians have access to free, high-quality services and so that these services are not abolished. That would benefit society as a whole, not just one small group.

● (1645)

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time standing in the House, I would like to thank the electors of Eglinton—Lawrence for their confidence in electing me as their member of Parliament. Eglinton—Lawrence is a wonderfully diverse riding in the heart of Toronto and a riding that had not elected a Conservative member before. During the next four years, I will represent the interests and reflect the values of all the residents of the riding to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

It is fitting that my first address to this chamber is on a topic of great personal interest: fiscal policy and the economy of the country. My career has been devoted to capital markets and securities regulation which provides the relevant perspective both to my role as a member of Parliament and minister of the Crown.

These last years have been a difficult time for Canadians across the country. Jobs have been lost, savings have been depleted and families have had to put off their dreams for a well-earned retirement.

While the global recession did not begin in Canada, Canadians and the people around the world were reminded that we are indeed not an island. What happens in neighbouring countries and distant lands can have a profound effect on our local communities, especially for a great trading country like Canada. This is true now more than ever.

What began as a credit collapse in the United States' housing market quickly grew to an international financial crisis, a deep global recession and a debt crisis in sovereign governments in Europe.

While Canada was not immune, we remained strong while others floundered. The recession began later, cut less deeply and ended sooner in Canada. This was the result of many factors, including the prudent regulation of our banking system, the resilience of our businesses, the resourcefulness of our people and the strong action of our government.

These actions protected our economy by means of one of the larger stimulus programs in the world. Canada's economic action plan invested in our communities with historic infrastructure investments, invested in our people with targeted tax cuts and invested in our most vulnerable with improvements in EI. And it yielded results.

[Translation]

Throughout the recession, Canada fared better than the other G7 countries. The number of Canadians who are employed has increased by nearly 540,000 since July 2009. The economy is growing again, our banks are solid and investment is on the rise.

The Budget

[English]

However, we are not out of the woods. We must continue to focus on the economy and our long-term financial future. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan will provide a framework for the future of Canada's economy, ensuring jobs that are created and growth that continues.

I would like to now focus on how budget 2011 relates to my new portfolio, natural resources.

In a few weeks on the job, my life has consisted of briefings, meetings, announcements, events, planes, trains and automobiles. While hectic, it has also been the start of what is promising to be one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my life.

Budget 2011 builds on the great work of my predecessors at Natural Resources Canada. Under the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are supporting Canada's leadership in developing and promoting clean energy technologies.

[Translation]

As part of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we are supporting Canada's leadership in developing and promoting clean energy technologies. Since 2006, our government has invested roughly \$10 billion in clean energy development and green job creation. One of the biggest successes of the past few years has been our eco-energy retrofit-homes program.

Since 2007, this successful initiative has allowed Canadians to benefit from grants to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. It is also an essential economic stimulus for communities across Canada. To date, our government has invested \$745 million in this program, allowing for energy efficiency retrofits to half a million Canadian homes.

In the new budget, we are investing \$400 million to extend the eco-energy retrofit-homes program in the current fiscal year, which will give Canadian families more time to take advantage of the grants of up to \$5,000 to offset the cost of improving the energy efficiency of their homes.

• (1650)

[English]

Let me now turn to another pillar of the Canadian economy, the forestry sector. I want to assure the House that we are standing behind workers who depend on the forestry industry in hundreds of Canadian communities.

[Translation]

I want to assure hon. members that we support workers who depend on the forestry industry in hundreds of Canadian communities.

[English]

Even at the best of times, these hard-working men and women face many challenges. Now, during the ongoing global difficulties, these challenges are that much greater. We must diversify our markets to ensure the ongoing success of our forestry sector.

In 2010, the IMF projected that advanced economies would grow under 3%, while emerging economies were expected to grow by

over 7%. That is why our government is focusing on expanding our free trade network and creating links to developing countries around the world, and we are getting results. Since forming the government, we have seen a 600% increase in softwood lumber exports to China. It is an amazing success story that budget 2011 is building on.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan invests \$60 million to help forestry companies innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad.

Canada's economic action plan has invested \$170 million over two years to transform the forestry industry and improve its long-term competitiveness.

[Translation]

This builds on the significant support provided by the government to help the forestry sector in making the transition toward higher-value activities and expanding to new markets. This includes \$1 billion for the pulp and paper green transformation program in order to support capital projects in the forestry sector that offer clear benefits to the environment.

[English]

These measures will help address the challenges facing the forestry sector and the workers and communities who depend on it. We will continue to implement measures that sharpen Canada's competitiveness, productivity and capacity for innovation.

These are just two of the important initiatives taken to strengthen our energy sector and our natural resource sector. There is much more in the budget, including significant funds to support clean and sustainable energy.

It is the right budget for families, the right budget for our resource sector, the right budget for Canadians. All members of the House should stand up and support this budget.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member opposite for his historic victory.

My question is about the support the government is willing to give seniors.

In my riding of Davenport, I spent many months, in fact over a year, knocking on doors and listening to seniors every day who called this plan an insult at less than two dollars a day. When we talk about a \$600 increase for seniors, it is not \$600 a week or a month, but \$600 a year or less than two dollars a day.

The member opposite from Toronto knows how much one can buy with less than two dollars. How can less than two dollars a day lift any senior out of poverty?

The Budget

●(1655)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the member opposite, having voted against the budget, is on the side that he purports to be.

Our Conservative government recognizes that Canada's seniors help build and make our country great. That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces new measures to improve the quality of life of, and expand the opportunities for, Canadian seniors. It includes increasing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors by \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, thereby helping more than 680,000 seniors across the country; enhancing the new horizons for seniors program; extending the targeted initiative for older workers; eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees; and extending the eco-energy retrofit program, which I referred to earlier.

These measures build on the over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief our government has provided to seniors and pensioners since 2006, including removing over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls, introducing pension income splitting, increasing the age credit amount, doubling the pension income credit and increasing the guaranteed income supplement.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the minister not only for his election but also for his appointment to an important role in cabinet. I definitely think it is good for Canada when a person of his experience and knowledge decides to enter into public service.

The member said he would represent the values of his constituents. My question is not about a multi-million dollar item but a question of values, because one item in the budget did offend me.

For those with children taking music lessons, for example, there is a tax credit worth \$75 per child. However, parents only receive that credit if they have enough money to be paying income tax. There are about nine million Canadians who do not pay income tax. It turns out that a single mother earning \$20,000 would not benefit from this \$75, whereas children of better off parents would.

How does this reflect the values of your constituents, Mr. Minister, to have such a program where only the well-off children get benefits for music lessons but not the poorer ones?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his kind remarks and affirmation of my credentials for my new responsibilities.

This government has introduced measures that benefit the average family by \$3,500. Not every measure will benefit every category. The member opposite had a distinguished career as an economist in a large chartered bank and would know there are a variety of measures.

Overall, we have done a great deal for Canadians in every field. Growing the economy is the way to benefit Canadians. I personally canvassed over 35,000 doors and I heard that message. It was a message that was reaffirmed on election day.

●(1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I resume debate, I would just like to remind all hon. members to address their comments to the Chair. I know that for new members this is not always the natural thing to do, but it is required.

Second, if members could keep an eye on the Chair when speaking, we sometimes signal when a member's time is coming to an end. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see you in the chair today.

I would like to start by thanking the very smart voters of Elgin—Middlesex—London who re-elected me as their member of Parliament and by thanking the great team that made it possible, including my wife who has supported me through four elections, and the hardworking staff who help me with my vision of constituency service.

I am honoured to represent those people here in this place. I represent an area of Canada that has spectacular beauty, a place of incredible history, a place of tradition and family values. Elgin—Middlesex—London is exactly as the name suggests, a sum of different parts. It has 80 kilometres of Canada's southern coasts, including Lake Erie beaches and fishing ports, bluffs, incorporating Canada's early pioneer history.

Elgin—Middlesex—London is proud of its agricultural history and century old family farms and how it feeds Canada. Elgin—Middlesex—London is a mixture of small- and medium-size municipalities, groups of villages and towns with a proud heritage and hard-working people, including part of Canada's tenth largest city, London, with all the cultural diversity and big city offerings of university, colleges, exciting sports teams and a mix of commerce and manufacturing.

Elgin—Middlesex—London also includes St. Thomas, Ontario, a fun-sized city that has its own small town volunteerism and family friendly atmosphere. Elgin—Middlesex—London also embraces the Middlesex portion, the thriving municipality of Thames Centre and more great agricultural production by great farming families.

As members will realize, this riding is a snapshot of just about all things Canadian: hardworking families; manufacturing, big, small, and medium; post-secondary education; seniors and veterans; agricultural producers, though back home it is still okay to call them farmers; big and medium cities and small villages; and even commercial fishing; and proud Canadians who work hard and believe in democracy, the rule of law and who want a good life for their families.

The Budget

Now that I have shared with members where I am from, let me share why this budget brings Elgin—Middlesex—London something for all, sharing the bounty that is Canada for those who work hard every day to make it that way.

Let us first start with what this budget brings for families. I cannot start with what the budget brings without saying what has already been done for families over the five years of this government. Let us talk about cutting taxes 120 times since forming government. Let us talk about cutting the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. Let us talk about removing a million Canadians from the tax rolls. Let us talk about increasing the amount Canadians can earn tax-free. Let us talk about reducing the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, and putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pocket of every Canadian family.

We introduced the universal child tax benefit, offering families more choice in child care by providing \$1,200 a year. I could go on and I think I will.

We introduced the child tax credit. We introduced the child fitness tax credit. Later on, I will tell the House about another new child tax credit. We brought in the landmark tax-free savings account, the best and newest way to save money since the RRSP. We eliminated the marriage penalty for one-earner families. We introduced the registered disability savings plan. We introduced a first-time homebuyer's tax credit and expanded it.

Due to the strong work of this government over its first five years, we have a strong record of tax relief that includes total savings for a typical family of over \$3,000. That is what we did before this budget.

Let us talk about what we did in this one. There is a new child arts tax credit, which one of the members just mentioned. There is a new family caregiver tax credit. There is an enhanced medical expenses tax credit, as we removed the \$10,000 limit on this credit. We are extending the eco-energy retrofit program so that people can make their homes more energy efficient, therefore saving themselves money. We are helping students in a number of ways, allowing them to earn more money towards an exemption on their loans.

It is incredible what we have been able to do for families. I wish I had time just to talk about families, but I am going to switch to business.

What have we done for small business? Again, I will not start with what is in this budget. Let us start with what we have already done, what we have been able to accomplish in our first five years of government.

We have increased the small business limit to \$500,000. The amount of money small businesses can earn has grown so that small businesses can actually become bigger while still paying small business tax rates.

• (1705)

We reduced the small business tax rate, speaking of that, from 12% to 11%, making small businesses more successful. What do we have in this budget for small businesses? There is a new hiring tax credit for small business, a temporary one-time credit using money that would be submitted to the government for EI. People can use it to hire new people and expand employment in this country.

Reducing red tape is something I have heard a lot. As a small businessman myself, when knocking on the doors of businesses during this last campaign I heard a lot about red tape and how much time it takes for businesses just to comply with all the regulations at the different levels of government. We will reduce that. We have put together a commission and we have already started our work.

Supporting youth entrepreneurs is in this budget. As a person who started my own business when I was in my teens, I understand what this is like. That was a few years ago. We put \$10 million in additional support toward youth entrepreneurs, young people who want to reach out and grab the bounty that Canada has, operate their own businesses and, yes, in time employ other Canadians and increase employment.

We extended the accelerated capital cost allowance. It will help manufacturers and businesses purchase the equipment they need to make their businesses more efficient and profitable and, therefore, be able to expand their businesses, hire more people and, as a result, create more jobs. That is for small businesses. There is more but I do not have time for all of it. I am going to go on to big businesses now.

An hon. member: Do your best.

Mr. Joe Preston: Yes, I will do my best.

We have lowered taxes for all businesses. We introduced the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance that I already talked about, giving businesses the ability to buy better, newer and faster equipment to make their businesses run better. Over the past five years, we have eliminated the cost-killing corporate surtax. We also have helped provinces get rid of their capital taxes.

We have enhanced scientific research and development. During the previous five years that we were in government we visited a lot of universities, colleges and businesses that have really been able to capitalize and commercialize on the research and development opportunities we offered to them. I have already mentioned that we have extended the accelerated capital cost allowance again in this budget. Speaking about this budget, this is where we are at.

Supporting seniors has been mentioned a lot today, as well as increasing the GIS, enhancing the new horizons program, extending the targeted initiative for older workers, eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally-regulated employees and we have already talked about extending the eco-energy program to help make homes more energy efficient and save people money. These are the things that we have been able to do.

Today I have discussed an area of Canada that I represent and the positive differences within it. I have talked about some of the positive steps in budget 2011 and how they will make Elgin—Middlesex—London a better place, indeed make Canada a better place.

The Budget

I just spent 35 days touring my riding, though I forget what caused that. I had discussions with Canadians and constituents and I found some people who have a fairly negative outlook on Canada as a country. I am here to say that I do not and the great people of Elgin—Middlesex—London think Canada is the best place on the face of this earth. What we have been able to provide them in this budget makes it just a bit better.

Collectively we are reminded often that Canada is the best place to live and we should celebrate that. Canada is looking good.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London to imagine with us, to dream with us, just how much better Canada could be if the Conservatives had applied some of the rhetoric that they espouse now post-budget into the actual document.

I would remind my colleague that the sum total of all of the social spending and the goodies, of which there were crumbs from the table that fell into much needed social spending, pales in comparison to the gargantuan \$6 billion corporate tax cuts that the government is allowing to go through uninterrupted even though both of the opposition parties have been urging it to reconsider this.

The NDP is not against a tax cut for small business. I would ask my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London if he knows what the small business tax is in the socialist paradise of Manitoba? When the NDP took power in Manitoba in 1999, the small business tax was 11%, but incrementally over 10 years we have put it down from 11% to 10% to 9% to 8% to 7% to 6%. Guess what it is now? It is a big fat goose egg, zero.

My colleague should not say that we are against tax cuts for small business or that we are the tax and spend party. When we have the chance we actually give small businesses a break on their taxes but we are vehemently opposed to the largest corporate giveaway since the CP Railroad and this wheelbarrow full of cash the Conservatives are dumping into corporate Canada for no appreciable benefit and for no good reason with no strings attached.

• (1710)

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, my Winnipeg friend and I have had a few of these discussions over time and I appreciate his comments today.

He was right. I was about to get up and say he had never met a tax he did not like to hike but apparently he has found one, so there is one he does not like to hike. That may be the only one in his repertoire so I am pretty happy to suggest that he still has not met many taxes he does not like to hike and has never met spending he did not like to increase.

As I shared in my debate, the wise people of Elgin—Middlesex—London have chosen a Conservative government with a better plan.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the eco-energy retrofit program. That program was put in place by the previous Liberal government, was cancelled by the Conservative government and on the eve of the election it brought it back for a year. These types of programs, when they are put in place for a short period like a year, do not provide the same kind of stability for small businesses involved in green renovation than a longer term approach would provide.

A company called Sustainable Housing in my riding had 50 employees when the Liberal program was in place. That number went down to about 16 employees when the program was cancelled. The company is now seeing this new program for the next year and there is a lot of uncertainty as to whether or not it really can expand and give people job security as it does so.

Would my colleague agree that it would make more sense to extend this program for four or five years because these are major decisions that homeowners have to make and major decisions for small businesses that are expanding into the green jobs of tomorrow, in this case green renovations?

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Kings—Hants back to the House. I was going to say it is nice to see him, but I almost cannot from here.

• (1715)

Hon. Scott Brison: I can see you Joe.

Mr. Joe Preston: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but it sounded like heckling and I have been ruling all of that out. I sit too close to you sir to be able to do it. You would certainly catch it.

The member for Kings—Hants and members of his party love to get up and talk about the one or two or three good things that his party once did when it was in power. If we had given my colleague long enough, he would have risen and told us what he was just about to get done. That was the next thing.

The eco-energy program has been a very good program across Canada. The secret to these programs is that they cannot be there forever or people will just keep putting off the changes that they need to make to their homes. We need to have them so that they can be refreshed from time to time and ideas can be made better and that is what this government has done.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Mount Royal.

In some sense, one could say that I only have three problems with this budget, which I would like to address. First of all, it makes the wrong choices. Second, it really is very weak on accountability. Third, it attempts to balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable in society. Other than that, I suppose we could say it is okay. I would say those are three rather important points.

[*Translation*]

The budget makes the wrong choices. It lacks accountability, and the government is trying to balance its budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable.

I want to start by talking about wrong choices. The worst choice is probably the tax cuts for large corporations, which will cost the government \$6 billion a year.

The Budget

[English]

It is not the only bad choice. There are the untended fighter jets. There is the billions on prisons. However, this is \$6 billion per year, which is a big chunk of the money available.

We think prosperity, growth, innovation and productivity are crucial, but we do not think the best way to do that is through reducing tax on the largest companies. We think it is better to either reduce the taxes on the smaller businesses or to have incentives to invest, like a five-year period for accelerated capital cost allowance or to have incentives like a flow-through shared type of mechanism to encourage investment in green technology and high tech industries. Those are just examples which we think are much more cost efficient and cost effective in raising productivity and promoting growth, innovation and jobs than the measure the government took.

However, the net effect of this decision to proceed with tax cuts to the largest corporations is that it puts families at the back of the line. Either the families get a pittance or they have to wait who knows how many years until the books are balanced. We think since families are struggling to make ends meet, families should be at the front rather than at the back of the line, which is where they are in this budget.

Let me give a few examples. In certain cases, families get something but it is a pittance. The government spends \$34 million to help students. There are about a million students in Canada, so that is \$34 per student per year. It makes no difference. The government spends money to help caregivers, but the maximum credit is \$300. That is not going to be a material help for a caregiver looking after his or her loved ones.

Then there are some more major measures, such as the income-splitting measure, but that comes to nothing until the books are balanced. The government claims that is after three years, four years or who knows how many years.

My point is that by doing these tax cuts for very large corporations, the government leaves families out. This is not the most effective way to stimulate growth and jobs and it has the consequence that either families get a pittance now or a bit more down the road. We think that is the wrong approach.

The second point is the lack of fiscal accountability. When we were government in 2005, we did find \$11 billion over five years in savings and we booked every item in the budget, so Canadians were clear on exactly what item was being cut or saved, where it would come from and what was going to happen as a consequence of these cuts.

The problem with this budget is that Canadians do not have a clue as to where those cuts will come from. Whose ox will be gored? We know a little bit coming out. There will be lots of cuts in Newfoundland on fisheries where a bit is coming out, but there is very little information in the budget knowing which services will be cut and which people will lose their jobs.

Instead, we get what I would call weasel words. For example, we are told that the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development will have savings on the order of \$500 million. That is interesting. What cuts will it get for \$500 million? Here is the

answer, taken straight from the budget. This is what the Conservatives are going to do: “Improve alignment of program funding with actual needs; Find efficiencies through improved procurement processes and use of technology; Improve use of internal resources and administrative efficiency; Align program activities with core mandate”.

This is a good one: “Refocus programming to benefit all Canadians”.

That is just gobbledegook. Those are weasel words. That does not tell Canadians anything at all about who is going to pay for these cuts, what services are going to be cut and who is going to lose their jobs. All we get are these weasel words and that is why I say the budget is lacking in accountability.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Third, the government is trying to balance its budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable, both in Canada and around the world. Last year's budget froze CIDA funding that included money for economic development in other parts of the world. In that budget, a quarter of the savings put towards reducing the deficit came from freezing international development funding.

[English]

In other words, a quarter from the previous year's budget of all the savings that were found were found by restraining CIDA funding. One quarter of the savings to balance Canada's books came on the backs of the poorest people in the world who received cuts in their development assistance.

I would mark the contrast between the Canadian Conservative government that got savings on the backs of the poorest people in the world and the British Conservative government that made an exemption for only two areas which were not debt cuts. The two areas that were not debt cuts were national health and international development. So, whereas the British Conservative government singled out development assistance for especially preferential treatment, the Canadian government singled out international development assistance for especially negative treatment. I think that is a prime example of balancing the books on the backs of the poorest people in the world.

This inclination to hurt the most vulnerable does not just go abroad. It is also true at home.

We heard today, in the supplementary estimates (A), that some of the money for affordable housing was being put back. However, do members know what was the one area where the cut of about \$120 million was not put back at all? Housing on reserves. There is probably the area of greatest need in this country.

The Conservatives cut the money for reserves, they cut international development assistance, they provide firefighters and caregivers and music lesson goers with tax credits, but those tax credits are worth nothing if people's income is low enough that they do not pay income tax.

The Budget

[Translation]

To conclude, the Conservatives are making the wrong choices in this budget, they are weak on accountability and they are trying to balance the budget on the backs of society's most vulnerable, both here in Canada and abroad.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for being re-elected and for being able to avoid the NDP wave, obviously.

I was actually quite shocked when I listened to my colleague speak about what has been done for families under the Conservative government.

Under the Liberal government, social programs were slashed, funding for provinces for health care was slashed, and every program that Canadian families used was slashed. It had such a negative effect on Canadian families. Certainly, it was something that as a Conservative government we said we would not do.

Instead, what did we do? We cut the GST. We gave families the child care benefit. That was something the Liberals would never have dreamed of doing. We are doing things for families like the sports tax credit and the arts tax credit, things that families are asking for.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, when will the Liberals get in touch with Canadians today? The problem is they are very much out of touch with Canadian values. Instead of seeing what Canadians need, they are again criticizing what this government has done.

• (1725)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend across the aisle for her positive comments about my re-election and the NDP wave, which I somehow managed to survive. I congratulate her as well for her re-election.

However, I take some exception to these remarks about Liberals cutting transfers to provinces, et cetera. She is talking about 16 years ago, in 1995. I would point out that this action was taken, and I would not subscribe to her definition of it, but there were severe cutbacks, she is right about that, because the Liberals of the day inherited a super huge \$42 billion Conservative deficit. We were on the brink of a fiscal crisis.

The most important point is, and the finance minister should listen to this, what were the finance minister's colleagues of the day, the Conservative Party and the Reform Party, in the mid-1990s saying to the Liberal government? They were saying, "Cut more. You're not cutting enough". And now they turn around and say that we cut too much. They cannot have it both ways. They said, at the time, "You're not cutting nearly enough". I remember those days very well.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also thank the two members who just spoke for their reference to the orange wave. Indeed, I am very pleased that the hon. member was re-elected. Despite everything, I have had some good discussions with him over the years.

Personally, I think both members are wrong. We are once again going through what happened in 1995. For instance, in Gatineau we have our share of problems in health care. We have not recovered from those cuts. No one in Quebec will say otherwise. Whether we blame the Conservatives or not for eliminating the deficit on the backs of the provinces, through cuts to vital programs like health care and education, the fact remains that we are still feeling the repercussions.

Drastic cuts have been made to the public service here in this region, even though it is the driving force of our economy. No one says that often enough. It hurt, and it continues to hurt. People are even more afraid to see what the Conservatives will cut next after all the reviews.

I agree with the member's comment that we do not know where the next cuts will be. Furthermore, that is perhaps the only difference I see in the two versions of the budget. They adopted the slower approach of a one-year review. In a year's time, they will hit us hard.

Does the hon. member think that the 1995 cuts are no longer being felt?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the 1995 cuts were necessary because of the \$42 billion deficit we had inherited from the Conservatives. However, it took maybe three years to balance the budget. After that, we re-invested in the economy and were able to sign the health agreement with the provinces that was in effect from 2004 to 2014. The Conservatives are trying to take credit for it, but that was a Liberal plan, a 10-year plan with a 6% per year increase in health transfers. That was after we returned to a balanced budget. We had the money to make these investments in health, education and social programs.

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Mount Royal, that wonderful, diverse and engaged constituency that I am honoured and privileged to represent.

I begin by expressing my appreciation to the electors of Mount Royal who have entrusted me with my sixth mandate in 11 years, as I was first elected in a byelection in 1999, and for their continuing engagement and involvement in the issues of the day.

In particular, I want to commend my constituents for their participation in pre-budgetary public forums. These encounters both inform and inspire my remarks today.

For example, at the invitation of the Minister of Finance, who recommended that such consultations be held, we held a pre-budgetary forum in my riding on February 10 in the presence of a cross-section of some 300 people from the riding. On March 4, I forwarded a summary of the issues discussed, concerns expressed, and recommendations to the minister. On March 17, in the light of emerging concerns, we held yet another public forum.

On March 22, the Minister of Finance tabled the budget in the House and on March 24, I spoke in the House with respect to that budget by way of reply. Indeed, the government's economic action plan and the budget, as an expression of that action plan, formed part of the discussion in my electoral encounters during the election.

The Budget

Accordingly, and as the minister said in presenting the government's post-election budget and the government's action plan on June 6, all done against the backdrop of the Speech from the Throne, the minister would be continuing where he left off or, more particularly, reaffirming what he said on March 22. As he put it earlier this afternoon, and I quote, "We like this budget so much we introduced it twice".

Similarly, as my initial critique anchored in the representations of my constituents of the time went seemingly unaddressed and unacknowledged by the minister who invited these pre-budget consultations, I thought it appropriate to reaffirm and refine those responses in my remarks today.

I begin as I did on March 24 by reaffirming that the budget is not just a financial statement or economic action plan, it is a statement of values. Against the backdrop of the Speech from the Throne, it in effect constitutes the government's vision for the future. It is not only a balance sheet, but as the minister himself acknowledged in his initial presentation on March 22, it is a statement of priorities, a balance of needs, indeed, a statement of principles and priorities underpinning such a vision.

Accordingly, I organize my remarks around two things.

First, I will seek to summarize the four major critiques of the government's action plan as conveyed to me by my constituents in the various public forums that we had, including pre-budget consultations.

Second, I will refer to the government's underlying vision, or the absence of an overall strategic vision, as again conveyed to me by my constituents.

In the matter of the critique as conveyed by my constituents, the first concern is the \$30 billion for an untendered contract for the purchase of F-35 jets. It is a matter of interest to note that at the pre-budget consultation we held on February 10 I shared with my constituency the proposed or anticipated cost at the time, which was \$16 billion. I then said that I thought it was higher, probably \$21 billion.

By the time we held the next consultation on March 17, we learned from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that, after conducting an international peer review, the estimated cost was now \$30 billion. Indeed, we learned during the election that even the \$30 billion may already be outdated.

The cost, as attested to by United States senators and congressmen themselves, was "out of control". Some countries like Denmark and the Netherlands were rethinking their commitment. There were those in the U.S. who were calling for the scrapping of the F-35 project as a whole.

The issue is not whether we need fighter jets. We have respect for the security needs of this country. The question is whether we should be spending \$30 billion, and rising, on an untendered contract. Even the Americans say the costs are out of control and an international peer review suggests that we need an open competitive contract with respect to this particular budgetary item.

●(1730)

Second, there was an extended critique by my constituents of the billions of dollars set aside for a crime agenda and for the building of megaprisons at a time when crime is declining. I have to say, as a former minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, that the government clearly has a responsibility to address the question of crime. Governments clearly have a responsibility for the safety and security of the streets and neighbourhoods of their inhabitants.

As I learned as a minister of justice, let alone in my previous involvement as a law professor in areas of criminal justice sur le terrain, one of the best ways to combat crime is to prevent it to begin with, to provide jobs for youth at risk rather than jails, to utilize an integrated, preventive and rehabilitative approach rather than one organized around over-criminalization, over-sentencing, megaprisons and extended punishments.

Third, my constituents critiqued the \$6 billion of proposed corporate tax cuts for the richest 5% of corporations. I am not opposed to corporate tax cuts as a matter of principle or as a matter of rigid orthodoxy. I can appreciate that corporate tax cuts can relate to economic growth and increased employment. Indeed, I was part of a government and sat in a cabinet that reduced corporate taxes from 29% to 21%.

I am not saying that we should never reduce corporate taxes. I understand, as I said, their validity. However, we did it at a time when we had eight successive budgetary surpluses. We did it at a time when we bequeathed to the Conservatives, when we were defeated, a budgetary surplus of \$13.2 billion. We did not do it at a time when there was, as there is now, the highest budgetary deficit of \$56 billion and we did not do it with respect to the very richest 5% of corporations while those in need were in fact given paltry handouts. That is the point of principle.

I will borrow from the Minister of Finance's own statement when he said, "What are the relative needs? What is the basis of comparative need?" I put the question to my constituents in our prebudget consultations. Their response in terms of the minister's own principle was that this budget spends 1,000 times more on fighter jets than it does on post-secondary students, 1,000 times more on megaprisons than it does on youth crime prevention, more for a single day of the G20 than in a year for seniors who are being given a paltry sum of \$1.20 a day, more in partisan advertising than it did on family care, and so on.

The final critique is that the Conservative government has expressly excluded low income Canadians from qualifying for measures under this budget, such as the family caregiver tax credit, a worthy measure but one that is inappropriately being implemented. In a word, the Conservatives have made the tax credits in this budget non-refundable, which only helps Canadians who earn enough income so that they can pay the income taxes. Indeed, those are non-refundable tax credits and are not even available to low income Canadians. Simply put, under the Conservative government, a taxpayer earning \$20,000 with a dependant would not qualify for any help as a caregiver, and this is something that we sorely need.

The Budget

Finally, on the matter of a vision for the future and of having a strategic plan for the future, my constituents shared with me what they considered to be the absence of such a vision or strategic plan. They spoke of the importance of the need for health care. Indeed, I tabled, at their insistence, a nine point action plan for health care. They spoke of the need for early learning and child care and the need for access to higher education and to justice.

They spoke of the concerns of seniors, a disproportionate number of whom inhabit my riding. They spoke of pensions and poverty and of the fact that 700,000 seniors in this country are living in poverty. They spoke of the need for a clean environment and the need to invest in green technology. They spoke of the need for jobs, social housing, social justice and always that the test of a just society is how it treats its most vulnerable.

What do we find when we look at this budget? We find, regrettably, a budget that is disconnected from the needs that I have just shared with the House as my constituents conveyed them to me. We find a budget without a comprehensive strategy for health care, environmental protection, early learning and child care, jobs and taking care of the poor.

• (1735)

It is a budget, in a word, that is disconnected, not only from the needs of my own constituents as they shared them with me, but from the needs of many Canadians across this country who have conveyed similar views.

• (1740)

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by very sincerely congratulating my colleague on his re-election. It is good to see him in the House.

One of the parts of the budget that has been very popular and very well supported in my riding is our ending of political subsidies. My hon. colleague has been involved in politics for a very long time. Would he not agree that it is actually healthier for a political party to raise funds on its own, to have policies that individual Canadians support and will actually back with their money? It be healthier for those parties because it would mean that they would need to be in touch with grassroots Canadians. There obviously is the tax implication and the fact that Canadians should not have to put money toward political parties that they do not support or agree with.

I am wondering what my colleague would have to say about that, given his experience in the political field, as well as seeing his party be successful and then not as successful in raising funds.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member opposite also on her re-election and her presence and participation in this House.

On the matter of subsidies and the like, the hon. member is correct that grassroots financing of political parties is important, and all political parties engage in it. However, the whole purpose of the subsidies has to be seen in accordance with the limitations that replace, on the one hand, financial contributions, and on democratization with respect to the financing of political parties, and to enhance political participation in the marketplace of ideas and in the marketplace of advocacy.

To the extent that some members of her party have spoken to it, and I am not saying that the hon. member spoke to it, but this kind of measure can put an end to the Liberal Party as we know it. In other words, we will not only defeat the Liberals but in fact the Liberals will be vanquished. Again, I am not attributing it to this House. I am just saying that the issue of political subsidization has to be seen within the context of maximizing political participation. That is how I look at it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Mount Royal for his victory and for withstanding the orange wave. That being said, I know that he was always very open to questions about the status of women when he was the justice minister.

The Minister of Finance will be very pleased to know that I am reading the budget; I am almost finished. I have only a few pages left to read and I did not see much about the status of women.

Did the hon. member read anything about the right to equality, for example, was there any additional funding allocated to the status of women in order to promote pay and other types of equity?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. I congratulate her on coming back to us and anticipate her participation in debates.

This budget and this plan barely touch on the principle of equality and the rights of women. The budget speaks about the anniversaries that will be happening in the coming year but it does not mention the fact that 2012 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is the 30th anniversary of the principle of equality. This is the same government that dismantled the court challenges program, which provided assistance to women and minorities and helped to meet the objectives of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my hon. colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings. I would like to congratulate him and all returning and new members who were elected on May 2.

I also thank the people of North Vancouver who, again, have given me the honour and privilege of representing them here in Ottawa.

I am pleased today to speak in favour of budget 2011 which introduces the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Two years ago, Canada, along with the rest of the world, faced an extraordinary economic challenge. The great recession, as it has come to be known, threatened the jobs and the well-being of millions of Canadians and their families.

The Budget

To address this global crisis, our government acted swiftly and decisively by introducing Canada's economic action plan which included timely and targeted investments in transportation, colleges and universities, libraries, police and fire stations, affordable housing and recreational facilities, infrastructure and road improvements, and countless other important projects. The actions of our government helped to ensure that Canada was able to avoid the worst of the global economic recession and that we were able to enter into recovery faster than almost any other nation in the industrialized world.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to stand here today and say that Canada has posted the strongest employment growth in the G7 and that more Canadians are working today than before the start of the recession.

Although Canadians should be proud of the success, recent world events have shown there remains considerable risk and uncertainty in the global economy. The American and some European economies are suffering from a massive debt crisis, and although we in Canada are doing much better comparatively, there are still far too many Canadians who remain without jobs. It is with this mind that our government introduces the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It is a blueprint to the building of a better Canada, a Canada that is stronger, more stable and more prosperous. By remaining focused on our economy, our government seeks to stabilize our fragile economic recovery.

We will do this by investing in Canadians and their families. We will encourage private enterprise to invest and to create jobs. We will help Canadians get the education and training they need to work in the 21st century economy. We will assist Canadian families in the care and well-being of their loved ones.

The major priority of our government moving forward is to continue to facilitate the growth and creation of new jobs. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes multiple strategies to achieve this. We will be introducing a temporary hiring credit for small business, designed to encourage additional hiring by this vital sector. We will extend the work sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers. This will help provide older workers who wish to stay in the workforce the opportunity to do so.

We will support the manufacturing sector by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery.

Most important, we will stay on track to keep taxes low in order to encourage job creators to reinvest profits and create jobs and employment.

Another important aspect in protecting our fragile economic recovery is to continue to facilitate further access to international markets. This is why our government is committed to negotiating new free trade agreements which will further grow our economic capacity.

In addition to negotiating a free trade agreement with the European Union, the biggest economic bloc in the world, our government is aggressively pursuing better trade relations in the Asia-Pacific region. Increasing our market access in these vital

markets is a key component to growing our economy and creating new jobs.

Our government has invested millions into port improvements through the Asia-Pacific Gateway initiative. This, combined with an anticipated free trade agreement with India, one of the fastest growing economies in the world, will directly benefit the Canadian manufacturing industry and our resource sectors.

Due to our comparative advantages, Canada has a tremendous opportunity moving forward through the 21st century, and our government is making the necessary investments to take advantage of this.

However, creating economic opportunities and jobs is only one aspect of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. In order to have a truly competitive economy in the 21st century, it is imperative that we invest in the education and training of Canadians.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan contains multiple measures to do just that. We will be investing hundreds of millions of dollars for research and development at top ranked universities and educational facilities. We will extend tax relief for skills certification exams. This will make all occupational trade and professional exam fees eligible for tax relief.

● (1750)

We have committed to double the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week. This will directly benefit over 100,000 Canadian students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their loans.

Investing in the next generation of Canadian leaders will ensure that our country will continue to maintain the positive momentum we achieved through the important investments we have made over the past five years.

I can mention, for example, a project in my own riding of north Vancouver. Capilano University in my riding received, through the knowledge infrastructure program, \$15 million toward the building of a new film and animation centre. This state-of-the-art facility will help train thousands of students for careers in the film industry. It is through investments in the arts such as this that our government is not only strengthening our economy, but also our society as well as creating jobs and helping to train our next generation.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan introduces important measures to help Canadians take care of their families and their loved ones.

We have introduced a children's art's tax credit, a 15% non-refundable tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees for children's arts and cultural activities.

We have also introduced a family caregiver tax credit, a 15% non-refundable tax credit on an amount up to \$2,000 for Canadians to care for loved ones in need.

The Budget

We have also removed the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially-dependent relative.

Also, we have extended the eco-energy retrofit program. This will help families lower the cost of their heating and electricity bills.

In addition to helping Canadian families, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan takes unprecedented steps to aid Canadian seniors.

We have enhanced the guaranteed income supplement so that low income seniors will have additional benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This will help more than 680,000 seniors and is the biggest increase of the GIS in over 25 years.

We have also enhanced the new horizons for seniors program. We are investing over \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and the social participation of seniors. The program will also move to protect seniors by raising the awareness of elder abuse.

Our government is also removing the mandatory retirement age for federally-regulated employees. This will give seniors the freedom to choose whether they wish to remain in the workforce.

On May 2, Canadians elected a Conservative majority government. During the campaign, our party promised to deliver on the priorities of everyday Canadians. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan delivers on this pledge.

As we move forward, our government will continue to lay the foundation for a stronger, more stable and more prosperous Canada.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Senator Smith said during the last election campaign and before his appointment to the other place, "it is "normal" that more of Ottawa's money should go to Conservative ridings".

Will the hon. member tell Canadians who elected opposition MPs that they will receive less federal funds because they did not vote for the Conservative Party?

Is this why the government will not commit to replacing the Champlain Bridge?

Is this why the township of Georgian Bay got \$1 million, and it was 86 kilometres away from Huntsville, for a linear park, but Rivière-Beaudette gets told that it will have to buy back its iconic historic lighthouse and assume costs for decontaminating the land that it is on?

That is the government for all Canadians? It presents itself as the government of all Canadians. Why was the equivalent of 4% of all funds directed toward infrastructure spending for the whole country spent in this small part of Ontario?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were to look at the facts, he would see that every one of the 308 ridings across the country benefited from Canada's economic action plan. Every riding benefited from the stimulus fund.

Canadians across the country are applauding this government for the bold initiatives that we took to implement Canada's economic action plan and the results are there for everybody to see.

Infrastructure projects across the country that will benefit Canadians for generations to come have been built in the last two years as a result of Canada's economic action plan. These projects will increase productivity, increase manufacturing, increase fitness of people with renewed recreational facilities, new bridges, new sewers and new health facilities.

Every Canadian has benefited as a result of Canada's economic action plan.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): I want to congratulate you on your re-election, Mr. Speaker, as well as my hon. colleague on his re-election.

I want to thank the voters of Cardigan for finding a way to send me back here for the eighth time. It is indeed an honour to be in this place.

The government has indicated that it has done a number of things. It is going to spend \$30 billion on untendered contracts for airplanes. It is going to spend \$6 billion to give major corporations a break. It is going to spend billions of dollars on prisons. However, there are much smaller figures at which I hope the Minister of Finance and my hon. colleague will take a look.

The government took \$64 million out of ACOA last year and will take \$15 million out of ACOA this year. When the government takes \$57 million out of fisheries that becomes not only an economic issue but a safety issue. I hope my hon. colleague will not stand up and respond to me about how much his government has done.

We must convince my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, of the importance of these issues before a fisherman loses his life because we could not find the funding to dredge the harbour.

• (1755)

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, there are many fine projects across the country that need funding from the federal government, and many of them have been funded.

The priorities of Canadians are clear. We will be focusing on economic growth and also on job creation with Canada's economic action plan. The best social program is a strong economy and that is why we will be focusing on a strong economy and creating jobs in the years to come.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to welcome my friend and colleague back to the House. It is a joy working with the parliamentary secretary.

I realize the parliamentary secretary has a very large family, has friends who have children and I want to give him an opportunity at this point to celebrate this budget by indicating which measures in the budget are going to help his family and the families of his friends as they progress through this wonderful time and through the summer.

I hope he will please take this opportunity to tell us what he thinks of the family measures in the budget.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on being re-elected and for also being reappointed a parliamentary secretary.

The Budget

As a result of reducing over 120 taxes over the last five years since the Conservative government came to power, the average Canadian family has over \$3,000 extra in its pocket at the end of each year. That is \$3,000 that it can spend on its children's education, that it can spend to look after its children and enhance their childhood. These are important measures.

We have also given tax credits for the arts so children can be enrolled in arts programs and cultural programs. We are also extending caregiver tax credits so family members can look after other family members who need it most.

Those are just some of the programs that we have introduced to help families.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with pride and humility today, I would like to thank the citizens of Prince Edward—Hastings for the overwhelming support they have given me in returning me to the House for the fourth time.

I am so privileged and proud to be able to speak on this budget today, a budget that I find has not only overwhelming support across this nation, but such positive attributes for Canadians. The reason is very clear and simple. This budget is about one thing. This budget is about people. It is about the couple on the main street, running its own business. It is about the students who are attending college or university, trying to further their career prospects. It is about the seniors who have contributed to their community all their lives. It is about the manufacturers. It is about the farmers. It is about the foresters. It is about consumers. It is about families. Yes, it is about real people.

The constituents of my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings represent many walks of life. This budget benefits them as it benefits people from across this nation.

This is the budget that strikes the critical balance in focusing on the economy, on the jobs and on the growth, while also delivering on the everyday needs of Canadians.

More important, this is the budget that follows up on our commitments, that mirrors our election promises and that effectively does what we said we would do.

This budget, prepared for the 41st Parliament, builds further upon the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

This government will support job creation by helping businesses and entrepreneurs succeed, keeping taxes low, investing in projects of national importance and in maintaining Canada's brand as one of the best places in which to invest and live in the world.

The next phase of the action plan advances these priorities by providing a temporary hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring by the vital sector. Having had a successful career as a small business owner myself, who over the years employed hundreds of citizens, I can tell members from personal experience how important this incentive is for job creation.

As well, we will extend the work-sharing program, the target initiative for older workers, to help Canadians stay in the workforce. We will support extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investment in manufacturing or processing machinery and equipment for another two years. Locally, hundreds

of small businesses in my riding to larger companies like Kellogg's or Procter & Gamble have all made significant capital investment and the resultant jobs have been, and will continue to be, created as a result of this magnificent and most effective tax credit.

We will legislate a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund for municipalities.

As a former municipal councillor and deputy reeve, I know how important predictable and dedicated funding is for effective infrastructure planning.

We will invest to promote innovation in Canada's important agriculture, forestry and mining sectors.

As promised during my campaign, and I certainly thank the finance minister, I am pleased to keep our commitment of \$20 million over two years to extend the tremendously successful eastern Ontario development program.

This government will support families and communities so all Canadians can enjoy a high standard of living and our communities can stay vibrant and safe.

The next phase of our action plan is to invest in these goals by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old age security and the GIS and who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties. This measure will provide a new top-up benefit of \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples. This measure represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year and will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

In my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, we now have the second highest concentration of seniors in Ontario as well as a significantly lower rural income base. I can assure members that the support of our seniors for this initiative is overwhelming.

● (1800)

We will attract more health care workers to underserved remote and rural areas by forgiving up to \$400,000 of the federal component of Canada student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses.

We will introduce a new \$2,000 family caregiver tax credit amount that will provide tax relief to caregivers of infirm dependent relatives including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children. In many rural ridings such as mine, we have a severe shortage of senior care facilities. Initiatives such as this will certainly go a long way to provide much-needed assistance.

We will also introduce a new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500 per child of eligible fees associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

The Budget

We will introduce a \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. In my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings and in many similar ridings in rural Canada, the communities are serviced by dedicated volunteer firefighters. This measure demonstrates very clearly our gratitude, our support and our appreciation.

We will provide nearly \$870 million over two years to address climate change and air quality, including the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program that will help homeowners make their homes more energy efficient and reduce the burden of high energy costs.

This government will promote research and leading-edge technologies by providing \$80 million in new funding over three years through the industrial research assistance program to help small and medium-sized businesses accelerate their adoption of key information and communication technologies through collaborative projects with colleges and colleagues. Across the country, and certainly in my riding, we have experienced and benefited from tremendous co-operation among these innovators, the entrepreneurs and our colleges. Across the country, the progression of the knowledge economy is absolutely crucial to our competitiveness.

We will establish 10 new Canada excellence research chairs, some of which will be active in fields relevant to Canada's digital economy strategy.

We will increase the budgets of all three federal granting councils by \$47 million annually, including support for indirect costs.

We will improve commercialization and supporting demonstration of new technologies in the marketplace by supporting research links among colleges, universities and businesses.

We will enhance and expand Canada student loans and grants for part-time as well as full-time post-secondary students.

We will encourage skills certification by making all occupational, trade and professional examination fees eligible for tax relief.

Finally and importantly, this government will balance the budget. We will deliver more than \$500 million in new ongoing savings from the 2010 round of strategic reviews. We will protect the integrity and fairness of the Canadian tax system by closing tax loopholes. We will launch a comprehensive one-year strategic and operating review of departmental spending across all of government in 2011-2012.

One simply has to listen to the numerous positive accolades for this budget from across the country. Positive comments have flowed from individuals, groups, organizations, municipalities, provinces, labour, management, professionals, small businesses, manufacturers, scientists, educators, students, seniors and parents.

As I said in my opening comment, this budget is about people. It is about where we are and where we are going as a nation. It looks out for the most vulnerable and yet, very importantly, it looks ahead. I am proud and excited to be a member of this government going forward with this budget that will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy; strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors and families; and provide the stability necessary to secure our recovery in this uncertain world.

● (1805)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I almost got so caught up with the enthusiasm of the member as to look again at the notes in my budget and wonder if we were looking at the same thing.

I appreciate the member's passion and I welcome him back to the House, but there are a lot of issues that are not being dealt with in this budget. I could talk about the fact that we could be lifting all seniors out of poverty, rather than just having some people helping them out of bed. It could actually be all seniors. They deserve that help.

As well, I could talk about our need to invest more in cities and transportation.

However, there is one issue I know this member particularly cares about. We saw a lot of people, former Nortel employees, who were promised help. I know there are people in his riding who were affected, people who are former Nortel pensioners.

Where in this budget is there any provision to help someone like a former Nortel pensioner or someone who was left on the side? Is there anything in this budget for them?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, this question is very important and, as he knows, dear to my heart, as I have one of the largest groups of Nortel retirees in Canada in my riding. During this election and for the last number of years I have known many of these people personally. I have witnessed the heartache, particularly over long-term disability as well as over the pension issue.

I first became aware of this situation when a number of people told me they were only going to get maybe 15% to 20% of their pensions by the time it unwinds. Whether it was fraud or mismanagement is, of course, yet to be determined.

We as a government asked what we could do. We undertook a number of initiatives, and right now the regular retirees are probably going to get well in excess of 80% through a number of concrete actions taken by this government.

Is it enough? Of course not. We always want it replaced. However, I can thank the finance minister for putting actions and activities into the previous budget as well as the current one to deal with that reality.

It cannot be retroactive. We understand that. Even Nortel employees recognize that, but we have to deal with the eventualities of other corporations in the future that can be impacted by legislation that we bring forward.

● (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the candour in the response addressing Nortel seniors. I want to ask the member a question with regard to the commitment in this budget to seniors.

The Budget

Canada is a country of great wealth and has so much potential. We can reflect upon what we are providing to seniors, and it would be very difficult to find anyone who would say we are not giving enough money to our seniors. The government has come forward and said how much it is going to give them, and it works out roughly to an increase of \$1.60 to \$1.70 a day.

Does the member anticipate this is going to be increasing over the next year or two? Is that enough for seniors, looking forward?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, the member is right in one context, in that we have one serious problem in addition to the ones we are dealing with as a nation, which is that we are an aging society. Increasing pressure will be put on all governments around the world to address the growing demographic demand of seniors.

As such, we have recognized that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all solution. There are seniors who are wealthy and others who live in poverty. There are seniors who need assistance in various ways and there are others who need assistance in definitive ways. We have introduced a myriad of programs over the past three to five years, and in this budget I am particularly delighted to see a number of initiatives across the board that will help many different people in many different ways.

Will there still be more to do as we move forward? There will be, absolutely. That is why this is the budget for this year and why we introduce a new budget every year. It is in order to deal with the changing demographic demands of our society.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Davenport.

Earlier today I had the opportunity to extend my deepest thanks to the people of Beaches—East York and to my family for supporting my desire to represent the people of Beaches—East York in this House. Allow me to extend my thanks to the hundreds of volunteers and staff who gave up their time and family life to support our successful campaign in Beaches—East York. It is my hope that I am able to justify their time and effort by my conduct in the House.

Let me begin my comments by saying how proud and humbled I am to be sitting as a member of the official opposition among such a large NDP caucus, a caucus full of such talent, potential and accomplishment and, importantly, optimism. Let me also extend my congratulations to all members on that side of the aisle and a few more on this side of the aisle on their success on May 2. Their sense of pride with their accomplishment on May 2 is manifest.

I would like to suggest that for all of us, as we get on with the business of this House, modesty and humility is more the order of the day. We have failed too many Canadians too often and for too long, so the challenges that we must confront and conquer are now formidable, and increasingly so, but a tremendous opportunity presents itself to us.

It is the opportunity, in a House with this particular partisan configuration, a majority government without the support of the majority of Canadians, to reach across the aisle to invite all members of the House to work together to address these challenges.

It is an opportunity that threatens to elude us shortly by way of the government's commitment to its regurgitated budget. From where I stand in this House, this budget has been seen and already judged and found wanting by the people of Beaches—East York precisely because it did not address the challenges that I have referred to.

It is a budget that leaves seniors in poverty when we have before us both the opportunity to and the imperative of lifting all seniors out of poverty immediately.

It is a budget that fails to address the needs of families for affordable and accessible child care when we should be providing single-parent families, two-parent families, working families as well as families without work, access to the affordable child care that they need to make ends meet.

It is a budget that continues to hang enormous debt around the necks of young Canadians who choose to pursue an education when we should be helping the young people of this country fulfill their potential and, in doing so, fulfill the promise of this country.

It is a budget that continues to leave new Canadians socially and economically isolated, their education skills and energy going wasted when we should be keeping our promise to all those we invite into this country to make use of their skills and energy, and in doing so, engage them in our collective effort to build always a better future for this country.

It is a budget that fails to put workers back into empty factories, businesses back into empty storefronts, and consumers back into shops when we should be using the resources of the Government of Canada to grow a competitive economy with good, well-paying jobs and secure pensions.

It is a budget that ignores the plight of our cities, the fact that our cities are vastly underfunded and carry a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit, and have become places of stark, economic disparity. Our cities should be recognized as places with tremendous potential for cultural creativity, for economic ingenuity and growth, for energy efficiency, and a meaningful response to global warming. Our cities should be at the forefront of our national agenda.

Finally, this is a budget that is short-sighted in that it is nothing new. It seems in fact to be something of a tradition passed on between Conservative and Liberal and Conservative governments. Both minority and majority governments have, for years and years, carried on without looking to the horizon to see how to navigate through the challenges ahead, to see the critical issues that will inevitably and profoundly reshape our future.

And so, we have a budget that pretends that there is no health care crisis for this country's seniors and their families. Time after time, seniors in Beaches—East York talked to me about their struggles, trying to provide care for their partners because there was no other care available.

● (1815)

Time after time, people my age answered the door, wanting to talk about their difficulties providing care for their parents while raising their kids. Very often the conversation turned to the need for the government to provide help with the growing need for psycho-geriatric care.

The Budget

We have a budget that pretends there is no climate change crisis. Islands are sinking below water in our oceans and seas, the permafrost is thawing below communities in our north, and the government carries on giving taxpayer money away to big oil corporations so that we hasten that process.

It is very clearly the expectation of the people of Beaches—East York that the government of this country think beyond tomorrow. We will never leave our children a great country if we do not do so.

I urge the government to seize the opportunity that we have before us. I noted at the beginning that we have an opportunity to recover our vision to build a great country. We can begin modestly, one practical step at a time. I believe it to be our responsibility to do so, and it is very clearly the expectation of my constituents that we do so.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the hon. member for Beaches—East York whose constituents will be very well represented. We heard how thorough his speech was. I agreed with it. I would like to give him the opportunity to talk a little more about this issue since I know he represents a riding with many pockets of poverty.

What could the budget have included to provide more assistance to the people of Beaches—East York, particularly its seniors? Does the hon. member believe that an amount of less than \$2 per day is sufficient to help many seniors get out of poverty?

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, clearly in a city as big and expensive as Toronto, the government's budget promises to the seniors of this country is wholly inadequate. The \$1.50 or \$1.60 a day, whatever it works out to, is offensive to the seniors of this country living in poverty.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about other communities within Beaches—East York and across this country who are also living in poverty. What people need more than anything else are jobs, and what the government fails to provide to people in Canada are jobs.

The government's single job initiative, corporate tax cuts, has failed to provide jobs for Canadians. The government will be aware there are studies that show that the highest tax cuts occurred back in the 1980s, and investment in capital spending in this country has been declining since, irrespective of corporate tax cuts in this country.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on his election.

I commend to him the budget that was presented in the House on Monday this week. It is an important document, as has been said by other members. It not only reflects fiscal matters, but it reflects the general policy of the Government of Canada.

I commend to him the measures to support job creation that are listed on page 15 of the budget. Perhaps the member would like to read that over the weekend.

I commend to him the fact that as set out at page 58 of the budget, that Canada has the best job creation among the industrialized nations in the world, since the great recession.

I commend to him also the graph on page 30 that sets out the quality of the jobs created in Canada, the majority of them being high paid jobs, and of course the fundamental facts set out page 14, that more than 540,000 new jobs have been created in Canada since the great recession ended in July 2009 which is, of course, a record in the industrialized nation.

For the new member to suggest with any seriousness that Canada has not done a very good job in job creation is an error.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for his commendations. I would point out that we have 300,000 more people unemployed in this country since before the recession.

In return, I would also commend to the Minister of Finance the website of the Department of Finance that shows the economic multipliers for various forms of investment. The website shows that the economic multiplier attached to corporate tax cuts is about 20¢ for every dollar invested. That very same website for the Department of Finance shows that other investments the government had the opportunity to make through its budget have multipliers that far exceed that, including investments in public infrastructure and fiscal infrastructure, which would be very useful in the city of Toronto as we severely lack in urban transit.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year the House unanimously approved a motion put forward by my hon. colleague from Trinity—Spadina to declare June 10 Canada-Portugal Day. This Saturday's Portugal Day celebrations include a parade in Toronto through my riding of Davenport and Trinity—Spadina.

Parliament expressed gratitude for the great contribution of the Luso-Canadian community to Canada, a community whose roots in Canada date back to the 16th century. Today almost half a million people of Portuguese descent call Canada home.

On the streets of Little Portugal in my riding of Davenport in the communities north of St. Clair and the communities north of Rogers Road there is deep concern and consternation and I dare say there is anger at how the Conservative government is treating seniors in the budget.

Maybe in some areas of the country it is a little cheaper to live than others, but in Davenport seniors are barely hanging on. I have spoken to many Portuguese seniors over the last year. Many of them bought their homes in the fifties and the sixties and they raised their families in those homes. They are still living in the same homes and they are proud of that fact. Yet they can barely hang on. They can barely pay their heating bills let alone all the other utilities. If they were listening to some of the debates that have been going on in the House this week, they would be scratching their heads. They would be very concerned about the level of debate in the House around the real problems for seniors.

There are seniors in my community who have no home care, seniors who cannot get around. People say that if their home is too expensive then why not just sell it. Where are they going to go? Are they going to live in a gazebo? I do not think so. A gazebo is not a national housing strategy.

Many seniors cannot get around. We need a national transit strategy in this country. The purchase of fighter jets is not a national transit strategy. That is what we need here.

I hear time and time again from people in Davenport that there are just no decent jobs around. The government says that it has created jobs, but we need to drill down and ask it what kind of jobs it created. I can tell the House what kind they are. Seniors in my riding are working at very low paying, \$10 an hour service jobs. They maybe at one point had a decent job with a pension but they do not have that job any more. These are the real issues.

People say that the economy is doing well, that the recession is over. Constituents in my riding tell me that the recession for many people is not over. The jobless problem has not been adequately dealt with by the government, certainly not in the budget.

The Budget

One would think that if the government were reintroducing the budget, it might have taken some time to get a few of those things right, but that is not what happened. We are very concerned. My community of Davenport is concerned.

I started this off by talking about the Portugal Day parade. The reason I did is because so many in our Portuguese community are seniors and they are looking for some help from our government. They have contributed through their blood, sweat and tears to make this country the great country that it is and what they see from the government is a cold shoulder. This is—

• (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I am pleased to tell the member that there will be five minutes remaining in his time when this question is next taken up before the House.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to order made Monday, June 6, 2011.

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

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