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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has invested over \$100 million in infrastructure projects in the cities of Mississauga and Brampton.

As a city councillor for over seven years in Canada's sixth largest city, I led the charge for some of these investments. I can say that this government's help put our neighbours to work and helped cities build infrastructure they could not have built on their own.

Next week, Mississauga is excited to open our vibrant, new downtown square. We are also opening new libraries where children can develop a love of reading with their moms and dads. Soon, our new, modern pools will help keep us fit and the hydrotherapy pool is sure to be a hit with seniors and young moms. I am most proud of the new ambulance station that will provide faster emergency response times.

Canada is coming out stronger than ever from the global economic downturn because of our Conservative government. It invested in communities, gave our neighbours jobs and improved the quality of life with lasting infrastructure projects.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a new member of the 41st Parliament, I would like to thank the people

of Brome—Missisquoi for placing their trust in me. It is time to get to work on the priorities of Brome—Missisquoi.

With respect to Montreal Pipe Line's pump stations, engineers from the National Energy Board have indicated that the company does not have any way of preventing an oil spill outside its facilities.

Inspectors also note that the direction of flow would take the oil straight into watercourses. At least one tributary of the Missisquoi River, which runs through Potton Township, would be affected. We will be following this file closely to ensure that we put the environmental priorities and the health of the people of Brome—Missisquoi ahead of the economic imperatives of major industrial polluters.

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[English]

YORK CENTRE

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to stand before you in the House today.

I will begin by thanking my dedicated campaign volunteers to whom I owe the most profound gratitude and appreciation. I also thank the voters of York Centre for putting their confidence in me. I promise to work my heart out for all of my constituents.

Like the many residents of York Centre, my father was an immigrant. He survived the Holocaust and came to Canada alone. He came with three things: a number on his arm, the shirt on his back, but, most important, hope in his heart. Canada became his home.

This is why I am so especially proud to represent the people of York Centre, many of whom are immigrants. As a first-generation Canadian, I know their bravery, perseverance and hard work first-hand, but, most important, how they play by the rules. In return, they just want to know that their government will stand up for them when they do.

This government has proven that it is here for all hard-working Canadians. I am so proud to serve under the principled leadership of our Prime Minister. This government will deliver on its commitments and will always stand with hard-working Canadian families.

*Statements by Members***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the proposed Kensington and area wellness complex, an initiative in my riding of Malpeque aimed at improving the health and well-being of constituents. This complex would offer centralized facilities, such as a gym, museum, auditorium, day care centre, library, meeting rooms and commercial space, among others. The planners developed an excellent model.

I urge the government to support this initiative by re-establishing programs so that the organizers can secure funding for this project. Being told that ACOA has no programs and, therefore, no money is not an option. This project is vital to the Kensington community but, unfortunately, with the cuts the government is making, it will only remain a dream.

I urge the government to support this initiative and others like it in rural communities so that rural Canada can make the advancements it well deserves.

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ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 459

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, my home town of Stouffville celebrated the opening of a brand new Royal Canadian Legion Branch 459.

The original Legion was built in 1947 by veterans from World War II who came together with veterans from World War I in a common goal to build a place of their own; a place to relive memories, embrace the camaraderie built in their history together and to commemorate the friends they lost.

Building on the past, the new Legion's home contains the cornerstone of the original home embedded in the front entrance to continue the legacy built in 1947.

In the words of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

The new home for Legion Branch 459 is no disservice to the joy and pain endured by our veterans. We will not forget history and we will not forget the bonds our veterans built. We will continue to build them into our future.

I congratulate Branch 459, its president, Murray Pattendon, and thank my entire hometown for its efforts in recognizing so many people who have sacrificed so much to help make this country the best place to live and work.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all hon. members of this 41st Parliament on their election.

I would first like to recognize the contributions made by my mother, my family and my volunteers. I would also like to say a

special thank you to my constituents, the people of Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, for placing their trust in me.

People voted for change and I promise to deliver. Quebeckers and Canadians have clearly indicated that health care is a priority.

They want everyone to have access to a family doctor and they want wait times to go down.

It is time for this government to take concrete action on the priorities of Canadians and show some real leadership in health care.

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[English]

HONOURS

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first statement in the House, I congratulate you on your new role.

I thank the constituents of London North Centre for giving me the privilege of serving them as their member of Parliament. It is an honour to be here. I also thank my campaign team, the dedicated volunteers who put in countless hours, and my family for standing by me as I hit the pavement on the campaign trail. Without them I would not be here.

Today in my riding, the city of London will be honouring Londoners who are recipients of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario. They are: Order of Canada recipient, Hanny Hassan; and Order of Ontario recipients, Dr. Joseph Chin, Gerald Fagan, Elizabeth Hillman Waterston and Professor Gordon McBean.

On behalf of the members of this House, I congratulate the recipients for making me proud and for making London proud.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Boston hedge fund wants to come up to Canada and destroy 2,500 acres of prime farmland and natural habitat in Dufferin county by creating one of the largest open pit mines in Canada.

This megaquarry would stretch three miles across and plunge 200 feet deep, a drop bigger than Niagara Falls. It would impact the Nottawasaga and Grand River watersheds that provide drinking water for one million Ontario residents. It would pump 600 million litres of water a day. That is almost the same amount of water used by almost 20% of Ontario residents.

The Suzuki Foundation and local conservation authorities have expressed concern.

This is an environmental disaster in the making. We need a federal environmental assessment. We also need a federal panel to review the environmental effects on the transboundary waters of Lake Huron and Lake Erie.

Statements by Members

These American hedge funds destroyed Wall Street three years ago. Now they want to come to Canada and destroy a beautiful piece of southwestern Ontario. They must be stopped.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAINT-LAMBERT

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to speak for the first time in the House on behalf of the people of Saint-Lambert.

To begin, I would like to thank my constituents for the confidence they placed in me. I want to reiterate my promise to them that I will fight tirelessly for their interests. I would also like to thank my husband, my children and all of the volunteers, as well as my mother, who has always been a source of inspiration for me.

I humbly accept the mandate that my constituents have given me. I accept the mandate to stand up for our families and our youth, and to provide our seniors with the opportunity for a decent life.

I would like to thank our leader for the trust he placed in my by appointing me deputy critic for citizenship and immigration. It is an honour and a privilege.

I am determined to work with the members of the House, the Quebec government and stakeholders for a fair, compassionate, transparent and efficient immigration system.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government did what we said we would do with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, jobs and the economy. To complete our recovery, we must implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low-tax plan for jobs and growth.

Canada's economy has grown now for seven straight quarters, with nearly 560,000 new jobs created since July 2009. While that is positive news, too many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economic recovery remains fragile.

Canadians gave us a mandate to stay focused on the economy and pass measures aimed at strengthening both our economic recovery and our country. We will follow through on these commitments.

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[*Translation*]

YOUNG CANADIANS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to make my first statement as the youngest member of Parliament in the history of Canada.

The first thing I want to do, of course, is to thank the people of my riding for their trust in me. It is an honour for me to represent them in the House.

I am here to speak on behalf of all the people in my riding, and also on behalf of all young people across the country. I received congratulatory messages from hundreds of young Canadians who were inspired by my election, and I plan to work tirelessly to show that we young people have a place in public debate and that we can achieve very good results.

May 2 was a great day for all young Canadians. Since the election, they can count on a strong voice made up of several members who truly understand their reality.

It is finally time to show that every Canadian, regardless of origin, gender, occupation or age, has a place in this important political institution.

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ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government says what it is going to do and then follows through, as demonstrated by the next phase of the economic action plan. We are continuing to move forward with the economic recovery and we are keeping our promises. Families will benefit from new tax credits to promote arts and physical activities. We will help the regions attract doctors and we will give volunteer firefighters the credit they deserve. Furthermore, we will accomplish all this without increasing personal income taxes. The economy remains fragile and the recent budget will bolster and complete the economic recovery.

Under this Conservative government, Canada has been a leader in economic recovery and job creation. We invite all parties to help Canada continue to lead the way by voting for our budget.

* * *

DAVID COLMAN

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to express our condolences on the passing of David Colman, the Director of the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital at McGill University.

[*English*]

Dr. Colman had a distinguished career as a research scientist, professor and clinician. Under his leadership, the world-famous Montreal Neurological Institute was one of the first to be recognized as a national centre of excellence in research and commercialization.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Colman initiated a campaign to develop new technologies that have changed the way diseases of the brain are treated. It is due to his contribution that the Institute is becoming a world leader in brain imaging, neuro-engineering and palliative care.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Canada attracts top talent in neuroscience research and treatment, thanks to the vision and dedication of David Colman and his team.

I stand in the House today to acknowledge his immense contribution to science and medicine and to pay respects to his family and colleagues.

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TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government received a strong mandate from Canadians to focus on completing the economic recovery. That is why we are focused on creating jobs and economic growth through expanding trade and tourism.

Today, we welcome the inaugural China Southern Airlines flight between Vancouver and Guangzhou, China, one of the fastest-growing regions in China and in the world. This new direct service is made possible by the current Canada–China air transport agreement, negotiated and signed by our government. China, as a global and bilateral partner, is important to Canada and we are engaged in a frank, friendly and forward-looking relationship with China.

This new service, combined with Canada's approved destination status, will give more options to Chinese tourists to visit British Columbia and the rest of Canada. It also further strengthens the Canada's Asia Pacific Gateway and will provide Canadians more choices for international travel to China.

Our government will continue to seek out opportunities to expand trade and tourism with countries around the world.

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●(1420)

JORDAN FRAM AND JASON CHENIER

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two miners who lost their lives last week in an accident at the Stobie Mine in Sudbury. Jordan Fram, age 26, was a 6-year veteran of the mines and 35-year-old Jason Chenier had 11 years of experience when they perished on June 8 while working 3,000 feet underground.

This devastating loss has saddened the entire community and resulted in nine stop-work orders issued against Vale by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, due in part to worrisome levels of water in the mine. This tragedy is a stark reminder that mining remains a dangerous profession and that we must learn from this tragedy to ensure it does not happen again. These men's lives were cut short, leaving behind grieving families, colleagues and communities in a desperate search for answers.

On behalf of all members of the House, I extend my heartfelt sympathies to their loved ones and colleagues. May they rest in peace.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP of the radical hard left do not know the first thing about governing. Ask a British Columbian or Ontarian who had to put up with its members in power.

While Canadians remain concerned about jobs and the economy, the NDP is having a gut-wrenching debate about whether or not it should remain committed to its reckless, hard left, high tax, socialist principles.

The NDP radical left remains committed to pro-drug policies and anti-trade policies. The NDP opposes Canada's leadership as a clean energy superpower. It even questions its commitment to federalism, with calls to repeal the Clarity Act.

The NDP proposed child care from birth to age 12, a 45-day work year and a 50% hike in the pension plan, policies that would cost billions.

The radical hard left NDPers should stop and think about the real priorities of Canadians: jobs and the economy.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the economy and job creation depend on four key factors: consumption, exports, investment and the government. Canadian household debt is far too high. Canadians are at a breaking point. Exports are declining. Corporations are no longer reinvesting because the tax cuts they are getting from the Conservatives are nothing but bonuses for senior management. The ball is in the government's court.

When will there be a real strategy for growth and job creation for our workers and our Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the best job creation record in the industrialized world. We are currently seeing a private sector-led recovery. Obviously, the budget passed by this Parliament will help us continue this recovery.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the facts run counter to what the Prime Minister is saying.

Since the Conservatives came to power, the fact is we have lost hundreds of thousands of good paying manufacturing jobs. The latest data from Statistics Canada today confirms that the bleeding continues. Manufacturing, in particular, and the auto and aerospace industries are losing thousands of jobs.

When are we going to realize that the policies are creating low wage part-time jobs and killing the balanced economy that we have been building in our country since the Second World War?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy has created over 550,000 jobs since the recession. Those jobs have been focused in the private sector and on high paying jobs. Those are the facts. Obviously we would like to see more and that is why we passed the budget.

The leader of the NDP said earlier that we could not create jobs through consumption, or investment or through exports, that we had to do it through government. On this side, we are aiming to have a private sector-led recovery.

• (1425)

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have a plan to create jobs then. That is quite clear. Its only strategy is to prevent working people from the right to bargain. Labour disputes should be dealt with fairly at the bargaining table.

First, the government threatens back to work legislation mere hours after Air Canada workers used their legitimate right to strike. Then it turns around, takes a government corporation and locks out its own workers, preventing Canadians from getting their mail.

Does the Prime Minister consider that this could in any way be interpreted as fair bargaining practice?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two parties in both the Air Canada dispute and the Canada Post dispute have thus far been unable to reach a settlement. Due to their inability to reach a settlement, they are threatening greater damage on other parties in the Canadian economy. That is not acceptable to the government.

This government will act to ensure that the Canadian economy and the wider interests of the Canadian public are protected.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post suddenly locked out all postal workers late last night. Is this bargaining in good faith?

The lockout is unnecessary. The union offered to suspend its strikes and work under the old contract during negotiations.

What is the minister doing to ensure Canada Post negotiates fairly? Is she fine with Canada Post manufacturing a crisis so the government can step in with back-to-work legislation?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has just indicated, in this case, Canada Post and the union have been unable to reach a negotiated settlement, which is a great disappointment for us because of the effect it has on Canadians and on the Canadian economy.

As a result, tonight we will be putting on notice legislation to restore mail delivery service for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Air Canada, the Minister of Labour keeps saying that

special legislation is necessary because the Air Canada strike could hinder our economic recovery. She seems to forget that the workers affected by this dispute are also consumers who keep the economy rolling.

Does the Minister of Labour realize that vulnerable workers and people who lose their pensions are not going to help our country's economic recovery?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have two parties at the table who have been trying to negotiate a collective agreement for a very long period of time. They are unable to reach said agreement by themselves, even though they have had ample opportunity to do so, and much support from this government and Labour Canada in terms of reaching an agreement.

Therefore, on behalf of Canadians in general and because we have a strong mandate on this economy to make sure it recovers, we have acted.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just learned that the Minister of Finance has just given a speech in New York City where, in the middle of a major political debate in the United States, the minister has chosen to side with the Republican fiscal hawks in the United States Congress.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister, since when does the Government of Canada interfere in the domestic political issues in the United States, and since when does his government become a branch plant of the Republican tea party in the United States?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the leader of the Liberal Party is talking about, but I can tell him this. Throughout the global recession and recovery, the leaders of the G20 have been working together to address the global economic situation.

What we do in each of our own countries in this global economy affects us all, and obviously we are working together to ensure a strong global recovery.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Speaking of double standards, Mr. Speaker, we now have another one.

The Prime Minister is constantly saying that those of us who quote the Auditor General are not telling the truth. So let me simply quote the Auditor General very directly with respect to the activities of the President of the Treasury Board and ask him one simple question.

The interim Auditor General said that he found what the government did unusual and troubling. I would like to ask the Prime Minister, is the Auditor General telling the truth when he says those words?

Oral Questions

●(1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government has said before, we have looked at the Auditor General's report in its entirety. It does make some interesting recommendations and observations. The government has made it very clear that it will take those into account in the future and act on those recommendations.

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[Translation]

LABOUR RELATIONS

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third example of the government's double standard is the situation we are in with Air Canada and Canada Post. With Air Canada, it is clear that a legal strike started yesterday. Services are still being offered, but the government is in the process of introducing a bill to put an end to the strike. As for Canada Post, the government is very slow to react on behalf of the workers who have been locked out and on behalf of consumers.

Why this double standard?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so far, with both Air Canada and Canada Post, the parties have been unable to reach an agreement. This could cause serious damage to the Canadian economy and to a large part of the population. This government will take action to protect the best interests of the Canadian economy and the Canadian people.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some numbers released today reveal that poverty in this country remains at an unacceptable level. One in ten Canadians lives in poverty. That includes nearly 700,000 children. While this government is building gazebos, middle-class incomes remain stagnant and poverty levels are increasing.

When will the minister realize the seriousness of Canada's poverty issue?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, one of the effects of the global recession has been an increase in poverty here in Canada. However, our economic action plan was there to fight poverty. We believe that the best way to fight poverty is to create jobs. That is why we have invested unprecedented amounts of money in training people so they can acquire skills and find work.

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 634,000 children are living in poverty, and poverty, as the minister has just said, has been on the rise since the Conservatives took power. Too many have to rely on EI to get by, benefits are running out, and people still cannot find full-time jobs to replace the ones they have lost.

How can the government continue to hand out huge tax breaks to profitable banks and oil companies while ignoring Canadian families living in poverty?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's concern for poverty is a little late in coming.

During the economic action plan, it was our government that tried to help those who were unfortunate enough to lose their jobs through no fault of their own by adding an additional five weeks and by making benefits available to the self-employed. We also provided unprecedented funding for training to help these people get the skills they needed for the jobs of the future.

Unfortunately, the NDP voted against every one of those initiatives to help lift these people out of poverty.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has begun announcing staff cutbacks in many departments including HRSDC, Canadian Heritage and Environment Canada.

It appears that these cuts have been made arbitrarily and that the government is no longer even trying to justify its actions to Canadians. The government really seems to be making things up as it goes along.

Can the President of the Treasury Board explain the logic behind these cuts—that is, if there is any logic involved?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer which takes a look at part of our plans to ensure that we live within our means as departments, but it does not paint the full picture.

Our plans are on stream. We are looking at rationalizing some services, but also delivering those services to taxpayers in a better way. That is our promise to taxpayers. That was what we ran on during the most recent election campaign and we have a strong mandate to do so.

* * *

●(1435)

[Translation]

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that we know that the President of the Treasury Board is able to stand, I would like to give him a third opportunity to tell Canadians about his use of the border infrastructure fund for projects in his riding, which is 300 kilometres from the border.

How can the President of the Treasury Board tell Canadians that he is going to cut their services when he himself is responsible for wasting \$50 million of taxpayers' money?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to this issue before.

There were 32 infrastructure projects that went forward, including resurfacing a runway at the airport in North Bay, repaving a provincial highway, and building a community centre. All of those projects came in on time. All of those projects came in under budget.

The Auditor General raised some legitimate concerns and observations about how the government could do a better job and this government has accepted those recommendations.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians pay their taxes, they expect that their hard-earned dollars are going to be treated with respect. If we look at how the President of the Treasury blew through \$50 million on glow sticks and gazebos, it is as if the three amigos, the mayor, the hotel manager and the minister, stuffed the largest porcine pinata ever conceived and then whacked all those baubles and booty over the hills of Muskoka.

When will the minister apologize for this abuse of the public trust?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest when the new Leader of the Opposition said that he was going to come to the House of Commons and raise the level of debate. I am very disappointed by the comments made by the member opposite.

With respect to the legacy fund, there were 32 infrastructure projects. They were all public infrastructure projects similar to projects done right across the country from coast to coast to coast. Every single dollar was accounted for. All the projects are now in the hands of municipalities, airport authorities, or provincial governments, and all providing good value for taxpayers.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP would certainly like to raise the level of debate, but to do that we would have to raise up somebody from the dead. He seems to be either hiding in the doghouse or he was put in the doghouse since he got whacked by the Auditor General.

When Chuck Guité played around with public funds for partisan gain, he got sent to jail. When the minister from Muskoka played around with public funds for partisan gain, he got the keys to the Treasury Board. What kind of message does this send to Canadians?

When will this minister stand up in the House and be accountable for his misrepresentation of public funds?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that, I deeply regret to say, was slanderous and character assassination. I expected better from the New Democratic Party.

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G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a year later and Toronto is still waiting for the government to accept full responsibility for the fallout of the G20 mess. Some Toronto

Oral Questions

councillors are pushing for long-term solutions, but the immediate financial needs still require action. Last week, New Democrats met, for example, with the owner of the Horseshoe Tavern which is one of the businesses still waiting for compensation.

When will the government stop stonewalling, treat Toronto with respect, and get their compensation out the door quickly?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has always treated the city of Toronto with respect, and let me tell members that on May 2 the people of Toronto showed their support and their respect for this government. Not only did we sweep the GTA with all but one, but we won the most seats in the city of Toronto.

I said to the member opposite when he asked this question last week, and I said to my friend from Parkdale—High Park, if there is any business, and the member provided the name of one, that is awaiting compensation, give it to me, I will be very happy to ensure that it is rectified as quickly as possible.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives rewarded their friends in Muskoka, no applications were required, no documentation was needed. However, in Toronto, they piled on paperwork and told Toronto businesses that they have to go into a process that is slow, bureaucratic, unfair and opaque, and then dismissed most of the claims or insulted them with a tiny amount.

What did Toronto businesses do to deserve such poor and shabby treatment?

• (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there are any businesses in the city of Toronto that are waiting for compensation, as I said last week, and I will say again, I got the name of one from the member for Davenport, and if the member for Trinity—Spadina knows of any businesses that are awaiting a response, I understand there are four or five yet to be determined, we would be very happy to move as expeditiously as possible.

I can say this. Boy, oh, boy, in the last 30 years, the people in Toronto elected the best crop of MPs that we have seen in that city in a long time.

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BORDER INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during tourist season in northwestern Ontario, visitors can wait more than three hours to cross the border.

For our communities, tourism is a key part of the economy. Yet, the government diverted \$50 million from the border infrastructure fund to beautify communities in the minister's riding, using the fund as a private wish list, while ignoring border regions like northwestern Ontario.

Oral Questions

Is the President of the Treasury Board finally ready to apologize?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to correct the record. No such funds were diverted. We used the existing authorities in this fund to provide support under three specific categories.

The Auditor General has raised some legitimate concerns about the transparency and the clarity to the House of Commons in the approving of those estimates, and we have fully accepted her advice.

However, I am very pleased to clarify that not a single dollar was moved that otherwise would have been spent on border infrastructure for this project. So, I know he will be very pleased with that.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans wants us to believe that the closure of maritime search and rescue centres in St. John's and Quebec City will not affect lifesaving services.

However, yesterday, Winston Pitcher, the head of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary in Newfoundland and Labrador, told the Prime Minister that these closures could delay rescues and put public safety at risk.

Where are the government's priorities? It makes massive increases to its own offices while cutting lifesaving rescue centres.

When will the minister admit a mistake has been made and start listening to search and rescue experts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear about finding efficiencies and aligning our resources, but we are absolutely not putting the lives of Canadians at risk. Our top priority will continue to be the safety and security of all Canadians.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, regarding the closure of the search and rescue centre in Newfoundland and Labrador, here is a quote: "A call centre? I am offended because it diminishes my role and the essential work that we do for human safety." Who said that? It was Merv Wiseman, maritime search and rescue coordinator and a former Conservative candidate.

Here is another quote:

The closure may have saved the Liberal government a few dollars, but Newfoundland and Labrador have had to suffer the consequences.

Who said that? The Prime Minister.

Will the regional minister for Newfoundland and Labrador, that is right, the member of Parliament for Labrador, rise in this House, finally, and condemn these cuts?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is from a fine source, the former Liberal government that decimated the Canadian Coast Guard through its neglect.

Since 2006, our government has made unprecedented investments in the protection of Canadians to the tune of \$1.4 billion invested in fleet renewal. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there has been a 33% increase in Canadian Coast Guard positions since we came to office. We have also relocated two of Canada's heaviest and most capable icebreakers, the *Terry Fox* and the *Louis S. St-Laurent*.

* * *

VETERANS

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 93-year old retired Major Gordon MacLean Logan, who was wounded six times during World War II, dedicated his life to serving Canadians.

For the past three years, he has had to pull teeth to speak to his Veterans Affairs case worker, thanks to a lack of resources. Is this how the Conservative government honours our veterans?

While Mr. Logan's health is failing, government advertising has exploded by 215%.

Can the minister please explain to Mr. Logan and his family how partisan overspending is helping him live with dignity?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised an important issue.

We on this side of the House, and I hope on all sides of the House, care for the well-being of all of our veterans. This is why we have invested and keep investing in the health of our veterans, whether it be their mental or physical health.

We will keep on investing and will take care of all of our veterans here, today and tomorrow.

* * *

● (1445)

[Translation]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months the government has been dragging its feet on the issue of foreign investment. In the meantime, the list of foreign companies that are renegeing on their commitments through layoffs continues to grow: Vale Inco, Stelco and now Custom House in Victoria. We need new regulations governing foreign investment to determine whether takeovers are truly in the public interest and to determine what guarantees are required.

Will the minister develop these new regulations before—yes, before—deciding who the Toronto Stock Exchange will be sold to?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear on this side of the House. We want to promote increased competition. Studying foreign investments is essential. We want to give consumers more choice. The hon. member is trying to mix different issues and muddy the waters. One thing is clear: we will continue to move forward with our policies in order to safeguard the economy and ensure that the economic recovery takes solid hold once and for all.

*Oral Questions***SYRIA***[English]*

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer. The truth is that only two out of 13,500 takeovers have been blocked since Investment Canada was created. The takeovers of Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and MacDonald Dettwiler were only stopped after the NDP held the government to account for its lack of transparency. We did the heavy lifting.

Now the minister has moved the deadline of the TMX takeover review into the summer when Parliament is not in session.

Will the government commit to acting now to establish a transparent public review of the Toronto Stock Exchange takeover bid?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it.

We believe in a strong economy. That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act, and always as a net benefit for Canada.

* * *

*[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest statistics show an increase of 18% in hate crimes against the gay and lesbian community. While most other hate crimes are committed mainly against property, over half of those committed against gays and lesbians involve violence. This is unacceptable.

What measures does the government intend to take to combat the increase in hate crimes against gays and lesbians?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's track record is clear. We believe strongly in protecting the rights of all Canadians regardless of their background, regardless of their roots. That continues to be the position of our government.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly and unjustly, transgender Canadians are still not protected against hate crimes nor are they protected against discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Code.

In its last session, this House passed legislation to provide those protections, legislation that was supported by the Minister of Justice.

This is a question of equality for Canadians who are our brothers and sisters, our daughters, our sons, our neighbours and our friends. Will this government act now to protect the rights and safety of transgender Canadians?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated to this House, the commitment of this government to the equality of all Canadians remains as firm as it has always been. That continues to be our position and will be in the future.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to ignore the current unrest in Syria and the plight of its people.

As we speak, innocent civilians who have been protesting peacefully are being arbitrarily arrested, tortured and in some cases even killed by the Assad regime.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on the Conservative government's latest steps to further support the Syrian people?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that today I have asked our Canadian delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council to introduce and seek the support of like-minded nations to condemn the actions of the Assad regime in Syria as a gross violation of human rights.

The Government of Canada, and I believe all parties in this place, calls on the Syrian regime to immediately end the killing, the arbitrary arrests, the torture and other acts of violence against its people. We also call on the Assad regime to stop trying to divert domestic and international attention from its brutal crackdown on peaceful, democratic demonstrations.

The situation in Syria is completely unacceptable, and Canada will continue to show its support for people seeking freedom in Syria.

* * *

● (1450)

*[Translation]***TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the partial closure of the Mercier Bridge announced yesterday is yet another blow to the people of the south shore. Wait times will be interminable. During the 2008 election, Montreal was promised bridges. In 2011, more promises were made. What has been done? Nothing. Where is the plan? When will the bridge be repaired?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member likely knows, ownership of this bridge is shared 50-50 between the Government of Quebec and the federal government. Since our government took office in 2006, we have invested \$135 million in repairing the federal government's share of the Mercier Bridge and in continuing the work. As with all bridges in Montreal, we will continue to ensure that the Mercier Bridge is safe, and all options are on the table to keep the area safe.

Oral Questions

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the summer is going to be very hot, and major traffic jams are expected to affect the entire greater metropolitan area. The minister has made vague promises about a long-term infrastructure plan. The government's inaction over the past six years has led us to the crisis we are experiencing today.

When will the federal government understand that Montreal's entire economy is at stake?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just answered her own question. If there are traffic jams, it is because there is work being done. If work is being done, it is because we have carried out 28,000 projects across the country under the Prime Minister's economic action plan.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, young Canadians are facing a tough summer.

The unemployment rate for young Canadians stands at 15%, and it has been getting worse. That is double the general rate. This means that university students will be forced to take out more loans and new grads will not find that critical first job.

The government's approach to youth employment has clearly failed. Where is the minister's plan to help young Canadians find work?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do want to help students get prepared, not just for summer jobs but also for their careers in the long term.

That is why I was very pleased to announce last week the launch of Canada's summer jobs program for this summer with an additional \$10 million in permanent funding. That is an additional 3,500 jobs for students each and every year going forward.

These funds will help them get the jobs they need to get experience, and also help pay for their studies going forward so they will not have to go as far into debt.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government obviously does not understand the extent of the problem of the lack of jobs for the youth of this country. With an unemployment rate of 15% for youth between the ages of 20 and 25, all those who need summer jobs to pay for their education are worried. Not only do our young people go into a great deal of debt to attend school, but, increasingly, they are finding only insecure and poorly paid jobs.

What does this government intend to do to reduce youth unemployment?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we want to help these young people, these students, acquire experience and skills, not

just during the summer but also as part of a long-term career. That is why we have just announced a very large amount of money that will result in the creation of 3,600 additional student jobs this summer in order to help young people obtain experience and earn money to continue their post-secondary education.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister has declared that the Wheat Board will be transformed, without disclosing his new model. The \$5.1 billion wheat industry relies on the strength of the Wheat Board in negotiations for the sale of wheat, the procurement of contracts for railcars and the funding of agricultural research.

With the future of the Wheat Board undefined, the minister has placed our western farmers in a weak negotiating position, and farmers are at risk of incurring huge losses. Will the minister explain what his new board model will look like, how it will be implemented and whether it will continue to be supported by government guarantees?

• (1455)

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House want to ensure that the Wheat Board has the ability to move forward, not in a single desk way but in a way that is open and accountable to the farmers it serves, very similar to the operation we see in Ontario.

I would like to cite Keith Degenhardt from the Western Grains Research Foundation, as the member opposite brought up how we do the check-off. Mr. Degenhardt says that the Canadian Wheat Board method of collecting the check-off is certainly not the only method of collecting wheat and barley check-offs.

They look forward to working with us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, skip the quote and have the plebiscite. That is what the farmers in the Prairies want to see.

The government has demonstrated that it does not care what the prairie farmer has to say, as the Prime Minister himself has decided to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

At what cost? Producer car-loading rights will be destroyed, the Port of Churchill will be devastated, hundreds of good-quality jobs will be lost in Winnipeg.

Why is the government destroying the Canadian Wheat Board and tell us why the farmers will not be allowed to have a vote? Why no plebiscite for prairie farmers?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, western Canadian farmers have been inundated with advice from Ontario members and members from downtown Winnipeg, but what they do is listen to their own.

This is what a farmer from Manitoba, the vice-president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, said:

—this change is all about improving the bottom line for farmers, restoring our property rights and creating greater prosperity throughout the prairies—

Ending the CWB monopoly creates the opportunity to reverse that trend and encourage much-needed investment in the wheat and barley industry throughout western Canada, including Winnipeg.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is well aware that children in Canada are at risk to the improper use of medications, because Health Canada does not require drug companies to disclose information on drug effects on children. It seems astounding that Health Canada would allow this to happen.

Drug safety is a huge public concern, so why is the minister not aggressively protecting the health of children and all Canadians with strict regulations for drug safety?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and all Canadians that we have one of the safest drug approval systems in the world. We have made significant investments in the Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network. As well, our government also created MedEffect Canada, a one-stop resource for health product safety information and adverse reaction reporting.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the parliamentary secretary should get up to speed, because the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* certainly does not seem to think the government has addressed this issue in any adequate way. In both the U.S. and Europe, regulatory and legislative changes ensure drug testing and disclosure on the effects of medications on children, but Canada lags far behind.

Will the minister commit today to regulations that require full disclosure by drug companies so that children are not at risk when they are taking their medications?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and Canadians that we are up to speed. We encourage manufacturers to submit pediatric information and to introduce an additional six-month data protection for drugs if they are filed for pediatric indication. In addition, our government created an independent pediatric expert advisory committee to provide advice on the development, licensing and vigilance of products.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION LEGISLATION

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canada has seen over 560,000 net new jobs created since July 2009 and seven straight quarters of economic growth, too many Canadians unfortunately are still looking for work and the global economic recovery remains fragile. That is why we need to stay the course and move forward with the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Indeed, our Conservative government did that today with the introduction of the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of State for Finance please inform the House why swift passage of this legislation is critical for Canada—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of State for Finance.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question reminds us that there are 680,000 Canadians who are now waiting for the July 1 deadline or they will not get this top-up for their GIS. We need quick movement through the House for this legislation. These seniors worked hard throughout their lives to support our economy. The least we can do, as members of Parliament, is to move this through quickly so that we meet the deadline we set of July 1.

* * *

● (1500)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday when we asked the minister of state about the case of Henk Tepper, a New Brunswick potato farmer imprisoned for almost three months in Lebanon as a result of a commercial dispute in Algeria, the minister gave us a narrow technical answer about consular services offered to Mr. Tepper.

Mr. Tepper's wife and children want to ask the minister why she has not personally intervened with her counterpart in Lebanon to ask for Mr. Tepper's safe return to Canada. Why the refusal to use political means with the government of Lebanon to have this Canadian farmer safely returned to Canada and end the ordeal in Lebanon?

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been many exchanges between Canada's consular services and authorities in Lebanon. However, I think Canadians understand that there is no simple way to transfer a Canadian citizen, who is in the legal process in another country, back to Canada.

Canada would not allow another country to simply say, "Don't deal with one of our citizens in your legal system", and we cannot expect other countries to exempt—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

*Oral Questions***SENIORS**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Elder Abuse Prevention Day, a time to recognize the abuse many seniors face in our neighbourhoods. Sadly, too many seniors are being physically, sexually and mentally abused by caregivers and loved ones. This should not be a day just to recognize elder abuse, but a day to take action and protect some of our most vulnerable people.

Could the minister tell the House and the seniors across this country why the government allowed the elder abuse awareness initiative to end on March 31, with nothing in its place to protect seniors in our country?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, any form of abuse is unacceptable. Our government is committed to supporting seniors by combatting elder abuse in all its forms. That is why we have introduced an extensive awareness campaign to take action on this serious issue. We have also committed additional funds in budget 2011 to further support elder abuse awareness.

Our government is taking action to protect vulnerable seniors and we will continue to work hard to do so.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Canada joins countries around the world to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and collectively speak out against all forms of abuse.

I would like to ask the minister of state responsible for seniors what the Government of Canada is doing to combat elder abuse.

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, elder abuse is unacceptable and we as Canadians need to take action against it. Our government is doing just that. Building on the momentum of our elder abuse initiative, budget 2011 provides increased funding to further support elder abuse awareness and we intend to move forward on our Speech from the Throne commitments.

No one deserves to be mistreated or exploited and our government will not tolerate it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at one time the pulp and paper industry was the economic heart of Trois-Rivières.

The Kruger company recently announced almost another hundred local layoffs. In my region, job losses in this sector have been on the rise for years and we fear the bleeding will continue.

What does this government intend to do to help this industry in crisis and when will it take action to protect these jobs in Trois-Rivières?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when all the books we read were printed on paper. Today, most are in an electronic format. There was a time

when the demand for pulp and paper was 50% higher than it is today. We should all get together in 2011 and 2012 to talk about this. To find solutions, we must first identify the problem. Today, it comes down to markets. Unfortunately, we have to look at new products and new markets. Our recent budget provided \$60 million to support research and development for new products, to the satisfaction of the Forest Products Association of Canada.

* * *

• (1505)

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and fine for the Minister of Labour to say she is hoping for negotiated settlements at Canada Post and at Air Canada, but the actions of her government prove the complete opposite. By threatening to introduce special legislation, the Conservatives are sending the crown corporations a clear message: there is no point in negotiating with employees since the federal government will impose back-to-work legislation at the first hint of pressure.

How can the Minister of Labour condone the attitude of her government, which is exacerbating the tensions, as we just saw at the Victoriaville post office back home, unless she too wants to muzzle unionized workers?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding both disputes, we have indicated to the House that in one case we have already put notice on the order paper and in the second we are putting notice on the order paper for back-to-work legislation.

It is not with great pleasure that we do that, because it is a fact that the best deal that can be had is the one that the parties themselves actually reach through their collective bargaining.

However, they have not been able to do that. It is now affecting the Canadian economy and it has effect on third party Canadians who are not part of this dispute but are the ones who are suffering from the hardship.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday during question period I asked the Minister of the Environment to explain the discrepancy between what the government had told the United Nations and what it told Parliament about Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. The minister responded by saying that oil sand industry contributions of 6.5% were included in the report to the United Nations. That was false.

Knowing what he does now, will the minister now rise, admit his answer yesterday was wrong, correct the record, and—

The Speaker: That is clearly not a point of order. That is a matter for debate. If the member wishes to pursue it, she has opportunities during future question periods. It is certainly not a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election and wish you the best of luck. If you had watched, the member for Winnipeg Centre and I have formed a civility caucus and the member and I are working hard to make your job easier.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, reports entitled "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: Quarterly Report to Parliament for the Period of October 1 to December 31, 2010" and "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: Quarterly Report to Parliament for the Period of January 1 to March 31, 2011".

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TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the overview report of the state of Transportation in Canada 2010, in conformity with the statutory requirements of flying in Section 52 of the Canada Transportation Act.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports on the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas.

The first report is on the delegation's trip to Mexico to the 7th Plenary Assembly. The second report is on an executive meeting that we had in Curitiba, Brazil.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in

Europe respecting its participation at the tenth winter meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Vienna, Austria, February 24-25, 2011.

● (1510)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the second part of the 2011 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Mission to Poland, the country that will next hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, held in Warsaw, Poland and Strasbourg, France, April 11 to 20, 2011.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe respecting its participation at the election observation mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Azerbaijan, November 5-8, 2010.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish the co-chair of the civility committee was here to witness this, but I will do my best alone.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

I am pleased to report that the committee considered votes under National Defence referred to it and reports the same here today.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

I am pleased to report that the committee considered a vote on supplementary estimates (A) under the National Defence referred to it and reports the same.

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MAPLE LEAF AND TULIP DAY ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-214, An Act respecting the friendship between Canada and the Netherlands.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House to introduce legislation to make May 5 maple leaf and tulip day. As we all know, there is a tremendous relationship between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Dominion of Canada. We have over 5,700 Canadians buried on Dutch soil.

Routine Proceedings

I am proud to say that the ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Wim Geerts, is very close by, along with the ambassador to the Hague. They are both here to witness this historic opportunity to make May 5, in continuity, maple leaf and tulip day to show the continuing friendship between the Netherlands and Canada.

There are now one million Canadians of Dutch descent in Canada. We are slowly taking over. As we say, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much".

So, Gouda cheese and Heineken for everyone. Let us hope we pass this bill as quickly as humanly possible.

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

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CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity).

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are trying for the fifth time in the House of Commons to correct a historical wrong.

In 1966, the superannuation plan of members of the armed forces, the RCMP and that of all federal and provincial public servants were blended.

What happens is that when members of the RCMP and military receive either a Canada disability pension or the Canada pension, it is deducted dollar for dollar from their superannuation plan, which leaves many of our heroes in Canada in financial dire straits when they retire or when they become disabled. This is simply wrong. Thousands upon thousands of veterans and their families, RCMP members and their families have asked that this injustice be corrected.

When we introduced this bill in the House of Commons the last time, the Conservatives, unfortunately, defeated it. We are hoping they have had a change of heart over the past election. We are hoping, for the sake of our heroes in this country, that we can correct this historical wrong.

I thank Roger Boutin, Mel Pittman and John Labelle of Lower Sackville for their great efforts, not only for their service to our country but also for the promotion of this important legislation.

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

* * *

●(1515)

FORMER CANADIAN FORCES MEMBERS ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-216, An Act respecting former Canadian Forces members.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the heroes of our country get quality medical care when they put the uniform on but when that uniform comes off they lose many opportunities to attend, for example, the Stadacona Base and other bases across the country for the medical

care that is there. Thus, they must go to the civilian side and many of them can no longer even find a doctor.

People who have served this country for many years should have access to the high quality medical care that they received when they were in the service. This bill would correct that wrong and allow members of our military and their families the opportunity to access those medical services long after they take the uniform off.

We have an obligation to the heroes of our country, and not just when the uniform is on. We have an obligation to them for the rest of their natural lives. This is the contract we signed with them. They have the unlimited liability when they serve our country. As parliamentarians, we have the ultimate responsibility to see that all their needs are met, especially on this legislation.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-217, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief relating to war memorials).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, on behalf of the residents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, to introduce an act to amend the mischief provisions of the Criminal Code relating to war memorials and cenotaphs.

I introduce the bill in an effort to add significant penalties for anyone convicted of mischief against a war memorial, cenotaph or other structure intended to honour or remember those who have died as a result of war. Anyone who intentionally damages or defiles a war memorial should face severe consequences.

Respect for those who have given the ultimate sacrifice so that we may live in peace is the responsibility of every Canadian. We owe it to our men and women in uniform to protect these revered memorials.

I would ask that my colleagues support the bill in an effort to keep our war memorials and cenotaphs sacred.

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

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CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (Autism Spectrum Disorders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to reintroduce an act to amend the Canada Health Act, the autism spectrum disorder act.

The bill would mandate both ABA and IBI, both treatments for autism, to be included in the Canada Health Act. These treatments have shown to have long-term benefits to persons diagnosed with autism, ultimately improving individuals' quality of life and productivity.

Throughout the country, our treatment system is patchwork at best and it is time the federal government end that and bring forward some really good treatment. It is time that Canada's health system supported the parents and families of persons with autism spectrum disorders and this is the first vital step, which I hope all parties will get behind and support.

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

* * *

• (1520)

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS ACT

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-219, An Act respecting the establishment of a National Strategy for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to reintroduce a national autism strategy bill. The bill would, among other things, establish national standards for the treatment and delivery of autism-related services and create a system to monitor autism prevalence.

Roughly 1 in 200 Canadians are thought to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. I was recently told the story of an individual named Mark by my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. Mark was born with autism. Mark fought against all odds and successfully, I am happy to say, completed two college programs and, this week, graduates from Waterloo University.

Unfortunately, people like Mark are currently the exception to the rule. I hope the swift passage of this legislation will make stories like Mark's more common in the future.

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

* * *

NATIONAL BRAIN HEALTH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS MONTH ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-220, An Act respecting a National Brain Health Education and Awareness Month.

She said: Mr. Speaker, five million Canadians are living with a neurological condition today. The bill would designate the month of March as national brain awareness month in order to help raise awareness about neurological disease and injuries.

Designating the month would educate the people of Canada to enhance their understanding of brain health, including brain diseases, disorders and injuries. It would ensure that brain health research was fully funded and that preventive measures, treatment and support were universally accessible. It would confirm the government's commitment to improving the quality of life of all persons who live with a brain condition and of their families and informal caregivers.

It is my hope that hon. members will support the bill and that the introduction of the bill will help raise awareness of the need for a national brain strategy and lay the foundation for a national strategy to which our party is already committed.

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

Routine Proceedings

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE AND THALASSEMIC DISORDERS ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-221, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, a national strategy for sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders, addresses the challenges faced by children and adults living with these inherited blood disorders.

The bill calls on the Minister of Health to initiate discussions with the provincial and territorial health ministers to develop comprehensive patient care throughout the life cycle, develop national standards regarding universal screening, develop centres of excellence for both pediatric care and adult care, assess best practises for patients to succeed at school and in the work place, develop information for medical education to prepare health care workers to meet the needs of Canada's diverse populations, develop adequate clinical guidelines and prompt pain management for patients in crisis, establish a program of funding to advocacy groups, and recognize June 19 as sickle cell anemia awareness day in Canada.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

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

* * *

MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES WEEK ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-222, An Act respecting a Military and Veteran Families Week.

She said: Mr. Speaker, our World War II veterans, Korean War veterans, Canadian Forces veterans and all Canadian Forces and reserves deserve more than one week of the year of recognition because of the enormity of their sacrifices. Their loved ones also deserve recognition and support.

My private member's bill calls upon the government to designate a national week for military and veterans families, to honour the families of our military and our veterans, and to acknowledge their sacrifices and their important roles.

Routine Proceedings

It is my hope that designating a national week will encourage all Canadians to have increased recognition of the contributions of military and veterans families, and celebrate their spirit with a week of appropriate activities and ceremonies that pay tribute, support and thank these families, and increase awareness of the sacrifices made by them, particularly among Veterans Affairs Canada and the government.

I hope all hon. members will support the bill.

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

* * *

● (1525)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-223, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (gratuities).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to re-introduce this bill which, if passed, will improve the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Canadians with respect to the employment insurance regime.

When restaurant servers apply for EI, their tips are not taken into account in the calculation of the EI payments even though they are included when they pay taxes. So they cannot collect EI on them.

This bill would make it mandatory for servers to claim their tips as income and that EI calculations be based on that total income. This is important because the custom in the restaurant industry is for servers to have low wages on top of which they receive tips. This change would give servers the economic security and equal footing that they deserve by removing the unfair and discriminatory economic disadvantage they face if they lose their jobs.

I would again like to extend my congratulations and thanks to Caitlin Rooney, a constituent of mine from the riding of Halifax who brought this issue to my attention. I would like to thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for seconding this bill, as I know she is a passionate advocate for the rights of workers who rely on tips to make ends meet.

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

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-224, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be re-tabling, for the third time, the NDP's climate change accountability act.

As everybody knows, the bill would establish a strong plan with firm science-based targets that would address the dangerous climate change resulting from unchecked greenhouse emissions and help improve our tarnished international reputation.

The government's lack of real action on climate change and refusal to take a significant leadership role internationally means that a massive environmental debt will be left for future generations, not just in Canada but globally.

The bill is important because it would provide a touchstone and a rallying point for Canadians concerned about the need for real science-based targets. It would help inform policy-makers about what needs to be done in taking a significant role in addressing climate change.

My New Democrat colleagues and I are committed to advocating for the targets and policies found in the bill and we will work with civil society organizations, activists, policy experts and Canadians to convince the government the time to act is now.

I would also like to thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and the NDP deputy environment critic for seconding the bill and for her willingness to take part in the fight against catastrophic climate change for her constituents and for all Canadians.

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

* * *

FISHERIES ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (closed containment aquaculture).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce a bill which aims to strengthen the Fisheries Act by requiring British Columbia fish farms to move from harmful open net pens to safe closed containment systems.

My bill would direct the fisheries and oceans minister to develop, table and implement a transition plan to move to closed containment. The plan would also ensure that those currently working in the industry would be protected during this transition.

The people of British Columbia have been clear on this issue. They want to protect wild salmon for generations to come. Thousands of people have signed petitions or postcards urging the federal government to adopt this legislation.

The economic opportunities are real. We have the potential to be leaders in closed containment technology. Amending the Fisheries act and moving to closed containment is a step in the right direction.

I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting the bill.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

● (1530)

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-226, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of New Westminster—Coquitlam.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce an act to change the name of the electoral district New Westminster—Coquitlam. The bill would amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act by adding Port Moody to the riding name.

Port Moody is an important part of my riding. Nestled at the east end of Burrard Inlet and surrounded by stunning scenery, Port Moody is a city that has a rich history and is the original terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway.

When I stand in the House, I want everyone to know who I am representing, and that includes the good people of Port Moody.

I ask my colleagues to pass the bill, as it would mean so much to all those in my riding.

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

* * *

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER ACT

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-227, An Act respecting the establishment of a National Strategy for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my bill asks the Government of Canada to establish a national strategy for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder that includes: the establishment, in co-operation with the provincial governments, of national standards for the treatment of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the delivery of related services; and the study, in co-operation with the provincial governments, of the funding arrangements for the care of those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, including the possibility of transferring federal funds to assist the provincial governments in providing treatment, education, professional training and other required supports for Canadians with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

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

* * *

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

BILL C-3—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period there was some discussion of the budget implementation bill's increase in the guaranteed income supplement and how we could ensure that this would be in place by July 1. I have an idea on how we can do it. We have discussed this with the other parties and I believe the other parties are in agreement with the following motion. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 78(1), Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, be disposed of at all stages as follows:

(a) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted for the consideration at second reading;

(b) if the bill is not reported back by Monday, June 20, 2011, during routine proceedings, it shall be deemed to have been reported from the committee without amendment;

(c) the bill may be taken up at report stage at the next sitting of the House and a motion for third reading may be made immediately after the bill has been concurred in at report stage;

(d) 1.5 hours shall be allotted for the consideration at report stage and third reading; and

(e) that the expiry of the time provided for in this order, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this order and, in turn, every question necessary to dispose of the remaining stages of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1535)

PETITIONS

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present petitions signed by hundreds of my constituents regarding the funding of the CBC.

I know a recent report documents that the CBC contributes \$1.3 billion to the Canadian economy every year and has created businesses from coast to coast, from Halifax, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, et cetera.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to affirm the importance of the national public broadcaster and to raise the CBC's parliamentary grant from the current level to \$40 per year for every citizen as recently recommended by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage of the House of Commons.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am submitting this petition on behalf of 163 of my constituents of Jenner, Alberta who want Canada Post to reopen their post office.

I bring their concerns to the House and to the Government of Canada. I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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The residents of Jenner have expressed their concerns that the closure of the post office is like removing the heart from the community.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many residents of Canada who wish to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the following.

For the past five years, the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, Sisters in Spirit initiative has worked to identify root causes, trends and circumstances of violence that have led to the disappearance and death of too many aboriginal women and girls.

In March of this year, NWAC released a report entitled "What Their Stories Tell Us", which provided evidence that 582 aboriginal women and girls had gone missing or had been murdered in Canada and that many mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and grandmothers had been lost to violence in our country. This makes it a pervasive human rights crisis.

The petitioners want the Government of Canada to renew the funding for the Sisters in Spirit initiative phase two, "Evidence to Action", and to invest in an action plan for aboriginal women that NWAC has developed to stop the devastating number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

We owe it to our sense of justice to make this happen.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of literally thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined and yet they say that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. Not only that, they say that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, which these signatories refer to as corporate welfare for corporate serial killers, and it blocks international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all its forms and to institute a just transition program for any asbestos workers laid off. They also call upon the government to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad.

Finally, the petitioners call upon the government to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

VISITOR VISAS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I bring forward a petition of individuals who would like the government to deal with the issue of visitor visas and, ultimately, how family members are denied the ability to visit Canada from countries like the Philippines, India and so many countries around the world. They question why it has become so difficult to visit Canada.

It is with pleasure that I table this petition.

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

• (1540)

[English]

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE SENIORS AND STRENGTHENING CANADA'S ECONOMY ACT

Hon. Lynne Yelich (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to begin debate at second reading on the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. This act would implement key measures from budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

Without a doubt, our government is on the right track for job creation, economic growth and keeping Canada among the best economic positions in the industrialized world. Let us simply look at the facts.

In the first quarter of 2011, Canada's economy grew by 3.9%. This is the largest level of quarterly economic growth in the past year. What is more, Canada has now seen seven consecutive quarters of steady economic growth. Additionally, in May, we once again saw positive job numbers, with over 20,000 net new jobs created. Overall, since July 2009, Canada has created over 560,000 net new jobs, the strongest record of job growth among all the G7 countries. Even better, over 80% of those 560,000-plus net new jobs have been full-time positions.

Similarly, recent findings published in the CIBC Canadian employment quality index have demonstrated:

Not only is the Canadian economy continuing to generate jobs at a healthy pace, but those jobs are gradually getting better....As of April 2011, this measure is roughly back to the pre-recession levels....The improvement in our measure of employment quality reflects a much stronger pace of full-time jobs...

However, there is more. For the third straight year, the World Economic Forum rated our banking system the best and the safest in the world. Also, both the OECD and the IMF have recently forecast Canada's economic growth will be among the strongest in the G7 for both 2011 and 2012.

In the words of the independent Conference Board of Canada:

Canada's economic fundamentals – fiscal policies, tax policy, monetary policy and management of the exchange rate – are arguably in the best shape in the developed world.

Listen to the words of a recent *Toronto Star* editorial, which reluctantly admitted that:

Canada came through the Great Recession comparatively unscathed. As many of our competitors wilted, we rose in stature and relative prosperity.

While all of this is positive news, we must remain cautious and focused on the economy, for we all recognize that too many Canadians are still looking for work and the global economic recovery still remains fragile. Now is the time to stay focused on the economy and on supporting job growth.

That is why we need to stay the course with the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

[*Translation*]

The bill before us today is an important aspect of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, as it implements key measures in the recent federal budget. As hon. members know, budget 2011 addresses the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that seeks to keep taxes low to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. We must ensure that this plan is not derailed.

Under the plan, we will ensure that taxes are kept low. We will make other targeted investments in order to support economic growth and create jobs. We will improve quality of life for seniors, families and children. We will control government spending and we will stay the course in order to eliminate the deficit.

Implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will preserve Canada's advantage in the global economy, strengthen the financial security of workers, seniors and families in Canada and garner the necessary stability to secure our economic recovery in an uncertain world.

• (1545)

[*English*]

The supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act contributes to the successful and swift implementation of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan by proposing to legislate into law several of its key measures.

Prominent among such measures include the following: help for vulnerable seniors by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement, also known as the GIS, for seniors who may be at risk of experiencing financial difficulties; support for provincial front line delivery of health care and social programs by extending the temporary total transfer protection to 2011-12, representing nearly \$1 billion in support to affected provinces; encouragement for Canada's young entrepreneurs by providing \$20 million to help the Canadian Youth Business Foundation; enhanced federal assistance for part-time students by reducing the in-study interest rate to zero, bringing them in line with full-time students; improvements to the registered disability savings plan, also known as the RDSP, by increasing flexibility to access RDSP assets for beneficiaries with shortened life expectancies, and ensuring that individuals can appeal in every single case a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit; support for Canada's veterans by providing

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tax relief for Legion purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths; support for Canada's leadership in genomics research by providing \$65 million to Genome Canada to launch a new competition in the area of human health, and sustain the operating costs of Genome Canada and genome centres; strengthened oversight of Canada's mortgage insurance industry to ensure the continued stability of Canada's housing finance system; and much more.

Before continuing, let me inform Canadians and this Parliament that the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act includes the most pressing time-sensitive measures from budget 2011 that require legislative approval. Rest assured, as is standard, we will introduce additional legislation this coming fall to pass into law outstanding budget 2011 measures before the end of the calendar year.

[*Translation*]

I would like to take the time to provide a few details on some of the key measures, especially those concerning Canadian families, workers and businesses.

I will begin by underscoring the improvements we are making to the guaranteed income supplement. Although Canada's retirement income system has helped reduce the incidence of poverty among seniors in Canada, some are still living in poverty. For example, seniors who rely almost exclusively on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement may be having financial difficulties.

What is more, women who contributed significantly to supporting their family, their community and society as a whole by working hard at home may find themselves in a precarious situation and might not have other sources of income. The Conservative government recognizes the contributions of seniors and is determined to ensure that they maintain a good quality of life.

In the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act, we are proposing a new top-up benefit to the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors. Beginning on July 1, 2011, seniors with little or no income other than old age security and the guaranteed income supplement will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for a single person and \$840 for couples. This measure represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year. It will improve the financial security and well-being of more than 680,000 seniors in Canada. These improvements have been well received by Canada's seniors since they were announced in the 2011 budget.

The C.D. Howe Institute has said that the new guaranteed income supplement top-up for low-income seniors is a significant increase in benefits.

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The Service Employees International Union was very enthusiastic about the measure, saying that the increase in the guaranteed income supplement is a victory for all Canadian seniors who are living in poverty.

Even the Canadian Labour Congress, which is also excited about the measure, stated that the CLC had been calling for an increase in the guaranteed income supplement. It said, "Minister Flaherty has made a modest improvement to the GIS in this budget. This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada."

The FADOQ network said the following:

This budget represents significant progress for seniors in Canada, but there is still plenty left to do.

For the FADOQ network, which has been fighting for improvements to the guaranteed income supplement (GIS) for years, the government's proposed increase is a step in the right direction.

• (1550)

[*English*]

Without a doubt, Canada's most vulnerable seniors have welcomed and are now really counting on the GIS top up to come into effect on July 1 as promised in budget 2011.

However, let me be very clear, the only way that this can happen is with swift passage of the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act before Parliament rises in the next few days.

For all they have done to build this great country, that is the very least we can do for those Canadian seniors most in need of our support. I implore all parliamentarians to act quickly to pass this act and to not let our seniors down.

Another key measure from today's act that I would like to highlight is the support we are providing Canada's veterans through tax relief for Legion purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths. The Legion's poppies and wreaths hold a special place in the hearts and minds of all Canadians as symbols of the contribution, courage, and sacrifices of those who served in the Canadian Forces, the brave men and women to whom we owe the freedom and opportunity that we enjoy today.

Each fall the Royal Canadian Legion begins its poppy campaign, which is the foundation of its remembrance program and a main source of financial support for the great work the Legion does in communities across Canada. I know how hard the Belgian Club and the Norwood Legion in my riding work to ensure that their poppy campaign is a success.

We all know how important the Legion is, not only in serving our veterans but also promoting remembrance of their sacrifices along with the countless other contributions they make to communities across Canada.

That is why our Conservative government is taking a small but important step to assist the work of the Legion and its poppy campaign through a 100% rebate for any sales taxes paid on their purchases of Remembrance Day poppies and wreaths. This is the right thing to do, and the least that we can do for our veterans and their families.

As Dominion president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Patricia Varga, recently declared:

[This measure] will mean that the funds raised by the branches for their Poppy Trust Funds will not have to go to the governments involved but will go to help veterans across Canada. Hundreds of thousands of dollars will be saved by this move and those are funds that will go to help our veterans.

A third key measure from the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act that I would like to highlight is the crucial financial support it provides to several provinces through the temporary extension of the total transfer protection program.

As members know, our Conservative government restored fiscal balance in Canada through long-term and fair transfer support to the provinces and territories, while the previous Liberal government radically and, frankly, shamefully slashed transfer payments to provinces and territories. The next phase of the plan reinforces our Conservative government's long-standing rejection of the old Liberal government's legacy of balancing the federal budget on the backs of provinces and territories through deep transfer cuts to health care and education.

Indeed, total federal support is now at historic levels, approximately \$57 billion, and will continue to grow in the years ahead. What is more, federal support for health, education, and social services has increased nearly 40% since we formed government in 2006.

In today's act, we are building on that record of strong transfer support by providing extraordinary protection to ensure several provinces have the stable support they need during the fragile global economic recovery by extending the temporary total transfer protection program to 2011-12.

This temporary program recognizes the short-term economic challenges several provinces and territories face as they emerge from the global recession by ensuring none receive less in 2011-12 than in 2010-11 from the major federal transfer programs, specifically from the combined equalization, Canada health transfer, and Canada's social transfer programs.

As such, this act authorizes nearly \$1 billion in payments to the affected provinces. That is \$368 million to Quebec, \$275 million to my home province of Manitoba, \$157 million to Nova Scotia, and \$157 million to New Brunswick.

This will ensure those affected provinces have the support they need to budget for the health care, educational, and other services that Canadian families depend on. In the words of New Brunswick Finance Minister Blaine Higgs, expressing his appreciation for the temporary extension:

I'm pleased that our transfer payments will continue as they did last year, so that helps us with our budget planning purposes for 2011 to 2012

• (1555)

A fourth key measure that I would like to highlight is the financial support that the act proposes providing to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to encourage Canada's young entrepreneurs.

The Canadian Youth Business Foundation is a national non-profit organization that was founded in 1996 to help grow our economy by encouraging and supporting young entrepreneurs with mentorship, learning resources and start-up financing. Since 2002, the foundation has helped young Canadians start more than 4,000 businesses, creating close to 18,000 new jobs.

Today's act would allow the foundation to continue its excellent work with an additional \$20 million in support. According to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, this proposed investment alone will enable young Canadians to launch more than 1,000 new businesses. Even better, these businesses are expected to generate more than 6,700 new Canadian jobs. In the words of the foundation, that means:

—we will be able to continue growing the next generation of entrepreneurs, talented young people who create jobs for themselves and for others, strengthen our economy and nourish the entrepreneurial spirit of our communities.

This new contribution will support many more of the brilliant business ideas that young Canadians generate every year

A fifth and final measure in the act that I would like to highlight today is an important improvement to the RDSP program. Essentially, it came to the finance minister's attention last fall that the Tax Court of Canada had recently held that existing income tax law would not allow an individual to appeal a ruling concerning an individual's eligibility for the disability tax credit unless that affected the individual's tax payable. What that meant was that individuals with incomes too low to pay tax were effectively barred from establishing an RDSP, or their eligibility for the disability tax credit had not been accepted by the Canada Revenue Agency.

To promote the fair and equitable treatment of Canadians, our finance minister took swift action to allow individuals in every case to appeal a determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit.

A CIBC tax professional, Jamie Colombes, observes:

This is very welcome news. Many people with a disability have very low income, and therefore have no tax owing. So, without this change, they might never have been able to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan if the CRA disagrees with their claim for disability.

Little wonder this proposal and the minister's swift action have been rightly applauded. In fact, the *Toronto Star* heralded that:

[The] Finance Minister...has come to the rescue of the poor and disabled.

[*Translation*]

These are just some of the key measures in the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

I believe that this important bill deserves the support of the House of Commons. Moving forward is the right thing to do—the only thing, in fact—for Canadians and our economy.

To conclude, I encourage all members to continue supporting the implementation of the next phase of the economic action plan and to back the Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that roughly

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\$400 million more was needed for pensions to bring all older Canadians to just the average of what they needed.

How could this \$400 million have been a threat to Canada's economic action plan? Why can we not manage and budget in a way to ensure that we can bring all of those people out of poverty and have a decent phase 2 of the economic action plan? How can we not afford both?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I am very concerned as well about the state of our seniors.

The budget implementation act will top up the guaranteed income supplement swiftly so that the seniors who are actually going to benefit from this new support will be able to get it by July 1. The budget implementation act is focused on these pressing issues because we are concerned that seniors will not otherwise get this money that should be available to them.

Yes, there is more to do, but I ask the member why on earth he is a member of a party that actually voted against a number of measures put forward by this Conservative government to help seniors, things like pension income splitting and reducing the GST, which actually help keep more money in the pockets of seniors. There were 120 tax measures to reduce taxes and help families keep \$3,000 more in their pockets every year, and yet the NDP voted against every single measure.

I would encourage the member to take to heart what he has said here today in his question. I would ask him to please vote with us to help our seniors get out of poverty and move forward so they can live their lives with dignity.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the title of the bill refers to supporting vulnerable seniors, an issue that was raised in the 40th Parliament in December of 2010. It was the decision of the Government of Canada to eliminate the optioning provision for senior citizens who withdrew their registered retirement income funds. The government eliminated the optioning of that income, thereby preventing many seniors from receiving guaranteed income supplement benefits, or risk having their benefits dramatically reduced.

When the government's action in this regard was brought to the full attention of the House, the government rescinded its decision, or at least said that it had rescinded its decision. It noted that it was wrong to take away the benefits of the guaranteed income supplement from seniors who withdrew funds from their registered retirement income funds, and pledged that it would correct the problem.

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The issue came on the back of a tax court decision called the Ward decision. The tax court ruled on when an individual was denied GIS benefits because he or she had withdrawn funds from their RRIF and the Government of Canada had withdrawn its support. Madam Ward had to take the matter to court. Regrettably, she lost. The tax court ruled that the current provisions of the Old Age Security Act as written offered the government proper recourse and authority to deny those benefits. The government said that it would change the act.

Does this budget implementation bill actually amend the Old Age Security Act to allow the withdrawal of funds from a registered retirement income fund and allow the optioning provision for the GIS and do so in accordance with the law? Yes or no?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I want to welcome back my colleague. It will be an interesting session for the next four and a half years.

As I said during my speech, this first budget implementation act has put together measures for some very pressing and emerging issues, measures that need to be passed before we leave, possibly on June 23 if not later. These measures are imperative because if we do not pass this bill, seniors will not get their GIS, the legions will not be able to get rebates for their poppies and wreaths. There are a number of measures that are absolutely imperative to pass before the summer break.

We are going to continue to move forward on a number of other measures in a budget implementation act in the fall. We are going to continue to push forward on our platform, and the member across the way is just going to have to wait until we get to that point.

• (1605)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been reading through the budget and paying careful attention, but I have some questions about the base statistics on which your work is done.

Most specifically, I am interested in what is commonly reported in the U.S. as the natural rate of unemployment. The U.S. Federal Reserve says that the current natural rate of unemployment in the U.S. is about 6%. Former finance ministers here have said it is about 8%.

What natural rate of unemployment are you basing the budget projections on, and can you tell me whether that natural rate is increasing or decreasing?

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for the question as it allows me another opportunity to reflect on what just happened in May. Twenty thousand new jobs were created here in Canada. That brings our total to 560,000-plus net new jobs since we took office.

The budget implementation act, which is what we are debating here today, is actually a small version of what is in the budget. The budget implementation act was designed to push the most pressing issues forward. Unemployment is a pressing issue. However, we

have to get some of these measures through by June 23, or maybe a couple of days later.

Other things that we are going to be doing on unemployment will come out in the fall. The member is just going to have to wait until we get there.

However, know this: If we proceeded, as the NDP has suggested, with raising corporate taxes, that would kill jobs, that would leave more unemployed people in Canada, that would affect families and seniors' ability to pay their bills. That is something this government will not do.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

Unfortunately, in life, we do not always get what we want. In this budget, Quebec will receive \$2.2 billion as compensation for its sales tax harmonization. There is also \$50 a month for our seniors as a guaranteed income supplement top-up. The Bloc Québécois would rather that amount be \$110, but \$50 is a first step.

The government is renewing the eco-energy program and there are tax credits for family caregivers. I do not understand how members from Quebec can vote against \$2.2 billion for Quebec. I am hoping that my colleague can explain that, because I do not understand.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. We worked together during the last Parliament, and I am looking forward to working with her in the future.

There are five members from Quebec on the government side of the House of Commons who are working very hard to implement measures that will improve things in Quebec. In the bill we are debating today, there are measures to ensure that Quebec will receive money through transfers. All members from Quebec must vote for this bill to ensure that it passes quickly. Otherwise, Quebec will suffer, since it will not receive the funds allocated for the transfers in this bill.

With respect to the other measures that have to do with Quebec, we have put forward an initiative to resolve the tax harmonization issue, and it will happen in the fall. We have five members from Quebec on this side who are working on implementing measures for forestry companies, manufacturers and so on. We will continue to move forward, but the members from Quebec on the other side are not the ones who will be putting these measures in place.

• (1610)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am asking for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Welland.

The Deputy Speaker: This being the opening round, the hon. member has asked for unanimous consent to share her time.

Does she have the unanimous consent of the House to do so?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I am rising to speak to Bill C-3, but since this is the first time I am rising to speak and give a speech here, I would like to send out special thanks to the constituents of Nanaimo—Cowichan who once again sent me back to the House. This is my fourth election and I am very appreciative of that support from my riding.

Mr. David Christopherson: And so are we.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for that.

Bill C-3 is an important piece of legislation. New Democrats have indicated that they will support the bill at second reading and get it to committee and then we will determine whether we will continue to support it.

I want to spend my time today focusing on what is not in the bill.

An article from the *Star* in a report today by Stats Canada says that:

The recession stopped progress on poverty in its tracks, according to new data from Statistics Canada that indicates almost one in 10 Canadians is considered poor... the agency says the poverty rate edged up in 2009 to 9.6 per cent—the second straight year that poverty has grown after more than a decade of steady declines. About 3.2 million people now live in low income, including 634,000 children.

Today in question period we heard from the minister who agreed that poverty had edged up.

There are no significant measures in the budget to address poverty in this country, whether it is families living in poverty, whether it is children living in poverty or whether it is seniors living in poverty.

People would argue that there is an increase in the GIS, but that increase does not go nearly as far as what New Democrats had asked for prior to the election. We recognize that doubling the GIS for seniors would have some impact on the poverty they face.

New Democrats have done some significant work on suggesting what we can do to address poverty. I want to mention Bill C-545 from the previous sitting of the House, which was introduced by Tony Martin, the former member for Sault Ste. Marie. Anybody who knows Tony knows it has been his life's work to raise the consciousness in Canada around poverty and the impact that it has on our communities and our families. He worked with a number of organizations to introduce his bill called an act to eliminate poverty in Canada. We have a template here for the government. It does not have to go out and reinvent it.

I will not read the whole bill of course into the record, but I am going to talk about a couple of things.

What is poverty? As described in this act:

—poverty is the condition of a human being who does not have the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-reliance and to facilitate their integration into and participation in society—

It also says:

—the federal government, through constitutional and legislative amendments has direct involvement in the reduction of poverty and plays a central role in programs providing social protection and income security, including pensions, the Canada Social Transfer, the Old Age Security Program, child benefits and employment insurance benefits—

It also talks about the fact that there are many provincial governments and municipalities that either have poverty reduction strategies in place or are working toward implementing them.

The purpose of this act is to impose on the federal government the obligation to eliminate poverty and promote social inclusion by establishing and implementing a strategy for poverty elimination and consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and aboriginal governments and civil society organizations. It was specific.

Then it outlined what this poverty and promotional social inclusion strategy would include. I am not going to read them all but there are a couple of key points. It includes the measures necessary to prevent people from falling into poverty, reduce the incidence, depth and duration of poverty and improve the situation of all people currently living in poverty, including those living in deep poverty or poverty of long duration and those who have multiple needs.

It says it includes measures to provide income security and access to housing, includes measures to promote the involvement of Canadians in determining and implementing the solutions to poverty, determine an acceptable measurement of poverty for Canada and sets out targets to eliminate poverty in Canada in the short term of 1 to 3 years, the medium term of 4 to 7 years and in the long term of 8 years or more. There are many more points under this.

●(1615)

It is distressing when we hear members talking about the fact that the 634,000 children in Canada are living in poverty. I have to remind us all that when we are talking about children, we are talking about children and their families. It is not just children. They do not live in isolation. They live with mothers, or fathers, or brothers, or sisters. So it is important.

In 1989, we had Ed Broadbent's motion in this House to eliminate child and family poverty by the year 2000, and many of us of course have worked with campaign 2000 around the fact that we have missed that target consistently since 2000.

Once again, this budget implementation act and the budget that was introduced by the government was an opportunity to take some steps, some measurable steps, toward eliminating child and family poverty in this country and the government has failed to do that.

Just in case people think that there has not been substantial work done on this, I want to refer to the “Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada”, produced by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I only wish I had the time to read in all of the good works that are in this report. The report is the accumulation of numerous committee meetings, numerous testimonies by organizations that worked with people living in poverty, by people in poverty themselves, by aboriginal organizations. Many organizations came forward to talk about what the reality is for Canadians who simply do not have enough resources to pay their rent, to feed their children, to clothe their children, to even dream of being able to save money so that their children could have a university or a college education. Many of those stories were heartbreaking.

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In my former role as aboriginal affairs critic, I am very familiar with the poverty that is facing first nations, Métis and Inuit in this country.

Sadly, I cannot read all of the recommendations in the report, but I will mention two. Recommendation 3.1.1 says:

...the federal government immediately commit to a federal action plan to reduce poverty in Canada that would see, during its first phase, the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

This action plan should incorporate a human rights framework and provide for consultations with the provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal governments and organizations, the public and private sector, and people living in poverty, as needed, to ensure an improvement in the lives of impoverished people.

I specifically want to cite Recommendation 6.2.5, which could have been included in the budget and in the Budget Implementation Act, which states:

The Committee recommends that the federal government increase the budget for social economy initiatives and that this increased funding be used to promote job creation among low-income individuals, especially those who face serious barriers finding and securing a job.

The work has been done. The studies have been done. In fact, the legislation has been written under the old Bill C-545. It is troubling when we see a lack of response to the serious poverty issues in this country.

I want to turn to a report by the Citizens for Public Justice because this puts some numbers to it. I know sometimes numbers put people to sleep, but I think these are important numbers.

In this report, called "Bearing the Brunt: How the 2008-2009 Recession Created Poverty for Canadian Families". It says, under the heading "Poverty and child poverty rate": "After the last recession, it took 14 years for the poverty rate to return to its pre-recession level".

We are not only dealing with the current poverty in this country, but we are looking toward many years of this playing out.

It also states: "Without a poverty elimination strategy, the poverty rate in Canada will continue to rise and fall with the economic cycle. It will take a concerted effort to eradicate poverty in Canada".

I know many on the New Democrat side come from social justice backgrounds and we think it is important, that Canada has the resources and it should have the political will to develop a poverty reduction strategy.

Let me just touch on the heading "Unemployment and Employment Insurance" for a moment. Under the subheading "Unemployment", it states: "Job losses during the recession disproportionately affected those most economically vulnerable, as 1 in 4 workers making \$10 an hour or less lost their job".

It went on to talk about the erosion of the social safety net, how:

The recession revealed the inadequacy of EI as a social safety net.

Despite a rise in EI coverage, almost half of the unemployed did not receive benefits.

Canadians who did receive EI benefits were living in poverty unless they had another household source of income.

As many as 500,000 Canadians have exhausted their EI benefits without finding new work.

Of course we hear the job creation numbers touted in this House. What people fail to talk about is many of those jobs created were part-time, seasonal contract jobs.

Although we will be supporting this to go to second reading, it is a sad comment that we did not take this opportunity to address the poverty issues and develop a national poverty reduction strategy in this country.

• (1620)

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member opposite if she plans to vote for this Budget Implementation Act?

I believe and I know that the seniors who live in Mississauga South have told me that they are anxious to receive the increase on the guaranteed income supplement. Without passing this budget, that will not happen by July 1.

I would like to ask the member opposite if her poverty strategies and her concern for poverty include the seniors in Mississauga South as well as the seniors all across Canada who want and need that increase to the guaranteed income supplement, which we will be providing if we pass this budget implementation bill?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned twice in my speech, New Democrats will be supporting the budget implementation act at second reading to get it to committee.

We have some concerns with some aspects of the bill. I know members have been having that discussion with the finance minister.

It is interesting that people talk about how we do not have time, that we have rush this through, that it is important that we get out there and protect seniors. Of course New Democrats have been in the forefront of talking about seniors and pensions.

When it comes to the poorest of the poor in this country, they have been waiting since 1989 for successive governments to take action on reducing child and family poverty. They are still waiting.

When will the government, and I know I am not asking a question but, demonstrate the political will to implement a poverty reduction strategy in this country?

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, to sit here today and listen to the government members wrap themselves in this business of getting next to nothing out to seniors, \$1.65 a day to people who only receive \$1,162, is disgusting. There is no other word for it.

For you to wrap yourselves in that as some kind of mythical excuse for passing this sham of a budget is disgusting. I crossed this country and I listened in 40 communities. Senior women talked to me about eating cat food, and you are sitting here, going to pass this and thinking you have actually done something.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to address their comments through the Speaker, please.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, in the previous Parliament, the member took on the role of meeting with seniors, speaking up for seniors, and was instrumental in having a pension motion that the New Democrats put forward pass in this House.

The member certainly does understand the plight that is facing many of our seniors. He tells the story of seniors eating cat food. All of us in this House can share stories about the dire circumstances that many of our seniors live in.

In Nanaimo—Cowichan I have met with seniors who are actually being forced to move from the riding because they can no longer afford their homes. They cannot even afford to rent. These are families that had been living in our community for many years.

The increases in OAS and GIS simply have not kept pace with the cost of living in many of our ridings. I live in a very beautiful part of the country, but the cost of living in many parts of British Columbia is higher than in some parts of the country. These symbolic rises in GIS and OAS are not helping these seniors stay in their homes, with their families, with the communities that they have lived in and where their children have grown up.

It is atrocious that we are asking seniors to just bite the bullet one more time, to take a hit for the country, and to leave their communities, leave their families behind. If we are serious about helping seniors, the token GIS increase is important, but we would ask that the government actually address the realities of seniors' lives and increase the GIS to the levels that New Democrats had asked for prior to the election.

• (1625)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate.

As this is the first time I rise in the House, I will take this opportunity to thank the great folks of the Welland riding, which of course is a great misnomer. We know that the Welland riding includes St. Catharines, Thorold, Port Colborne and Wainfleet, as well as the great city of Welland and all those in between.

As well, I would like to thank all of those great volunteers, specifically my family who were a great help in supporting me during the election and, indeed, during the many endeavours that my family has allowed me to participate in.

I want to follow-up with my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan in talking about seniors and the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. He did great work in the 40th Parliament, when the House unanimously adopted a motion that talked about how we could bring all seniors across this country out of poverty.

I do not think there is a member in the House who could honestly say to themselves that they think there is a senior in this country who should live in poverty. I do not believe there is a Canadian in this country who would think that a senior should live in poverty. If we all agree that there should be no senior living in poverty in this country, then where is the will to actually lift them up?

If one asks the unemployed in Welland, as I have, or the unemployed in any riding, if they think we should lift seniors out of poverty or if they should have a job first, they would say that they want seniors out of poverty. If one asks a senior living in poverty if

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they think they should come out of poverty or do they think their kids or the people who live down the street should get a job, those seniors would say with all sincerity that those people should get a job. That is the remarkable character of Canadians who want to help one another.

There is a difference between a young person who is unemployed at the age of 24 and a senior who is 84. Obviously, it is age. It is the number of years they have left. The 24-year-old, judging by the lovely tables the insurance companies give us, would probably live another 60 years. The senior in poverty at 84 only has a couple of years left. Now that we have a government that says it took a step, the seniors in poverty might think that they may not have time to wait for the second step.

Why would we allow one more senior to leave us permanently who was not taken out of poverty? We owe it to them. We all stand in this place and say that we owe it to the seniors who came before us and built this great place, but those of us who are new like me and others who have been here for multi generations, we say we owe it to them and yet we cannot fulfill the promise.

One may say that we do not have the resources to do this. Seniors would understand that as they came through the Great Depression and post-World War II. They understand the sacrifices they have to make and they would continue to make them.

We all know we have the resources to lift every senior out of poverty, yet the government's recommendation in this bill is to say, "We are going to take a step".

I implore the government to find the other shoe and take the other step. It would simply cost \$400 million more, by rough estimates, to bring every single senior across the country out of poverty. What a glorious thing we could all say if every one of us stood in the House and said that we together, all 308, said that no senior should live in poverty and we accomplished it. However, what are we going to say? We are going to say, "We took a step".

A step is not good enough. It is not good enough for the seniors in my constituency who may lose their house because they cannot pay the property taxes. They choose between rent and hydro, heat in the winter or food on their plate. What is left are the property taxes, which continually go up. If they cannot afford to pay, they will lose their house. Yet, we continually say that we took a step in the right direction.

It may well be in the right direction, but the step is not big enough, it is not long enough, and it really needs to be all of the way there.

I say to my friends on the government benches that they have an opportunity to take this bill to committee because we are going to help them get it there. This is the government's opportunity to say to all seniors in this country that we will lift them all out of poverty. We will not take a step, a half measure, but will literally lift all seniors out of poverty. That would be the success of this House in its early stages.

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•(1630)

I heard the parliamentary secretary talk it out, saying we need to get it done by July 1 because we have to have those cheques in the mail.

If the government had listened to my good friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, it had the money last year. If we want to talk about getting it done quickly, then it should have listened to that member when he brought it forward two years ago. Seniors would be receiving the cheques today. They would all be out of poverty and we would all be proud of our accomplishments.

That is what it takes when we show initiative. That is what it takes when we mean what we say. As they say in the street, “You either walk the walk or you talk the talk.” I am afraid that my friends on the government benches are still talking the talk.

There is an opportunity here. Do not lose it. I implore the government to not lose this opportunity. The reward is greater than just simply a good piece of legislation. The reward is that every time we walk down the street and we see seniors that we do not know, we can look them in the eye and without opening our mouths or moving our lips our minds can say that we were part of that House that lifted all of those seniors out of poverty.

Just think for a moment how joyous a thought we would have when we walk past those seniors and we once again see the light in their eyes brighten rather than that dullness that we see today because they do not know where their next meal will come from or whether they can keep their home or buy a small present for their grandson or granddaughter because they live in poverty. Think of the light we can put back on the faces of those seniors.

My colleagues, that alone is worth \$400 million. That alone is worth it and we have the wherewithal to do it from a resource perspective. We have the ability to do that. We have an obligation to do it. We owe that obligation to them and we ought to fulfill that obligation as our duty as MPs to all Canadians across this country.

There is an opportunity, my friends on the government benches, to do right by seniors. I ask the government to amend its implementation legislation when it comes to second reading and lift all seniors out of poverty.

When the parliamentary secretary talked about poppies and wreaths, I was absolutely thrilled to hear her do that. Let me just say that in 2009 I actually presented a private member's bill that said that is what we should do. I am glad to see that the government is finally following through on that. Albeit the bill got lost because we dissolved Parliament and we did not get to it. I am not ungrateful from the perspective that it will happen, except we could have done it last year. We could have passed that bill. I was happy to let the government move it forward if it wanted. Therefore, I am pleased to see that, indeed, we will do what is right.

I want to thank Mr. Hank Nikitzuk, a member of Branch 4 in Welland. At that time we only paid GST on the poppies. By the way, all poppies are made in Toronto. They are actually not made across this country. So are the poppy wreaths. It was Mr. Hank Nikitzuk who brought the idea to me. He said, “Do you know we pay GST on poppies?” At the time I thought it could not be so. How could we

possibly charge tax on poppies when they are being sold to raise money for veterans? It turned out to be so. When I actually informed the government that it was so, it told me it was not so until it actually did its own research and figured out that it was so. Of course, by the time it came to the realization that it was the case we had the HST. Therefore, not only did we have the GST, we also ended up with the HST.

I have a question that is somewhat rhetorical and I will ensure that it gets asked at committee. I heard the parliamentary secretary say that all tax will come off for poppies and poppy wreaths. When she says that what I am hoping is that it will be the HST. In response to questions from us, I have heard that the HST does not belong to the government any more as it is provincial. Therefore, I hope that when the parliamentary secretary said that all taxes would come off poppy wreaths and poppies, what that really meant was the HST and that all of the money will go back to the veterans.

Let me just end with EI. The EI provisions that allow the premiums to go up will outpace the amount of benefits. In the province of Ontario, 44% of claimants actually get benefits. These are the folks that we represent. That is a crime. They need and deserve benefits like everyone else across this country. That rate must go up if indeed they will be paying more.

•(1635)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened quite carefully to my friend, who sits in front of me, from the great riding of Welland, and I thank him for his comments.

I was not a member of the House in the previous Parliament, but it seems to me that members of the official opposition were instrumental in ensuring that the budget that the minister presented in the House a week or so ago was not passed originally on March 22, and that, in fact, the leader of the official opposition delayed the increased cheques for GIS to seniors in a greater way than perhaps any other group in the House.

I would like the member to respond to this question. Why was it more important to bring this House down on March 25 rather than implementing the budget when it was presented at that time?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, far be it for me to try to put things in chronological order, but it seems to me the budget was not before us on that particular day; it was an absolutely different piece of legislation. We did not get to the budget. The government did not fall on the budget, but on a separate motion.

As much as we can roll back the clock to March and ask what would have happened if that had been different, my hon. colleague, whom I am getting to know very well, would not be here if we had not had an election; it would have been someone else sitting there.

We were not the official opposition at the time. Another party was the official opposition. We are now the official opposition and we will do our due diligence.

Clearly, if we had listened to the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, we would have had cheques for seniors in this country last July, not this July.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is in regard to seniors and the guaranteed income supplement. I look at it from the point of view that yes, there is a high need to lift our seniors out of poverty. We too want to see more money going to our seniors in terms of their income and their pensions. In fact, I have had opportunity myself to introduce petitions, talking about the guaranteed income for our seniors and the need to increase it.

I look at the title of the bill, Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act. The member who spoke prior to the hon. member for Welland said that she was not too sure how her party would be voting on this particular bill.

Has the NDP taken a position as of yet on whether or not they will be supporting the bill?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, we have clearly said that we will send the bill to committee. I have said to my friends in the government that they have an opportunity at committee to indeed amend the bill and do what the title says, support vulnerable seniors.

The bill will help a bit, but it will still leave seniors vulnerable. I am suggesting to government members, since committee is where we can modify, change, amend, make better, that they should do what they want to do and that is to support all seniors whom they call vulnerable. When the bill comes back, they can say they no longer have to worry about it because there are no more vulnerable seniors. They can actually protect and support them, and raise them all up, and they will not have another vulnerable senior.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his intervention. I know that he has a real interest and a real commitment to helping our seniors. When we introduce legislation, obviously there are times when not everything gets covered off, and I think he has certainly gone to great lengths to cover that off. The measures that are being implemented would remove 680,000 people. I was interested in the hon. member's comments about the GST and the HST in regard to the veterans issue. I wonder if he could elaborate just a little bit more on that for us, please.

• (1640)

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Madam Speaker, because poppies are manufactured in Toronto, Ontario, the HST applies. When the parliamentary secretary talked about the removal of all taxes, what I heard from the government side is that it was only responsible for the GST.

I am hopeful that when the government says "all", it has struck a deal that says that the HST will not apply because poppies happen to be manufactured here. If they were manufactured somewhere else where there is no HST, it would only be that. However, that is really my hope because I wanted to see it at zero when it introduced that bill and I know the government wants to see it as zero as well.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I wish to seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Etobicoke North.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleagues.

[*English*]

I will begin by thanking the people of Halifax West for their confidence in me in re-electing me. It is a great honour and a privilege to serve them in this House and to work on their behalf.

I had an interesting election night. In fact, another candidate was declared elected at one point by *CBC News* in my riding. I consider that, what I would call, a near political death experience. I am all the more happy to have made it back to join colleagues here.

An. hon. member: It was a Lazarus-like experience.

Hon. Geoff Regan: My colleague from Scarborough suggests that it was Lazarus-like because he recalls that I had a different experience previously in 1997 when I took, what I sometimes call, an involuntary sabbatical when I was defeated and then returned in 2000. So, it is a great honour and privilege to be here again and I am delighted work on behalf of the people of Halifax West.

I will turn now to the bill before us, Bill C-3, the budget implementation bill. The government has certainly jammed a lot into this one piece of legislation. We have many things being dealt with, such tax exchange agreements, Genome Canada and the amending of the Auditor General's Act to provide that he or she can serve beyond the age of 65. It also deals with interest on student loans and mortgage insurance contracts in cases where companies are being wound up. It even deals with kayaks and canoes. As the owner of a couple of kayaks, I am pleased to see that the Conservatives are paying attention to us kayak owners.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: That got my attention.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I am delighted to see that the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's has noted that and is interested in that issue. I think he is probably also interested in the issue of small crafts, a little larger than kayaks and canoes, as there are lots of fishing communities in that riding, as I well know.

However, there was also a lot left out, unfortunately, of this bill. A few months ago we heard from the government how important it was to pass the budget immediately, that it was to provide immediate assistance to firefighters and caregivers through a tax credit. These things were so important to the government that they did not really make it into the budget implementation bill, and that is rather strange. The Conservatives were so anxious to get those things done and it was so important to pass the budget a few months ago and yet where are they in the bill? Where are those measures that they promised?

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Maybe that is why the government is ramming this 55-page bill through and using the absolute minimum time for scrutiny of it. That is an odd thing. It probably hopes that we do not actually notice what else is missing from the bill, like, the home energy renovation program. That is a program the Conservatives killed twice before. They killed it when they became the government in 2006, and then a year ago they let it go again. Even though it was in their platform and in the budget, it is not important enough, apparently, to be in the budget -implementation legislation that is before us now.

I can say that my constituents in Halifax West and the businesses in my area will be disappointed at this because these are important measures.

During the election campaign, I had the opportunity to knock on thousands of doors, as I am sure everyone here did, and to talk with countless residents to hear about the issues that are of concern to them, the things that preoccupy them and that they are worried about from day to day when it comes to the Government of Canada. Obviously, sometimes they raise issues that are dealt with by other levels of government. However, people did raise concern about the home renovation program, which has been very important to people over the years. It was started by the Liberal government previously.

Many people who work in the energy and audit industry, the people who work on installing better windows or more insulation and doing the various things that could make homes more energy efficient, the small contractors who work in this field, were very concerned.

Seniors, who relied on and benefited from this program, were very angry with the Conservatives when they quietly killed this program a little more than a year ago. Many of them are anxious to have it back. They are anxious to see it again. It is too bad that it is not in this bill, and I would like to know why.

I hope colleagues on the Conservative government side will tell us why it is not in this bill. It is too bad, as well, that the government is not committed to long term, stable funding for this kind of important program. The Conservatives talk about how they have a stable majority Conservative government and so forth. Why can they not provide, with that majority, stable funding for the home renovation program? Why are they only funding it for one year? What is it about this program that makes it only good enough to fund for one year? Why is it not good enough to have in the bill?

● (1645)

I also heard from firefighters and caregivers who wondered why the Conservatives would not provide refundable tax credits so low-income earners could qualify. That is what we have been talking about in question period and in the House in general.

In fact, one volunteer firefighter called my office just the other day. This is a young student who does not make enough to even qualify for the tax credit. Is the Conservatives' view really that students should not get the benefit of that, even though they are giving the 200 hours or more required as volunteer firefighters in their communities? Do they not think those people's service is important to the community? Can they really say that it is not important enough that they should receive the benefit of this program?

If it had been refundable, this student, who is struggling to pay his way through university, would have received a \$500 rebate. Under the Conservatives, he will get nothing. People like him wonder why the Conservatives have programs for rich Canadians and corporations but nothing for low-income earners.

We have seen the government's fiscal plan for corporations. We know that it is lowering taxes for the country's largest corporations but it is doing nothing for small businesses. They already have a tax rate of 11%. The government has dropped the corporate tax rate for the largest companies in the country, from 18% to 15%, when they were already competitive internationally and 25% below American rates. Why? It is because the Conservatives are not concerned about the little person. They are concerned about their friends, apparently, at least that is what it looks like.

In my riding of Halifax West, people told me during the election campaign and since that we need to do more to support families. They are concerned. They are having a tough time making ends meet these days. They need help finding child care spaces and affordable education. They need help looking after their aging parents, finding high quality jobs and reuniting with family members abroad.

I have a riding that is very diverse. Many people who live in my riding of Halifax West were not born in Canada or in Nova Scotia. They were born elsewhere in the world. There are probably more newcomers to Canada in Halifax West than in any other constituency east of Quebec City, perhaps even Montreal.

People are telling me that they are having difficulty with the rising cost of living. They are having trouble making ends meet and they are not seeing concern or getting assistance from the government, whether it is buying groceries or paying for a tank of gas, and of course we are seeing the cost of that rising. They also want to ensure that we leave a clean environment for their children and grandchildren. It is not something we see as a priority at all by the Conservative government.

I look forward to raising these issues during the 41st Parliament, along with my colleagues. We in this party will also be watching to ensure that the government keeps its promises in other areas, like the one to fund the undersea cable from Newfoundland and Labrador to bring Muskrat Falls power to Nova Scotia. We will be looking as well for Ottawa to be at the table with the Province of Nova Scotia and the municipality for the new convention centre in Halifax, and many other issues.

There are a few good things in this bill but there is so much missing and so much more the government could have done, especially if what it says about the economy and its ability to spend is true.

Government Orders

• (1650)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Madam Speaker, leading into the member's comments about good things in the bill, I would like to hear the good things about the helmets to hard hats program that is in the bill. That would be an excellent one and I am sure it is something his riding would welcome. I would like to hear some positive things about our budget and I am sure this would be a positive one for him to expand on.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see the minister back again. We have mutual friends who live in my riding and with whom she has visited Croatia.

I know she knows that she can be confident in hearing lots of positive things about the budget from the government side, which has more than enough time to extol the virtues of itself and of this bill, which I really think, as I said, has a great deal missing from it.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague brings a lot of experience to the House. Notwithstanding the sabbatical, it is great to see him back here.

My colleague talked about the short-term aspects of some of these great programs and extolled the virtues of some of them, but they are short-term in nature.

The best 14 weeks pilot project is essential not just for workers, but also for businesses to allow them to survive in the smallest of communities. However, it will be extended for only one year.

My colleague talked about the program for home renovations. It also will be extended for just one year.

The CBC gets a \$60 million cut, but at the same time what the CBC requires is a long-term investment to allow it to plan several years down the road, a model similar to what the BBC uses.

Could my colleague talk about that once again and also about some of those programs that deserve to be invested in over a much longer term? Could he also talk about how shortsighted the budget implementation bill is on some of these measures?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, the question my colleague asked is about the short-term nature of many of the provisions in the budget. For a government that talks about being stable, I have to wonder why it cannot offer stability in some of the measures that it has in the bill or some of the measures it has trumpeted so loudly in the past, like these pilot projects.

These pilot projects are a big issue in areas like eastern Quebec and Atlantic Canada. A lot of communities rely upon seasonal industries when other kinds of work are not available and those industries need people to be available to do work for them. These pilot projects have been critically important in helping people to put food on the table and helping them to get through some difficult periods. It is a concern.

The government wants people to believe it is actually concerned about them, but only for a year. If the government is concerned, why would it only have these measures in place for a year? What magical thing will happen in a year's time that will make these measures unnecessary? Is every home in the country going to be renovated and

energy efficient a year from now? That seems extremely unlikely. What makes that program worthwhile, but only for a year?

It makes me wonder if these programs were just put in the window for the purpose of an election. Was the idea simply to get votes with these measures? The government is suggesting that it is doing a great thing, but it is not mentioning too loudly the fact that it is going to do it only for a year. A year from now it is going to yank these programs away.

• (1655)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-3.

Before doing so, I must first thank and express my deep admiration, appreciation and respect for the very good people of Etobicoke North. Many in our community have become real family and friends. I thank the people of Etobicoke North for the privilege of humbling serving them. I promise to raise their issues in this great House and to fight for what is important to them.

Today I will tackle jobs, health and the environment.

Etobicoke North is one of thirteen priority areas for the city of Toronto. The people in my riding want jobs. Our youth want jobs. As a result, I spend many constituency days meeting fathers, mothers and young people who are unemployed, correcting covering letters and resumes, providing job interviewing skills and, most important, finding placements and work for our community members.

Last Parliament I was able to lobby the government for a new jobs program for our community, but my community needs more help now. It needs a real plan for job creation and a plan for youth employment. How many jobs will the next phase of the government's plan produce? How many of these jobs will come to Etobicoke North?

Going forward, I believe health care will be a defining issue of the next four years. My constituents, like Canadians across the country, want their health care system to be there when they and their families need it most.

During the election, family after family told me they wanted federal leadership on hospital wait times. A 2011 study from the Canadian Institutes for Health Information shows wait times for priority procedures vary widely across the provinces. For example, in some provinces more than half of cataract and knee replacement patients wait longer than the recommended time frames for their procedures. Currently no pan-Canadian benchmarks exist for CT and MRI scans, both necessary for diagnosis.

Government Orders

Let me highlight the importance of diagnostic imaging. One Canadian patient, 77 years old who was in growing pain, losing weight and becoming steadily more ill over the course of many months was told to wait for five months for an MRI, despite the fact that her doctor suspected she had cancer. As the result, her family paid more than \$11,000 U.S., out of pocket, for a trip to the Mayo Clinic. She was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Canadians want better results from their health care system, particularly at a time when our aging population is putting pressure on the system's ability to deliver. I believe Alzheimer's disease and other dementia are among the most significant and critical health care issues in Canada, and we cannot ignore them.

Today 500,000 Canadians suffer with some form of dementia. The impact on those with the illness, and on their families, is profound, as is the cost to society, \$15 billion today, \$150 billion in 30 years.

Where is a national or federal strategy to cope with the rising tide of dementia? Existing federal programs, research funding, support and income assistance pale in comparison to the enormous and rapidly escalating health, economic and social impacts of this devastating disease.

In the last Parliament I introduced a bill to establish a national Alzheimer's office within the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop, in conjunction with provincial health departments, a comprehensive national plan to address all aspects of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia and specifically to improve the lives of persons with dementia and decrease the burden on society.

My last point regarding health is the need for evidence-based policies. The government has been made aware that over 12,500 treatment procedures for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI, have now been undertaken worldwide in over 50 countries and that some MS patients report improved quality of life, including reduced brain fog, fatigue, improved circulation and motor skills following the procedure. Sometimes we ignore the obvious at our peril.

• (1700)

In 1982 Barry Marshall and Robin Warren, Australian physicians, identified a link between an ulcer and a bacterium and it was 1994 before the medical system recommended treating that bacterium with antibiotics.

Why is the government refusing to undertake a nationally funded multi-centre clinical trial to determine if treating CCSVI will improve the quality of life for MS patients, 55,000 to 75,000 of them in Canada? Multiple treatment trials are under way in the United States. It is time for Canada to act.

The last issue I will tackle is climate change, one of Earth's most pressing challenges and perhaps a defining issue of our generation.

The floods that devastated Pakistan, Venezuela and Colombia this year are a wake-up call. The wildfires that gripped Russia are a wake-up call. There will be worse impacts, more wake-up calls and no country will be exempt.

Despite this year's extreme weather warnings, the government failed to even mention climate change in the throne speech. No

wonder we keep winning fossil awards for being followers instead of leaders on the world stage.

In 2009 the government missed a real opportunity for a triple win, a renewable stimulus with positive impacts on the economy, jobs and the atmosphere.

In 2009 it invested \$1 billion in a green infrastructure fund over five years to support projects like public transit, sustainable energy and waste management. In stark contrast, Germany invested \$13 billion, the United States \$50 billion and China \$221 billion, or 220 times that of Canada.

Is the government missing another opportunity in 2011 with its clean air agenda?

Climate change is not a closed case. We can rise to the challenge, as in the past when major powers rose to the challenge. They built country-wide railways, they fought in World War I and World War II and they travelled to the moon.

If all current plans and pledges to cut or limit emissions were delivered completely on time, global emissions would still keep growing during the next 10 years. Canada has a responsibility to make progress on the 2020 target and not just one-quarter of the way.

More stringent actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cannot be postponed much longer. Otherwise the opportunity to keep the average global temperature rise below 2° Celsius is in danger and serious impacts are associated with this limit, including an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, shifts in growing seasons and sea level rise.

Climate change was missing from the throne speech and is wholly under-represented in budget 2011. Canada should honestly listen to the voice from the front line on climate change, should ensure that those impacted by climate change are meaningfully involved and that those who make the decisions must be accountable to those impacted.

Finally, it is important for the government to realize that individuals are making change in their own lives and that they want change on the national and international stage.

It is also important that parliamentarians ask this question. "Is this something my children would be proud of?"

Government Orders

Climate negotiations require sacrifice. We must negotiate for our children who are not here. We have to accept moral responsibility.

• (1705)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I congratulate the member for Etobicoke North for being re-elected in what I think she would probably agree was a bit of a sea of blue in Etobicoke and neighbouring Mississauga.

She spent a fair bit of time talking about health care. I hope the member, in her response, will acknowledge the fact that this government has maintained the 6% increase in transfer payments to our provincial partners for health care and that we have been a very strong government in working with the provinces to give them flexibility to deliver front-line health care services to all our residents who rely on them.

Will she stand and acknowledge the record of this government in terms of our funding for health care?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and thank him for his question. However, I would ask, what has the government done on negotiations for 2014? I was very clear on the government's lack of progress on wait times and I did give some very clear examples.

We need to be talking about the future of health care. I see nothing about building the future of health care. I see nothing about genomics and how it would allow tomorrow's physicians to predict in utero or at birth what major diseases a person is likely to develop. A physician could then prescribe a personalized program such as lifestyle changes to prevent disease going forward.

Personalized medicine would reveal whether an individual is likely to respond well to a drug and would ensure that each patient receives the right medicine at the right time. There could be vaccines created to specifically treat a person's cancer. I know stem cells are frightening for many people, but they need to understand that I as an adult can take stem cells from my own hip bone and be treated for disease.

It is important to start having these conversations about the future of health care.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague's knowledge of issues regarding health care is quite extensive and I congratulate her on her response a short time ago. I would also commend her for her work on CCSVI and MS. She has educated MPs from all parties on this issue in the last Parliament and I am sure will continue to do so in this Parliament.

I want to go back to the climate change issue. I agree with my colleague that climate change was not featured in the Speech from the Throne. I remember several occasions some time ago when the government bragged about its work from Copenhagen and other major international conferences despite the fact that criticism was levied against it from many other countries.

One of the issues was carbon sequestration, which was talked about extensively, but I do not hear much about that any more. Perhaps the hon. member could shed some light on this. I do not know if the government could. However, I used to hear a lot about that and how it could affect reducing the adverse effects of climate

change, especially when it comes violent weather. The average sea temperature in eastern Canada right now is rising. I was hoping she would comment on that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and thank him for the tremendous work he does. It is an honour to serve with him in the House.

My colleague has raised important issues. It is important for people to understand that climate change is not just an environmental issue, it is a human rights issue. For some people it may mean the right to live. Climate change is also an international security issue and a justice issue. The ones who are suffering the most have the least responsibility for it.

Here in Canada it is important for us to listen to those on the front line. The front line voices are those who live in the north of Canada, our aboriginal people, and the Maldives who live slightly above sea level.

I had the privilege of going to Westminster on climate change. We heard from a woman from Bangladesh that salt water had intruded onto her farmland. As a result, her husband had to work in the forest where he was mauled to death by a tiger. Since her husband had died, she was sent to live with her family where a hurricane hit and they lived for a month on an embankment. That was how they survived. She came to Westminster to tell parliamentarians, "Big important people do justice for us. Climate change is deep down in my heart painful".

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise again in the House in this Parliament.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

I want to commend you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker. It seems all members have been standing in the House thanking everyone back home who has helped get them here and I would like to do the same.

I would first like to thank God for this remarkable opportunity to serve the people of Crowfoot. I want to thank my constituents and constituency for supporting me in the last election.

We all have supporters who help get each one of us elected. I would like to thank my wife Darlene for her unwavering support and love, and the help she gave me in the work that I do constantly. A supportive spouse in a place like this is absolutely imperative and I am very blessed to have the one I have.

Government Orders

I also want to thank my two children, Kristen and Ryan. This is about the only time I can do it. Both of them during the campaign helped out by their support and being there. Today is my daughter Kristen's 19th birthday and far too often members of Parliament are working here in Ottawa as our loved ones back home are celebrating some of the significant events in their lives. Dad wishes he was home today with her, but we will be celebrating on the weekend. I thank Ryan for his help around the farm and the ranch when I am not around.

I had a campaign manager who has campaigned with me for the last four elections, Steven Snider. I thank him for his expertise, as well as my official agent, Neil Thorogood. We all have those who have hung around for all of these elections over the years. My riding is quite extensive geographically and I have campaign offices set up throughout it, with many people staffing the offices in Camrose, Three Hills, Strathmore and others.

Throughout the years in opposition, Conservatives diligently worked toward the day where, as a political party, we could bring forward effective change through budgets and throne speeches or addressed during budget time. We wanted to see taxes lowered. We wanted to see a reduction in taxes.

We wanted a country, a government and a nation being able to pay down the debt load that every Canadian is faced with. We wanted to be able to spend federal funds effectively and efficiently. We wanted to stand up to those who would abuse our criminal justice system and to tell criminals there are going to be tougher sentences while supporting those who have been victims of crime. We wanted to be able to implement many other policies, including the Senate, over the five elections that I have been involved in and campaigned on.

Today, we have the opportunity to address this budget implementation bill, to discuss some of the issues, to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and that hopefully we will be able to achieve some of what we have promised. I am proud to report to all the people I have mentioned, the campaigners and voters who supported me, that we will keep our promises and live up to our word.

The budget we are working on today is almost exactly what we introduced before the election. During the election campaign, we said we would bring back the same budget or many of the measures that were in it, and we kept our word. The budget includes some of what we campaigned on and the budget implementation bill that we are debating today keeps the promises we made.

In my riding of Crowfoot and the surrounding ridings in the province of Alberta, we are certain about a number of things. We are certain, first, about our political views. We know what works well in the province of Alberta, in our homes and communities, and we continue to push for the things that we value.

•(1715)

For the first time in my political career, the electors in my riding are enjoying a majority government. The Crowfoot riding has always been one of those ridings that has been fiscally conservative, most of it very socially conservative in that it is compassionate about those who need help.

In the 41st Parliament, the MPs from across Canada who share our views have been elected, elected to form, not just government as we have for the last five and a half years but government in a majority sense. We have waited a long time.

Today we are debating the budget implementation bill. The budgetary process is complex. Canadians have already heard the news that the next phase of Canada's economic action plan has been approved. It was approved last night by the House of Commons.

It is technically correct, the budget passed, but what the House passed is merely a general motion that approved our Conservative government's budgetary policy. What we debate today is needed in order to implement the provisions that we passed last night. This is standard procedure.

The budget implementation bill will be sent to committee now for hearings and then returned to this chamber for report stage and third reading, and then it will repeat this process as it goes to the Senate. Once the budget implementation bill is passed, we can move forward on the measures in the budget that will help hard-working Canadians and their families.

The measures in the bill focus on the Canadian economy. It contains measures that support hard-working Canadians and their families, and it will aid in the economic recovery.

We said it during the election campaign and we say it again, "We will keep taxes low". We are targeting investments to support jobs, to support the creation of new jobs, and to also hold and keep the jobs we have already. We want to see growth. We are improving the quality of life for our seniors, our families and our children.

We said in the budget and in the budget implementation bill that we will control government spending and stay on track to eliminate the annual federal budgetary deficit with a plan to do it by 2014-15.

At a time when budgets are tight, our government believes that taxpayers should not be overburdened with an annual \$27 million subsidy for political parties. We are freeing taxpayers from that yoke that was around their neck with this bill. We believe that engagement by individual Canadians is what empowers political parties.

I noted one day that the NDP member for Hamilton Centre spoke on this issue. We have a difference of opinion. We talked about democracy that day and the importance of democracy. The view, and I believe his is well-intentioned, is that taxpayers should fund this democracy in a way that we believe is not right. We believe that political parties are not entitled to taxpayers' dollars, but that we should raise those funds from within our own ranks and from our supporters.

As Canadians support a political party, I will approach my supporters, my volunteers, and those who vote for me and I will ask them to contribute to the effort. I will not simply say to the 45,000 who voted Conservative in my riding, "Don't worry about it. There will be \$90,000 a year coming in to the political party". No, we will ask for their support. It is not the entitlement any more. We should not be automatically going to the treasury of our country and asking for that type of funding.

Government Orders

Taxpayers, at least what they told me in the riding of Crowfoot, believe there are better things the government should be spending their money on. In fact, the default position of the voters I represent is, "Please, stop taxing me to death. Reduce my taxes. Stop spending my tax dollars on everything possible and instead, only spend taxpayers dollars on necessary and desirable programs and services". Those were some of the quotes that I heard in the last election. One of the best ones was when an older gentleman from Hanna came to me and said, "Tell Ottawa to spend less so we can keep more".

● (1720)

This budget does a lot for seniors and for Canadians. We look forward to being able to implement this, hopefully sooner rather than later. Hopefully we can do this in a short number of days.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member took great delight in bragging about all the things the government was doing for seniors. If the government is doing such a great job in raising seniors out of poverty, why are there more seniors in poverty now than when the Conservatives first came into power?

He talked about subsidies and how they were unfair to Canadian taxpayers, et cetera. Does the hon. member really think it is fair and democratic for his government to receive 40% of the vote, but receive 100% of the power?

My colleague also talked about wasting political money on political subsidies. Could he explain to us why it is okay then for senators, who are appointed and receive good pay, to spend 100% of their time during an election campaign working on that campaign? Is that not just another subsidy?

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, I thought that if I referenced the member in my speech, there would be a good chance he would stand and ask a question.

With respect to seniors, we are so pleased to be able to recognize that significant demographic in our country. Seniors have built our country. They fought for our freedom and our liberty so we could enjoy all our values.

However, we also recognize that there are some who are vulnerable. That is why we have brought forward measures in the budget that would give another \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, those who are the most vulnerable. We have a different philosophy than that of the NDP. We believe that for those who are vulnerable, we will put measures in place to help them.

My colleague talked about our government receiving 40% of the vote. We have a system that probably is the best system in the world. It is called first past the post. I believe there is less chance of corruption, fraud and all those things that may go on in some parts of the world during elections. First past the post served the old British parliamentary system quite well and it has served us well in Canada.

He mentioned the Senate. We have talked about the need to reform the other place election after election. We will continue to move forward with measures that will make the Senate effective. We will not allow 45-year terms for senators. We will move on these issues.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the contrast between the walk and the talk reminds me of an article I saw in this morning's *Ottawa Citizen* by well-known

Conservative commentator Dan Gardner. In this article he contrasts the rhetoric of the Prime Minister with the reality of the government. He says:

And the record of [the Prime Minister's] government doesn't look much like the beliefs of [the Prime Minister].

Record spending increases. Surpluses turned into structural deficits. Bureaucratic bloat. Vote-buying tax policies that make economists pull their hair out. Hyper-centralization of power. Slush funds. Pork-barrel politics. Cronyism and patronage that would make a Liberal blush. A plan to fix the budget as credible as Greek bonds.

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments on reconciling his walk and his talk.

● (1725)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Madam Speaker, if Dan Gardner is the individual who wrote *The Trouble With Canada* and the *The Trouble with Democracy*, then I would encourage everyone to read them. Most of the troubles he wrote about were the troubles that took place over 13 years of Liberal government.

I have gone to meetings where the NDP talked about Canada being a country with taxes that were too low. The Liberals said that if they only had another term, they would be able to solve all the problems they did not solve in those 13 years.

A new day is dawning in our country. We have a majority government. We are very much looking forward to the positive policies that we can bring forward for Canadian families, for children, for seniors, for all those across the country.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, everybody is thanking everybody and I would like to do that as well. I certainly congratulate you for repeating your position. I always admired your work in the last session, and I know I will admire your work in this session. Also, I have admired your work as chair of the all party arts caucus. I hope you will find the time to take that on again. You did a great job and we need that caucus.

I thank the people of Dufferin—Caledon for electing me for the fourth time. Of course it was four elections in seven years, but it seems like it has been forever. Certainly we need workers to get elected. We cannot do it ourselves. I thank all those people who have helped me. I thank my wife and family for the help they gave me as well.

Today, we are debating Bill C-3, which is the budget-implementation bill and which was proposed by the Minister of Finance. It is titled "Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act", which will allow the government to support seniors in need and help provinces during the economic recovery, encourage young entrepreneurs in business and enhance federal assistance for part-time students, among other measures.

Government Orders

As the member of Parliament representing Dufferin—Caledon, I have an important role in ensuring our government delivers to the residents of my riding, as we all do for all our ridings. In the opinion of my constituents, certainly after going through an recent election, it is absolutely necessary for the government to help Canada recover from the recession. Bill C-3 and the budget we have introduced will make this happen.

The government remains committed to the economy, as it attempts to deliver on Canada's economic action plan. This economic action plan is working, as evidenced by the fact that in the first year alone almost \$32 billion in stimulus spending and tax relief was delivered. With this budget, the government intends to deliver another \$28 billion in support for recovery from this recession.

The implementation of budget 2011, through the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act, will, I believe, make this happen.

The investments made over the last two years have been successful in shielding Canadians from the worst economic downturn we have had in years. The carefully researched and focused 2009 budget was prepared to respond the challenges of our time. As a result, over 28,500 projects have been completed or are under way, which has created over 480,000 jobs across the country. I believe it is now up to 560,000 jobs since 2009.

Of these projects, over 8,100 revolved around provincial, territorial and municipal infrastructure projects. This includes over 4,100 infrastructure stimulus fund projects and over 2,000 recreational infrastructure Canada projects. Many of these projects, I am pleased to say, occurred in my own riding of Dufferin—Caledon. I think every member here could talk about the projects that occurred in all of their ridings.

Residents of Dufferin—Caledon are benefiting from this plan, as a result of the significant federal investment in projects, which range from road and water infrastructure to recreational facilities throughout the riding. Perhaps the largest the venture was the continuation of the Caledon community complex in the town of Caledon for which the town received \$7 million. Other projects include the construction of a sewage treatment plant in East Luther Grand Valley and the renovation of the Dufferin County courthouse in Orangeville. Additionally, federal grants have been spent on water infrastructure in Shelburne, Orangeville and Peel, with road infrastructure occurring in Caledon, East Garafraxa, Orangeville, Mulmur and Peel.

Federal contributions also supported recreational facilities, such as the construction of a skate park in Bolton and the upgrading of trails at the Albion Hills Conservation Area.

• (1730)

In an effort to invest in a cleaner energy economy, federal support was given to the Mayfield recreational project to upgrade accessibility and energy initiatives. Over the course of the last two years, our riding of Dufferin—Caledon has received federal assistance in over 30 projects, reaching a grand total of \$31,888,372.

The construction and renovations that occurred in Dufferin—Caledon helped to deliver an immediate boost to local jobs and incomes within the area and the completion of these projects will

deliver benefits to the citizens of the riding for many years to come. These projects have all occurred as a result of the last budget. It is clear that the government has created an economic plan in which Canadians will feel secure.

The next phase is critically important. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is intended to build on the success of the stimulus plan and create conditions for long-term economic prosperity throughout the country. It will support job creation, families and communities, invest in innovation, education and training and preserve Canada's fiscal advantage.

Our government has listened to the citizens of Canada and the residents of my riding of Dufferin—Caledon. The budget and the bill before us reflect the comments, suggestions, concerns, wants and needs of Canadian citizens, including those of my riding.

Budget 2011 and Bill C-3 will continue to support jobs and growth within provinces and territories throughout the country. The legacy of modernized infrastructure, enhanced skills training and lower taxes will continue to benefit Canadians.

The proposed bill will keep taxes low, which is a concern for Canadians throughout the nation, and it will control government spending, which will help to eliminate the deficit by 2015.

The bill reflects the priorities of the residents of my riding with an emphasis on the economy and the reduction of the deficit. The interests of our citizens are reflected as our government has remained focused on our citizens and on securing the economic recovery of our country.

We have a plan to achieve the goals of improving the financial security of Canadian workers, families and seniors and we must continue to focus upon this plan.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is dedicated to the continuation of this plan. The budget and the bill are dedicated to the creation of jobs. As we continue to recover from the recession, it is vital for the government to help our citizens find work. Our government has realized this and we have worked to ensure that job creation occurs throughout the next two years.

With the budget and Bill C-3, the Conservative government is ensuring that our citizens will find work that will help them support their families. Specific measures include providing a one-time hiring credit for small businesses, which will encourage hiring. Bill C-3 would provide \$20 million over the next two years to help Canadian Youth Business Foundation in its support of young entrepreneurs.

Dufferin—Caledon is the home of a thriving business community, with many start-up businesses in various industries. These initiatives will help all those involved in the business sector in the area. It is vital that we support job creation as presented by the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and the bill before us.

Government Orders

The well-being of Canadians is important to the government and the budget and the bill will continue to support seniors, children and students. This budget is especially important to our country's seniors who have worked to build a great country for future generations and who deserve a dignified retirement.

The senior community represents a large portion of Dufferin—Caledon and I have had the privilege of hosting several seniors' expos held in the riding for numerous years. Through these events, I have had the opportunity to meet many of my senior constituents and listen to their concerns.

Budget 2011 and this bill protect our seniors and will increase their financial support. Through the enhanced guaranteed income supplement as stated in the supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy act, eligible seniors would receive annual benefits of up to \$600 for a single senior and \$840 to couples. This action will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors throughout Canada, including those residing in my riding.

I had a bit more to say, but my time is up.

• (1735)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said a lot about seniors, and it is something with which we should be seized.

As the member will know, we thought there could have been a lot more done for seniors. In fact, before the election, we had fought to ensure that more seniors would be covered in the budget submission. Sadly, the government did not hear our message or the message of seniors that there could be more done so we could lift more out of poverty.

I want to be very specific in terms of the budget. If the member could take a look at page 183 of the budget and the strategic and operating review. Could the member enlighten us on whether we will see savings out of the strategic and operating review? Could the member tell us what the plan is to find those savings and assure Canadians, including his constituents, that no one will be affected in terms of the service delivery by government to constituents? It seems lacking in a plan.

How can we be confident of the plan in the budget when all we see is a reference to savings, but not a lot of detail? Could the member enlighten us on that?

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. The focus of our government in this bill and in the budget has been on seniors. Certainly in my riding, it was a question that was asked throughout the election.

I know my friend on the other side talks about how we could do more and it was made quite clear prior to the election that he thought we could do more. The problem is, of course, we have just gone through a recession. We are still not out of that. We are still worried.

The assistance that has been given, and I will not repeat the items that are in the budget and in the bill as we have gone over those a number of times, are certainly modest. Compared to what the New Democratic Party wants, they are very modest. However, considering the times, I think it is pretty good and the seniors like that.

As far as the plan is concerned, the minister has made it quite clear we are going to have a review.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker from the Conservatives questioned the Liberal Party's commitment to health care. With regard to the health care accord, which is so critically important to Canada, the government seems to be quite content to sit back and do nothing, in terms of engaging provinces to try to get dialogue going so that we can have a 2014 health care accord that all Canadians can be proud of.

How much longer do we have to wait before the government decides to start opening negotiations with provinces so that we can have a health care accord for 2014? Why wait so long?

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the person asking the question is a Liberal. I can certainly remember having the honour of serving at Queen's Park as a member of the provincial parliament and listening to the Liberal government with its cuts of \$25 billion for health care. That is how it got rid of the deficits in this country.

We have made a commitment to increase the transfer payments by 6%. We have increased our payments by 33% since we entered office. It is never enough, of course. Health care is a serious problem. That is why we have to have some very serious negotiations with the provinces by 2014 with respect to the accord. We all have our responsibilities. The provinces have their responsibilities. The federal government has its responsibilities. It will require some debate in this House. Health care is certainly first on the mind of everyone in this country and we all have our job to do.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I would also like to thank the voters in the riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and my family, my husband and my two daughters, Frédérique and Sarah-Alexandre. I would also like to thank my entire team of volunteers who made it possible for me to be here today.

On June 6, the hon. finance minister introduced his 2011 budget entitled "A Low-Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth". The budget, as introduced in March 2011, was rejected by the NDP. We are still not satisfied with this new, slightly modified version, which does not meet the expectations and needs of the voters who placed their trust in us.

Although the government is relieved that it has obtained its majority and will govern for four years, it should not forget that the majority of voters gave their vote of confidence to other parties, which have not formed the government. We are talking about 60% of the voters.

Government Orders

Not all Canadians said yes to the economic plan proposed by the Conservative government. This clearly indicates that voters want to have a say in what will be decided and implemented in Ottawa, and the government must take that into account. The government will also have to explain to millions of voters why some measures to support families are not in the budget.

It is this reality that the NDP is concerned about. There is nothing in the government's proposals to improve the living conditions of Canadian families. Poverty exists in Canada and increases every year. All experts agree that, for the past few years, the gap between rich and poor families in Canada has been widening. Inequalities persist rather than diminish.

However, there have been some small steps forward. In 1989, Canada's poverty rate was 10.2%; in 2008, it was 9.4%, a reduction of 0.8% in 20 years. In 1989, the poverty rate for those under 18 was 11.9%; in 2008, it was 9.1%, a reduction of 2.8% in 20 years. Canada can do much better for its people, and we cannot be pleased about such a small decrease in poverty.

Our youth are in a precarious position. In 1981, 31.2% of young workers between 14 and 24 had a low-wage job. In 2000, the proportion had risen to 45%, a sharp increase in 20 years.

Given the precarious situation facing young people, parents are being forced to provide for their children longer, since they do not have the means to start their own families. The only significant measures brought in to help children date back to 1990 and 1998—so over 10 years ago now—namely, the Canada child tax benefit and the national child supplement.

The benefits of those measures, which were meant to make things easier for families, have diminished over the years, because at the same time, employment insurance benefits have decreased and certain medical services have been delisted. Social assistance payments were lower in 2007 than in 1986. The employment insurance system was less generous in 2008 than in 1981. In 2007, the poverty gap was the same as in 1981. The average family needs an extra \$6,700 a year.

Disparities also persist in the workplace. Canadians now have to work a lot more in order to provide for their families. The percentage of Canadians working 50 hours or more a week has increased. Disparities also persist in health care. More and more young people are reporting health problems that affect their daily functioning—things like memory, reasoning and mental health problems. In 1998, 80% of young people aged 12 to 19 said they were in good health. In 2005, only 67% reported the same.

The Canadian government needs to do something for the future of our children and youth and support all Canadian families that contribute to our economic development, even though some of these families are going through tough times, such as job loss, the death of a parent, illness or any other number of things that can happen in life.

All programs are needed in order to help Canadians re-enter the workforce and allow them to get by when they face an unexpected financial loss.

● (1745)

Any decreases or cuts to support for families undermine the many years of effort to combat poverty and inequality in Canada.

The NDP is asking the government to urgently consider measures that are not included in the budget but that would help families meet their basic needs, namely, decent housing, jobs with salaries that are commensurate with skills and experience, help for all children living at home, benefits to ensure that all families are able to eat a healthy diet every day, programs that give access to health care and programs to support young workers and those with less training.

The NDP is also asking the government not to call into question assistance that has already been granted and not to reduce assistance for unemployed workers. The NDP reiterates its request that the government help people who are unable to work and who do not have the resources to meet their family or other obligations.

In a recent report, the OECD expressed its concerns about the high rate of unemployment in Canada. Young people and those with less training are still the most affected by unemployment. As a result, reducing or eliminating programs to help unemployed workers will make many families more vulnerable by depriving them of the support they need, or it might plunge them into long-term poverty.

The government is capable of adopting measures to support businesses in case of an economic crisis or recession. Why then is it so difficult to do the same for families who are also experiencing financial crises? Why ignore this reality that affects many families each day?

Immediate action must be taken to increase assistance. It will be too late for many families if we do not act quickly enough.

In another area, the decrease in the public service's budget will directly affect workers who will be under a great deal of pressure to get the work done in deplorable conditions. They will be asked to produce more and work longer hours for the same salary. They will be at risk of burnout, depression and psychological harassment.

The NDP believes that it is shameful and completely irresponsible to attack families once again; on the contrary, they need relief from their troubles.

In conclusion, Canada seems to have become a much richer country but, in reality, only the incomes, and thus the wealth, of the richest 20% of Canadians have increased.

Poverty in a rich country is not an inevitability; it is the result of poor policies. Therefore, the government must propose a real agenda to eradicate poverty and inequality.

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague tell us who is most affected by poverty in Canada?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to answer my colleague's question.

Government Orders

Those most affected are single parents, single individuals between the ages of 45 and 65, recent immigrants—since 2000, three-quarters of new immigrants have been members of a visible minority, persons with disabilities and aboriginals.

• (1750)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles thinks we could do to truly resolve the issues of poverty and inequality in Canada.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

It is absolutely possible to fight poverty, because persistent poverty in a country like ours is the result of bad policies. If we change some policies, we can considerably reduce poverty and inequality. Some countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have managed to curb poverty and inequality by adjusting their policies.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her intervention and congratulate her on her election to this Parliament.

One of the issues we have talked about today is seniors poverty. She mentioned and referenced the issue of concerns around newcomers as well.

The concerns we have on this side is that there clearly is more that can be done and should be done for seniors. I would like to know about some of the issues she heard about seniors in her riding during the campaign and what she thinks can be done and what should be done, and also about newcomers, because that was touched on as well. We have seen the government cut back on newcomer support. That is something that has affected many newcomers. I would like to have her comments on that particular subject.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member once again. During the campaign, I met many seniors in my riding. People are refusing to see their family members go to a nursing home to be taken care of. They want to do it themselves. They decide to work together. I met a family where two sisters decided to take care of their mother. Other people have decided to create multi-generational homes in order to be able to have elderly parents close by, especially if they are suffering from Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. They are then able to take care of their loved one and ensure that the person is receiving good care. These people also told me that the elderly need to be taken care of. But putting them in homes is too expensive and difficult, so it is better that they do it themselves.

[English]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. When it comes to newcomers, our government has probably increased funding like no other government. We also took off the landing fee, which was a difficulty for many of the newcomers. There are many ways that we have actually improved settlement for newcomers.

However, I would like to ask the member what she thinks of our plan to cut the deficit.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, many things can be done to help new immigrants. For example, a national anti-poverty strategy needs to be created, one that includes them and is based on targets and deadlines. As well, an action plan must be created in collaboration with the opposition, accountability must be ensured and official indicators of poverty need to be established.

[English]

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government released the 2011-12 budget and, once again, it falls short for Canadians. The government continues to give away billions of dollars to the most profitable corporations while moving ahead with \$11 billion worth of cuts from programs and services that Canadians rely on.

Just recently, we heard of cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans totalling \$56.8 million this year alone. This means that habitat conservation and monitoring will suffer. Most disturbing was the announcement that the Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador search and rescue centres will be moved to Halifax, jeopardizing the lives of countless people who make their living on the sea.

As Fisheries and Oceans critic for Canada's New Democrats and the official opposition, I am very concerned that the budget does not even mention the word "salmon", an iconic species in British Columbia that has faced many challenges over the last decade. I am concerned that with the cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it will become more difficult to protect our salmon and other aquatic species.

This budget contains little for the people of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody. This budget does nothing to address the \$574 million funding shortfall for the Evergreen Line. Many in my riding have dubbed this desperately needed transit project the "Nevergreen Line" as, after 20 years of delays, this line still has not come to fruition. As completion has again been pushed back to 2015. It is now being speculated that this may be the most delayed transportation project in the country. These delays are ridiculous.

People in the tri-cities are calling for the federal government to come back to the table, to sit down with the province and TransLink, our local government authority, and hash out a new funding formula that puts shovels in the ground this month. The Evergreen Line is the most pressing transportation infrastructure project in the Lower Mainland and, at the very least, deserves a mention in this budget.

Government Orders

The government's strategic and operating review reveals that Infrastructure Canada is cutting \$45 million of green infrastructure funding, even as it stares down a \$123 billion municipal infrastructure deficit in this country. The green infrastructure fund is imperative if we are to move forward with transit and other green building initiatives. As a former city councillor, I know too well the lack of funding that cities face. It is an uphill battle and we must do more to invest in our cities. This budget fails to do that.

However, I am not surprised. This budget also does nothing to address the most pressing issue of our time: climate change. Canadians want the government to take action on climate change. The federal government needs to follow a path to lower carbon emissions. The government has consistently failed with regard to this environmental file.

Canada's New Democrats have proposed several initiatives that the government could take to demonstrate its commitment on this issue. The NDP has a plan to cap carbon, putting a price on carbon and establishing hard emission limits for Canada's largest polluters.

We have also put forward the climate change accountability act. In fact, it was re-introduced today by my hon. colleague, the member for Halifax. It would ensure that Canada meets the long-term target of reducing our greenhouse emissions to 80% below that of 1990 levels by the year 2050 and set interim targets between 2015 and 2045.

Canada's New Democrats also would like to see more emphasis on green and renewable energy. Canada could become a leader in this field if we dedicated the resources to developing it. Rather than subsidizing big oil, we should help businesses that are committed to making green investment. We could use the money that the government gives to large oil companies to invest in transit, household energy, conservation and renewable energy development.

One thing I will commend the Conservative government for is the renewal of the eco-energy retrofit program. I stood in the House in February of this year and called on the government to reinstate the program. The eco-energy retrofit program not only created jobs but helped working families make needed improvements to their homes. I am pleased that the Conservative government listened to the NDP and brought this program back. I think the Conservatives would do well to build and expand on this program.

• (1755)

When Canadians are asked what issue is most important to them, many say that it is health care. At the beginning of March, Canadians were horrified to hear of patients at the Royal Columbian Hospital in my riding being treated in a Tim Hortons donut shop. The Royal Columbian Hospital has been at the centre of several patient horror stories since it was forced to drastically increase its capacity in 2004 when Saint Mary's Hospital in New Westminster was shut down.

The federal government cannot sit back. It is time to act. It is time to protect our public health care system and provide adequate funding.

This budget does nothing to help front line health care workers. Too many Canadians are without a family doctor. I hear from people in my riding who cannot find a doctor who will take their family on and, instead, must rely on walk-in clinics with long wait lines, or use

the emergency room, which is a very expensive way to provide health care.

Canada's New Democrats are calling on the federal government to invest in public health care and to invest in the training and hiring of 1,200 new doctors and 6,000 new nurses, which would lessen the load in hospitals and save millions in health care costs in the long run.

The health care system faces many challenges and New Democrats have proposed solutions, such as a national pharmacare program so that people can get the medication they need at an affordable cost; and appropriate home care service so that seniors can stay in their home when they face chronic health care problems.

New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody is a diverse riding, but one issue I hear consistently is that it is becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet. I am talking about affordability. My riding is home to many seniors and some live in poverty. Seniors living in poverty after working their whole lives building this country is unacceptable.

This budget provides only a \$300 million per year increase to the GIS. That is only \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. This is less than half of what is needed to pull every Canadian senior out of poverty. It would not take much and it would go a very long way to help the seniors in this country to live in dignity. It is shameful that the government continues to provide corporate tax cuts and subsidize oil and gas companies when seniors in this country are living in poverty.

The Lower Mainland is one of the most expensive places to live and yet this budget fails to invest in affordable housing. Among all the world's major metropolitan areas, Vancouver has been ranked the third least affordable city. Residents across the Lower Mainland, including my constituents, struggle to secure safe, affordable housing. When will the government wake up and face the realities of the average Canadian, including the affordable housing struggle?

As we all know, the government made a backroom deal with B.C.'s provincial government to impose the harmonized sales tax, effectively shifting the tax burden from corporations to individuals. Hard-working citizens have been hard hit with this new tax, paying upwards of \$800 in additional taxes each year. Many seniors in my riding have written to express to me their frustration at how the HST has affected their already strained pocketbooks.

Instead of acknowledging their role in implementing this much hated tax, the federal government has shrugged off responsibility onto the provincial government. British Columbians know better and deserve better from the government.

Government Orders

• (1800)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments and I thought there were a number of inaccuracies in what he said, but what concerned me the most were his comments relating to Fisheries and Oceans.

He commented on the \$56.8 million that is listed in the budget as reductions. I am concerned, and I heard this during the election campaign as well, when someone takes that number and then assumes that somehow habitat enforcement and monitoring and stock assessment and all of those things will be reduced.

Would the hon. member not agree that is really fearmongering when he has no idea what is involved or what that \$56.8 million is composed of?

In regard to Fisheries and Oceans' budget of about \$2 billion, does the hon. member or do his constituents really think that we cannot find less than 3% of a federal department's budget that is poorly spent and should be reduced?

• (1805)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that this department has faced several cuts over the years and is really struggling to implement its mandate.

I have heard from so many fishers from coast to coast in different communities. I have heard from non-profit organizations. I have heard from many who say there is not adequate science or information. I have even heard from DFO workers in the field who are struggling to get the good information they need to make the decisions necessary to protect our fishery and make it a thriving, flourishing industry.

That is critical to providing a strong department and making that department work well.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add to the exchange that just took place. I think the point that was levelled at my colleague in the NDP was that the \$56 million cut was just a little bit of flesh on the side, when in fact it is not, when we look at the total numbers.

For example, the parliamentary secretary accused him, and I assume he would accuse us of the same, of fearmongering. The Conservatives are closing a busier than average search and rescue centre. Fearmongering? Quite frankly, we have a right to be scared in the wake of that closure.

I would like to ask my colleague about the cuts at Fisheries and Oceans. Does he fear for certain programs? For instance, the Conservatives talked about small craft harbours and a lot of the infrastructure from coast to coast to coast. I would like him to comment on that, and the \$56 million cut in expenditures, as cutting to the bone.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate my hon. colleague's concerns, which I share. I think the cuts are making an already tough situation tougher.

It is nice to think that we could simply make a 3% cut across the board and all would be well, but try to tell that to community

members who are struggling, whether in regard to restoration of our Pacific salmon or in regard to the privatization of the halibut fishery, which is a real concern, or in regard to search and rescue decisions where lives depend on having adequate response, and where in some places in this country the response time is already not at a satisfactory level, which Canadians are extremely concerned about. These cuts will only exacerbate the situation.

I have talked to a number of people who are concerned with the infrastructure for their harbours. Investment in harbours will decrease with the budget as opposed to increasing. That is the kind of investment we can look to with this budget.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond—Arthabaska. While I am on my feet, allow me as well to congratulate you on your position in the chair. It is well-deserved, I might add.

Let me also take an opportunity to thank the good people of Essex, my riding back home, for what is now my third re-election to this chamber. I was the first Conservative MP in Essex in almost 50 years to have been elected back in 2004, and now the only Conservative MP since Confederation to be successfully elected in four consecutive terms.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jeff Watson: Thank you, to my colleagues.

Let me also thank and recognize that Canadians gave our Prime Minister and this government a very strong mandate. That includes a strong mandate from Essex as part of that.

I rise today in support of Bill C-3, our budget implementation bill, an act supporting vulnerable seniors and strengthening Canada's economy. It is a budget that was in large measure originally tabled in March. The budget this time around is nearly identical to that one, with many benefits for the Windsor-Essex region back home and, of course, important benefits for Canada.

Bill C-3 and its measures build on our government's impressive record, a record where, for example, our economic action plan has created over 560,000 jobs in the last two years; where we have been on a low tax track for businesses, both small and large; where, during the downturn, stimulus was temporary, as we wanted it only to sustain us and to stimulate the economy at that time, not to create long-term structural deficits; a record where we paid down debt before we went into the great recession and one that will balance the budget or better by 2014; and a record that includes a 33% increase in funding to support public health care.

There are important new changes since the March budget. There is the beginning of the phasing out of the per-vote subsidy for political parties and also the beginning to set aside funds for the federal government's obligatory one-time transitional payment to Quebec for its impending decision to harmonize its retail sales tax with the goods and services tax. I am surprised, of course, that opposition MPs from Quebec voted against this measure when voting on the budget in principle. Such harmonization and the amount of the transitional payment, as I recall, were unanimously supported by the National Assembly in Quebec.

Government Orders

The measures in Bill C-3 that are important for Windsor-Essex and for our country are first of all the very specifically articulated increased support in our budget for the Windsor-Essex parkway. That is the extension of Highway 401, where it currently ends outside the city of Windsor, to what will be a new international border crossing, a bridge between Windsor and Detroit. Our commitment in 2007, of course, was to fund up to 50% of the eligible capital costs of that particular project, a project that will create 12,000 jobs for one of the highest unemployment areas in Canada.

If I could take a step back, budget 2006 established our borders and gateway crossings fund, about \$2.1 billion. Budget 2007, which we termed "Advantage Canada", laid out a five page vision statement on the border crossing at Windsor and Detroit and in that budget we made a \$400 million down payment toward the Windsor-Essex parkway. As we see now in budget 2011, the current incarnation of our budget, we are promising up to \$1 billion to be set aside from that fund. So, that is a very critical one.

As I talk about our government's support for this project, I am disappointed to see that New Democrat members are opposed, particularly the two New Democrat MPs from Windsor West and Windsor—Tecumseh. They profess verbally to support the DRIC, the new international crossing, and the Windsor-Essex parkway that connects Highway 401 to that important crossing.

I will remind members that this is no minor infrastructure project. We talked about 12,000 jobs from the parkway, up to 30,000 jobs to be created by the parkway and the bridge crossing. It is the top infrastructure priority in Canada, supporting a huge bilateral trade relationship with the United States. These New Democrat members should have been standing in their place and voting for it in 2006, 2007, and now on budget 2011, and actually supporting this project.

• (1810)

If they had the courage of their convictions, where they say they support it, they should actually be standing, even if it means breaking ranks with their party to support our budget.

Second, what is important about our budget implementation?

It is good for industry. The accelerated capital cost writeoff, for example, was begun in 2006 under our government and was extended again in a later budget to 2011. Now, Bill C-3 extends that, our budget extends that for a further two years. It is timely for the retooling for our industries, our manufacturers, increasing their productivity precisely at a time where the Canadian dollar is high. Couple that with previous budget measures where we created a tariff-free zone for machinery imports and we have a perfect nexus, the perfect opportunity for our industries, particularly the machine, tool, die, and mould sector back home which supports not only the auto industry but the aerospace and other sectors. It is a perfect time. It is a historic boost, allowing them to continue their retooling, increasing their productivity and their competitiveness.

The boost of funding for the industrial research assistance program, IRAP, is a huge one. Our economic action plan gave a historic boost during the stimulus period for our businesses. We are continuing that with increases to the IRAP this time around.

Bill C-3 is good for rural Canada. How about more rural doctors and nurses, a new firefighters' tax credit, and new funding for agriculture, especially to improve food safety? All are very critical for rural Canada.

Our budget is obviously very good for seniors with an immediate boost to the guaranteed income supplement. I understand we are working against a very critical deadline of July 1 to get that critical funding to our poor seniors. This GIS measure represents continued progress on retirement security begun by this government with improved rules around direct benefit, direct contribution pensions, RRSPs, RRIFs, our commitment with the provinces on a new pooled retirement pension plan and our continued ongoing talks with the provinces and territories over a modest enhancement to the CPP.

The opposition can join us in furthering retirement security by supporting our budget and this immediate boost to the guaranteed income supplement.

What else is in store from the government with respect to the budget?

How about an increase for Canada's summer jobs, an additional \$10 million a year during the stimulus period. Guess what? Now it is permanent. It is ongoing. That is 3,600 student summer jobs. That is not insignificant when they are looking for valuable skills that they can later take into full-time employment and beyond.

These measures are built on our government's record. We have had a low-tax plan for jobs since 2006, especially in 2007, a \$200 billion package over five years, not only for businesses but for consumers by lowering taxes, increasing disposable income for consumers to stimulate the economy and create jobs. We have our economic action plan, the stimulus that has created 560,000 jobs in the past two years. We are on a low-tax plan for our families saving \$3,000 per year for the average family of four. Our move to balance the budget will create the room for us to implement a family tax cut. With regard to income splitting, we did it for seniors with respect to their pensions. We are now going to do it for families. That is an incredible thing.

Our record includes strong support for the auto industry. In 2008, we established a national automotive strategy and we backed it with money. The first investment went to the Essex engine plant down our way to increase and expand the footprint of the automotive industry. It includes our investments in health care.

Government Orders

I will be supporting this bill. It supports rural Canada, our manufacturers and farmers. It will allow the immediate and timely boost to the guaranteed income supplement for our poor seniors. It supports the single largest infrastructure project in Ontario, the DRIC crossing and the Windsor-Essex Parkway, specifically.

I call on opposition members to support Bill C-3 with their conscience and also with their votes.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of my Conservative colleagues mentioned that they did not want to use public moneys to fund political parties.

Can my colleague explain how tax credits for those who make a contribution to a political party—a minority of Canadians—are not funded by all Canadians? I know a number of people in my riding who are unhappy about their taxes funding the generous tax credit for wealthy contributors to the Conservative Party.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the tax credit, it drives those who actually support a political party to put their money down on the line. They get a benefit from doing that. However, the difference is that we are phasing out the per vote subsidy. I do not know if it is indexed to inflation but it increases over time. It is an automatic payout by taxpayers who supports parties automatically whether they agree with them or not.

For those who actually have the guts to put their dollars down, they get some benefit back. I think that is an incentive to encourage us, but it is also an incentive for the political parties to go out and hustle and create a platform, create something that appeals to people so they will want to give to that party. We have done that successfully, much better than the opposition.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is in regard to the home retrofit program, a program that is supposed to be assisting many thousands of Canadians, and no doubt this year it will. The qualifier there is that it is for this year.

Ultimately, many would argue that a multi-year program of this nature would have been far better in terms of job creation. He talked in his speech about the importance of the creation of jobs, particularly when we look at small business. By having a multi-year program that looks at retrofitting homes, there would have been more of a commitment to those long-term jobs with many of those small businesses.

Why would it not have been a multi-year program?

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for a promotion I guess I did not know I had earned. Perhaps he could tell the Prime Minister and put in a good word for me.

All kidding aside, I wish the hon. member had been here much earlier in the 40th Parliament when previous budgets were presented. The eco-energy retrofit for homes was a multi-year program. Had the member been part of the Liberal Party at that time, he would have opposed it like the rest of his colleagues did.

This is just simply an additional year on what was a multi-year program, a very successful one I might add. Thank God it is back to provide some more jobs this year.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how pleased I was to hear from the member for Essex. He has been a real champion, particularly for probably one of the largest infrastructure programs that this government has and any in recent memory will endeavour.

I want to warn him that, if his NDP neighbours are anything like the ones up in northwestern Ontario, they will vote against it but they will also take credit for it. I just want to let him know in advance that this is something that goes on all the time.

The member in his great speech alluded to the 12,000 jobs that the project itself will contribute to the economy. I just wondered if he could talk about the economic advantages beyond the 12,000 jobs that we will see just to set up this infrastructure and how disappointing it will be for the people from the ridings represented by members of the NDP when they vote against this.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, we just came through an election campaign where the NDP opponents were taking full credit in their literature for having secured 100% of the funding. What is funny is that one cannot secure the funding if one actually votes against the funding. That is a bit of a curious oddity.

It is a huge project, not just for the immediate jobs but, ultimately, end to end, from the 401 to the I-75 in Michigan. A multi-billion dollar project. Even if a fraction of that goes into the economy as additional stimulus over the next five to seven years of construction, it will be a huge boom to Windsor Essex county. Of course, by having a redundant crossing, it secures our bilateral trade relationship with the United States and, on our side of the border, puts us in a position to secure long-term business investments worth millions and millions of dollars. New companies will start up because they have predictability at the corridor.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I call upon the hon. member, I wish to inform him that I will be interrupting his speech at 6:30 p.m., for that is when the time allowed for this debate will expire.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Essex for agreeing to share his time with me. I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to speak to Bill C-3, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011, introduced on June 14. The bill consists of 12 parts, one of which is very attractive for Quebec. I am talking about part 8, which directly concerns Quebec and its government, since it provides a payment of \$368.9 million for equalization.

Government Orders

That is just one more reason for me and my Bloc Québécois colleagues to support this budget, especially since it already provides \$2.2 billion in compensation for our sales tax harmonization. Of course, we could not pass that up. I have been a member in this House for seven years now, and this will probably be the third time I have voted in favour of a budget. Every time, the only reason I voted for it was because it was in the best interests of Quebeckers. The people of Quebec have sent us to the House of Commons to represent their interests, to stand up for them. When budget 2006 provided \$3.3 billion in 2006 for the fiscal imbalance, voting against it was out of the question. For the same reason, we will support this budget here today.

With any budget, we must be careful. The government will always say that its budget is perfect, that all of the measures are wonderful and that there are no shortcomings, while the opposition will find everything that is wrong with it, criticize the measures and always say that it does not go far enough. In the House, we must take stock and weigh the pros and cons of a budget before voting. In this case, there are a number of shortcomings in the budget, and I will perhaps have time to list a few of them. However, in weighing the pros and cons, members from Quebec cannot, in good conscience, vote against a budget like this. Members will recall the long battle waged by the Bloc Québécois and the Government of Quebec regarding the \$2.2 billion for tax harmonization.

The Government of Quebec harmonized its sales tax with that of the federal government in 1992. However, only Ontario, the Maritimes and British Columbia received several billion dollars in compensation, while Quebec was left waiting, supposedly for administrative reasons. I am wondering why the federal government did not act before now, particularly since this measure was in the budget before the election was called; the Bloc Québécois would have immediately supported the budget. The Conservative government, a minority government at that time, would then have been assured that it would keep its place. We likely would not have had an election, as we unfortunately did over these past few months. Everyone was saying that an election costs a lot of money and that it was the fault of the opposition. The Conservative government had the opportunity to prevent an election. We can look back and replay the past but it does not do much good.

As a result of pressure from the Bloc Québécois and the Government of Quebec, an announcement was made during the election campaign that \$2.2 billion in compensation would be allocated in the budget. I am not the type to be content with the answer that the cheque is in the mail. We therefore waited to see whether that money would be in the budget, in black and white. It is, and we are very happy about it.

However, like the hon. member for Essex, I question the reaction of the NDP MPs from Quebec who have decided to ignore the measure giving Quebec \$2.2 billion in compensation. This measure will help not only the Government of Quebec, but all Quebeckers. The NDP MPs have decided not to support the budget. They will have to answer for their actions and explain to their constituents why they disregarded this measure by voting against the budget.

The hon. member mentioned some examples from his own region, where the MPs also decided not to support the budget. It is an

entirely democratic choice, but I was rather shocked to see that many of the NDP MPs from Quebec decided to reject this measure.

● (1825)

There are other interesting measures, including some for seniors, namely \$300 million to help seniors living in poverty. The measure having to do with the guaranteed income supplement is a step in the right direction.

That is another lengthy battle we waged in the House. The Bloc Québécois moved a number of motions to improve the guaranteed income supplement. The math is not hard: another \$110 a month is needed to lift the least fortunate out of poverty. It is not going to make them rich. Now there is talk of \$50 a month; the necessary amount has not been reached, but I have to say that at least this is a step in the right direction for the least fortunate seniors.

As the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, this also makes me want to vote in favour of the budget. That is not to say that the battle is over, that we can sit back and finally say that the guaranteed income supplement issue has been resolved. It is not resolved, especially since there is a shortfall of \$60 a month and we also want—

● (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1855)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 7*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy

Adams

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Alexander	Allen (Welland)	Mulcair	Nantel
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison	Nash	Nicholls
Ambler	Ambrose	Norlock	O'Connor
Anders	Anderson	O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Angus	Armstrong	Oliver	Opitz
Ashfield	Aspin	Paradis	Paty
Atamanenko	Aubin	Payne	Péclet
Ayala	Baird	Penashue	Perreault
Bateman	Bellavance	Plamondon	Poilevre
Benoit	Benskin	Preston	Quach
Bevington	Bezan	Rafferty	Raitt
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Blaney	Block	Ravignat	Raynault
Boivin	Boughen	Reid	Rempel
Braid	Breitkreuz	Richards	Richardson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Rickford	Ritz
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge	Rousseau	Saganash
Butt	Calandra	Sandhu	Savoie
Calkins	Cannan	Saxton	Schellenberger
Carmichael	Caron	Seeback	Sellah
Carrie	Cash	Shea	Shipley
Charlton	Chisholm	Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
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Choquette	Chow	Sorenson	Stanton
Christopherson	Clarke	Stewart	Storseth
Cleary	Comartin	Strahl	Sullivan
Côté	Crowder	Sweet	Thibeault
Cullen	Daniel	Tilson	Toet
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Dechert	Del Mastro	Trottier	Truppe
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Dusseauit	Dykstra	Warkentin	Watson
Fantino	Fast	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Weston (Saint John)	
Fletcher	Fortin	Wilks	Williamson
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Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hassainia	Casey	Coderre
Hawn	Hayes	Cotler	Cuzner
Hiebert	Hillyer	Dion	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Hoback	Hoepfner	Easter	Eyking
Holder	Hughes	Foote	Fry
Jacob	James	Gameau	Goodale
Jean	Julian	Hsu	Karygiannis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Lamoureux	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	MacAulay	McCallum
Kent	Kerr	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Murray
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Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)		

NAYS**Members****PAIRED**

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: It being 6:59 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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