



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 148 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 24, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 24, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

•(1005)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2010 annual report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 15 petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the first part of the 2011 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in London and Strasbourg from January 20 to 28, 2011.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Japan interparliamentary group, respecting its participation in the 17th bilateral meeting of the Japan-Canada Parliamentary Friendship League held in Vancouver, Squamish and Whistler,

British Columbia, January 3 to 7, 2011, and the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation respecting its participation and the annual visit of the co-chairs of the Canada-Japan interparliamentary group to Tokyo, Japan, February 13 to 18, 2010.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both of our country's official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on National Defence regarding the Supplementary Estimates (C) 2010-11.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on National Defence regarding Bill C-41, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on program review. I hereby present the report today.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on the situation of persons with albinism in Tanzania.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, Ind. Cons.), seconded by the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques Cartier, moved for leave to introduce Bill C-643, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (contributions).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce, in both official languages, a bill that will enact amendments to the Canada Elections Act so that contributions may be made in any calendar year to the candidate who is not the candidate of a registered party.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CHRONIC CEREBRAL SPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to present nine petitions regarding chronic cerebral spinal venous insufficiency. We need evidence-based medicine in Canada. That means we must collect evidence. MS patients are calling for clinical trials. After 50 other countries, 12,500 procedures, and country after country in North America, South America and Europe report upwards of 86% of MS patients showing evidence of CCSVI, the petitioners are calling for clinical trials and follow-up in Canada.

• (1010)

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 462 people who are calling on the government to improve the guaranteed income supplement.

This petition is even more relevant because in its budget, the government left only crumbs for seniors with regard to the guaranteed income supplement.

This petition calls for an increase of \$110 per month for people who live alone and \$199 per month for the survivor's allowance. The petition also calls for retroactivity for the amounts owed to those eligible for the guaranteed income supplement and a six-month extension of the spouse's allowance in the case of death.

This petition was sponsored in particular by the Fédération de l'âge d'or du Québec, or FADOQ, which I would like to acknowledge today for the work it is doing to stand up for its members.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also have two other petitions to present.

They deal with affordable housing, specifically low-income housing, in Quebec. There are currently 65,000 households living in housing that requires renovations. Yet we know that the government has made more program cuts this year.

I have two petitions here that are signed by hundreds of Quebeckers who are calling on the government to reverse its decision. They are asking that these programs not be cut and that, instead, affordable housing receive more funding for renovations and improvements. The buildings are falling apart.

I hereby present the two petitions concerning affordable housing.
[English]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition is signed by machinists from the Air Canada overhaul base in Winnipeg. Over 500 full-time employees may find their jobs ending up in El Salvador. Air Canada failed in its duty to comply

with the Air Canada Public Participation Act by selling its overhaul bases to Aveos in Winnipeg, Mississauga and Montreal.

On December 14, 2010, the Air Canada Council claimed at the transport committee that Aeroman, the Aveos subsidiary in El Salvador, could not do Air Canada maintenance in El Salvador. This is totally untrue, as Aeroman performs maintenance on exactly the same aircraft that is overhauled in Winnipeg, namely the A-320 series and the Embraer.

The El Salvador facility could maintain 87% of Air Canada's fleet. In fact, the El Salvador facility is expanding from four to sixteen lines. Just so that members know, Aveos has only four lines in Vancouver, four in Montreal, one in Toronto and five in Winnipeg, for a total of fourteen. In El Salvador alone it will have sixteen lines, more than all of Canada combined.

The workers who have signed the petition want Air Canada to comply with the Air Canada Public Participation Act by reverting to ownership of its overhaul centres.

POVERTY

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition from the congregation of St. Luke's Anglican Church in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. The petition is in support of the elimination of poverty in Canada.

MICROWAVE RADIATION

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first one is on behalf of my constituents of Beaches—East York and approximately 3,000 Canadians from across the country.

The petition calls on the Government of Canada to immediately revise Health Canada's Safety Code 6 to take into account the serious health effects of microwave radiation related to cellphone tower construction. The petition draws attention to the issue of the growing number of cellphone towers being constructed in my community and various communities across Canada.

My constituents have been very vocal leaders in bringing attention to this issue. I would like to thank all petitioners who have taken up this cause.

• (1015)

POVERTY

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition pertains to support for Bill C-545, An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada.

As the petitioners say, poverty affects over 10% of Canadians and disproportionately affects aboriginal peoples, recent immigrants, people with disabilities and children. Poverty leads to poor health, such that people living in poverty suffer more health problems and have lower life expectancy than those not living in poverty.

The implementation of poverty reduction plans in several Canadian provinces and other countries has shown that poverty can be reduced. Bill C-545 would require the federal government to develop and implement a strategy for poverty elimination in consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and aboriginal governments and civil society organizations.

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting petitions that were circulated by the FADOQ network and signed by more than 2,000 Quebecers. They are calling for an increase to the guaranteed income supplement monthly benefits, which the budget did not provide. The government offered mere crumbs.

I am presenting this petition because the Bloc has been calling for these measures for nearly 10 years and we believe that this is the only way to allow the most vulnerable people in our society to live in dignity. It is a question of dignity and social justice.

[English]

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of petitions.

The first petition is from 1,564 Canadians across our nation asking for a national action plan to combat human trafficking in this country. This petition encompasses support for non-governmental organizations so that the victims of this heinous crime could have counselling, shelter, food and clothing and be able to see a vision for their own lives as they carry on from having gone through that experience.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second is by 409 Canadians from across this country who want Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to decriminalize the selling of sexual services, criminalize the purchasing of sexual services and provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution.

These are very important petitions. I congratulate the people who have taken up this cause to stop these horrendous crimes and protect these innocent victims.

[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from the people of Saint-Léonard-d'Aston, in my riding, as well as Sainte-Perpétue, Saint-Célestin, Grand-Saint-Esprit, Sainte-Eulalie, Saint-Wenceslas, Bécancour, Sorel-Tracy and Saint-Pierre-les-Becquets.

This petition is calling on the Government of Canada, which is now known as the government of the Prime Minister, to make the

Routine Proceedings

required public investment enabling Société d'habitation du Québec to complete its renovation plan for low-income housing, which includes covering an accumulated maintenance deficit.

[English]

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Hon. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, Ind. Cons.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in the House today in support of the volunteer firefighters who we all know are critical to protecting our lives and the fire safety of small communities across the nation in ridings like mine, Simcoe—Grey.

On average we know that our volunteer firefighters give over 443 hours of service, equivalent to 60 work days a year. Small communities are under severe financial stress and having paid firefighters is not an option.

I was pleased to see that this was included in the budget. It is unfortunate that the opposition parties are not supporting it and that we will be going to the polls, because I know that the average Canadian citizen would like to see support for our volunteer firefighters.

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition here today signed by 640 people who, out of concern and respect for seniors, are showing their support for the FADOQ network and its demands of the federal government. They are calling on elected representatives to improve and simplify the guaranteed income supplement. The petition states:

We the undersigned call for automatic enrollment for all Canadians, a significant increase in benefits for singles, full and unconditional retroactivity, as well as a six-month benefit extension following the death of one of the beneficiaries in the couple.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition signed by a few hundred people concerning low-income housing. About 544 housing offices in Quebec provide housing to nearly 65,000 families. This housing stock is worth more than \$7 billion. Given that it is constantly deteriorating, it is important for the federal government to provide some support, not only because it will generate energy savings, which is good for the environment, but also because it will create many jobs in several regions of Quebec. I therefore invite the government to give special attention to this petition.

• (1020)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is another in a series of petitions that have been presented over the past few days on social housing. These petitions have come from the ridings of Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Montcalm, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Brome—Missisquoi and Abitibi—Témiscamingue. The 700 signatories oppose the 30% the federal government is cutting from funding for renovation costs. The government had committed to investing in the maintenance of housing built in the 1970s. Now it is cutting those investments by 30%, which is huge for Quebec.

The Budget

BORDER CROSSINGS

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my other petition calls for the border crossings in Brome—Missisquoi to remain open. Some 900 people living near the border have signed a petition calling for public hearings at the very least.

These petitions are in both of Canada's official languages. Indeed, we have two official languages. A number of Americans speak French when they attend our meetings. It is very important that these crossings remain open. Our life with our American friends is at stake.

[*English*]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to table a petition today.

The petitioners indicate that they would like to see more accountability in health care brought to the Canada Health Act, which would include stable funding, national standards and so much more. We need to recognize that the national government does have to role to play in health care.

In fact, just so the House is aware, I posed a question to constituents asking them which level of government they believed has the primary responsibility to protect and guarantee health care services. Just this week, 55 questionnaires came in, 37 of which said that the national government should be playing more of a leading role, which reinforces the importance of this particular petition.

[*Translation*]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Canadians, I am presenting a petition calling on Parliament to take the necessary measures to eliminate child pornography from the Internet and to prevent the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet.

VETERANS

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today that was circulated by a number of volunteers who work with veterans and their families at St. Anne's Hospital. There are roughly 500 petitioners who want to ensure that soldiers who return injured receive better compensation.

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present today a petition signed by 586 people calling for improvements to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. We saw what the Liberals did with this program and the crumbs the Conservatives allocated to it in the latest budget. The people of Berthier—Maskinongé want real improvements to the guaranteed income supplement.

COPYRIGHT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition from the people of the south shore and Baie-Comeau. It is another petition against Bill C-32, one that is modelled after the Culture équitabile petition and that calls for the House to revise this bill to amend the Copyright

Act. We must return to the spirit of the Copyright Act, copyright, and not shift to the right to copy, and we must restore the legitimate rights and, naturally, the compensation of creators. I am extremely pleased to add this petition to all the others that have already been presented in the House.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1025)

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 22 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I meet with Canadians and I ask them what they are looking for from us in Ottawa, their answer is clear. They want a government they can trust. Canadians work hard and they play by the rules. They want a government that respects the rules and follows the law. They want a government that does not waste Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars.

Marie, the other day, told me that she wants a government that "is working hard for me, not trying to sell itself to me with my own tax dollars".

[*Translation*]

Canadians tell me they want a government that will clean up the books and provide a credible plan to get Canada out of deficit, a government that will make real investments to protect the programs that have helped make this country strong—programs like our national health care system.

[*English*]

Canadians want a government that will invest in families and the jobs of tomorrow. They want a government that is there for them when they need it, whether they are struggling to provide for their children, taking care of a sick relative at home or just trying to make ends meet on a fixed income. However, instead of listening to Canadians, the Conservative regime has put forth a budget with more out-of-control spending that is out of touch with the priorities of Canadian families. It continues to show contempt for Canadian taxpayers by hiding the true costs of its agenda.

The Budget

The Conservatives have wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on partisan advertising. They treat tax dollars as if it were their own money. They wasted \$1.3 billion of taxpayer money on a 72-hour photo op at the G20. Of course, we all remember the fake lake, the gazebos, the bug spray and sunscreen, luxury furniture, glow sticks and \$70,000 on mini-bar snacks.

The Conservatives are borrowing \$6 billion and digging Canada even deeper into debt in order to pay for corporate tax breaks for the top 5% wealthiest corporations in Canada. This is despite the fact that the chief economic analyst at Statistics Canada said recently that the effect of corporate tax cuts on job creation is “trivial”.

[*Translation*]

Meanwhile, in January, the Conservatives raised job-killing payroll taxes for all Canadian businesses when they increased EI premiums. This Conservative tax hike hurts Canadian small businesses in particular—the very employers that are responsible for creating the most jobs in Canada.

[*English*]

While the Conservatives boast about a technical recovery, they are out of touch with the deep human recession that many Canadian families are facing. The fact is that there are over 100,000 fewer full-time jobs in Canada today compared to the fall of 2008. Most of the jobs that have been created have been part time, a fact that the Conservatives conveniently leave out when they are discussing their budget.

In my own riding of Kings—Hants there have been losses of jobs at Fundy Gypsum, Eastern Protein, Canard poultry and the Larsen's plant. A lot of people are losing good full-time jobs and seeing these full-time jobs replaced by part-time work. The Conservatives are boasting about the number of jobs and yet ignoring the plight that families are facing. When good full-time jobs are replaced by part-time work, Canadian families find it even tougher to make ends meet.

I would like to talk a bit about agriculture. My riding of Kings—Hants is an important centre for agriculture and farmers in my riding, in fact farmers across Canada, face real challenges. This is a difficult time in many agricultural sectors. Canada's food producers are a cornerstone of Canada's economy. Canada's farmers in our agrifood sector provide one out of every eight jobs in Canada and generates \$42 billion in economic activity each year. Food is a vital link between rural and urban Canadians and the Harper Conservatives have betrayed farmers by cutting—

• (1030)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I want to remind all hon. members not to use the given names of other hon. members.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I forgot. I read the memo from the Prime Minister's Office and I thought that change had taken effect. I apologize. You are quite right. It is not that government. It is the Canadian government, which is something that party over there seems to forget quite frequently.

The Conservatives have betrayed farmers by cutting \$418 million from Agriculture Canada's budget. There is nothing in this budget to

compensate farmers for these cuts. The Conservatives are trying to balance their budget on the backs of Canadian farmers.

The Liberal Party has committed to developing a national food policy and to put the flex back into AgriFlex, as farmers have asked for. That is federal funding that can be used for practical programs and investments in the RMP in Ontario and ASRA in Quebec, improved crop insurance or a livestock market price insurance program in the west, and a bi-Atlantic program in the east. We will invest in and support agricultural research. We will support important agricultural events including, of course, the Hants County Exhibition, Canada's oldest agricultural fair. I would be remiss not to mention that. The Liberal Party will support getting more healthy, high-quality, home-grown foods on Canadian tables.

Canadian families are finding it more and more difficult just to make ends meet. With a record youth unemployment rate of 15%, too many young Canadians are losing hope. Canadian families are now facing record levels of personal debt. A typical family in Canada today now owes more than \$1.50 for every dollar of annual income. In fact, that is not only a record in Canada but it is higher than American families. Canadian families are struggling now with rising food costs, medical costs and higher tuition.

[*Translation*]

They are barely able to pay the bills now, and they are wondering how they are going to get by when interest rates start to rise.

[*English*]

However, hard-working, low income Canadians, many of whom are juggling more than one part-time job just to pay the bills, do not seem to factor into the Conservatives' vision of Canada. The Conservatives have deliberately excluded low income Canadians from qualifying for measures under this budget, like the family caregiver tax credit and the volunteer firefighters tax credit.

The Conservatives accomplished this exclusion of low-income Canadians from these programs by making the tax credits non-refundable. These tax credits will only help Canadians who have earned enough money that year that they actually pay income taxes.

The Liberal Party would recognize the work of all volunteer firefighters and all family caregivers regardless of their income. This would include Canadians who have left their jobs and have taken unpaid leave to take care of sick relatives, the very people who are most in need of help. These people would not qualify for the Conservatives' family caregiver tax credit.

It seems like the poor just do not exist in the Conservatives' Canada. The Liberal Party sees things very differently, and we would not leave low income Canadians out in the cold to fend for themselves.

The Budget

[Translation]

We believe government programs should be accessible to all Canadians, particularly low-income Canadians who often need the help most.

• (1035)

[English]

Last fall, the Liberals announced a real family care plan with a refundable tax benefit for working families worth up to \$1,350 per year that would help all low- and middle-income Canadians. We also announced a six-month family care EI benefit to help Canadians who take time off work to care for sick or aging relatives.

However, in this budget, the Conservatives deliberately excluded the poorest caregivers with a paltry \$300 in a non-refundable tax credit that is not available to low-income Canadians. Under the Conservatives, a Canadian taxpayer earning \$20,000, with a dependant, would not qualify for any help as a caregiver. It is outrageous, it is unfair and it is un-Canadian for the Conservatives to discriminate against low-income Canadians.

As Liberals, we have a fundamentally different view of Canada compared with the Conservatives.

The Conservatives divide Canadians into categories. They tailor their policies toward potential Conservative supporters and they ignore everyone else. If anyone does not support the Conservatives' agenda, he or she is not seen as part of their Canada.

Liberals are nation builders. We reject the Conservative politics of division. Instead, we aim to govern on behalf of and to defend the interests of all Canadians, and that includes low-income Canadians.

Much ink has been spilled on how this budget will affect seniors. The fact is this budget actually cuts federal support for seniors over the next five years. That is right. Transfers to seniors over the next five years are half a billion dollars less than they were in the last fall economic statement and almost \$3 billion less than in budget 2010. That is even after we include the paltry increases to the GIS for seniors. The GIS increase works out to about \$50.00 a month for seniors who qualify. That is less than a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons every day.

Also, the clawbacks to this measure are punitive and unjust. Under the Conservatives, a senior who earns just \$170 per month in his or her pension is considered to be too rich and that this new \$50.00 a month GIS supplement would be clawed back. And if they have a pension of \$366 a month, they are too wealthy, according to the Conservatives, to receive even a penny of this GIS increase.

The GIS increase is simply Conservative crumbs, especially when we consider that Conservatives are spending 20 times more on tax cuts for the wealthiest corporations. Shockingly, unbelievably, the Conservatives want to give 20 times more to the richest corporations in Canada than they want to give to Canada's poorest seniors.

It is very clear that seniors in poverty are not the only ones getting overlooked by the Conservatives in this budget.

Transfers for children's benefits also go down by \$1 billion over the next five years under this budget, which means that over the next

five years the Conservatives are actually budgeting less support for seniors and children living in poverty.

The budget has no plan for child care or affordable housing. It is completely silent on the most serious challenges facing our country such as, how we are going to pay for rising health care costs. Everybody knows that the demand for health care is rising. As Canadians in the baby boom generation start to retire, they are going to place a greater demand on government services and at the same time we know that the tax base is shrinking as fewer people are working to pay for these services.

Rapid changes in our society will lead to more and more people without jobs, and more and more jobs without people. We need to invest more in learning and in training.

There is no credible plan in the budget to address the reality of rising health care costs in Canada or the absolute essential need to invest significantly in training, retraining and lifelong learning. This is important because we are on the eve of the most important negotiations with the provinces on health care.

Where is the plan to deal with health care costs after the 10-year Liberal health care accord expires in 2014?

• (1040)

We were part of that cabinet back in 2004. At the time, the Martin Liberal government put \$41 billion into health care, the largest single investment in health care in the history of Canada in any health care accord. That was at a time when the federal government was in surplus and many provinces were in surplus.

Today, we have a federal government that has racked up a record deficit. We have provinces struggling with deficits. We have health care costs rising and we know we have these negotiations coming up with a deadline for 2014. Yet, nowhere in this budget are these negotiations discussed. Nowhere in this budget is there money being set aside to plan for this important investment that would protect the public health care system in Canada. There is no mention of this negotiation. For the Conservatives, the public health care system in Canada is not really a priority.

The budget does not provide a credible plan to return Canada to balanced budgets. In fact, instead of getting us back to balanced budgets and putting aside money to invest in health care, the Conservatives are deliberately gutting Canada's capacity to invest in health care and education with reckless spending on corporate tax breaks, fighter jets and U.S. style mega prisons. Conservative spending is out of touch and it is out of control.

The Budget

This budget spends 1,000 times more for fighter jets than for post-secondary students. This is a government that is spending 1,000 times more for prisons than on youth crime prevention. The Conservatives spent more on the G20 in a single day than this budget offers Canada's seniors for an entire year. The Conservatives spent three times as much on self-promoting advertising than this budget has for family care over the next 12 months.

It is clear that the Conservatives view this budget as only a marketing exercise. It is full of spin. It has a few small attractive gimmicks, baubles and trinkets, but it does nothing to address the main priorities of Canadians.

The other day the member for Cape Breton—Canso said that this budget reminded him of a salesman who once tried to sell him a car. The car had a knock in the engine, there was smoke coming out of the tailpipe, the transmission was slipping and it was leaking oil. My friend, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, pointed out these flaws to the salesman. The salesman said: “Yeah, but you gotta listen to the sound system”.

The Conservatives are trying to distract Canadians from the waste, the rot and the corruption in their government by creating some noise. The Conservative budget certainly has a lot of noise. It also has a \$43 billion black hole.

There is no mention in the budget of the Conservatives' plan to waste billions and billions of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars on schemes that have nothing to do with the priorities of Canadian families. There are no details on their plan to spend a staggering \$30 billion on untendered fighter jets. To put that in perspective, that is more money than the government spends on health care in an entire year. It does not tell Canadians in this budget, but the Conservative government plans to send a bill for \$1,000 to every man, woman and child in Canada to pay for the fighter jets.

This budget has no details on the Conservative plan to spend \$13 billion on U.S. style prisons. That is just the price tag for one of its prison bills. Thank goodness we have the Parliamentary Budget Officer who continues to provide Parliament with some information on the costs of the Conservative agenda. We know that the government refuses to provide Parliament with the real costs.

The Conservative regime still refuses to provide Canadians with detailed information on the cost of 18 of its crime bills. The Conservatives want members of Parliament to vote on legislation without knowing how much it would cost Canadian taxpayers.

This is fundamentally anti-democratic. All members of Parliament, opposition and government members of Parliament, have the same fiduciary responsibility and constitutional obligation to know the cost of the legislation that we are asked to vote on. Canadians are wondering, why the Conservative secrecy?

•(1045)

That is why the Conservative government was found in contempt by a parliamentary committee earlier this week. It is a historic first in Canada. In fact, it is a first in the British Commonwealth parliamentary system for a government to be found in contempt of Parliament. It is not a good first. It is not something that any of us is proud of. In fact, we are embarrassed with the government and how it treats Parliament. At a time when the world needs a Canada that is

helping build a more peaceful and stable democratic world, we are not setting a very good example when we have a government that is attacking the democratic institutions that keep us free here in Canada.

This is about more than just Conservatives' contempt for Parliament. It is about their contempt for the citizens who chose this Parliament. It is about their contempt for taxpayers who pay the bills.

The Conservatives continue to hide the real costs of their agenda. With all of the items that are not in this budget the question we must ask ourselves is, can we trust the government to tell us the truth? Can we trust the government to give us the real numbers?

The budget reminded me of the fall 2008 now infamous economic statement. Back then everyone knew that the Conservative government had spent Canada into a deficit even before the recession began. People recognized that the Conservatives had increased spending by 18%, three times the rate of inflation, in their first three economic statements. The Conservatives knew that too and that is why they wanted to hide that fact from Parliament and from Canadians, so the finance minister cooked the books and announced the government would sell over \$10 billion worth of assets in order to get to a tiny little \$100 million surplus. Ontarians will recognize this trick because it is the same trick that the same Conservatives played in Ontario when the same minister used the same trick of false asset sales to try to hide the fact that the Conservatives had put Ontario into deficit.

In reality, in the fall of 2008, there was no real plan to sell assets. In fact, we asked day after day for the list of assets that were to be sold. As a former minister of public works, I can say that there is at least a year between when one has to actually determine what one wants to sell and a process to actually sell it. The government said that it did not have a list, or rather refused to provide us with a list at that time. There was no list. The Conservatives had no information on assets to sell because it was a phony asset sales plan. A year later, the Conservatives quietly cancelled the plan before anything was sold. The Conservatives went on to give Canadians a record \$56 billion deficit.

In yesterday's budget the Conservatives announced what they called a strategic and operating review. It is part of their attempt to pretend that they will cut spending and balance the budget, but once again, the budget does not provide any details whatsoever about these cuts or their restraint. No wonder neither the Parliamentary Budget Officer nor the International Monetary Fund believes the government's numbers. Both the PBO and the IMF have shown that the Conservatives' promise to balance the books simply is not credible.

The Budget

The Conservatives have added nearly \$100 billion to the debt since 2008. They have undone all the sacrifices that Canadians have made to pay down the debt. In fact under the Conservatives, the combined federal-provincial debt to GDP ratio has reached 82%. That is higher than the U.K., France, Germany and it is almost as bad as the Americans.

Let us remember, it was the previous Liberal government in the 1990s that took on the deficit and balanced the books for the first time since 1969. Under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, the Liberals delivered nine consecutive balanced budgets, but according to the PBO, the Conservatives will not balance the budget any time soon.

The finance minister likes to say that the government is on track. Let us be clear. The government is on track to add \$200 billion to the federal debt by the year 2015-16. The Conservatives are mortgaging our children's future to pay for their ideological schemes, their bad priorities and their reckless spending. They are hiding the true costs of their agenda and they are asking MPs to vote on laws without telling us how much these laws will cost Canadian taxpayers.

• (1050)

In doing this, Conservatives are showing contempt not just for Parliament but for Canadian citizens and taxpayers. They are breaking the rules to hide the facts. They are doing this to cover up their wasteful spending and out of control and out of touch priorities.

As we see from the budget, Conservative spending is out of control and out of touch with the priorities of Canadian families. What we see from this budget is more of a government that cannot be trusted to tell us the truth and respect Parliament. It is time to end the Conservative gravy train and to show some respect for taxpayers.

For this reason, I would like to move the following amendment, seconded by the member for Beaches—East York. I move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following:

the House not approve in general the budgetary policy of the government because the government and its policies are out of touch with the economic needs and priorities of Canadian families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Kings—Hants has moved an amendment.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Peterborough.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and it seems his memory is not very good, so I will remind him of a couple of things.

It was \$2 million that then justice minister Allan Rock claimed the gun registry would cost and \$2 billion is what the Liberals spent on it, but they never told Canadians and hid it. That is 1,000 times, not 1,000%, over budget. The amount was \$1 billion that disappeared in the HRSDC boondoggle when Liberals were in government. There was \$363 million stolen through the ad scam. That is what the Liberal government did.

The member stood and defended ad scam in the House. I do not think he was really fulsome in his answers because he never said which ridings got the money. If he wants to stand on ethics, he can

stand in the House right now, come clean with Canadians and tell them which ridings got the stolen money.

Where is the more than \$40 million that is still missing? If the Liberals want to run on the bandwagon of being as clean and pure as the white driven snow, then they can start today with a little bit of honesty in the House.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I was actually very proud to be part of a government that had the guts and courage to appoint Justice Gomery and support his work in getting to the bottom of this and to have a judicial inquiry. The Liberal government was not afraid to get to the truth, to achieve justice on behalf of Canadians, and to do the right thing for Canadian taxpayers.

That is very much unlike the Conservative government today, which did not listen to Elections Canada when it told the Conservative government that its party was breaking the law. The Conservative government will appeal and continue to appeal, and refuse to take the judgment of Elections Canada seriously or to listen to the courts that say the Conservatives are guilty of breaking Canada's election laws.

There are two Conservative senators potentially facing jail time. The government continues to defend the indefensible in the in and out scandal. The Prime Minister does not respect the law, the courts or Parliament, and does not believe in or understand the importance of these democratic institutions in keeping us free.

With the most recent Bruce Carson issue and \$80 million being funnelled to his fiancé from the Government of Canada, money that should have gone toward water purification, to the Elections Canada scandal, and the potential jail time for Conservative senators, the government is in it up to its neck in corruption and rot. It will not do what Liberal governments did, get to the truth for Canadians and do the right thing.

• (1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Papineau there are desperate needs. Seniors, single mothers, youth and immigrant families have great difficulty finding a little bit of stability. They were stunned to learn that there is not one cent in the budget for affordable housing: nothing for low income housing; nothing to establish housing stability for people in need. I would like to ask the hon. member to comment on the irresponsible omission of affordable housing from the budget.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. The government should have made investing in affordable housing a priority, but there is nothing in this budget for this priority because it is not a Conservative priority. The Conservatives' proposal to increase seniors' pensions by \$50 is insulting to them. It is ridiculous for the Conservatives to say that the pension increase is a great thing. It is insulting. This is not help for the less fortunate. It is an insult.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague about the health care provisions that are really very minimal in this budget from the government.

One of the things in this corner that New Democrats were looking for was a commitment to new health care professionals, new doctors and nurses, who would help Canadian families. There are five million Canadian families without a family physician, and yet there is nothing in the budget that would increase the number of doctors and nurses in Canada.

The Conservatives came through with this funny proposal to shift doctors from cities to rural areas by forgiving student loans, which does not increase the number of family doctors available to Canadians. It also does not really address the incredible debt of students who are coming out of post-secondary education with huge student loan debt. It does not address either of those important situations.

I wonder if the member might comment on what the Conservatives are not doing in those areas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Please stop the clock. It is my understanding that there was no translation for the question from the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. If he could quickly and concisely repeat his question, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, the question was about the lack of commitment on health care in this budget, of providing new family physicians to the five million Canadians who are without one; the problems of the proposal from the Conservatives to forgive the student loan debt of health care professionals who are prepared to move to rural areas and what that does to the need for doctors in urban areas; and, also, how it does not address the mounting student debts of Canadians who are seeking post-secondary education.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question and for his service to Canadians. I understand he has chosen not to run again. I can tell him that his courage in defending rights and in setting an example in the way he lives and works have been an inspiration to me and for this House. We thank him for his service.

In terms of the under-served community proposal, the rural proposal, to attract and retain health care professionals in rural Canada, I actually believe that proposals to attract and retain doctors in under-served communities makes sense. I have some difficulties with the design of the Conservative plan, but the Liberal Party launched last spring a plan to help relieve student debt levels for nurses, doctors, and nurse practitioners who choose to serve in under-served communities.

It is not limited exclusively to rural because there are under-served communities in urban Canada as well, but it is a disproportionate challenge in rural and small-town Canada in places I represent in Kings—Hants.

On the post-secondary education side, it is notable that the Conservative government intends to spend a thousand times more on fighter jets than it is proposing in this budget for post-secondary education.

My colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, a great advocate for post-secondary education and students, pointed out to me that this will amount to \$34 per year for every Canadian student going to university or college. For \$34 per year, one cannot even buy a textbook for goodness' sake. It is a paltry sum designed to buy a few votes with trinkets and baubles, but it does nothing really to help Canadians who need the help the most.

• (1100)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair would also like to extend best wishes to the member for Burnaby—Douglas as he leaves this place of his own volition.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to read a quote for my hon. colleague:

We cannot increase corporate taxes without losing corporate investment. If we lose corporate investment, we have a less productive economy...That means fewer jobs. That means more poverty.

Who said that? That was the member who was just speaking.

When we talk about plans, what the member fails to tell Canadians is that the Liberal plan is stealing from Peter to pay Paul because when he talks about helping seniors and helping people get out of poverty, he forgets to mention that the Liberals intend to raise taxes. They intend to raise taxes on corporations from 16.5% to 18%. They intend to raise the GST. They intend to implement an iPod tax. They intend to implement a carbon tax.

If the Liberal Party could come up with the \$40 million that it stole, I would ask the member to explain if it could commit today to put it toward more poverty issues?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, it is contrary to parliamentary rules to accuse another member of lying, so I will not do that. I will respect parliamentary rules and I will not say that the member of Parliament has lied. Canadians can draw their own conclusions by checking the facts.

I do believe in cutting corporate taxes when we can afford it. I was part of a government that did reduce corporate taxes when we were in surplus. In fact, that government balanced the books and cut corporate taxes from 29% to 19% when we were in balanced budgets, and we could afford to do that. We went from having above average corporate taxes compared to our competitors to below average corporate taxes compared to our competitors. Today, our corporate tax rates are 25% lower than those of the Americans.

I do believe philosophically in competitive corporate tax rates and in reducing corporate taxes, when we are in surplus. However, we are not in surplus; we have record deficits. If we add to that debt today to help the few, the 5% of the wealthiest corporations, every Canadian family is going to pay the price down the road with less money for public health care, less money for education, and higher taxes for all Canadian families.

That is not just bad economics. That is not just bad social policy. It is immoral.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two days ago I had the opportunity to share my initial reactions to the budget. I said that there was nothing, nothing and nothing in the budget for Quebec. Quebec is nowhere to be seen, and I repeat that today.

Last year Quebec was left out. Only the oil companies, banks and the automotive sector benefited in the budget. This year, even though it was Quebec's turn, we are nowhere to be seen. The Conservative government could not care less about Quebec. It has dropped Quebec from its priority list and soon, the people of Quebec will drop the Conservatives.

The Prime Minister has marked a big *x* on Quebec, and Quebecers will certainly not put an *x* on the ballot for him or any of his puppets. I can guarantee that.

We essentially asked for three things in the budget: fairness for Quebec, consideration for Quebec's economic needs and support for the people who need it. To finance all of that, we proposed measures that are simply fair: ending tax giveaways to those who do not need them and asking more from those who have more. It is simple. What did the government do? Nothing. The tough times will come after the election, and the little guy is the one who will continue to pay.

First, we called for fairness for Quebec. There is a series of issues between Quebec and Ottawa that have been dragging on and on, some of them for 20 years. Ontario harmonized its sales tax with the GST and received \$4.3 billion in compensation. It was the same for British Columbia, which received \$1.6 billion in compensation. The Maritimes received \$1 billion in compensation. Quebec has been waiting 20 years for our due: \$2.2 billion.

For the benefit of the Conservatives, I would like to do some basic calculations. Since Quebec pays a quarter of federal government expenses, we can easily say that Quebecers paid a quarter of the three compensation amounts I just mentioned, for a total of \$1.75 billion. We can also assume that Quebecers will pay a quarter of the \$2.2 billion that Ottawa owes Quebec, which is approximately \$550 million. So Canada's share will not be \$2.2 billion; it will be \$1.65 billion.

What we must understand is that Quebecers have already paid their share of compensation to the other provinces, which is \$1.75 billion. Quebecers have paid off their debt to the other provinces. It is time for the other provinces to also do their part. It is time for Quebec to receive its fair share.

The Government of Quebec feels that all of the important points of this issue have been settled. It even sent a draft agreement to Ottawa. The only thing missing is the Minister of Finance's signature at the bottom of the page. But he will not sign it. Since it does not appear in the budget—it is not even mentioned—we can assume that he has no intention of signing this agreement in the coming year. That and that alone means that we cannot support this budget, and the government has known that for a long time. It wanted an election and it will get one because it has written Quebec off.

There are other disputes that are still not settled. For example, the government changed the way in which natural resource revenues are calculated. This will cost Quebec \$250 million.

•(1105)

Here is another example: the government is refusing to make protection payments, which would have allowed Quebec, and the other provinces, to avoid significant reductions in equalization payments. That might be fine for the other provinces, but it is not fine for Quebec. That is another \$250 million to add on to the first \$250 million, which is on top of the \$2.2 billion. Still on the subject of equalization, the courts ruled in Quebec's favour and ordered Ottawa to pay \$137 million in compensation for losses in the 1990s. And yet the government refuses. Despite the court orders, it has not paid.

The ice storm happened 13 years ago. Just because it happened that long ago does not mean that we should not get paid. Quebec has been owed \$421 million for 13 years, and that money has been frozen. Manitoba was compensated for its floods years ago. It has been years and Quebec still has not been paid. And I have not even mentioned cuts to higher education transfers, which have yet to be cancelled. It is high time that Ottawa start paying its debts to Quebec. Yet, it is not doing so. In fact, it is refusing to sign agreements with its creditors. How can that be fixed? Should the Government of Canada be put in default? No, we will just pull the plug and that is that.

We are also asking that the government take Quebec's needs into account. Our economy does not depend on oil or automobiles. In order to prosper, our economy must do various things, such as produce goods. Our manufacturing industry needs to be modernized; it needs to increase production, innovate and invest. Our economy needs increased tax credits for research. Are these things included in the budget? No. Our economy needs an investment program for new product development. Is this included in the budget? No. Support is needed for new business start-ups, for SMEs, one of the main sources of job creation. Is this included in the budget? No. There is nothing in this budget, nowhere.

Our leading industries must be able to count on support comparable to what their competitors are receiving. I am thinking here about the aerospace industry, which has suffered because of the lack of any true aerospace policy. Meanwhile, the government wants to make major military purchases without any guarantee of economic spinoffs for our aerospace industry. How much did the aerospace industry receive in the budget? Nothing. Not one cent. Just a vague promise that it might be considered one of these days. Perhaps the Conservatives can let us know when they return from outer space.

Another industry that has been cheated is Montreal's financial hub, which does not want to, must not and will not be moved to Toronto. If that were to happen, it would be the head offices and decision makers that would leave. This must not happen. Is there anything in the budget to reassure Montreal? No. To make matters worse, the government is bringing back its ill-conceived plan to create a Canadian securities commission. Nobody wants such a commission except Ottawa because it wants to keep Quebec out of the financial sector to its own benefit and, of course, Toronto because it wants to do Montreal out of its financial hub and head offices. Who is the Minister of Finance? A member of Parliament from the Toronto region of Ontario and the former finance minister for that province.

The Budget

Quebec City, our nation's capital, needs infrastructure worthy of a national capital. We do not need a peewee arena or a bridge that is falling apart.

● (1110)

Once again, crumbs were thrown to the national capital. I acknowledge that the contribution to the National Optics Institute is a good thing, but Quebec City wanted more. Quebec City deserved much more. It especially wanted respect, not clowns dressed up like the former Quebec Nordiques mascot, Badaboum—no offence to Badaboum. The Conservatives have crossed Quebec City off their list.

Our regions also have special needs. The forestry sector is in crisis. Farm income is unstable. Fishers are struggling. Youth are leaving. Businesses that innovate have trouble attracting qualified employees to the regions. What is there for the sectors that sustain our regions? Crumbs. The forestry industry received \$60 million, a 40% reduction from what was announced last year. I would like to point out that Ontario's automotive industry has about the same number of jobs; yet it received \$10 billion. Thus, there is cause to be—I will say angry, rather than using unparliamentary language.

Our forestry companies need measures that will provide access to capital. Our forestry regions need a little help to diversify their economies; they were given nothing. The forestry regions are nowhere in this budget.

The environment, clean energy, electric cars—that is where the future lies. Where is this mentioned in the budget? Nowhere. Again, Ottawa has taken a step backwards. There is nothing to expedite the arrival of electric cars, nothing for second generation ethanol production. There is still no plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which would allow Quebec to enjoy its extraordinary advantages. What are the only specific measures for clean energy in the budget? Measures for pipelines. Quebec sees a green future, but this budget is mired in oil.

Since the government is out of touch with Quebec, we informed it about our economic needs and which sectors of activity are important to us. Bloc Québécois policies are not dictated by Toronto or Calgary. As usual, the government did not listen; it wrote off the Quebec economy.

Third, we asked that they look after people. Employment insurance has not been any kind of insurance for many years. The majority of those who lose their jobs cannot access it. We asked for major reforms so that employment insurance would again be accessible to those who need it. Tuesday's budget confirmed that this government, like the other one, is going to plunder \$17 billion from the fund in the next few years. There is nothing for workers in this cynical budget.

We have been calling for an additional \$110 a month for those who receive the guaranteed income supplement. Why \$110? Simply because that amount would allow our most vulnerable seniors to reach the low income threshold. So, what is there for the poorest of the poor, those who do not receive the guaranteed income supplement because they do not know that it exists or that they are entitled to it? Nothing. Where are they in this budget? Nowhere.

This government is insensitive and heartless, and that is reflected, once again, in Tuesday's budget.

The Prime Minister is stonewalling Quebec. The Conservative leader falsely claims that the economy is his priority, but Quebec and its regions were completely written off in the Conservative budget.

● (1115)

Quebec has been denied what it is owed for sales tax harmonization, as well as for other disputed issues. The forestry industry never gets anything but crumbs and scraps. The government continues to steal from the employment insurance fund, leaving workers in the lurch. In light of this indifference, and considering the interests and values of Quebecers, the Bloc Québécois has no choice but to vote against the Conservative government at the earliest opportunity.

In closing, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Québec:

That the amendment be amended by adding after the word "families" the following:

and because the budget does not meet the expectations of Quebecers, in particular as regards the \$2.2 billion Quebec is owed for having harmonized the GST and the QST 19 years ago.

● (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Hochelaga just proposed an amendment to the amendment.

Questions and comments? The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member from the Bloc for his speech on the government's budget and for the amendment to the amendment he just proposed. He raises a very important point: there is nothing in the budget with regard to harmonizing the GST with the QST, the Quebec sales tax, even though this government has already signed agreements with other provinces and transferred money in compensation to them.

I would like to know whether the hon. member and his party agree with this. In Quebec, we have a very high percentage of seniors and in the Conservative Party budget, we do not see enough help for our seniors. In fact, the government spent more money on one day at the G20 than it has allocated in its budget for the most vulnerable seniors.

What does the hon. member think about that? What does the Bloc think about a Conservative government that wants to spend more on one day of meetings than it wants to spend on helping our vulnerable seniors?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to that question. I just want to remind the hon. member of a certain number of things.

Ontario received its compensation after 244 days of discussions with the federal government. British Columbia received its compensation after 131 days of discussions with the federal government. Do you know how long it has been since Quebec harmonized the GST with the QST? It has been 6,841 days. That is long enough.

The Budget

The hon. member has provided a good analogy: the Conservatives spent \$1 billion in three days on a party. Does that mean that in less than a week, they could have compensated Quebec for harmonizing the GST with the QST?

• (1125)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member from Quebec a question about what was said by several Quebec organizations that supported the budget recently presented by our government.

First, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec said, and I quote:

In this regard, the FCCQ is particularly in favour of the temporary hiring credit for small businesses, the targeted initiative for older workers, support for the manufacturing and processing sector, and the extension of the temporary 15% tax credit for mineral exploration. The FCCQ is also in favour of the industrial research assistance program, the support for young entrepreneurs and the commitment to move forward on the recommendations of the Task Force on Financial Literacy.

What does the hon. member have to say about the statements made by Quebec organizations that strongly support the Conservative budget? He said that there is nothing in the budget for Quebec, but what these organizations have said shows that Quebec has much to gain from this budget.

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, let us take the example of small businesses. The Conservatives are saying that they are going to give SMEs a credit for the employment insurance fund. In other words, the government is unable to provide direct assistance to SMEs.

In January, I proposed to the Minister of Finance—his parliamentary secretary was present—a business start-up program modelled after one that was implemented in Quebec in 1994 and 1995. What did the government do instead? It allowed and plans to continue to allow entrepreneurs, SMEs, to dip into the employment insurance fund, which does not belong to them. In other words, in addition to stealing from the employment insurance fund, the government is also letting others steal even more from it. The Conservatives are a gang of thieves.

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is absolutely right. There is precious little in this budget and what is in there is really pretend money.

Let us look at forestry, for example. I would like the hon. member to make a comment about forestry. In the United States over the next number of years, there will be billions of dollars in subsidies for its forest industry. There is nothing in this budget to protect the Canadian forest industry, nothing to match those subsidies and nothing about talking to the Americans to end those subsidies.

I wonder if my hon. friend would like to make a comment about forestry in the budget, and he can relate it to his province if he wishes.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, to leave time for other questions, I will simply say this: \$10 billion for the automotive sector and \$60 million for the forestry industry. That is 167 times less. That difference speaks for itself.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused. Yesterday, when my colleague was on TV with the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, I thought I heard that a refundable tax credit would be issued to family caregivers.

Like my colleague from Kings—Hants, I know that it is unparliamentary to say in the House that a member lied. So I will not say that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse deliberately lied to the public when he appeared on television, but I would like my colleague to explain the difference between the claims that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse made and the reality for family caregivers, who are struggling and have no income.

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, indeed, there is some confusion. If incompetence had a name, it would be the name of the member for Lévis—Bellechasse.

I do not blame the member for Lévis—Bellechasse for not having the financial skills, since he must have other ones. However, he is not capable of reading what Dimitri gives him and repeating it properly. Unless what Dimitri gave him was wrong, in the budget, on page 114, it clearly says that the credit is non-refundable.

What does “non-refundable credit” mean? It means that people who are really struggling do not pay taxes because they do not have a high enough income. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse is telling these people that they will receive some aid, a refundable credit. That is untrue. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse is a liar.

• (1130)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair would remind all hon. members that there are rules and practices of decorum in this place and that there are certain phrases that are not used. I would ask the hon. member from Hochelaga if he would like to address this.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, in the heat of the moment, I said that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse was a liar. That is true, and I am sorry.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unacceptable for a member to violate the rules of the House. You asked him to correct his mistake. I hope that it was a mistake, but since he has said it twice, it was not a mistake. Since he has not followed the rules of the House, I encourage you to have the member removed until he is ready to act honourably here in the House.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member from Mississauga South is rising on the same point of order.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke is absolutely right. It is unparliamentary language to refer to any hon. member as being a liar. The practice is for the offending words to be withdrawn and, if the member refuses, the Speaker will need to consider further action.

I encourage the member simply to withdraw that word and we will move on.

The Budget

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before the hon. member for Hochelaga rises, perhaps I was not clear in my first comment. The Chair is requesting the hon. member for Hochelaga to withdraw his remark.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I was not clear. I am doubly sorry and withdraw my remarks.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I consider the issue resolved.

Resuming debate. The hon. leader of the NDP.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Outremont.

This week the Prime Minister had a choice to make. He knew very clearly where the New Democrats stood.

Canadians know that it is not particularly natural for us to work with the Conservatives. It is hard to work with a government that consistently puts the interests of Bay Street, the banks and the multinational oil companies ahead of middle-class Canadians but, putting that aside, we were willing to try to make it work because a budget is an opportunity to get results right now for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister could have introduced practical and affordable measures to help families make ends meet each month. He could have responded to the serious shortage of family doctors and nurses.

[*English*]

He could have strengthened retirement security for hard-working Canadians from coast to coast. Instead, under a cloud of scandal, the Prime Minister showed that he is, unfortunately, incapable of working with others on behalf of Canadians. He has proven himself incapable of putting the needs of our families today ahead of well-connected Conservative insiders.

[*Translation*]

During the recession, Canadians were looking for leadership from Parliament. They wanted practical solutions to help overcome the challenges they were facing. They were looking for the kind of solutions that were put forward by the NDP. However, what they got was proof that Ottawa no longer works.

[*English*]

Instead, Canadians got was more proof that Ottawa is broken and more evidence that the Prime Minister, sadly, cannot be trusted.

I proposed a road map for strengthening the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan so that Canadians could retire securely and with dignity. These are the people who built our country and they have every right to live in security and with dignity.

I presented a practical proposal to use this budget as an opportunity to lift every senior in Canada out of poverty. One-quarter of a million senior Canadians now struggle just to get by. It is unacceptable and seniors are looking to Ottawa for help.

There are seniors like Cliff Stafford from Oshawa, who, after 50 years of hard work as a mechanic, has to rely on food banks to feed himself. That is wrong. He lost his wife nine years ago. He still has a mortgage to pay and he is grappling with an illness. He watches every penny he spends but the CPP cheque just does not stretch far enough. This budget will not help him at all.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

I asked the government to train more doctors and nurses in order to help the millions of Canadians who do not have a family doctor. These millions of Canadians have no one to turn to when they get sick. Parents and seniors need to make a difficult decision—drive for hours to find a doctor or sit in an overcrowded waiting room. This budget does not help them.

[*English*]

We put forward a practical measure to deal with the affordability crisis that people face today, to ease the burden of already stretched family budgets. It was an opportunity to help families by removing the federal tax off home heating. Canada is a cold place. We have to heat our homes.

It would have been an opportunity to take that tax off that necessity of family life, a practical way that Parliament could have helped make life a little more affordable in these difficult times. For families struggling to pay for skyrocketing heating costs, the budget is not going to help them either.

The Prime Minister has had five years to fix what is wrong in Ottawa. He has had five years to deliver on a promise to make life more affordable. He has had five years to clean up the scandals in Ottawa, once and for all. He has five years to do something about health care, about which he has done nothing. Instead he has made things worse.

New Democrats know we can do better.

[*Translation*]

We can do better. Canadians deserve better. They deserve a trustworthy prime minister who will stand up for families.

[*English*]

I believe Canadians deserve a prime minister they can trust, a prime minister who will focus on the priorities of today's families, each and every day while we work in this place, a prime minister ready to roll up both sleeves and put partisanship aside and work with others to get the job done. That is Canadian leadership and that is what we need.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's speech. I want to take this opportunity to mention some things that I believe are missing from the budget, and the member should feel free to comment on any of them.

We want the northern health accord, which is very important to the north, extended for five years. Last year it was only extended for two years. There is nothing new this year.

The Budget

One of our biggest needs is affordable housing and shelter. There is virtually nothing substantial for seniors or students, as the member mentioned. There is embarrassingly little in the budget for aboriginal people. The MAP program has not been restored, the money that was cut from museums. The 15 arts programs that were cut have not been restored, including travelling museum exhibits, which are very important for the north.

The dental therapy school has been closed, which is very important for the north. The Canadian Environmental Network is not funded again. It does great work across Canada. The friendship centres have not received a cost of living increase. Also missing is the great CAIRS project in the Yukon for healing. There is nothing for and search and rescue for the north, which I have been pushing for five years. Apparently the Senate has just confirmed its support for me on that. There are tourism cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission. Of course there is nothing for child care.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the Yukon for his comments about what is missing from the budget.

There is no question that when it comes to housing and shelter, for example, that we are a country that should be able to provide affordable housing and a roof over everybody's head, typified by the legislation brought forward by my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, calling for a national housing program. We saw no steps forward in the budget to deal with the housing crisis.

When it comes to the situation facing aboriginal people, when we look at how young children in aboriginal communities, by the thousands, cannot even get access to drinking water or water to clean themselves without burning themselves with the chlorine, if they are lucky enough to even have a plant that will generate clean water with chlorine, it is outrageous. What do we see but a scandalous effort to try to scam these communities and abscond with the funds that rightly belong to them to give them that basic necessity of life? The AFN was right to condemn the budget as inadequate.

The comments on child care, the environment and many other issues are all very valid points.

• (1140)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are the items the NDP has been asking for over the course of budget consultations: enhance the GIS for low-income seniors; employment insurance; pilot project extensions; extension of work-share enhancements; a one-year extension of the eco-energy retrofit program; renewal of the clean air agenda; support for key sectors, agriculture, forestry, mining; continued openness to CPP expansion; helmets to hard hats; forgive loans for medical professionals in rural and remote areas; and close several tax loopholes used by corporations. We have delivered on all of these.

There has been much talk about the coalition. Will the leader of the fourth party be forming a coalition should the result of an election be a minority government?

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I remember there was a proposal to form a coalition. The leader the second party at the time, the now Prime Minister, invited me to a meeting in his office after the election in 2004. He said that he wanted to introduce me to the member from Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the leader of the Bloc Québécois. He said that they had a plan because they did not think

Mr. Martin necessarily had the right to take control of Parliament, even though he had the most seats.

I am hearing the hollering and the bellowing of the very member who asked me a question. He claims to want to hear the answer. Perhaps he can speak that loudly at the same time as he listens. That is multi-tasking Conservative heckler style.

I was the one who said that there was no way I would help make Stephen Harper prime minister. In fact, I said that I would work to ensure he did not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would ask all hon. members to refrain from referring to other members by their given names.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Outremont.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start with some specifics, then move on to generalities.

My goal is to describe the two items in this budget that bother us the most, first, to identify which inadequacies in this budget make it absolutely impossible for us to support it and, second, to expose the government's real intention, which was to have its budget defeated and trigger an election. Then I will examine this in the broader context of this government's budget policies over the past five years and explain why, during the upcoming election, which the government wants, voters will be faced with two conflicting visions of the future. Ours is one of sustainable development.

Let us look at the two examples I mentioned. During my meeting with the Minister of Finance and our party leader's meeting with the Prime Minister, we made it clear that one of our top priorities is taking care of seniors living in poverty. We believe it is absolutely unacceptable that in a G7 country, one of the richest in the world, here in Canada we still have hundreds of thousands of seniors living in poverty. This is not an abstract definition; this is a formal definition as set out in Canadian legislation. We have a poverty line, a low-income cut-off, below which the state recognizes that people are not making ends meet. Gas prices have skyrocketed this year, for instance, and people living in this situation are going to see a significant increase in the cost of heating fuel, and quite simply, they will no longer be able to get by. That is why there are more and more seniors having to turn off their heat, because they just cannot afford it. And it is minus 15 degrees Celsius again here today.

So, we put that on the table. It would have cost \$790 million. The Prime Minister is trying to fool everyone by saying he made an effort to accommodate our request and put \$300 million into the budget. That still leaves hundreds of thousands of seniors in poverty and it is shameful.

Compare that to the money allocated for the next tax cuts for the wealthiest corporations. In fact, there have been a number of such cuts over the past few years, which at the end of the day add up to a grand total of \$60 billion. This year alone, there was a new tax cut to the tune of \$3 billion. Look at the banks. There are other sectors, but it is mostly the banks and the oil industry that are benefiting from these cuts.

The Budget

The six largest chartered banks in Canada made a record \$22 billion in profit last year. They handed out half those profits, or \$11 billion, as bonuses for their executives. The government is allocating \$300 million to poor seniors, leaving hundreds of thousands of them in poverty, but it is giving \$3 billion in new tax cuts for these same banks and oil companies. For every dollar the government was able to find for poor seniors, it found \$10 for new gifts, from the national tax base, for the banks and the oil companies. This is unacceptable. The Conservatives knew exactly what they were doing by allocating that amount: they were triggering an election.

Add the cost of the election to their proposed allocation and we would almost have enough money to help all seniors living below the poverty line. But that hardly matters. They wanted this election and they knew what they were doing.

The same argument holds true for the \$2.2 billion in my second example, the object of the Bloc Québécois subamendment. One only needed to look at the premier of Quebec last night to understand that we were right when we said that the matter was settled. It was very obvious. They knew very well that, if they put that money in the budget, the Bloc would vote for the budget. It was the last thing they wanted. They would not have had their election. Taking advantage of the weakness of the official opposition and its leader, the Prime Minister, always the calculating strategist, said to himself that he would take the plunge while he was there.

• (1145)

And what about that \$2.2 billion? I will tell you right away. It was very obvious from last night's interventions that this announcement will be made during the election campaign. I believe they have miscalculated, and that it could come back to haunt them. People are not stupid. They can see the sheer cynicism and they will not be bought with their own money. All the better if the matter is settled, because that money has been owed to Quebec for a long time. For two and a half years we have been asking questions in this House, and for two and a half years they have responded with empty rhetoric. It is becoming clear that the Conservatives were keeping this one for an election announcement.

With these two specific examples as our starting point, we can now look at all of the government's budget policies for an explanation as to why the Conservatives did in fact want an election they said they were trying to avoid. When I said that the tax reductions favour the wealthiest corporations, the Conservatives' response was often to say that the tax breaks applied to all companies. However, in reality, a manufacturing company that is no longer making ends meet and that is not making any profit is clearly not paying any taxes. So, a tax reduction would not be of any benefit whatsoever. Who was receiving all this money? The wealthiest corporations. Simply put, the Conservatives' policy was to subsidize the wealthiest corporations that did not need assistance, leaving the companies that needed help the most to die on the vine. They have no strategic vision. They completely destabilized the balanced economy that Canada had built since the second world war, destroying the manufacturing sector with the high value of the loonie. This rise in the value of the dollar resulted from the fact that we were importing an artificially high quantity of American money

because the Conservatives have never factored in the environmental costs of the oil sands.

No one says that we should not develop the oil sands. We merely say that we should not develop them in this manner. Right now, because of the Conservatives' choices, we are saddling future generations with the biggest environmental, economic and social debt in our history. Environmental, because the Conservatives are saying that we will take care of today and you can clean up our mess tomorrow. Behind the longest dams in the world, there are inland seas full of toxins that are seeping inexorably toward the water table and into other surfaces. This will have devastating effects on future generations—on human beings and their health, as well as on our ecosystems.

In the last two years, our economy has seen the largest deficits in our history—another debt that will be bequeathed to future generations. Our society is suffering from what economics textbooks refer to as the Dutch disease, that is, an influx of foreign currency to purchase a raw material that we do not even have the intelligence to process or add value to here. We are exporting tens of thousands of jobs. We are destroying the manufacturing sector. Since 2000, we have lost over 600,000 jobs. Since the Conservatives took power, we have lost nearly 400,000 well-paid jobs, jobs that enable workers to support their families and qualify for a pension. They are being replaced by part-time jobs, most of the time, especially in the service industry, which do not provide a sufficient income to support a family and do not offer any pensions. That is also a debt—a social debt, this time—that we are leaving to our future generations, who will be forced to find ways to take care of all these people who will reach retirement age and will not have the means to take care of themselves.

For all these reasons, based on both the current budget and this government's overall policy over the past five years, we believe that the time has come to contrast a tired vision that does not respect future generations with a social-democratic vision that is firmly focused on the future, that will respect our obligation to implement a real, equitable and sustainable development system, that will eliminate social inequalities and that will be the way of the future. This is what the NDP has been advocating since it was founded 50 years ago.

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the leader of the NDP told a popular talk show host in Alberta that he was open to participating in a coalition government with the Liberals and the Bloc.

Since the member for Outremont not so subtly covets the leadership of the fourth party, I was curious if he shares his current leader's desire to participate in a coalition government.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, if the member from Alberta were to come to my riding today, he would see a large number of signs already up that say, "*Travaillons ensemble*". I know he is listening to the translation so he knows that means "let us work together".

The Budget

This is the first time in Canadian history that we have had three consecutive minority governments, so there are some of us who believe we have to adapt to that reality. We have to become acquainted with it and work within it. That is why we have always been the party offering to work with others. That is why we were the party that said we were going to sit down and read the budget, unlike the Bloc and the Liberals who said they were going to vote against it in advance. And we did just that.

On the other hand, it takes two to tango. If the government claims that it was actually listening and is willing to work with others, we should not make the mistake of believing it. In fact, the \$300 million put in place would have left hundreds of thousands of poor seniors to live in poverty, and in one of the richest countries in the world that is simply not acceptable.

•(1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a passion for Canada's health care system and in looking over the budget I would ask my New Democratic colleague this question.

When we think of our national health care system and the role the federal government should play, I would like to recite a questionnaire that I sent out to my constituents to which we just started receiving some feedback. The questionnaire asks "Which level of government do you believe has the primary responsibility to protect and guarantee health care services? Circle one. National government versus provincial government".

To date, it is virtually two to one saying that the national government should be playing a leading role in this area.

Does the member feel, or would he agree with me that the budget provides very little hope in terms of any sort of national standards or any sort of commitment toward having and improving Canada's national health care system? Does he see any hope whatsoever in this particular budget?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the biggest hope for Manitobans and for the Canadian health care system is to elect Rebecca Blaikie on May 2. That is the best way because it is indeed the NDP that brought forward the very notion of universal free public medical care. She is going to fight for that, but she also understands that in our federal system we have to work together. The next Parliament will be responsible for renegotiating in 2014 the deal that has held the federal government and the provinces together.

What a shame last year when the Quebec government floated the idea of user fees. The first person out of the starting blocks to back that notion was the leader of the Liberal Party. He had to back down when his own caucus went against him. I am saying right now that the best thing that is going to happen for health care in Manitoba and in the rest of Canada is to have a woman like Rebecca Blaikie there, standing up and fighting for free universal public medical care in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Pailé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member for Outremont, who was also once a member of the National Assembly, as was the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin and the minister from Pontiac. Yesterday, the member for Pontiac said with regard to harmonization and the

compensation Quebec is seeking that neither he, who was a member of the Liberal government, nor I, who was a member of a PQ government, had ever requested compensation for harmonizing the GST.

What does the hon. member for Outremont think about the comments by the hon. member for Pontiac and Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, both of us have known the hon. member for Pontiac for a long time. This is the first time I have ever heard him say something that is so far from the truth. I have the right to say that.

I was there in the National Assembly. I saw Bernard Landry, the then finance minister, go up the wall. That happened to him now and then, but that time it was truly justified. On the eve of a federal election, new rules had been concocted to buy votes in the maritime provinces. Nearly \$1 billion was paid for harmonizing the GST. Quebec has been asking for compensation ever since. I was there at the time and it is not true to say we did not request it.

I was behind the door here yesterday when I heard the Prime Minister say we did not look at the budget. There is a fine article in today's *Toronto Star* that explains that this is also absolutely not true. We took the time to analyze the budget. Just because we are against it, that does not mean we did not read it. It is because we read it that we are against it.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Burlington.

I am proud to stand here today in support of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan and all of its positive measures for job creation, families, seniors and so much more. However, I am also very disappointed.

I am disappointed because, while our Conservative government presented a plan that was balanced, that listened to the real needs of Canadians and actually included items the opposition members claimed were important to them, they had other ideas. They did not want Parliament to work. They did not want to focus on the real priorities of Canadians. They did not want to work together to support the economy, no matter what they have said here today. They did not want to work together to support job growth for Canadians.

We found out what the opposition members really wanted two days ago when the Liberals, NDP and Bloc Québécois united yet again as a coalition. Only moments after the budget was released, they announced they would recklessly force Canada into an unnecessary election, Canada's fourth election in seven years. Only thinking about their own political self-interest, the coalition members selfishly made a clear choice just the other day, to place their own political ambitions ahead of Canada's economy and Canadians' financial security.

The Budget

Let me be clear. Our Conservative government, like the vast majority of Canadians, does not want an election. We need to focus on the economy, especially the fragile state of the global recovery and uncertainty caused by recent world events. We need to focus on helping protect and create jobs. We need to focus on helping families and seniors. That is what Canadians want.

This is what we heard from Canadians during our extensive prebudget consultations. Notwithstanding what the coalition members have said, there is still time for them to stand up and put Canadians' interests ahead of their own political ambitions and opportunism. Today I am going to strongly encourage the Liberal, NDP and Bloc Québécois members, who are all in a coalition, to do precisely that.

I encourage them to work together in Parliament with our Conservative government to implement the positive measures in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan to support hard-working Canadians. Let us work together to provide strong initiatives to support job creation and continued economic growth. Let us work together to provide new supports for families and seniors from coast to coast to coast. Let us work together with our low tax plan for jobs and growth.

In my time remaining today, I would like to outline key elements of our plan that would support job creation and those that will help families, seniors and our communities. I would also like to outline what Canadians are saying about it. First, I would like to mention a few ways we are supporting job creation. We are providing a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring by this important sector.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business applauds this new credit and our plan, praising it by saying it “recognizes the major contributions of small business to job creation and economic growth...while finding important, low-cost ways to help small firms grow the economy”.

We are supporting the important manufacturing and processing sector by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance rate for investment in eligible machinery and equipment for two years. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters cheered this item as it would give:

—manufacturers the confidence to invest in their future by boosting purchases of productivity-enhancing technologies... We need these investments to compete with the rest of the world, drive innovation, improve productivity, and offer the high-paying jobs that will in turn sustain the public services and living standards that Canadians enjoy.

We are also legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities welcomed this commitment as “essential to reducing Canada’s infrastructure deficit and securing a high quality of life for Canadians”.

Second, I would like to outline a few measures that would better support families, seniors and communities. We are taking a major step to help Canada's low-income seniors by enhancing the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, for seniors who are most in need. This important measure would provide a new top-up benefit of up to \$600 per year for single seniors and \$840 per year for couples.

This vital measure represents a major investment of more than \$300 million per year and will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 seniors across Canada.

Even the Canadian Labour Congress, not a traditional supporter of our government, commented on this measure. I would ask the NDP to listen to this quote very closely. These are the words of one of Canada's largest labour unions. It called our measure for seniors “a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada”.

● (1200)

It added:

Well I'd say to [the NDP leader] there's enough in this budget that we want to look at it seriously in the labour movement. We would think that that would be, if we were at a negotiating table we'd take that offer.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

According to the Fédération de l'âge d'or du Québec, with this budget the government is taking a step in the right direction, especially by improving the guaranteed income supplement.

[*English*]

We are also helping attract more health care workers to underserved rural and remote communities by forgiving up to \$40,000 of the federal component of Canada's student loans for new family physicians and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses.

We have already heard applause from across Canada for this measure. Indeed, here is what Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall said, “Helping to pay off loans for the federal portion for those loans, that's very positive. Doctors in rural Saskatchewan is a huge issue... Help from the feds is a welcome thing”.

We also introduced a new \$2,000 family caregiver tax credit that would provide tax relief to caregivers of infirm, dependent relatives, including, for the very first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children. The Canadian Caregiver Coalition gave high praise for this measure, remarking:

On behalf of the millions of family caregivers across the country, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition applauds the Federal Budget. The measures announced in the budget are an important acknowledgement of the vital role of family caregivers.

We are also introducing a \$3,000 volunteer firefighters tax credit amount for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs gave high marks to the tax credit, declaring it:

—a crucial measure to ensure the retention and recruitment of volunteer firefighters, which will help keep Canadian communities safe.

We are also extending the eco-energy retrofit-homes program that would help families make their homes energy efficient and reduce the burden of high energy costs. The Canadian Home Builders' Association has applauded this decision, stating the plan:

The Budget

—did the right thing to maintain momentum among homeowners for improving the energy performance of their homes. This initiative...reduces energy bills and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

These are only a few of the many measures that would support job creation, help families, help seniors, and help our communities. These are measures Liberal, Bloc and NDP MPs would be turning their backs on if they vote against the budget in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

The opposition coalition faces a choice between opportunism or working together to secure our recovery and strengthen the financial security of Canadians.

We invite the opposition to reject a needless and unnecessary election and, instead, support Canadians and Canada's economy with our low tax plan for jobs and growth.

I implore all of the members of the other three parties to take this into consideration. This is no time for an election. This is a time to look at our fiscal outlook, to look at the needs of Canadians who have spoken loudly through consultations for months and months to prepare this budget. This is no time for an election.

I implore all members of this House to seriously consider the ramifications of the \$300 million to \$400 million election at a time when Canada is recovering. This is a good budget. In fact, Canadians have applauded it.

I would ask all members from the opposition parties to, again, put aside their aspirations to govern as a coalition and please take Canadians' interests to heart and vote in favour of this very good budget for Canadians.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has one part of the speech right; that is, that parties should work together.

However, the Conservative government was found to be in contempt of Parliament for refusing to provide the finance committee, a committee that she and I both serve on, with the information that we needed to do our jobs and, in fact, to take that information off the table, so that Canadians could not assess the various pieces of legislation that were proposed in certain activities. The member is well aware of that.

This is a matter of trust; it is a matter of integrity. The government has been found to be in contempt of Parliament and there will be a vote on that, certainly, and that will happen before the budget vote.

This is a matter of trust. The government cannot be trusted to provide the information, or to provide it accurately when it does, as testified before a number of committees by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

● (1210)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I do work together on the finance committee, but Canadians need to understand how those committees work. Six opposition members sit on a committee; five members of the government sit on a committee. The opposition members have voted together on a number of initiatives. They could ask the tooth fairy to produce audit reports, and as a coalition, their six combined votes against our five votes could hold the tooth fairy in contempt if they so choose.

The fact remains that the documents were provided. The opposition members had a different plan. The plan was to embarrass the government, but we are not embarrassed. We will stand up for Canadians. We will support the people who have put us in power and we will do that with tremendous pride.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions for my colleague. I listened intently to her speech. She talked about the eco-energy retrofit program. However, people told me that what was in the budget does not give them enough time to get what they need in order to do the renovations to their homes. One year is just not enough.

The problem here is that organizations such as CanSpec say that it cannot even do the inspections on the eco-energy retrofit program that is about to expire in March. People are being left alone with no answer as to whether or not the government will delay the March 31 deadline, so they can get their inspection done because they cannot get the inspection done.

[*Translation*]

Given that the forestry sector is the largest industry in Canada and that thousands of jobs have been lost in that sector, it is unbelievable that the government turned its back on that sector and ignored the forestry industry's request for \$1 billion. A total of \$60 million is not enough. There have been massive job losses. In Ontario, 1,000 jobs are lost a month.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, let me read a quote from the Forest Products Association of Canada which negates everything the NDP member said in her speech:

[It] welcomed the forest industry measures contained in today's federal budget which support the industry and the 240,000 Canadians it directly employs. The measures provided in today's Budget recognize the significant opportunity before the industry to expand its markets and products beyond lumber, pulp and paper. These measures will promote strategic investments that will support the industry as it emerges from the recent economic downturn.

That is a quote from the Forest Products Association of Canada, so she is incorrect.

With regard to all of the measures that we have put in place for the eco-energy retrofit-homes program, if members opposite do not pass the budget, she is right, there will be delays. This is an important measure that we must see through. We have provided a number of measures to help people have energy efficiency in their homes. Yet, the NDP voted against every single one of them, including the GST reduction.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for sharing her time. She is new to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and is doing an excellent job in leading our committee. I want to thank her for her efforts.

Today, I have 10 minutes to talk about everything that is in our low tax plan, this budget that the Minister of Finance has brought forward. I want to focus on a number of things that affect Burlington in particular. If I wanted to go through all the good things for Canadians that are in this budget, it would take me about two hours instead of 10 minutes.

The Budget

I am going to focus on things that are for Burlington. I hope my NDP friends listen because this is some of the stuff that they actually asked for and are now going to an election. I think they hoodwinked the Liberal Party into thinking that the NDP was going to support the budget, so they could say anything they wanted. But all of a sudden, no, they are not. Now the Liberals are caught with egg on their face, now that we are facing an election.

Let us get back to what is important to Burlington in the budget. First and foremost, the majority of the calls, emails and visits to my office are from seniors, by far the greatest number are from seniors about the issues facing seniors in my riding of Burlington.

I have advocated for a number of things for seniors over the years with the finance minister and with other departments. I am very happy to see what we are doing for the poorest seniors in this country. In the past we have looked at seniors issues, and with pension splitting we have been able to resolve some issues. It is a big benefit to the seniors of Burlington.

In this budget we are enhancing the money that is going into GIS. GIS, for those who do not know, is the guaranteed income supplement. That supplement is for those who have the lowest income levels in Canada. This change that we are making today will affect 680,000 seniors across this country, including many seniors in my riding. It is \$600 annually for an individual or \$840 for a couple, which will make a significant difference in the income levels for those seniors.

I did a study when I first got into office, five years ago, on what a senior's income actually is. At that time it was just over \$18,000 a year for Burlington seniors. It has gone up. Our party has done things for seniors, in terms of deductions and so on. We have been able to address this.

This is a significant change that we are making, that is targeted—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1215)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would ask hon. members on both sides of the House to wait until they are recognized to speak. I will not be recognizing, for questions and comments, those who continue to heckle.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, we have made some significant improvements in that area.

Another area in the budget that I want to highlight, which has not been well-talked about but will be over the next 36 to 45 days, or however long the election campaign will be, is the investment of \$10 million in the new horizons program. I will give an example of what the new horizons program has done for Burlington.

We have a seniors centre in Burlington that provides a breakfast program to shut-in seniors once a month. Through the new horizons program, we were able to put a new kitchen in that seniors centre. This program provides support for groups that are doing good work for seniors in our communities every day. I am honoured that the finance minister saw that the new horizons program does deliver and that we will continue to deliver by adding \$10 million over a two-year period to this program.

I advocated for a couple of things in the budget for families. They are a little different than what I was asking for but they do attack the problems that I have been talking about.

My wife works for Easter Seals, which is a charity in Ontario that raises money for disabled children. I actually used to work there myself a few decades ago. This budget would eliminate the \$10,000 cap on the medical expense tax credit. If one is disabled, there is no limit on the amount one can spend and receive for a tax credit. However, if one is caring for someone else, in this case a child, there is a \$10,000 limit on what one can spend each year and receive as a tax credit. This budget would eliminate that \$10,000 cap.

From my own experience, as well as my wife's experience, the costs and difficulties that parents face every day while caring for a disabled child is a tremendous burden to begin with, but one that the parents who I know take on willingly. They are willing to spend what they can to ensure their disabled children are comfortable, productive and enjoy life as much as possible. However, that costs money. We are removing that cap on the capital expense through the medical expense tax credit that is in existence now. I am proud of that move.

I also advocated introducing a new caregiver tax credit. As we all know, our population is aging. I have two 93-year-old grandmothers still with us and I have known four great-grandparents. In the case of both grandmothers, one lives with my parents and the other lives with my uncle and aunt, so they are caregivers to those individuals. There are caregivers in every single community. What we are doing for those 500,000 caregivers is providing a tax credit to recognize the work they are doing to look after either their spouses, grandparents, parents, children or their common-law spouses. We are recognizing the value and the efforts those people put forward to ensure a good quality of life for those individuals who need help and are given care at home.

The other area I want to mention, which may not have been discussed in great detail yet, is that we are offering a forgiveness of loans to those young doctors and nurses who are graduating from medical school if they choose to practice in rural or remote areas.

Some might ask why that would be important to someone from Burlington, which is an urban area. I actually grew up in a small town in Ontario of approximately 5,000 people. I can say that over the last number of years members of my family have struggled to find a doctor after their doctor retired. It has been very difficult for that community to attract doctors and nurses to come and practice there. This money will give a new doctor or nurse the ability to start a practice in these communities, such as the one in which my parents and family live, without the burden of that debt that he or she may be facing.

• (1220)

I have had meetings with medical students who are looking at debts of a hundred thousand dollars, which is a significant amount. We want to encourage young people in the medical field to go to those rural areas and provide the services that we receive in the urban areas.

The Budget

The previous speaker mentioned the eco-energy retrofit program. I am proud that we are going back to ensuring that individuals are able to look at their energy efficiency needs for their own home. We will support them in reducing their costs and their consumption of energy, which is very important in this province and around the country.

I heard that we were not supporting research and development. I want to read a quote that I do not think too many folks have read. It is from McMaster University, which has a campus in my riding. The president of McMaster University, Patrick Deane, said:

The Federal Budget announced on Tuesday included new funding to support a variety of important university initiatives. "The government has again recognized the critical role universities play in building Canada's future through its budget commitments to university research and support for students".

We are putting money into innovation, students and research like no other government ever has in this country. I am very proud to be a Conservative, I am proud to serve in this government and I will be proud to serve in our future government after we go to this unnecessary election.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke of investments in seniors. Is he aware that in this budget federal transfers to seniors over the next five years will actually be reduced by \$3 billion over what was projected in budget 2010?

Does the member think it is fair that under his government's caregiver plan, that paltry \$300 in a non-refundable tax credit, that low-income Canadian families will not qualify? In fact, a Canadian taxpayer earning \$20,000 with a dependant would be considered too rich by the Conservatives, or something, but, in any case, they will not qualify to receive any benefit. The Conservatives' caregiver plan and volunteer firefighter plan actually discriminate against low-income caregivers and low-income firefighters.

Why are the Conservatives discriminating against Canada's most vulnerable in denying low-income Canadians these types of benefits?

• (1225)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I do not know what the member will tell his people back in his riding about forcing an election when we had an opportunity to make a difference for Canadians.

To the credit of the Minister of Finance, he put out a pamphlet in a relatively short form so that the Liberals would understand it because we knew they would not read it. However, if the member went through it, he would see that under "supporting families and communities", we have enhanced the GIS, we have enhanced the new horizons senior program, we are eliminating the federal rules on retirement age, we are supporting families through the family caregiver tax credit, we are changing the medical expense tax credit and we are introducing flexibility on the registered disability plan.

There are pages and pages that Canadians will not benefit from because the Liberals were caught with their pants down thinking the NDP would be supporting the budget. Now they are facing an election and they have no idea what they are doing. However, we are going to beat them at that.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard the member mention many of the initiatives that we are undertaking for seniors and many of the investments that we are making in innovation and research.

However, one of the things that he did not comment on, and I wonder if he could expand on, is the initiative that this government has put forward on tax credits for the arts. As a person who studied music all my life and has seen the benefit of it in my own family, I wonder if the member could comment on what this means to the families of Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question for me. I am a big supporter of the arts. I have been working since 1999 on getting a performing arts centre for the city of Burlington, which is under construction as we speak with the support of federal money.

As a father with daughters, I have taken advantage of the credit for activity in sports. I have very active, sports-oriented children.

However, the community of Burlington has a tremendous arts community for young people taking dance and music. We have the Teen Tour Band, a world renowned band of 200 young people performing in their red coats all around the world. They will be travelling to commemorate Pearl Harbour and will be the only Canadian representatives there.

This tax credit will make a big difference to the families of Burlington in ensuring their children are able to participate in the arts, which makes culture, not only in Burlington but across the country, an important aspect of everyday life.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

I will give three reasons why the Conservative budget so richly deserves to die and why Canadians deserve much better.

The first reason is the budget makes bad choices. Because they go so far as to commit \$6 billion to corporate tax cuts, the Conservatives are left with a pittance to support ordinary Canadian families that are struggling to make ends meet. Canadians deserve better than that.

Second, there is no fiscal accountability, as I will explain in a minute. When the Liberals made cuts, we itemized every line item in the budget that would be cut. The Conservatives give no information and therefore have no credibility on the savings that they propose in the budget. Once again, Canadians deserve better than that in terms of fiscal accountability.

Third, the government seeks to balance the books on the backs of the most vulnerable. Canadians are a caring, generous people. They will not go for this. Again, Canadians deserve better.

On my first point, that the Conservatives are left with a pittance to support ordinary struggling families, given their commitment on corporate tax cuts, let me give two examples.

The first of these is to compare the Liberal home care program and the Conservative home care program. There are three reasons why theirs is just a pale shadow, a totally inadequate shadow of our plan.

First, the maximum amount of money that the caregiver will receive is \$300 under the Conservative program. It is \$1,350 under our program.

However, it is worse than that. Our credit, the \$1,350, is refundable, which means if people are so poor that they do not pay taxes, they get the money. If they are so poor that they do not pay taxes, they get zero under the Conservative program, even though they have offered only a paltry \$300.

Finally, our program, in addition to those grants, offers an additional six months employment insurance relief for caregivers.

The Conservative plan is pathetic because the government is saddled with this \$6 billion in corporate tax cuts so there is no more money in the bank to provide meaningful help to families.

The second example is with respect to post-secondary education. The Conservatives are providing \$34 million in additional help for students. That might sound like a significant amount of money, but it is about \$1 per Canadian. It is about \$34 per student. Nowadays students desperately need government support. The unemployment rate for young people is way up, so it is harder for them to get jobs. Often their families are hard-pressed and less able to support the education of their children.

The Conservatives are offering a meaningless, paltry \$34 per student. Our Liberal program has not yet been announced, but our leader is passionate about support for learning and for post-secondary education. Unlike the Conservatives' program, our program will be meaningful, more in the order of magnitude, greater than their program. That is because we think very strongly that post-secondary education is crucial, not only to provide equality of opportunity but also to promote a strong economy and higher productivity through well-educated Canadians.

Through those two examples, and I could go on but I have limited time, I am making the point that the Conservatives put up window dressing as if they are supporting Canadian families, but the amounts of money are so small that they are virtually meaningless. Canadians will see, once the election campaign gets under way, that Liberal support for Canadian families is real. Conservative support is paltry to non-existent.

That is one of the reasons why I say Canadians deserve better.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

This government makes bad choices. This government does not have any money to seriously support families because it insists on giving tax breaks to large corporations. Canadians deserve better. Canadians will see, over the course of the election campaign, that they will receive more from the Liberal platform.

[*English*]

The second point is fiscal accountability.

The Budget

When we were in government in 2005, we saved \$11 billion over five years. In the 2005 budget, line by line, and that information still exists, it said which programs would be cut, by which amounts, over how many years.

The Conservatives similarly claim that they will find savings of \$11 billion over seven years, but they tell us nothing about where that money will come from.

I can give one example. On page 203 of the budget, we have alleged savings of something on the order of \$500 million for one department, Human Resources and Skills Development. What are the sources of the savings? Let me read it:

- Improve alignment of program funding with actual needs
- Find efficiencies through improved program management and use of technology
- Improve use of internal resources and administrative efficiency
- Align program activities with core mandate
- Refocus programming to benefit all Canadians

That is all the Conservatives tell us. It is gobbledygook. Those are weasel words. They mean nothing at all. There is no accountability, no transparency and therefore no credibility in any of these projected Conservative savings.

I come now to my final point, and that is the question of balancing the books on the backs of the most vulnerable.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

As I said at the outset, Canadians are generous. Yes, they want to balance the budget, but they do not want to do so at the expense of the most vulnerable members of our society.

[*English*]

My point is the Conservatives are balancing the books on the backs of the most vulnerable, both internationally and at home.

Internationally, last year, fully one-quarter of the savings were through freezing foreign aid, through freezing the CIDA budget. Therefore, one-quarter of the money to reduce the deficit was on the backs of the poorest people in the world. That was in sharp contrast to Britain, which favoured foreign aid. Even though everywhere else was getting draconian cuts, foreign aid was spared the cuts because of British commitment to poor countries. Canada is the opposite. Last year, the Conservative government got a quarter of the savings on the backs of the poorest in the world, and this from a starting point where Canada's foreign aid relative to GDP is embarrassingly low.

Not only that, but the finance minister committed to me personally that he would have something for microcredit in his budget. We had a unanimous resolution to that effect. He agreed that microcredit was important for the poorest on the planet. There was zero in the budget for it.

It is not as if this balancing the books at the expense of the poor is only international. It is also here at home.

The Budget

Consider the non-refundable tax credits for firefighters. A poor firefighter gets nothing. A well-off firefighter gets something, not much but something. A poor caregiver with income not high enough to pay taxes gets nothing to look after an aging parent. A richer caregiver, even though it is not very much, at least gets something.

Again, it is at the expense of the poorest and the most vulnerable. The fact is if a person is a poor firefighter or a poor caregiver, he or she gets nothing.

Finally, let us consider housing. Who is more vulnerable than aboriginals living on reserves in poor housing and other Canadians in poor housing?

The Conservatives singled out housing to receive no extension, whereas every other infrastructure program did. Hundreds of millions of dollars have disappeared from the budget in support for affordable housing on reserve and repairs to social housing. There are no Canadians more vulnerable than those people.

As examples, poor firefighters, poor caregivers, poor people living in substandard housing are bearing the brunt of the Conservatives' efforts to balance the books.

Canadians are a generous people. We want to balance the books, but not on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our country and abroad.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it quite interesting that my hon. colleague across the floor talks about what the Liberals would do if they were in government. However, he needs to be reminded of what the Liberals actually did do when they were in government.

In 1995 the Liberals cut \$25 billion for the most vulnerable people in Canada, the people in hospitals, the people on social services and the people in post-secondary education. They have a history of doing those kinds of things. Therefore, it is not a matter of suggesting the Liberals will do something different. We know what they will do.

I was a part of a provincial government when those cuts came through and everybody in the whole province suffered because of it. Health care and post-secondary education suffered.

He talks about their needing restructuring and rebuilding. Who starved them of all the money at the time they actually needed it? The Liberal government. It had 13 years. He talks about difficult situations on Indian reservations. For 13 years, it accumulated against them. Today he stands with a solution for everything.

Is it the Liberal plan to go back to the days of the 1990s and cut and slash health care, education, post-secondary and social services? Is that how he plans on balancing the books?

● (1240)

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, we are talking mainly about today and the future. We are talking about the government's budget. The government's budget in front of us, in black and white, says no money for poor firefighters and for poor caregivers. It slashes aid for poor people in Africa and slashes funding for the poorest in housing. We would not do that in our platform.

In addition, going back to 1993, when the new Liberal government inherited a \$42 billion Conservative deficit, we were

told that we were about to become an honorary third world country, thanks to actions by a previous Conservative government. I remind the member opposite that when we made the necessary cuts to save the country in the mid-1990s, those Conservatives, those Reform Party people, criticized us for not cutting more. That was their position.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member will know that there are many lost opportunities in the budget. He was in Winnipeg recently and he knows we are about to open a new airport facility there. However, unfortunately last year alone over 50,000 Manitobans were fleeing across the U.S. border to fly out of Grand Forks because of high Canadian taxes. The same is true for British Columbia and points in Ontario, where people cross the border to fly out of the United States. The fact is our airport taxes, as at the last budget, are the highest now in the world.

Why has the government missed the opportunity to address what is a growing problem and deal with having Canadians fly out of Canadian airports rather than American airports?

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that there is an important issue of those taxes being high and people from Toronto, for instance, going to Buffalo and similar other points across the country.

One of the reasons for this, and an important and recent reason, is the new charge the government has imposed for security. None of us will oppose security. We all think it is essential. However, the security charges in the United States are much lower than in Canada. We believe the government has charged more to airlines and to customers for security than it spends on security. It is a tax grab.

It is too late now as we are almost into an election. However, when the government had power, it should have been more moderate in its security charges so as to alleviate the kind of problem to which the hon. member referred.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a story that I have been thinking about a lot this week concerning the introduction of this very disappointing federal budget.

A number of years ago, after I sold my company and went to study abroad, I met a man from Namibia who asked me, "Where is my Canada?" I was very perplexed and asked him what he meant by the question. He said, "We used to look up to Canada more than any other country in the world. It used to be a model of good governance, economic success and global engagement", and then he repeated his question, "Where is my Canada?" He said that Canada had lost its way and he hoped that we would find it again.

The Budget

I reflected on that this week because I really do believe Canadians have been wondering where their Canada is, where the compassionate, progressive and fiscally responsible Canada is, the one we know and love. Where is my Canada?

We are speaking about the budget this morning and what we should be doing in our country and what our direction and vision should be for next year and the years ahead. I again reflect upon what my friend asked, "Where is my Canada?"

The government's limitless spending has generated the biggest deficit in the history of Canada. Under the Conservatives, the size of government has increased 40% in four years and there has been a huge growth in waste. Let me talk about some of the waste because I have been doing a lot of work on that in my responsibilities on Treasury Board.

The Conservatives spent more in advertising in the last year than all the beer companies combined. They have spent 9.35% more per year on what are called professional and special services than ever before. One of the most egregious examples is the Prime Minister's Office, which is spending \$9.9 million more. It is an increase of 30%. That shows the kind of leadership in this country. There is 16% more being spent on cabinet, \$9 million more of borrowed money, all wasted dollars.

So many people in our country need assistance in finding jobs to help their families who are struggling, and this is the best budget the Conservatives could come up with?

More irresponsible than the waste is the fact that the government still does not even have a plan to get us out of the record deficit of \$56 billion last year. The Conservatives continue to tell Canadians they will retire the deficit in five years. However, the Liberals know differently. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has forecast an \$11 billion deficit for 2015-16. We know how the government feels about the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but how does it feel about the International Monetary Fund, which also says that the government will continue to be in deficit in five years?

How can a government continue to defy two third-party financial analysts that say we will not be in surplus but in deficit. How can Conservatives turn their heads and say, "No, Canadians, we will be in surplus, not to worry", especially when they did not give any assumptions in the budget for the cost of their megaprisons and the untended fighter jets, or costs and analysis of what the corporate tax cuts will do.

While this record spending and waste are going on, our national debt continues to accumulate under the government. Under the Liberal government the national debt declined from 1997 to 2007, saving taxpayers millions of dollars in interest payments. However, in just three years under the Conservatives, all the hard work and sacrifices that Canadians made in the past decade have been wiped out. Already 13.5% of every taxpayer dollar is going to pay for interest, and it is going to get worse because we are continuing to add to the debt.

•(1245)

Clearly, the priorities of the Conservative government are not the priorities of Canadians. I have spent a lot of time speaking and engaging with constituents in my riding in numerous round tables

and town halls and other meetings. The message I hear is that families need help: families need access to child care, families need better health care, and seniors need support to live with the dignity they deserve.

In my riding recently I heard of a 93 year old woman about to be evicted from her apartment, yet the Conservatives have not put in any money for affordable housing in the budget. How can that be?

The Conservative budget offers nothing for child care, nothing more for health care and nothing for affordable housing. For the very poorest seniors, the Conservatives will increase the GIS top up by only \$1.64 a day. That would not get a person a coffee in this country. Compare that with the waste I spoke of, the costs that will be associated with these mega-style prisons and the costs associated with corporate tax cuts.

I see a lot of poor choices in the budget. I see \$30 billion that we know of in untended fighter jets. That is a thousand times more than the Conservatives are spending on post-secondary education. There are billions being spent on American-style megaprisons. That is a thousand times more than they are spending on youth crime prevention. There is \$6 billion in large corporate tax cuts, yet there are \$1.3 billion in cuts to CMHC and affordable housing. They are spending three times more on self-promotional advertising than on their supposed family care plan. It is simply atrocious. Canadians wonder where this will end. We hope we will be able to help that along soon.

There are a lot of issues, even in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador concerning this budget, and I will name three. There are cuts, for example, to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, \$3.9 million over three years. ACOA is incredibly important to Atlantic Canada. It is important for our economic generation. It is important for community development. We need to restore the funding to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

The budget cuts funding for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans by an astounding \$84.8 million over three years. We need more money for science. We cannot cut \$84.8 million and expect to have the science required in this country to ensure that we have established stocks.

There is \$6.6 million over three years being cut from Marine Atlantic. Marine Atlantic is a lifeline for my province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is our national highway. It is what links the island of Newfoundland with the rest of the country. It is just as important for goods and services all across the country as it is for goods and services in Newfoundland and Labrador. We must have a solid link between the island and the rest of the country. Yet there are cuts to Marine Atlantic.

The Budget

Time is short and I wish I could go on and on. The Conservatives are spending billions upon billions on jails, on jets, on corporate tax cuts, but not on the priorities of Canadians. They waste money on advertising and ministerial offices. I told hon. members earlier about the increases. It is a great paradox, really, when we look at it. They spend more on their own, spend more on self-promotion and they take from Canadians.

It is not just about the waste. It is not just about the deficit. It is not just about the debt. It is not just about the wrong priorities. It is about the judgment of the government, the judgment of these Conservatives when they look at priorities for our country.

I started by saying, "Where is my Canada?" I think every Canadian should ask the same question.

• (1250)

Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to ask a couple of questions of the member, a fellow Atlantic Canadian. We certainly share some concerns.

I was surprised, though, that she referred to beer advertising, because I think it was her leader who compared beer advertising and the Canadian flag, which probably gave a sense of where the Liberal priorities might be sometimes.

I was also surprised at her comments about the ferries. I would have thought she would be singing from the rooftops about the fact this government provides brand new ferries to Marine Atlantic for Newfoundland, recognizing the incredibly important constitutional obligation to look after transportation connections across the country. That is certainly an obligation that has been honoured. I understand that most Newfoundlanders are very pleased that this Conservative government has put new ferries in place. Maybe the member can clarify that. Maybe I am wrong; maybe the old ferries should have been left in place. I might have misunderstood that.

I would also like the member to comment on the growth of the deficit. I remember the comments from Newfoundland. Even though they supported the stimulus spending, the sense was that we were wasting a lot of money on stimulus spending and wasting too much money on signs about stimulus spending, which I understood just pointed out how many projects there were.

I wonder if the member would want to comment on whether she felt those stimulus projects were in fact a benefit to Newfoundland.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Speaker, I was encouraged to hear that my hon. colleague shares some concerns.

As I said, Marine Atlantic is vital not only to the island of Newfoundland and the link between the island of Newfoundland and the country but also to the goods and services from the rest of our country coming to Newfoundland. I think that is critically important. This is not just something for the province of Newfoundland but for the whole country.

Absolutely, we needed a solid plan. It is a capital investment to ensure that we have the ferries to meet the constitutional obligations.

However, under the Liberal government there was a plan to purchase ferries. It was a different plan than what the Conservatives eventually went with, and we all know how that is turning out in

Newfoundland and Labrador. We know some of the concerns. We have seen some of those things.

Yes, investments in Marine Atlantic are critically important. In this budget we are now seeing the Conservatives actually making some cutbacks, not to the capital side but to the actual operational side.

• (1255)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member would know that our total debt at the moment is around \$543 billion and that the government is just coming off adding another \$56 billion to that. This year it will be another \$43 billion, and the next year it should be a \$34 billion deficit. This is at a time when interest rates are actually low. What is the government going to do when interest rates start moving up, which must happen over the next couple of years, and interest payments start going up astronomically?

The government is doing all of this at a time when corporations are getting tax reductions and ones like the Royal Bank of Canada are paying their president \$44 million a year.

Does any of this make sense to the hon. member?

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Speaker, I did point out in my speech that I am quite concerned about this accumulating debt.

I pointed out that between 1997 and 2007 Canadians sacrificed. We put a lot of effort into paying down our debt. We did not want to burden future generations. We did not want to borrow from our children.

Now, in three short years, the Conservatives have added to that, taking us right back to the point where we were 10 years ago. It does concern me greatly that we are continuing to add to that debt.

If the Conservatives need some assistance in identifying some of the waste within the government and how that waste could be recovered to ensure that we do not have a deficit, I would be happy to help them out. I was pointing out waste all throughout the fall.

There are choices in our country. I think that is what my hon. colleague is pointing out. We are certainly hearing that interest rates will rise, and as they rise the fiscal capacity of our country is going to be limited. At a time when the government is choosing to spend on untended fighter jets and corporate tax cuts, that will not allow it any money for other priorities in the country.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate on budget 2011. I will be splitting my time with the Minister of Labour.

I want to encourage all parliamentarians to support this excellent budget. I want to encourage all Canadians, in fact, to read this budget in detail because it includes a number of measures that are certainly worthy of support.

In general, this budget supports job creation by helping businesses and entrepreneurs succeed.

The Budget

It keeps taxes low, invests in projects of national importance and it maintains Canada's brand as one of the best places to invest in the world. It supports families and communities so that all Canadians can enjoy a high standard of living and our communities can stay vibrant and safe.

It invests in innovation, education and training to promote research and leading-edge technologies, and to provide Canadians with the opportunity and incentives to acquire the skills needed for jobs in today's labour market.

It also preserves our fiscal advantage in order to be able to invest in the priorities of Canadians, to keep Canada's economy growing strongly and to maintain our low interest rates.

Particularly, I want to address the benefits in this budget for my province, the province of Alberta.

Under our Conservative government in 2011-12, Alberta will see record federal transfers totalling nearly \$3.4 billion; an increase of \$1.1 billion from the former Liberal government.

Alberta will see growing transfer support for health care, which is a 29% jump from the Liberal government, or \$2.1 billion; and for social services, which is a jump of nearly \$1.3 billion, or 114% over the former government.

This increased support will help hospitals, doctors, nurses, schools, teachers and other critical services in my province.

A permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund would be legislated, which was the number one priority outlined to me by the mayors of Edmonton, Leduc and Devon in terms of making this a predictable, stable, long-term funding for municipalities that they can count on into the future.

A one-time credit of \$1,000 against the small employer's increase in 2011 EI premiums over those paid in 2010, which was called for by small businesses from across Canada and by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I want to thank them for putting that idea forward.

The budget also provides assistance to the manufacturing and processing sector. I want to compliment the work of people like Larry Kaumeyer from Almita Piling Inc. and Lori Schmidt who works with Productivity Alberta, another investment that we made through western diversification in terms of making these manufacturers and processors even more efficient.

I want to compliment the Minister of Finance on extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing, which was something that was unanimously supported in the 2007 industry committee report.

There is also help for farmers, especially those in rural areas, in terms of a \$50 million initiative for agricultural innovation.

There is an additional support of \$10 million for work sharing. This was raised by companies like Argus Manufacturing and Nisku. It would allow these companies to retain employees by having the government cover part of the cost of the employee. For those industries that have periods of boom and bust, it would allow them to

retain employees during those tough times so that they would be there when the market and services pick up.

I would like to recognize the work done by both the current and former ministers in terms of the Red Tape Reduction Commission and also extending the BizPaL service across the country.

As well, I would like to recognize the extension of the energy retrofit housing program.

In my riding in the area of Devon where we have the research centre that deals with a lot of the tailings technology for the oil sands, Sustainable Development Technology Canada is very active in terms of supporting companies like Titanium with some very new technologies. This budget provides \$40 million over two years in SDTC and that is why they have come out in support of this budget very strongly.

I want to talk about innovation and investments in R and D. This budget provides \$80 million in new funding over three years for the industrial research assistance program, IRAP. Small- and medium-size businesses across this country would all point to IRAP as an effective program that works and our government has funded this to the tune of \$80 million over three years.

There is an additional \$37 million per year to support three federal research granting councils, CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC, which had asked for increased funding. We are prioritizing during times when we have to reach a balanced budget by 2015-16.

● (1300)

We are investing in key areas like innovation and research at universities and colleges, which is why the universities and the colleges have come out and strongly supported this budget.

Just before Christmas, this Parliament adopted a motion I introduced with respect to Alzheimer's. I am very proud to say that this budget allocates \$100 million to help establish a Canada brain research fund. It will support the very best Canadian neuroscience and accelerate discoveries to improve the health and quality of life of Canadians who suffer from brain disorders.

The motion was adopted unanimously by this House of Commons. Members of Parliament from the four parties spoke in favour of the motion and it is now in the federal budget. The point that the Prime Minister is making in his statement this week to the other parties and to Canadians is that a lot of the initiatives in the budget were in fact ideas that were presented by all four parties and by Canadians from all walks of life. The motion made its way into the budget and this is why the budget does deserve support.

There is some other funding in terms of investment and research and development. Over \$50 million over five years is provided to support the creation of 10 new Canada Excellence Research Chairs.

There is an additional \$65 million for Genome Canada to continue its work. This was certainly called for by all four parties as well.

Another \$50 million over five years is provided to the Perimeter Institute of Theoretical Physics, which is doing outstanding work in that region.

The Budget

Another \$60 million over three years is provided to promote increased student enrolment in key disciplines related to the digital economy.

I do want to address the issue of seniors because many seniors in my riding have come forward, especially in the province of Alberta where the inflation rate has been higher than the national average. Obviously, having an economy that typically grows above a national average overall is a good thing, but it does place some constraints certainly on seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes, in terms of dealing with rising costs. The budget enhances the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old age security and their GIS payments. It puts an additional \$300 million into this program, which is \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for a couple. This investment will help 680,000 seniors across this country.

As the House knows, this was asked for by other parties. It was certainly supported strongly by members of the Conservative caucus. This is an initiative worthy of support and I ask all parties to therefore support it.

With respect to the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees, we in fact are changing the federal rules with respect to this and the targeted initiative for older workers, which was in fact another request made by opposition parties.

I want to review some of the initiatives that this government has already taken with respect to seniors.

Since 2006, our government has increased the age amount, first by \$1,000 in 2006, and then by another \$1,000 in 2009. We have doubled the maximum amount of income eligible for the pension income credit to \$2,000. We have introduced pension income splitting. We have increased the age limit for maturing pensions and RRSP plans to 71 from 69 years of age, something that was done by the former government. It had put it down to 69 from 71. We have reversed that policy change. This means that in 2011, a single senior can earn at least \$19,000 and a senior couple at least \$38,000, before having to pay any federal income tax.

In the time remaining in my speech, I would like to quote from a number of organizations which have come out in strong support of this budget. Chambers of commerce from across the country have applauded it. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce applauds a low-tax budget.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and its network have been very active in the corporate income tax debate over the last few months and our message has been heard:

—Canada's low tax plan has created a healthy economic environment for business investment and we applaud the government for staying the course.

It is not only endorsed by those organizations representing all businesses. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, also came out and endorsed this budget as well. It endorsed the EI hiring tax credit:

CFIB is extremely pleased to see its top budget priority— an EI Hiring Credit for Small Business—announced in the 2011 budget. As this budget forecasts rising EI premiums in each of the next three years, this credit will be a major help to small firms in growing their workforce.

In terms of red tape, the CFIB as well commends this government for its action taken in terms of improving taxpayer fairness under the Canada Revenue Agency, which I know my colleague will follow up on in his speech later this afternoon.

In terms of retirement income, the CFIB strongly endorses the government's action with respect to the ongoing work to introduce pooled registered pension plans to really help those Canadians who do not have a public pension plan or do not have a private pension plan.

I see that my time is up—

• (1305)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a smile on my face and the member for Edmonton—Leduc will probably be doing the same thing.

We have worked very well in the past. I also want to compliment the member on his fine work, not just on industry but on the Standing Committee on Finance. It is encouraging to see that we have members in this House who are uniting forces and able to make people in this Parliament work so well. We look forward to his good works after the next election.

The member would find my question predictable because it is clearly something I had waited for in what appears to be the last budget of this Parliament. That is, the promise made by his party with respect to reducing the fuel burden on our truckers and on industry.

In the last election, the Conservatives campaigned on a 2¢ per litre reduction in diesel taxes. That election is almost finished and we are coming to another election. The term of the government is almost there. I wonder if the hon. member remembers that promise made by his government. We are dealing with high fuel prices and high food prices. The time would be now. Why is it not in the budget?

• (1310)

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, I want to return the member's comments. I served with him on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. He was an outstanding vice-chair of that committee. He certainly made it work and I commend him for his work, for instance, on the report we did in 2007 which recognized that we had to do something for the manufacturing sector and thereby implemented the changes with respect to the accelerated capital cost allowance. So I certainly commend him for his work there.

I remember the promise made in the last election campaign. Obviously, that was a promise made over a full term of government which we hoped to see.

In terms of reducing fuel costs though, this government has reduced costs overall in terms of consumers and namely with respect to the goods and services tax, from 7% to 6% to 5%. That is the biggest thing that could be done, whether for someone putting gas in a car, or buying a new home. The biggest change we could make for consumers is to reduce the GST, which we have done.

The Budget

In terms of the fuel excise tax, we will see what happens in the next campaign which we expect will start in the next few days. However, I appreciate the member's question and his work, and I thank him for his comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc on the good job he does chairing the Standing Committee on Finance.

I would like to ask him what he thinks about the fact that there is no mention in the budget of compensation for Quebec for the harmonization of the two taxes, the GST and the QST, when such compensation was given to other provinces, including Ontario, British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces; when the Government of Quebec has been requesting compensation for the harmonization of these taxes since 1997, as was confirmed yesterday; and when Quebec is paying its share, 25%, of the compensation being given to other provinces for tax harmonization.

Why is a settlement not even mentioned in the current budget?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, first I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and for his work on the Standing Committee on Finance.

[*English*]

It is a valid question because if the sales tax with the province of Quebec were harmonized with the federal government, my expectation is there would be some form of agreement that would be modelled on the agreements that occurred between the federal government and the Atlantic provinces, British Columbia and Ontario.

However, the fact is that the sales tax is not harmonized as it is currently. That is why our finance minister and the finance minister of Quebec are working very hard to try to reach an agreement where it is harmonized. Once that agreement takes place, my expectation is that a similar model will be applied, as was applied with the Atlantic provinces and with British Columbia and Ontario.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to say that my hon. colleague from Edmonton is far too good an MP to really believe the speaking points he was sent in here to read today.

There is only one glaring choice made in that budget that for me summarizes justification for the fact that every other party in the House rejects the government's 2011 budget. The Calgary Stampede is getting \$5 million to celebrate its 100th anniversary. The Grey Cup is getting \$5 million to celebrate its 100th anniversary. That is \$10 million, but the total amount for youth crime prevention and gang prevention is \$7 million a year. How can we support—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I will have to give the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc 35 seconds to respond.

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, I can assure my colleague and send him my notes to show that I, in fact, wrote the speech myself. They are my own talking points.

With respect to the funding, I believe the Grey Cup is an event of national importance and events of national importance ought to be

supported by their government. The Calgary Stampede, in my view, fits that category. That is what we did with programs like the marquee tourism events program. We try to support events across the country which are of incredible national importance.

In response to the question, if he does not want to listen to me or my party, he can listen to the universities and colleges in his region, to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and even to the Canadian Labour Congress, which is advising the NDP to think seriously about this budget, look at the support for—

• (1315)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to be here today talking about the budget. I think it is incredibly important that we have a full discussion on the important issues that are facing us today and that we also take a look at the solutions that we have presented to the people in order to make it through the next phase of the recovery from the recession.

At the very core of it, I am very proud to represent the constituency of Halton. I am the mother of two boys. They are nine and six years old. My worries, when I am home in the riding, are with regard to the economy. I am concerned about jobs for my family, for my friends, and for my neighbours. I am concerned about the rising costs in my household. I am concerned about whether or not my friends and family, and myself can make ends meet. I am also concerned that my kids are safe and healthy. So when I, in this House, take a look at the budget, first and foremost, that is how I look at it. I look at it as what we call that ordinary, typical family, that person who is worrying about those kinds of things that I just talked about.

What do I see in this budget? I see support for job creation. I see support for families. I see that support for communities. I see investment in innovation, education and training, those kinds of things that are going to help my kids to do better in the future, and my community to do better. I also see what I very much like, which is a plan to ensure that we are taking care of the expenses in government, that we are looking after taxpayers' dollars. All of these things will allow me to manage my day-to-day life.

The child arts tax credit would be incredibly beneficial for a lot of my residents in Halton. Indeed, we have already proven that we care about families, with \$3,000 for the average family being saved already from the measures that we have put in place. I am very proud of these things. That is why I know that this proposed budget would make a difference for residents in Halton because I know it would make a difference in my life.

It is important to understand that this budget was built from the ground up, that it was a process that was thoughtful, and we had gone through very specific steps.

The Budget

As a local member of Parliament, I consulted with municipal councillors, with businesses, with seniors, and with local families. However, as the Minister of Labour, my job is to ensure, as well, that the workplace is the most productive, healthy, innovative, and positive place that we can have people working in because it is there where the economy grows. It is there where we do the great things we need to do in order to ensure that our country continues to prosper.

I was lucky enough to go to consultations in Sydney, Nova Scotia, the place where I was brought up. I was in Thunder Bay. I was in Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver and Iqaluit. I made sure in every single case that organized labour had input. I am the daughter of a Cape Breton labour organizer and very proud of it. I respect and I want to hear that voice.

We also had experts in the fields of occupational health and safety as well as labour relations. We listened, we responded, and we heard.

So, what have we done from the labour perspective?

First and foremost, a strike or a work stoppage on the economy could be absolutely devastating. If we were to have a rail strike in this country, we would see a cost to the economy of \$125 million a week. Not only that, it is the harm to the third parties, those innocent parties who are not part of the collective bargaining process, who have to live with what is happening at the table, who will feel the pain associated with the work stoppage.

Our role in Labour Canada is to ensure that the parties come to an agreement. That is why we are providing money for preventative mediation and conciliation services to ensure that work stoppages do not happen in Canada. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Never more has this been more appropriate in this case.

In consultations, we listened and we heard from employees about the importance and the dignity of continuing to work past the age of 65. People want to work past 65. There is no question about it. Indeed, on my town hall teleconference on Tuesday night with members of my community, I was told that by separate residents, that they have retired, they want to use their skills, and they want to be productive. In fact, 65 is just an artificial number in any event, that came inherited to us from the past and is truly meaningless.

However, we listened to employers as well. The importance of listening to employers is that in some cases there truly are some bona fide occupational requirements that are needed in order to ensure that there is a healthy and safe workplace at play.

Finally, in 2008, we introduced the wage earner protection program. It gave certainty to people in the event of a bankruptcy, certainty in two ways: first, they would be paid out in a timely fashion as the government steps into their shoes and assumes their claim in a bankruptcy action; and second, they knew that they would get some form of payment for lost wages, severance and termination.

• (1320)

Before that, they were assured of nothing but a long, protracted legal settlement that they would have to go through and pay for out of their own pocket in order to reclaim their wages. Our government stepped into their shoes. Our government recognized the importance

of it. It is a lean, efficient, effective program that delivers rock solid results when workers and families are at their most vulnerable.

I have been thanked by organized labour many times in consultations for this program, but I did hear, as I was in Thunder Bay speaking with two of our candidates, Richard Harvey and Maureen Comuzzi-Stehmann, about a situation for workers at the former Atikokan Forest Products where, because of the restructuring effects, they were unable to claim the wage earner protection program. We took those complaints back, and I heard them from organized labour as well, and we introduced in this budget the fix.

The member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River has been, in his local media yesterday, discussing this issue too and offering to help his constituents. His complaints regarding the situation and his commiserations with the people are nothing but crocodile tears because he has an opportunity to make a difference in these people's lives. He can do it now, today. Instead, his response is to talk about what will happen after the election. It is not enough. The solution is there. It is too little, too late.

In the past 14 months I have absolutely treasured the ability to be the Minister of Labour, the role I have taken on. I have met good people and I have seen the great work they do, both domestically and internationally on the organized labour scene. I sincerely want to thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity I have had in these past few months.

We all recognize, as I have said before, that the workplace drives the economy. Organized labour recognizes that too. They understand the importance of working with dignity. They have imparted that importance on to me. I take the matter very seriously and I understand very sincerely that these are the issues that are important to them.

As a government, we have listened to organized labour. As a government, we are the ones who have taken their concerns and translated them into effective measures that we are proposing in the budget. That is exactly why Ken Georgetti of the Canada Labour Congress talked about how important it was that we had put in place the provisions for seniors and that we had put in place the provisions for all the matters respecting EI and work sharing. He is pleased with the announcements in the budget about extending work sharing programs, about EI pilot projects, support for laid off older workers, and improving wage protection for laid off workers. That is a great laundry list of items on which we have delivered.

In terms of seniors, he made it very clear that this as well is a budget that is a win for seniors. We have taken care of that matter too. We respected and we listened to the point of view of organized labour, and I am very proud that we were able to do that in this budget.

It is quite unfortunate, however, that there are different opinions in the House with respect to whether or not the point of view of organized labour should be respected in terms of the budget.

In conclusion, labour relations is a very fulfilling field. Getting to a deal at the negotiation table is incredibly satisfying when we know we have done the best we can, we have gone through the process, that we are able to get a deal that is good for our company and good for the people we represent.

The Budget

Ken Georgetti from the Canada Labour Congress has over 30 years in senior roles at the table. I have great respect for his negotiating skills, and I have greater respect for his innate sense of when to close a deal. He knows how to do a deal. He knows when negotiations are at an end, and that is why, when he said the following, representing 3.2 million brothers and sisters of the organized labour movement, it meant something. He said:

I'd say to [the NDP leader] there's enough in this budget that we want to look at it seriously in the labour movement. We would think that...if we were at a negotiating table we'd take that offer.

Plain and simple.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to the labour minister's speech. I do not think that she said very much about the funding given to the Canadian forestry industry, which amounted to a measly \$60 million for the entire country.

Given that the forestry industry provides more jobs than the automotive industry, which received \$10 billion from the government, how could she fail to recognize the lack of emphasis that has been put on the forestry industry in the regions?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question with respect to forestry. In my former role as minister of natural resources during the economic recession, I had a large role to play with respect to delivering for the forestry industry.

In the same way, we built the budget and the proposals from the ground up. We talked to the Forest Products Association of Canada, the labour industry and the communities that were being affected, which is why the programs we put in place were very important.

The green infrastructure fund associated with pulp and paper facilities received \$1 billion. That went to help pulp and paper facilities upgrade, modernize and become more green and efficient. That was incredibly important. The community adjustment fund assisted communities to ensure they diversified so they would have something more than forestry to deal with in the future.

We also have dedicated resources to marketing. In fact, our forest companies have done a wonderful job of getting to markets in areas that we had not expected before. For example, we are doing great work in China. We were doing great work in Japan with respect to the sale of wood. I know companies do a great job and will continue to do so. Our role in government is to support what the companies want to do and support the workers and the communities.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Labour for the tremendous work she has done with the Conservative government. She has brought to this government some extraordinary talent, skill and devotion that, frankly, was lacking in previous governments.

She commented on several of the things in the budget that would help workers. I would like her to take it home a bit and tell us how this budget would actually help her community and province to ensure the people who need the things provided in the budget get them.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her friendship and kind words. We have done great work this year.

I must point out that I was reading in this week's issue of *Maclean's* magazine a quote from a senior Liberal adviser who stated that the Liberals needed to win back votes who are largely female, largely under 50, largely suburban and largely non-Anglo-Saxon.

In answer to the member's question, that would be a great description of my riding, quite frankly, and me, except in terms of ethnicity. However, it is clear from the position of the opposition party that the Liberals have given up on that very demographic. They have given up on seniors, young families, working-class people, volunteers, entrepreneurs and students. However, we should not be too surprised. As I said in the beginning, I am here to work for my constituents. I am here only because of my constituents and every day I think about what is better for them.

It is very clear that the coalition will be led by a Leader of the Opposition who is not in it for Canadians, like we are in it for our constituents, and is clearly in it for himself. Otherwise, the opposition would not be turning down a budget that would be very beneficial for my constituents and for people who are severely affected across the country. The leader did not come back for Canadians and that could not be more obvious than right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Québec.

Not surprisingly, I am speaking today to express my disappointment with the current government's budget, which ignores Quebec requests.

When we released our budget expectations in January, we made it clear that certain measures were crucial if the government wanted our support.

For example, one essential condition for our support was that Quebec be given \$2.2 billion for tax harmonization. Unfortunately, unlike Ontario, British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, which was a pioneer in harmonizing taxes—it did so 19 years ago—has been shortchanged. And that was a Conservative decision. The Bloc will propose an amendment to the Conservative budget in order to put an end to this chronic injustice.

When it comes to social issues, the Conservatives have shown that they do not care about the less fortunate. Their budget does nothing to address the well-demonstrated need for real employment insurance reform to reflect the reality faced by workers.

Instead of offering long-term solutions, the Conservative government would rather continue plundering the employment insurance fund, to the tune of \$17 billion over five years, and will only commit to pilot projects. In that regard, this government is simply repeating what has always been done in the past. In the end, the employment insurance fund is the government's cash cow, to the detriment of workers.

The Budget

In particular, Quebec and its regions also needed a real program to assist older workers who have lost their jobs, in order to support them until their retirement. Clearly, there is a huge gap between the Conservatives' rhetoric about the regions and what they are actually doing as a government.

Furthermore, the Quebec manufacturing sector cannot count on any substantial federal policies to help it develop. We submitted some concrete proposals, however, such as funding for research and development for all innovative companies. For example, instead of presenting a real policy for the aerospace industry, which just happens to be concentrated in Quebec, the budget proposes simply reviewing policies.

The Conservatives also continue to favour the wealthy. In order to finance our requests, the Bloc Québécois had submitted a plan that would have allowed Ottawa to increase revenues by \$16 billion without dipping into the pockets of middle-class workers.

In particular, we proposed a surtax on the richest taxpayers, who could easily give a little more, the elimination of tax havens, which are liberally allowed in Canada and are costing Canadians billions of dollars in lost tax revenue, and the end of gifts to oil companies, which always benefit from tax cuts. That plan provided more than enough to pay the money owed to Quebec and to meet its most pressing needs.

In addition, the government is maintaining its centralizing agenda, which will have an impact on Quebec's economy. It must abandon its plan to create a single securities commission, a measure that goes against the interests of Quebec and infringes on Quebec's jurisdictions. I might add that it also flies in the face of a unanimous vote in the Quebec National Assembly, yet the government continues on that path, completely ignoring all requests from Quebecers and the Quebec nation, despite having recognized that nation.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on the Conservative government to back down immediately and put an end, once and for all, to its plans for a single securities commission, which is designed to do Montreal out of what it has for Toronto's benefit and which infringes on Quebec's jurisdictions.

● (1330)

I would now like to talk about a matter that is very important to me. I have been a member for seven years and, throughout that time, the lack of social housing in Laval has been an issue. More than 16,000 Laval households are facing a crisis. They spend more than 30% of their income on housing and represent 36.6% of all renters in Laval. What is even more serious is that 7,400 of them spend more than 50% of their income on housing.

The federal government owns a penitentiary in the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul area of my riding. It has been closed for 21 years, since 1989. Since that time, the government has been considering solutions for converting the penitentiary facilities and the grounds around the old building. Since 2006, I have been formally requesting that the government include affordable or social housing in its plans for the site. In 2007, people sent hundreds of reply cards in support of this request to the minister responsible. This is not a recent file.

In 2009, in the absence of a positive response from the government, I circulated a petition formally calling on the government to proceed with the conversion of the old penitentiary and to work with the Government of Quebec to include affordable or social housing. The petition had 2,813 signatures and was presented here on June 15, 2010. I was very surprised to hear the response of the Minister of Public Safety when Parliament resumed last fall. He unabashedly stated, "the CSC [which is under his authority] is open to the sale of the property to a third party...the development of affordable or social housing is outside the mandate of the CSC."

I understand that it is outside his mandate, but the petition was addressed to the government, which is responsible for the facility.

And that is the point we have come to with this government. It is not meeting the needs voiced by the people. But the people of Laval will not forget. The government is showing complete disinterest in the needs of the people, but at the same time it recently announced that it would spend \$40 million to incarcerate an additional 96 prisoners in the Laval Federal Training Centre, which is located near the former penitentiary. This all stems from the government's repressive ideology. This government has millions of dollars to house inmates, but it cannot find money to house needy families.

In keeping with the needs expressed by the people, the Bloc's budget expectations called for the following measures. First, the Bloc called on the federal government to gradually reinvest in social or affordable housing until it reached approximately \$2 billion in additional funding per year. It also expected the government to commit to eventually allocating 1% of its revenues to social housing, a total of \$2.6 billion for 2011-12, over and above current funding levels.

In addition, the Bloc wanted the government to introduce a system to manage the CMHC surplus and bring an end to the systematic accumulation of that surplus, which will reach more than \$10 billion in 2011. This surplus should be used, in part, to fund the gradual reinvestment that the Bloc is proposing.

Since homelessness is often caused by a lack of social housing, the Bloc is also calling for improvements to the homelessness partnering strategy. It is appalling to see how little the 2011 budget offers in this area. No new funding was announced for construction, conversion or renovation of social housing. The Conservative government boasts that it has invested in construction, but it is the first government that has not reinvested anything in social housing. The Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain is decrying this situation. It says that a single F-35 fighter jet is the equivalent of 6,400 subsidized housing units. That proportion is astonishing.

● (1335)

To conclude, the Conservatives have chosen to turn a blind eye to Quebec's requests and will have to answer to the voters.

● (1340)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the Bloc Québécois member, and I have a hard time understanding why the Bloc is always whining when the federal and provincial governments sit down together to talk.

The Budget

As we said, and as the Government of Quebec has often repeated, the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec are on the right track with tax harmonization.

The Bloc always has something to say. However, the Bloc will never be in power, will never be able to sit down with the Government of Quebec, and will never be able to sign a cheque in Parliament.

I would like to know how much money the Bloc Québécois has injected into Quebec's economy since 1993?

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I am shocked by the type of comments I am hearing.

Some say that the Bloc Québécois has never made any investments in government. To my knowledge, neither have the Conservative members.

In my opinion, it is the government that invests money. It is the government of the people, who are represented by all those present, that sets the priorities and spends taxpayers' money. The money does not belong to the Bloc or to any other party. It belongs to taxpayers, and we allocate it to the right places.

This government wants to spend \$20 billion or \$30 billion on fighter planes when other needs have not been met. I believe that the government's priorities are wrong.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like the member to comment, if he wants to, on any of these things. He made a good point about housing missing from this, as well as shelters, which is very important in my riding.

I asked the Minister of Finance to increase the mineral exploration tax credit to make it longer and more permanent. The good news is he did for one year, and I am glad he did that, but the mining associations wanted it for more years to give a longer certainty. Would the member support me on that?

Also, there was embarrassingly little for aboriginal Canadians. Museum programs were cut, including the MAP program for small museums. Fifteen arts programs were cut, including the travelling museum exhibits, which are very important for the Yukon. The Conservatives also closed the dental therapy school, the only one in Canada.

The Canadian Environmental Network, which does great work across Canada, will now have to close. The friendship centres have not received a cost of living increase during the entire term of the government. There was nothing for the great CAIRS Yukon project or for search and rescue for the north, which the Senate just said had to be put in, as I have said for five years now.

There were cuts made to the Canadian Tourism Commission. There is nothing for child care, addictions, mental health and, as the member said, there is very little for students and seniors.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Madam Speaker, I listened to the list of complaints expressed by my colleague. The cuts made by the current government strengthen my conviction that, in the areas of culture,

research and education, it is not choosing its priorities based on the needs of the general public.

I believe that the government is wrapped up in its ideology, and would spend billions of dollars on punishment and militarism rather than on direct assistance for people who sorely need it. That is what the Bloc finds deplorable about the budget, and that is why we will be voting against it.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. Bloc Québécois colleagues for supporting me in my speech on the budget.

I am pleased to speak here today, because the budget is of particular interest to me. As the member for Québec and caucus chair for the Québec City region, I cannot help but note that the Québec City region has been forgotten in this budget. The budget reads more like an election speech, since the measures within the budget are simply a smattering of goodies for vulnerable groups.

The Conservatives will say that, during the election campaign, seniors will not get their \$50 a month. They said we did not read the budget, but with our experience here in the House of Commons, we have a good research service and members who have a thorough grasp of their files. From a careful look at the budget, we could see right away how little it has to offer Québec.

We made some very targeted requests in precise figures. In fact, the Conservative Minister of Finance even said that the Bloc had done a good job. So why are we not voting in favour of this budget at the outset? We had asked for \$2.2 billion in compensation for harmonizing the GST and the QST. Six provinces have been compensated, including British Columbia, Ontario and the maritime provinces. Yet Québec is being ignored. Several billion dollars were given to those provinces in compensation: \$1.6 billion to British Columbia, \$4.3 billion to Ontario and \$1 billion to the Maritimes, for a total of about \$7 billion. Québec paid \$1.75 billion of that amount to compensate them. We are asking for \$2.2 billion.

It is also shocking to see how quickly the Conservatives agreed to that: after 244 days for Ontario and 131 days for British Columbia. How long has Québec been waiting for an agreement to be signed? How many days? It has been 6,841 days. It is truly shocking to watch the Conservatives drag their feet on this issue.

Earlier, the Conservative member for Beauport—Limoilou said that we are always whining. We read the papers just like everyone else, just like the citizens of the Québec City region. We know very well that Minister Bachand has been working hard while trying not to upset the Conservatives too much because they react easily and he does not want them to slam the door and say that they will not compensate Québec. Nevertheless, Québec has been waiting for this money. If Québec had \$2.2 billion dollars in its coffers, the Government of Québec would be able to pay off 60% of its deficit, which would give it more flexibility to meet the needs of the people.

The Budget

Conservative MPs from the Quebec City area should have demonstrated more leadership with regard to this budget, which could be called an election announcement. The epicentre for the MPs that were elected here in the House is the Quebec City region, which has six representatives. If there is an election—we are, of course, still waiting to see if there will be one—we will hound the Quebec City region's MPs. They will have to answer questions. During debates or when they are interviewed by our local and regional newspapers, they will have to answer, in an intelligent way, certain questions that we want to ask them.

For example, they put on Nordiques jerseys to support the team coming back to Quebec City. We do not know why they put those sweaters on but, in the end, they did not bring in any funding for the Quebec City arena. They said that private funding was needed. Private funding was obtained and then they wanted something else. The real reason was put in writing. There was a directive from the Prime Minister's office stating that funding would not be given for arenas anywhere in Canada. The Conservatives also wanted to make it seem as though this arena would be used exclusively for sports. That is untrue. This is a multi-purpose arena that would house cultural and sporting events, as well as some Olympic events. Clearly, the people of Quebec City have been misled.

Furthermore, a number of issues have been put on the back burner, for example, the Quebec Bridge.

• (1345)

My hon. colleague from Louis-Hébert has worked hard on defending that issue in the Quebec City area. He also moved a motion in the House calling on the government to repurchase the bridge and enter into discussion with the owners, CN, to find a solution. Again, we saw the Conservatives' bad faith with this file. They acted just like the Liberals and let the matter drag on, saying it was up to the courts to decide. In the meantime, as in Montreal, the bridge is rusting and it could end up costing more than we think. This was an important issue for the Quebec City area.

The Shannon issue is one that I have followed closely and on which I have dogged the government. The groundwater in Shannon is contaminated. We will not get into details about the levels of contamination, but the shocking thing is that the government failed to include any money in this budget for decontamination.

It would cost roughly \$20 million a year for a technique that might be better than the last one. This technique would allow us to move forward and clean up the groundwater so that people in the municipality of Shannon can be safe. I know that this case is currently before the courts, but enough with the excuses.

Before the last election, many things were promised. For example, they promised to resolve the mail sorting centre issue and to do something for the zoo. Once the election was over, we did not hear another word about these plans and they moved on to other things. Many things need to be addressed and there will be many more challenges to face for the development of the Quebec City area.

The Prime Minister said in his speech, the day after bringing down this electoral budget, that he was focused on job creation. If there is one issue in the Quebec City area that all members from Quebec City should focus on it is the Davie shipyard issue.

The rules for the request for proposals were changed causing the shipyard to lose weeks, and thereby preventing it from being able to restructure and become solvent. Regardless of what we want to do in this case, they have stymied our ability to be proactive.

In *Le Soleil* or the *Journal de Québec*, a daily newspaper in our region, the counterpart of the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse has said he thinks the federal government should be much broader in its request for proposals and give this company the opportunity to prove its solvency.

What is shocking is hearing the leader of the members from the Quebec City region, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, say that the Quebec City region should not expect the Davie shipyard to be a priority. We can see what little weight she carries in cabinet when it comes to talking about the Davie shipyard. She herself said that there should be no expectations, even if the Davie shipyard were solvent. She should stand up for her region and be proactive. She should do everything she can to ensure that the Davie shipyard receives its fair share. The total for all of the contracts is said to be \$35 billion. Could the Quebec City region not receive its fair share? We are talking about 2,700 jobs and economic spinoffs to the tune of \$2.1 billion, but the Conservatives are nowhere to be seen.

Earlier, I mentioned the Quebec Bridge. Money was taken from the fund for the continental gateway strategy to restore the Champlain Bridge. This fund is meant for modifications or economic inputs in connection with the St. Lawrence River and for the continental gateway. The money being taken from that fund is not new money, and that is what I find despicable about how this government works. We are seeing a smattering of goodies to please voters. I think that vulnerable groups are being held hostage. We know what the Conservatives are capable of doing. During the previous election, we saw how they could dangle the idea of another \$50, but we also know that there was a price.

• (1350)

So it is not for everyone. People need to take a close look at this measure.

It is too bad; I would have liked to speak longer. The Quebec City region and a number of leaders were disappointed by the Conservatives' motives in the region—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

• (1355)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, since I arrived in the House of Commons I have been teased by our friends in the Bloc, who say that there is a good and a bad Bernard Généreux, the good one being the president of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités. After the budget was presented on Tuesday, I saw this:

Mr. Généreux also welcomed the measure that would make the annual \$2 billion investment in the gas tax fund permanent. With such an announcement, municipalities were hoping for more stable funding.

If he was good yesterday, he is still good today. They just said that he is the good Bernard Généreux and that I am the bad one. In the budget, we said that municipalities—I was a mayor once myself—have the right to receive funding. That is what we did.

I would ask my colleague to respond to that.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, he said that he may be the good Généreux, but I know the difference between good and bad. I wish him luck, because this could be his last or second-last day here in the House. We have a good Bloc Québécois candidate who will be able to rise to the challenges that he has not been able to meet for the Quebec City region. We will have people who will be able to speak. Speaking also brings power. During the election campaign we will speak about the good things and, especially, the bad things the Conservatives have done.

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the litany of projects in the Quebec City region that have come to nothing under the Conservative government, I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks of members who say that it is important to be in power, to be in government.

Does that mean that there are first-tier and second-tier members throughout the country?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. It says a lot about what the Conservative members think of democracy. Members have to be elected to Parliament, they have to be in government. The Conservatives have not understood that the opposition is there to monitor the government's actions. They would prefer it if there were 308 Conservative members in the House who got to make decisions without ever being criticized.

They have not understood what a true democracy is. It always makes me smile when I see the Prime Minister go to another country and say that he is going to help it. I will not single out any particular country. The government wants to bring democracy to other countries, but perhaps it should start by taking a look at Canada. That is what we are asking for. The situation is quite shocking. Things often get heated because the Conservatives have no respect for the work done by opposition members, whether they be Liberals, New Democrats or members of the Bloc Québécois.

Rather than saying that a particular member is whining, the Conservatives should consider that the member is analyzing an issue, consulting different segments of the population that they do not consult, and relaying those perspectives back to them. A democracy means allowing people to speak. Yesterday, we were told that we were not capable of reading a budget. That attitude is truly contemptuous of how seriously all members here take their work.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has cancelled and closed the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences. For a number of scientists studying climate across Quebec and the north, it is very important. Does the member think that is a terrible loss to Canada?

[Translation]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue that the Bloc Québécois takes quite seriously. It is our hope that the Conservative Party will really put its heart into this rather than simply continuing to put a spin on the situation, as is its wont. Any action that the Conservatives have taken to help the underprivileged amounts to peanuts. All they are offering is crumbs. I hope that the public will understand the issues at stake in the

Statements by Members

election campaign, including the democratic deficit. The Conservatives are also trying to gain the favour of the most fragile groups in society, which is dangerous.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

ACT OF BRAVERY

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a brave young man from my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul.

On December 4 last year, Kole Devisscher was driving along the Red River when he noticed a young boy struggling to pull himself out of the frigid water. Kole immediately sprang into action to rescue 10-year-old Ralph Chartrand. With only a tow rope in hand, he put his own life in great jeopardy as he ventured out onto the treacherous ice. Astutely, Kole made a loop with the tow rope and guided the young boy into putting the rope over his shoulders, before pulling him out of the river.

By risking his well-being for the life of another, Kole Devisscher truly embodies the values of what it means to be a Canadian. He is a true hero and an inspiration to us all.

As a result of his courageous actions, I am honoured to nominate him for the Governor General's Medal of Bravery.

I invite all members to join me in applauding Kole's bravery.

* * *

SUSAN AUDREY VAN BIBBER

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): On February 28, the Yukon lost one of its great matriarchs, Susan Audrey Van Bibber (Chambers), née Dickson, at 99 years of age.

We could not possibly write a history of the Yukon without mentioning her legendary contributions and those of her 154 descendants and the many others she took under her wing.

She was a hard-working, tough, gritty Yukon woman, trapping, wrangling and chasing horses well into her eighties.

She was a wonderful cook, making incredible moose stew, and her cinnamon buns were gone as soon as they came out of the oven.

Sue was entertaining storyteller, and her family and friends could see the world through her eyes as she wittily shared her endless stories of people and places spanning a century.

Sue's pride and joy was her family. She was loved and will be sadly missed by her husband of 67 years, Alex Van Bibber, and those remaining of her 9 children, 46 grandchildren, 73 great-grandchildren and 26 great-great-grandchildren.

We all miss Sue. May God bless her. *Massi.*

Statements by Members

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Madam Speaker, the federalist parties are unable to respond to the aspirations of Quebecers and constantly minimize the achievements of the Bloc Québécois, even though there are numerous examples of the Bloc Québécois achieving concrete results for Quebec.

Only yesterday, Bill C-35 on immigration consultants received royal assent. It is thanks to the work of the Bloc Québécois members that the act contains a “Quebec clause”, which means that all immigration consultants in Quebec will have to meet Quebec’s requirements, which include fluency in French.

Without the hard work of the Bloc, there would be two categories of immigration consultants in Quebec today: those accredited by the federal government, who would not be required to be fluent in French, and those recognized by the Government of Quebec. Fortunately, the Bloc was here to get concrete results for Quebec and for the French language.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats want to make this Parliament work. That is why we proposed a practical, doable plan to lift seniors out of poverty, provide pension security, and to ensure that Canadians have access to doctors and nurses.

The problem is that the current Conservative government is only interested in playing games and undermining our democratic institution.

My constituents do not want an election. They need help to make life more affordable.

New Democrats listened, but Conservatives did not. They are too busy behaving as if they are above the law. Is it any wonder we have another instance of abuse of power with the Prime Minister’s own former top aide, Bruce Carson?

Just yesterday, I returned a call from a constituent in Capreol, Mrs. Greaves, who had called me to say that she was totally disgusted and insulted by the budget. She said that the \$600 in the budget barely addressed her needs. Mrs. Greaves is 72 years old and is still working as a nurse because she has no choice. That is no way to treat our seniors.

It is not too late for the government to change its course and adopt the NDP’s practical, doable plan for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. The hon. member for Abbotsford.

* * *

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, epilepsy is a disorder affecting over 300,000 Canadians and 50 million people worldwide. It is one of the most common neurological disorders, but sadly it is misunderstood by many. That is why I rise to call attention

to Purple Day, an occasion on which we raise awareness of this life altering condition.

As an epilepsy sufferer herself, nine-year-old Cassidy Megan founded Purple Day in 2008 as a way to foster support for others suffering from the same condition. Purple Day informs the public of the symptoms and causes of epilepsy, teaches us how to respond to seizures, raises money for research and demonstrates to those with epilepsy that they are not alone.

It might surprise members to know that a member of my immediate family suffers from this disorder.

Although many who suffer from epilepsy benefit from recent advancements in research, much remains to be done. I am confident that some day we will discover a cure for epilepsy.

I call on all members to join me on March 26 in commemorating Purple Day.

* * *

● (1405)

DINING OUT FOR LIFE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we celebrate Dining Out for Life, which benefits people living with HIV-AIDS in British Columbia. The event is B.C.’s largest fundraiser by restaurants, raising over \$3 million in the last 16 years.

Today over 250 restaurants from Whistler to White Rock and across the Fraser Valley will contribute 25% of their sales to people living with HIV-AIDS. This event is a great example of the generosity of Vancouverites, B.C.’s restaurants, and sponsors like B.C.’s own Sumac Ridge winery in coming together for a great cause.

The Gastown and Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver has the largest HIV infection rate in North America, with 30% of the local population affected. There are currently over 6,000 Vancouver residents living with HIV-AIDS.

The proceeds from Dining Out for Life go to support A Loving Spoonful and Friends for Life, two organizations that are making a difference in the lives of those with HIV-AIDS. A Loving Spoonful has provided over 100,000 meals to the most needy, and Friends for Life is a wellness centre where people come together for compassion and support. This year—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Simcoe North.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in January I held several meetings in my riding with constituents to consult on the budget. My constituents were clear.

They asked for support for low income seniors. Our budget has delivered on that, with a guaranteed income supplement top-up of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples.

Statements by Members

They asked for an extension to the eco-energy retrofit homes program. Again, our budget has delivered, with an investment of \$400 million.

They asked for tax credits for small businesses to create jobs and to reduce red tape. Our budget has delivered, with a \$1,000 small business hiring tax credit and the Red Tape Reduction Commission.

My constituents have rarely shown interest in partisan political games, but they are concerned about their jobs, their families and their futures.

I ask the members opposite to listen to the priorities of Canadians, set their political ambitions aside and support this budget.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a group of students at the University of Sherbrooke recently took part in “Five Days for the Homeless”. They collected thousands of dollars to support services for homeless persons.

For five days, nine students slept outside and relied solely on the generosity of the public to meet their needs. Through this initiative, these young people were able to raise awareness of homeless and poverty among people in their community

People who work with the homeless took this opportunity to remind me of their fears for the future of the HPS program. Unfortunately, their fears were confirmed by the 2011 budget, with the Conservatives still refusing to index and improve programs to combat homelessness as well as social housing programs.

The Conservatives should spend a few days sleeping in the open air, and then they would realize, given the miracles that the workers achieve with these funds, that the minimum we owe them is indexing and a funding increase.

* * *

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are things that are absolutely unacceptable. For example, an opposition coalition that puts political self-interest above the needs of Canadians is absolutely unacceptable.

A sponsorship scandal that lined the pockets of Liberal bagmen with millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars, that too is absolutely unacceptable.

Then there are things that surpass unacceptable and enter the realm of barbaric. So-called honour killings of women clearly transcend the definition of unacceptable. This practice deserves to be repudiated for the evil and barbaric thing it truly is.

I hope the disgusted reactions from all across Canada to the misguided attempts at political correctness by the member for Papineau have taught him the difference between unacceptable and barbaric. That member seems to be following in the footsteps of his father, Pierre Trudeau, whose political legacy was called disastrous

and destructive for Canada's economy, unity and international reputation in the *National Post* yesterday.

* * *

•(1410)

HEALTH

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents of Brampton—Springdale, who are demanding action on the issue of health care. Families are frustrated at having to wait for hours and hours at the Brampton Civic Hospital located in my riding. Seniors are suffering because they have to wait for months to see specialists and receive the medical care they require.

The average wait time at the hospital is 17.5 hours. The doctors and nurses are working tirelessly, but the fact is demand is growing. Bramptonians deserve better. They deserve a government that will actually invest in more doctors and nurses and work with the Brampton community to have a second hospital to ensure that the growing demand is met.

We need a government that is going to put health care at the top of the agenda, because that is what Canadians and all Bramptonians deserve. Brampton families and seniors demand a government that will invest in more doctors and nurses and reduce wait times in health care.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Hon. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in yet another chapter of partisan politics, the Liberals are proving to the public that they are not concerned about policy or people, but are just in it for themselves.

After the tax exemption for volunteer firefighters was presented in the budget this week, the member for Malpeque was falsely claiming that it was a Liberal idea.

That is really interesting because, on October 8, 2003, he voted against that tax credit put forward in my private members' bill, Bill C-325. The bill, which I originally introduced in December 2002, failed by a narrow margin of 96 to 99. Ninety-seven of the 99 members who voted against it were Liberals.

Does it matter whose idea something was? Are we not here to get things done for the people of Canada? How can Canadians trust Liberal members who at one time vote against something but change their position when they feel some political advantage is possible?

Is this not just another deliberate effort to mislead on the part of the Liberals? This is a question voters will need to consider when they choose their next member of Parliament.

*Statements by Members***GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 85-year-old Vera Cudjoe is anxious and worried because she cannot afford her \$260 hydro bill. She tried turning off the heat to save money but got desperately sick.

Vera was a nurse and the proud director of the first national black theatre. She worked hard her whole life but the current old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments simply are not enough to live on.

Instead of helping seniors like Vera by removing the tax on home heating, the Prime Minister would rather take care of his buddies like Bruce Carson. Thanks to taxpayer dollars, Carson has two houses, a condo and a Benz for his escort fiancée, while Vera cannot even afford heat.

That is just one example of the Conservative government's twisted priorities. No wonder Canadians believe Ottawa is broken. No wonder the Conservative government no longer has the trust of ordinary Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, our Conservative government tabled a responsible budget that will help seniors and families, strengthen our communities and bring more doctors to the regions of Quebec. We tabled a budget that meets the priorities of people in all regions of Quebec: to improve the guaranteed income supplement; invest in innovation, education and training; and create a new tax credit for family caregivers. These are some concrete examples of how the budget will help the people in our regions.

Unfortunately, the coalition led by the Liberal leader is threatening to bring down the government and vote against a budget that they did not even take the time to read. By so doing, they will deprive thousands of Quebecers of the tax breaks to which they are entitled.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, transitional measures were put in place in 2000, after the employment insurance economic regions were inadequately reconfigured. Certain regions, like the Bas-Saint-Laurent—Côte-Nord region, have had a blended unemployment rate for more than 10 years, which was adopted in an effort to correct this error until the next reconfiguration. On March 12, 2011, the government started gradually phasing out these transitional measures.

But many unemployed and seasonal workers will not qualify unless these transitional measures are extended. Instead of undertaking a sweeping reform of this outdated system that does not reflect the current reality of workers, the Conservatives are keeping thousands of people in suspense and in poverty. The 2011 budget does not extend the transitional measures, which would have been good, as would a fair reform of the employment insurance system. Once again, the Conservatives are showing their contempt for the regions of Quebec and—

● (1415)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have had enough; they are fed up. They can no longer put up with a Conservative government that is so out of touch with the priorities of Canadian families. Canadians are fed up with seeing the Conservatives scorn and disrespect democratic institutions like this House, like Elections Canada, like the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Canadians have had enough of the Conservatives taking them for fools, trying to ram down their throats things like costly fighter jets, American-style megaprisons and gifts to the richest corporations. Enough is enough. The Conservatives have shown too much contempt for democracy and for our Parliament, and it must stop. It is time they were held accountable. It is time for Canadians to judge them on their poor choices, their bad faith and their attacks on our democracy. We no longer have confidence in this government, nor does this House. Canada deserves better.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal leader was asked by reporters if he would form a coalition with the socialist NDP and the separatist Bloc Québécois. Of course, the Liberal leader avoided the question.

The Liberal leader signed on to a coalition before and he will do it again. His own personal ambition comes ahead of Canada's stability.

The Liberal leader and his coalition partners want to return to reckless policies that failed Canada decades ago, raising taxes to pay for spending we simply cannot afford. The reckless tax-and-spend approach would kill jobs, stall our recovery and set Canadian families back.

The coalition still has a choice: Its reckless ambition for an unnecessary election or the important measures in the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth, to support Canadian families and to complete our economic recovery.

We encourage the coalition to join with us, put the interests of Canadians first and help us complete the economic recovery.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES**

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, well beyond high school, advanced skills and learning are absolute necessities for Canadian young people in a very competitive world, but it is expensive. Two-thirds of Canadian families do not think they can afford to send their kids to university, college, technical school or on apprenticeships. Their futures are at risk.

In the Conservative regime's twisted priorities, why is it spending a thousand times more on stealth fighter war planes than on students trying to go to school?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the young men and women who serve in our air force are protected and have the best equipment to keep us safe. These men and women are putting their lives on the line to serve Canada. The best they can hope for is that the Government of Canada will be as supportive of them as they are of this great country.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both the Pentagon and the Parliamentary Budget Officer have demolished the Conservatives on fighter jets. The cost is \$30 billion, which is a thousand times more than help for students.

For low income seniors, the Conservatives offer a paltry \$1.15 a day. The junior finance minister compares it to depression relief in the dirty thirties. Well that is a dirty insult.

Why did the Conservative regime waste more money in one day on the gluttonous G20 binge last summer than it would provide to low income seniors for a whole year?

• (1420)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Canada wants to waste \$400 million on an unnecessary and reckless election.

The real scandal here is that the Liberal-led coalition with the NDP and Bloc Québécois will not even accept the democratic will of Canadians. Worse yet, they will not be open and transparent about it.

Unlike the reckless, Liberal-led coalition, the government wants to put hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of the hard-working people who built this country, seniors living on modest incomes, rather than spend that money on an unnecessary election.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. speaker, nobody will take lessons on democracy from that crowd.

We have Conservative contempt for students and seniors, and young parents needing child care. We have Conservative contempt for families looking after sick or aging loved ones at home. We have Conservative contempt for Parliament and taxpayers in hiding \$70 billion and falsifying documents. We have the Conservatives being hauled into court on election fraud and being investigated by the RCMP for influence peddling.

Is applying these Conservative standards how a twice bankrupt, disbarred lawyer and convicted felon gets to be the chief of staff to the Prime Minister?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the most fundamental traditions in Canada and one of the most fundamental parts of our liberal democracy is that the person with the most votes wins. The Liberal Party is showing outrageous contempt for Canadian voters by saying that it does not matter which government they elect because it will form a coalition with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois and make reckless decisions from an unstable government.

Instead of spending \$400 million on an early election, let us put that money into the pockets of low income seniors, the vulnerable who need our help, the men and women who built this great country.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the \$400 million cost that the member is talking about reminds me of the Mirage air base fiasco for which the government was responsible.

[Translation]

It is shameful to see how wasteful this government is being with Canadians' money. Let us put this into perspective. The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Pentagon can confirm these figures: a thousand times more money for fighter jets than for our children's education and a thousand times more money for prisons than for crime prevention. It does not make any sense.

How can they look at themselves in the mirror?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the professional, non-partisan bureaucrats who work in the Department of National Defence disagree with the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In fact, they said that the methodology was wrong. They said that the cost of an aircraft should not be calculated based on its weight, that one does not go on historical analysis that is 50 years old and that one does not push it out 30 years.

DND officials would be pleased to meet with the Parliamentary Budget Officer to discuss his methodologies and correct some of his flawed findings.

Why does the member from Montreal want to damage and hurt the air force and his aerospace industry?

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sense the minister is transferring blame to the civil service.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

It is shameful to see how far the Conservative government will go to try to impose the Prime Minister's ideology on Canadians—the abuse of power is unbelievable—but it will not work. They will be found in contempt of Parliament for their schemes and cover-ups. This is a first in the history of the world's parliaments.

How does he explain this contempt to Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is showing incredible contempt for Canadian voters. The Liberals want to simply set aside the results of the next election campaign and form a reckless and unstable coalition with their friends in the Bloc Québécois and in the NDP. Worse yet, they refuse to be honest and transparent about it.

Instead of wasting \$400 million on an unnecessary election, let us work to improve the quality of lives of seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement for those women and men who built our country and need our help.

* * *

[Translation]

ELECTRICITY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to funding for the subsea cable connecting Newfoundland and Labrador with Nova Scotia, the Minister of National Defence stated that the interests of the Atlantic provinces and Canada would be put before the interests of Quebec.

In short, what the Prime Minister is telling us, through the Minister of National Defence, is that he does not care about Quebec's interests when it comes to the undersea cable project and that, in the end, his priority is Canada, even if it is at Quebec's expense.

Is that not so?

• (1425)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought the Leader of the Bloc Québécois would take the opportunity to congratulate the government on having reached an agreement with the Government of Quebec on royalties for oil and gas deposits in the years to come, which will create thousands of jobs in Quebec. I obviously expect his congratulations.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister could have answered the question. What Ottawa has just done, it did many years ago for the Atlantic provinces.

While the Minister of National Defence goes around boasting about the subsea electric cable, which will be funded with Quebec taxpayers' money, the Conservative members from Quebec are not saying a word. Quebec did not receive a single cent from the federal government for putting its hydroelectric network in place.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, by funding this subsea cable, he would be funding Hydro-Québec's competitors? That would be unfair to Quebec.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can say to my hon. Bloc Québécois colleague that the

members of the Conservative Party are standing up for Quebec. Contrary to the Bloc's claims, they will ensure that Quebec taxpayers receive the same treatment as taxpayers in the west, in the east and all across Canada. We will support Quebec's claims.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order to take over a larger share of the Old Harry deposit, Newfoundland and Labrador is refusing to recognize the validity of the agreement between Quebec and the Atlantic provinces concerning their borders in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Newfoundland and Labrador claims the agreement is invalid because it has not been ratified by the federal government.

Since the government says it is at the regulatory stage, will it immediately ratify the 1964 agreement so that Quebec can have full jurisdiction over its territory, rather than again favouring Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is yet another demonstration of the Bloc's inability to accomplish anything. By forcing a pointless election, the Bloc Québécois is causing the delay of a number of projects and a number of agreements that are important to Quebec. Here is the question of the Old Harry deposit today. It was settled by my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, and the Government of Quebec. It is tangible proof of what our party can accomplish for Quebecers.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has imposed a moratorium until 2012 on the exploration and development of hydrocarbon deposits in the St. Lawrence, while awaiting the results of environmental evaluations.

In the name of the precautionary principle, will the Conservative government ask Newfoundland and Labrador for a moratorium on the exploration and development of oil and gas deposits in the St. Lawrence until serious environmental studies can be conducted?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the Government of Quebec that decided to impose a moratorium over the next two years on the development of hydrocarbon deposits in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

I thought the Bloc Québécois was in tune with the Government of Quebec and had its support, but that does not seem to be the case. Once again, the Bloc is out of the loop when it comes to decisions made by the federal government and the Government of Quebec.

*Oral Questions**[English]***THE BUDGET**

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats put forward affordable, practical, reasonable solutions to take the pressure off family budgets, practical solutions that would have given middle-class families a break as they still struggle to come out of this recession, such as strengthening the CPP, taking the federal tax off home heating and taking action to actually hire more doctors and nurses.

Why has the Prime Minister refused to show some leadership by working together? Why is he rejecting getting results and instead choosing to provoke an election?

• (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that suggestion is absolutely outrageous.

We brought forward a budget designed to have low taxes and to create jobs and economic opportunity, a budget that provided support for the most vulnerable seniors by increasing support for the guaranteed income supplement to the men and women who helped build our country and needed a bit of extra help. We increased transfers to health by 6%.

Why will the NDP members never stand and support good measures that help health care and Canadian seniors who are vulnerable? Why will they not do the right thing and support a great budget from an even better Minister of Finance?

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP is always prepared to work with the other parties to get results, and the Prime Minister knows that. I worked with him when we were both in opposition. We signed a number of letters together. Since he became Prime Minister, it has been more difficult, but we managed to get \$1 billion for the unemployed over a year ago, as well as apologies for the residential schools. We have proven that we are able to work together.

Why does the Prime Minister now refuse to work with others?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were a good number of consultations with Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The Minister of Finance and ministers and members of Parliament from right across the country did a lot of listening. We responded with a balanced package focused on jobs and opportunity and on helping the most vulnerable seniors, through increasing support for the guaranteed income supplement.

The NDP wants a coalition with the Liberals, and that should be absolutely outrageous. The real concern that Canadians have is the NDP might get more seats than the Liberals and the leader of the NDP could end up as prime minister of a risky, unstable minority government.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel a draft coming from the other side.

New Democrats understand that getting results for people is job one and that is why more and more people are putting their trust in the NDP.

Let us recall that even Paul Martin, the Liberals' corporate tax cutter in chief, also with scandals hanging over his head, was willing to work with others. New Democrats negotiated a budget amendment for \$4.6 billion for Canadians' priorities like transit, housing, and education.

It can be done, but the Conservatives refuse to do it. Why are they refusing to amend their budget?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we wanted to take advice on how to run an economy and how to run a federal government, we certainly would not take it from Paul Martin.

Less than four months after meeting in a Toronto hotel room with the leader of the NDP, walking out with \$5 billion in his pockets, he voted to turf the scandal-plagued Liberal government out of power.

The real scandal is the Liberals want to work with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP to force a coalition government on Canadians, a government that they did not vote for, a government about which they will not be honest and transparent in telling Canadians. That is not in the interest of Canadians. That is wrong for Canada.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-11 is the Conservative plan that would grant power to the Indian Affairs minister to impose drinking water systems on first nations bands. Bruce Carson was responsible in the PMO for aboriginal policy and, as legislative director, he helped develop Bill S-11.

Could the government confirm that the bill was key to his plan to skim off his \$80 million share of the \$1.6 billion pot of money that was destined to help desperate aboriginal communities?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely outrageous.

The Liberals are showing absolute contempt for Canadian voters. Normally in Canada the winner of the election gets to form a government, but not with the Liberals. They have such contempt for the Canadian electorate that they want to form a risky, unstable government with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. They do not have the courage to be open and transparent with Canadians.

Rather than spend \$400 million on an unnecessary election, let us focus and put that money to work for Canadian seniors who desperately need our help through the guaranteed income supplement.

Oral Questions

●(1435)

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is about the Prime Minister's judgment.

How does a man like that get put in charge of drafting government legislation? How does a disbarred lawyer, who served time in jail and was being chased by Revenue Canada, get the highest security clearance? Why did all of those ministers or their officials meet with him when they knew Bruce Carson was banned from lobbying?

We now learn that his son, Craig Carson, was a senior ministerial adviser to Jim Prentice and even to the current House leader. Did he have any role in setting up these—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. government House leader.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is more slander, more smear from the Liberal Party.

The Liberals are bankrupt of ideas. They have nothing to show Canadians on jobs, the economy and economic growth.

We have a low tax plan to help create jobs. We have a budget before the House that will support the most vulnerable seniors by increasing the guaranteed income supplement.

What we have is a Liberal Party that has contempt for the Canadian electorate. It wants to force an unnecessary election rather than do the right thing and help Canadian seniors.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-11 would give the Conservatives the power to impose their solution for drinking water on the first nations. Telling the first nations that they are not competent to make that decision for themselves is insulting enough. Through this scheme, Mr. Carson's fiancée allegedly pocketed \$80 million in commissions for selling water filtration systems.

Are they not ashamed of profiting from the misfortune of the first nations?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not one single dollar went to that company, not a single dollar. If the Liberal Party has any evidence of that, I would encourage it to table it before the House.

The reality is the Liberal Party is making it up as it goes along. It will not be honest and transparent with Canadians about its plan for a coalition government with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. This would be unstable and would cause great damage to our country.

There is a great Canadian tradition that the person with the most votes wins. That should apply to Canadian democracy. The Liberals should stop their contempt for the Canadian electorate.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not have to make it up. The facts are awful as they stand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, Bruce Carson did it all: chief of staff for the Prime Minister, special advisor to environment minister Jim Prentice and special advisor to the last two ministers of natural resources,

including the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant. Mr. Carson even drafted a bill that would have given him access to part of the \$1.6 billion allocated to the first nations.

And the Prime Minister had no idea what was going on? How can Canadians believe that?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a former British prime minister said the following:

I always cheer up immensely if an attack is particularly wounding because I think, well, if they attack one personally, it means they have not a single political argument left.

That is the Liberal Party. When it comes to jobs, the economy and economic growth, the Liberals have absolutely no solutions to offer the Canadian people. Our government is focused on jobs. Our government is focused on helping the most vulnerable seniors in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' hypocrisy truly knows no bounds. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance knew very well that by refusing to meet the legitimate demands of Quebec, in particular the \$2.2 billion in compensation, they ran the risk of provoking an election. The Prime Minister was guiding the Minister of Finance's hand when he deliberately brought in a budget that does not meet Quebec's demands.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that it is his intransigence and stubbornness that are responsible for a possible election?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no. We have had good discussions with the Government of Quebec. They are going well and we have made progress. Unfortunately, the coalition wants to have an election, so things will be delayed.

●(1440)

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no one is better at derailing a train than he is. If the Conservatives did not want an election, they would not have organized a \$26 million pre-election campaign at taxpayer expense, like the one last week. If the Minister of Finance did not want an election, he would have abandoned his infamous and predatory plan for a securities commission.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that he and his government will be responsible if an election is triggered?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have presented the right budget for all of Canada. It is a plan praised across Canada from coast to coast, a plan that has the credibility of top economists, a plan that keeps taxes low, a low tax plan that helps low income seniors, families, small business, caregivers, manufacturers, workers, and many more.

That is what Canadians want, not an unnecessary election caused by a power seeking coalition.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's budget proves that the Conservatives deny the existence of and challenges faced by over half of the population. There is nothing in the budget to improve women's lives. In recent years, as well, the Conservatives have cut the budget of Status of Women Canada, cut funding for a number of women's rights groups and allowed pay equity, a fundamental right, to become negotiable.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his government's indifference to the needs of women in Quebec may provoke an election?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that that is absolutely false. In fact, it is this government that has raised the budget of Status of Women funding to its highest level ever in the history of this country.

We are now funding every province of this country and every territory, including Quebec. I ask the member to work with us to improve the lives of women from coast to coast.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is still refusing to assume its responsibilities when it comes to the right to housing. The Conservative budget has no new money for affordable social housing. According to FRAPRU figures, Quebec will lose \$57 million a year for the construction of social housing and \$78 million for the renovation of existing public housing.

Does the Prime Minister realize it is his government's indifference to Quebeckers who do not have a decent place to live that could trigger an election?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was our government that invested nearly \$2 billion in affordable housing and much more under our economic action plan for the renovation and construction of nearly 12,000 units all across Canada. If it were left to the Bloc, no one would have had any improvements in housing because the Bloc members would have voted against it, just as they will vote

Oral Questions

against the budget tabled this week to help Canadians. What they want is a coalition, which Canadians oppose.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Carson was given privileged access by the Prime Minister to inside information about Canada's energy and environment policy. He was not alone.

The Conservatives gave \$15 million for a new program while Mr. Carson was advising the Prime Minister on energy and environment. He was then made the executive director of the same program, but it now turns out that the deputy director, Mr. Adamson, is a former Conservative policy adviser to the Minister of Industry, who had funded the program in the first place. To top it off, the program's current chair, Mr. Heidecker, is the former vice-president of the Alberta Conservative Party.

The question is no longer whether the Prime Minister is giving—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. government House leader.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question there. He was cut off.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know why the member opposite is avoiding the question. The Prime Minister arranged for \$15 million in taxpayer dollars to employ his former senior staff. What did Canadians get for this \$15 million?

On the organization's website, Canada School of Energy and Environment, is a presentation Mr. Carson gave in 2010 to the Manning conference entitled "Managing a Conservative Political Agenda in a Minority Situation". It is full of advice on how to manipulate the media, question period and members of Parliament.

Will the Prime Minister now admit he is just a defrocked televangelist of accountability—

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I got the hon. member's question. We can have another try from the member for Parkdale—High Park.

I remember when Peggy Nash was here. She was always fighting for the cause of senior citizens. If Peggy Nash were in the House today, she would be voting for the guaranteed income supplement increase because it is in the best interests of Canadians, and they deserve it.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Carson is being investigated by the RCMP for influence-peddling.

Oral Questions

In his official biography, Carson says the Minister of Natural Resources gave him various duties.

What duties has Bruce Carson performed for the Quebec lieutenant?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more scandalous talk from the Liberal Party. The real scandal before Canadians is the Liberal-led coalition which wants to push aside the results of the next election campaign and assume power in a risky coalition government with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. That is in the worst interests of Canadian taxpayers.

Worse yet, the Liberals will not be open and transparent about their attempts to push aside the results of the next election campaign. Canadians deserve better and our seniors need the help from the guaranteed income supplement. They need that support.

Instead of spending \$400 million on an election, let us put that money to work for Canadian seniors.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if he continues to play the clown, the hon. member could get a job with the Cirque du Soleil.

Bruce Carson was appointed to head the Canada School of Energy and Environment. Its \$15 million budget is 100% funded by Ottawa. A budget like that was given to man who had been disbarred and imprisoned for defrauding clients. He is what is called a white collar criminal.

This Carson fellow escorts his minister pals, substitutes for them with full authority, and says he has received direct assignments. This school is starting to look like a front, and a Conservative cover for Carson.

Why was this person given so many privileges?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this from a man who sat around the cabinet table when Alfonso Gagliano was named ambassador to Denmark. It is just a little rich.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the priorities of Canadians. This week, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan was introduced in the House.

Unfortunately, the reckless coalition, led by the Liberal leader, has said it will force an unnecessary and opportunistic election.

As a member from the north, could the Minister of Health update this House on the new measures included in the budget to improve the welfare of Canadians?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our government has included in our budget new

measures to forgive student loans for doctors as well as student nurses working in rural and remote communities.

In fact, our budget included a new family tax credit for caregivers of loved ones who are ill. As well, the plan also includes health transfers to the provinces and territories.

Unfortunately, the reckless coalition has said it will force an unnecessary and costly election that will kill measures that will help Canadians.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another day, another investigation into Conservative corruption.

Party insiders close to the defence minister have received senior jobs with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. One is even getting up to two years of French training on full salary before he starts work in P.E.I. ACOA is an agency of the Government of Canada, not the Conservative Party.

The Conservatives have appointed Conservative bagmen to the Senate, kept a known fraudster in their inner circle, and now there is more evidence of patronage run amok.

What happened to their promise to clean up Liberal-style corruption?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to accountability and transparency. The minister's office does not interfere in the hiring practices of the agency.

Our government brought in the Federal Accountability Act, which tightened up the rules. Strict Government of Canada guidelines and practices are always respected.

The real concern is that we know the coalition members across the way would recklessly increase spending, raise taxes, and kill jobs not only in Atlantic Canada but right across this great country.

● (1450)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, any pretense of reform under the Federal Accountability Act has given way to the old, unbridled patronage and rum bottle politics of the Mulroney years, complete with a brand new parcel of rogues lining their own pockets by peddling their influence.

I know they think that the boys have to make a living, but trying to profiteer from the third world conditions of first nations goes beyond unethical. It is loathsome and reprehensible.

In the death rattle of this Conservative government, I want it to tell us one thing. What role did Bruce Carson play in writing the Federal Accountability Act?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): None, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget does not meet Quebec's needs as far as cultural development is concerned. The budget does not contain any direct assistance to increase artists' incomes, nor is there any new money for Quebec's film industry. The Conservatives have demonstrated that they have no intention of restoring the international touring grant programs. Moreover, arts and culture program spending was cut by 7% in the last fiscal year.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage realize that his government's indifference when it comes to Quebec and its culture may end up triggering an election?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the member is completely wrong. Our sixth budget was tabled in the House. There has been a nationwide increase in funding for arts and culture in each and every budget. Here is what the Canadian Conference of the Arts had to say in support of our budget: "In this version of the 2011 budget, we see the next phase of Canada's Economic Action Plan put into place to support culture and communities, and investing in innovation, education and training."

Moreover, Étienne Alary, president of the Association de la presse francophone, said in support of our budget that they were glad to see that the voice of minority official language publications had been heard. As usual, we have delivered the goods when it comes to culture.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for years everyone in Quebec has been asking for an \$800 million-plus increase to post-secondary education transfers in order to restore them to 1994-95 indexed levels. Instead of continuing to encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction by announcing new research chairs in its budget, the government should transfer the long-awaited \$800 million.

Does the Minister of Finance understand that it is his government's indifference towards Quebec and its post-secondary education system that could trigger an election?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the facts all wrong. We introduced the Canada student grants program to help students with the cost of their education, to allow them to attend a post-secondary institution and reduce their debt. We want to help them take advantage of training and have access to education. Unfortunately, the Bloc voted against all of our efforts, the same way they will vote against—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list of politically motivated Conservative appointments is long

and broad, as was said earlier in the House, but none more concerning or egregious than those taking place in ACOA. ACOA P.E.I. has become a retirement home for old Conservative cronies.

Could the minister confirm to the House how many Conservative appointees are currently being investigated by the Public Service Commission? It is a simple question. How many are being investigated?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I will reiterate my previous comments to the member across. We do not interfere in the hiring practices of the agency. Our government brought in the Federal Accountability Act, which tightened up the rules. Strict Government of Canada guidelines are always adhered to.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he can tell that to the judge.

If the minister spent less time looking after his Conservative buddies and more time looking after Atlantic Canadians, maybe we would not have been shafted in the budget like we did this week. There is \$85 billion dollars for Fisheries and Oceans; \$35 million for ACOA; \$7 million for Marine Atlantic. Talk about robbing Peter to pay Paul. They robbed Peter, they robbed Keith, they robbed Gail. Where were these ministers from Atlantic Canada when this robbery was going on? Where were they when they were taking money from Atlantic Canadians?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso was talking about various names that sounded suspiciously like ministers to me and he knows he cannot refer to members in the House by their names.

However, the hon. Minister of National Revenue, I am sure, will avoid this.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through you, to the member opposite, with the utmost respect, I would ask him to give his head a shake.

In our budget, we have the responsibility as a government to conduct reviews of programs and practices to ensure we are delivering the best results for Canadians. Any responsible organization does that. Savings would be realized going forward and in a manner that will not negatively affect client services or program delivery.

The real concern is now we know that the coalition members across the way would recklessly increase spending and raise taxes that would affect Atlantic Canada as well as all of Canada.

*Oral Questions***THE BUDGET**

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, northern families are struggling to find doctors and nurses, yet this budget would do nothing to solve that problem.

Dr. Roger Strasser, the dean of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, said:

Just providing financial incentives are not enough to turn around the shortage of doctors and nurses in rural and remote areas.

Why are Conservatives ignoring health specialists and northern families?

Why did the Conservatives reject the NDP's practical plan to increase the number of family doctors and nurses in rural Canada?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, how ironic. The member claims to care about the health care of Canadians and the health of Canadians, but will be voting against the budget that addresses those issues he has just raised.

The vote against the budget is a rejection of the research funding that we are putting forward. The vote against the budget is a vote against doctors and nurses in rural and remote communities. The vote against the budget is voting against the increased transfers to the provinces and territories again. This is a vote against Canadians.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hated HST pushed by the government on British Columbians costs the average B.C. senior around \$2.00 a day. Now Conservatives claim a measly \$1.15 a day more for seniors would somehow address tragic levels of poverty.

Conservatives spend without limit every time a corporate CEO has his hand out with \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts. However, what about the seniors who built this country? A loonie a day for them? How disgraceful. Canadian seniors deserve better.

Why will the government not give older Canadians the retirement security, retirement dignity that they deserve? It takes away too much. It gives—

The Speaker: Order, please. The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as my hon. friend's reflections on British Columbians, it is very clearly a matter of fact that the province of British Columbia is the level of government which is advocating the HST.

I would also say that the NDP members, federally, are the ones who have opposed every tax reduction that our good finance minister has proposed.

For British Columbians and for all Canadians, we have indeed brought in significant increases to low-income seniors to meet their needs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources arrived in the House just a few moments ago. He is

usually very punctual. He is indeed a bit late, but he has a very good reason. I would like him to inform the House of this excellent reason for all of Quebec.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to the House that my counterpart, the Deputy Premier of Quebec, Nathalie Normandeau, and I have announced an historic agreement between our two governments on offshore oil development in Quebec.

The Government of Quebec has been calling for this for more than 12 years now and it took our government to answer that call. We reached this agreement despite the Bloc Québécois MPs' constant criticism of this industry, despite the Bloc MPs from the Lower St. Lawrence, the North Shore and the Gaspé who do not want to create jobs in this industry for their region.

The choice is clear. They have a choice between the whiners in the Bloc and the Conservatives who want—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was scandalous enough that the Conservatives were giving jobs to their special friends in Atlantic Canada, but the appointment of incompetent people who are not even bilingual is the last straw. In an effort to do damage control, they plan to pay up to two years of salary, or a quarter of a million dollars, so that these individuals can learn French.

Do the Conservatives take the people of Atlantic Canada for fools?

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an unfortunate question when we are talking about the good character of great Atlantic Canadians, especially people who have provided a service to Atlantic Canada and P.E.I. for many years, lifelong public servants.

If the member has a question about that, perhaps he should ask his colleague from P.E.I. about the character of the individual we are talking about.

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is completely normal for government suppliers to be solvent. However, by requiring that bidders meet this condition 50 days prior to the submission deadline, a condition that was not set out in the preliminary documents, the Conservatives gave the Davie shipyard fewer weeks to restructure. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse should follow the example of his counterpart in the Quebec National Assembly and insist that the federal government give the Davie shipyard a fair chance to submit a bid.

Will they stop trying to sabotage the Davie shipyard's recovery?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member now knows that it is important for a company to be solvent to be able to be awarded a contract from the Government of Canada.

Further to that, the national shipbuilding procurement strategy has been in full consultation with all shipyards across the country, including Davie Shipyard. Importantly, the RFP itself was overseen by KPMG in terms of the financial requirements and an independent fairness monitor who said that these decisions were made objectively, free from any personal favouritism and political influence, and encompass the elements of openness and competitiveness. That is what is important.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, elected members of Parliament, including 26 Conservatives, voted to save lives by passing Bill C-393, the medicines for all bill.

However we have obtained an email drafted by the industry minister directing Conservative senators to kill the bill. Conservatives are again using the Senate, a relic of the 19th century according to the Prime Minister, to kill a bill this House passed. Conservatives are putting profits for the big drug companies against saving lives.

Do the Conservatives understand democracy, or do they just not like it?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that bill, as drafted, would not do anything to help the people that the member purports to want to help. That is what the hon. member knows but does not want to say.

If he really wants this bill to pass in the Senate, he should be voting for the budget. He should be voting for the government to continue. Then the bill will be debated in the Senate. However, he is too chicken to do that.

He is too susceptible to his fellow colleagues and their ridiculous arguments that are going to dissolve this Parliament and plunge us into an unnecessary election so that they can form a coalition.

Business of the House

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks our Conservative government once again demonstrated that we will stand up for victims.

This House passed Bill C-59 which would end the shameful practice of releasing criminals after a mere one-sixth of their sentence.

Sadly, the member for Ajax—Pickering said it would be better for inmate morale if criminals were let out, serving just a small fraction of their sentence.

Could the minister please update the House on the progress of this bill?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question and her hard work on the file.

I am very pleased to inform the House that yesterday Bill C-59, abolishing accelerated parole, received royal assent.

However the news is not all good. Shockingly, each and every Liberal senator stood in their place and voted to put car thieves, drug dealers and white collar fraudsters like Earl Jones back on the street early. We do not expect the Liberal member for Lac-Saint-Louis to help, but we sure could count on Senator Larry Smith.

* * *

● (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the government House leader.

I would like to know what the government proposes for business tomorrow and the balance of the week, what the Conservatives anticipate next week bringing to the floor of the House and how they intend to vote on the non-confidence motion which will be moved here tomorrow morning on the verge of bringing the government down.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Very smug, Mr. Speaker, a very smug official opposition.

Some hon. member: Hear, hear!

Hon. John Baird: When members are called smug, they all cheer and applaud.

As for the business of the House, I believe the minister responsible for the Status of Women has a motion that she would like to move after I have concluded my response to the Thursday question. Following that, without anticipating the outcome of any vote of the House, there seems to be an appetite to allow members who will not be running in the next election to have two minutes each to make statements. Following these statements, we will continue with day one of the budget debate.

Business of the House

Tomorrow we will consider the last allotted day in this supply period. I do not know why the opposition coalition is talking about ending this very productive Parliament to force an unwanted and unnecessary election. Recent weeks have led me to conclude that this is the most dysfunctional Parliament in Canadian history.

Yesterday our Conservative government achieved royal assent for the following bills: Bill S-6 to eliminate the faint hope clause; Bill C-14 to provide hard-working Canadians some fairness at the gas pumps; Bill C-21 to crack down on white collar crime; Bill C-22 to crack down on those who would exploit our children through the Internet; Bill C-30, *R. v. Shoker*; Bill C-35 to crack down on crooked immigration consultants; Bill C-42 to provide aviation security; Bill C-48 to eliminate sentencing discounts for multiple murderers; Bill C-59 to get rid of early parole for white collar fraudsters, a bill the Liberal government opposed but the Bloc supported; Bill C-61, the freezing of assets of corrupt regimes; and Bill S-5, safe vehicles from Mexico. What a legacy for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The work of this Parliament is not done. There are a number of key and popular government bills that Canadians want. Next week, starting on Monday, we will call: Bill C-8, the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement; Bill C-46, the Canada-Panama free trade agreement; Bill C-51, investigative powers for the 21st century; and Bill C-52, lawful access.

Does the Minister of Justice ever stop fighting crime? He gets more and more done. In many respects, as House leader I am like the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Justice.

Of course, we need to complete the budget debate to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth. Therefore, Tuesday we will debate day two of the budget, Wednesday we will debate day three of the budget and on Thursday we will debate day four of the budget. We have lots to do and I suggest to the members across that we turn our attention back to serving the interests of the public.

While I am on my feet, I would like to serve those interests by asking for unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, Bill C-49, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Marine Transportation Security Act shall be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

• (1510)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I would again ask for unanimous consent for the following motion. I move: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill S-10, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, shall be deemed to

have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed for the Minister of Justice.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I move: That Bill C-60, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, shall be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, this is the last one. I seek unanimous consent for the following motion. I move: That Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (Democratic representation), shall be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. whip to the New Democratic Party is rising on a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, perhaps you could seek the unanimous consent of the House of Commons to send a message to the Senate asking it to immediately pass Bill C-232, requiring Supreme Court judges to be bilingual. This bill was the first to make it to the Senate and it has been rejected by the Conservatives.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

Business of the House

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe you would find the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That the House of Commons:

Recognizing the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day established in 1911 to acknowledge and commemorate the social, political and economic achievements of women;

Recalling the United Nations decision, in 1975, to choose March 8 as International Women's Day, the day on which to celebrate women's contributions across the world;

Noted the decision of the Government of Canada to use the theme Girls' Rights Matter for this year's International Women's Day focusing on the importance of equality and access to opportunity for all girls and women throughout their lives.

Agrees that, further to the announcement made by the Minister of Status of Women on March 8, 2011, Canada will lead in the effort to propose a United Nations Resolution that would proclaim September 22 as an International Day of the Girl.

• (1515)

The Speaker: Does the minister have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I stand to ask for unanimous consent that Bill C-624, the Nortel bill, be deemed read, debated and passed at all stages.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: I understand there is an agreement to grant two minutes each to members who have indicated that they will not be seeking re-election.

[Translation]

I will recognize members in order of seniority.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

* * *

[English]

RESIGNATION OF MEMBERS

Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 22 years, thank you for allowing me to take but a few moments to thank all members of this House, past and present, who have stood tall in their efforts to help a short person.

When I arrived here in 1988, I found an inspiring place where partisan rancour might boil in this chamber but the collegial spirit filled the halls.

I recall asking rather pointed questions of a minister, Perrin Beatty, then walking back to our offices in the West Block together talking about the issues of the day, family and life. It was rather like the old Warner Bros. cartoons with the wolf and the sheepdog, but I am not sure which of us was the sheepdog.

However, I have tried to maintain that view of this place ever since, and found many friends among the many parties.

I think most every one of us comes here with the willingness to raise the potential of Parliament to change the lives of people. I look back on my years here and just about every fond memory comes from the many occasions when members from all parties banded together to support a cause or a bill. Sound and fury often drowns the more tender tones of consensus that I have been privileged to experience over the years.

I remember being in Holland and witnessing the emotional connection that all four party leaders had for our veterans and their determination to make a difference in their lives.

As I take my leave, I feel the need to thank three Prime Ministers: Paul Martin for a huge leap of faith in allowing me to join his cabinet; Jean Chrétien for giving me the experience of the 1992 constitutional committee and for not throwing me out of the party for my sometimes contrary voting record; and finally, our current Prime Minister for giving the families of murder victims a measure of justice and peace through consecutive sentencing.

From now on I would thank all hon. members in advance for looking straight into the camera so that I can watch with a keen eye, miss everyone with a heavy heart and be thankful again for all the fond memories of my decades in this House.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the greatest job, the greatest people and the greatest country. Being a member of Parliament, we have access to decision-making and decision-makers, national and international. The experience of being a member of Parliament is as big as this world.

I am thankful to our Prime Minister for my appointment to the Privy Council and for his confidence in me in the task that he had appointed to me.

I am thankful for the support and confidence of my constituents since 1993.

I am thankful for the support of my assistants here today in the chamber, Krissy and Chelsea Côté. Believe it or not, Krissy has been with me all 17.5 years. I am thankful to my assistant in my Cranbrook office, Wendy Kemble. I am particularly thankful to Ken Miller, who got me into this in 1991 and is still with me today as our electoral district president.

I am thankful for the support of my friends in the party, the people who put up the signs in the snowbanks and do the phoning. I would not be so proud as to think that they just support me. They support principle, political principle, and I thank them for that.

Most important, I am thankful to my family, to my wife Jeannette, three children, their spouses and seven grandchildren.

Business of the House

Above all, I am thankful to God for supporting me every day in every way during this period. My faith in Christ is my enduring pillar.

• (1520)

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour and a privilege to serve in this place. One does not get here on one's own merit. If that were the case, I would not be here. We get here because some folks have confidence that we will represent their best interests.

I would like to thank them.

First, I would like to thank Preston Manning who provided the inspiration for me to seek elected office in 1988 as a Reformer; Dr. Pat Pettman and others who encouraged me to run again in 1993; Alex Soroka who managed so many of my campaigns, and Eric Sykes and Jim Northey who did the same; the good people of Delta and Richmond who have supported me all these years; but mostly, my wife Sue who has been steadfast in her support, my daughter Carolyn who was just two when I was elected, my older daughters Erin and Kristy, and my son Martin and the grandkids.

Success in this place depends on good staff and I have been fortunate in that regard. Brian Derrah, friend, lawyer, researcher extraordinaire, has served me well for over 17 years on the Hill, as well as Michelle Cormier, Gail Galloway and Kelly Williams. Most important, Karen Siefken and Karen Wilson have served my constituents with devotion in the Ladner office. They were indispensable. I thank them and others, including collaborators Phil Eidsvik and Dennis Brown.

I thank the staff on Parliament Hill for their kindness, concern and dedication to duty, especially the folks at the Library of Parliament whose solid research can make us look awfully good.

I thank the good people at Air Canada who have done their best to make an onerous travel schedule doable and the staff at the Ottawa Marriott, my home for close to 15 years. Last but not least, I thank my colleagues and the Prime Minister for his outstanding leadership.

Not long after I was elected, I had a significant decision to make and I looked to the hon. Ron Huntington, a former member of this place, for counsel. His advice was to choose not just what served my purposes that day but to choose what I would be comfortable with when I left this place. I have followed that advice.

My hope when first elected was that when my time here was done the folks at home would say, "He kept his word. He represented us well". That remains my fondest hope.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 17.5 years can certainly fly by in the blink of an eye. Fewer than 1 in 100,000 Canadians has the privilege and honour of standing in this House to represent the hopes, wills and aspirations of our citizens. We are all blessed to have that opportunity.

I have seen much in the last 17.5 years and I will miss much from this House.

I want to first thank each and every member. I have had the privilege of being a member of a two political parties. Some members have been colleagues on that side and on this side sit in this House today. Sometimes our profession gets besmirched but, as all

of us here know, everyone in this House works doggedly hard in the interests of our citizens and in the interests of our country. We may have differences, and vital differences of what those differences may be, but all of us, to a person, to a man and to a woman, give our heart, our soul and put our life into this House and into our country for the future of our country.

I hope that at the end of the day we can work together. We have differences and we must have those knock-down, drag-out battles. Those battles must occur, but I hope that the serious and vital issues of our country will be dealt with, not only for the interests of our citizens here at home, but also for what happens half a world away. We know that like a pebble in a pond, what happens in our country is like a ripple that goes beyond our borders. Our borders are porous. What happens far away affects us here at home. Of all the things we are most privileged to have a chance at is to reach out and help in those in our country and in our world.

I want to thank each and every member for being a colleague.

Last, I want to thank my parents, Colleen and Cyril; my four brothers, Neil, Andrew, Paul and Darryll and their families; and my partner Gina who is here today. Without their endearing support and help, we could not do what we do.

I wish all my colleagues the very best of luck in the future. I know they will all do great things. I am thankful for their camaraderie and collegiality. *Carpe diem.*

• (1525)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been written that to everything there is a season. In my political career, everything came together some 17 years ago when I was first elected to the House of Commons. While I can assure members of my good health and although I still feel honoured and privileged to be a member of Parliament, I have decided I will not seek re-election when Canada next goes to the polls.

I was 36 years old when this adventure started, and all four of our children were still at home. Now they are all grown up, married, and Deb and I have 10 grandchildren. I vowed I would leave politics one day with the one thing that mattered most when I entered into it: the love and respect of those closest to me. It is thanks mostly to my wife, Deb, who is the anchor and love of my life, that this will happen. It is my life's greatest achievement.

I was elected first as a Reformer and quickly learned that listening to and serving the public had its own unique rewards. My constituents are passionate about their issues and politics and working with them has been an ongoing inspiration and motivation. They are wonderful, commonsense people and I will forever be grateful for their encouragement and support.

One of the best parts of political life is the friends we make along the way. A whole new world of people we would never have met otherwise have become near and dear to us. Not just political partisans either, but interesting, thought-provoking folks from all kinds of backgrounds, religions and regions. Like the rock solid friends we have always had in our home town, these new friends have become an integral part of our lives. We are richer and better people for their loyal companionship.

Of course serving in cabinet has been an exceptional experience. I will always be grateful to the Prime Minister who went out of his way to assure me that he not only wanted me to be a minister, but he was confident I could do the job. He appointed me right on the heels of my serious encounter with cancer, and his encouragement to me at the time was, "Don't let people tell you that you can't still contribute – don't let them push you aside". Cancer survivors need to hear words like that and they need to know in their heart that they are true. I thank the Prime Minister for those words. My health has been good ever since.

Throughout it all, my staff have been exceptional. The workload, the high expectations and public pressure on these people is enormous, but they have consistently risen to the occasion and they have all served Canada with distinction. Any good reputation I may have garnered over the years is due in large part to their efforts. The same can be said for so many of the professional civil servants I have worked with in three separate ministries, and the Clerk and her staff are on that list as well. Our country is fortunate to have these people toiling on our behalf.

In all ways, large and small, my experiences these past 17 years have reinforced the conviction that Canada is one of the most blessed countries in the world. Full of abundant natural resources and a generous, stoic people, consistently peaceful and generally prosperous, we are among history's most fortunate. What a great country.

One day, and perhaps soon, I will leave this place and my role here behind. I will leave with mixed feelings, because I love serving our country and its people. But for everything there is a season, and I am convinced this is the right time for me and Deb to seek out the next, wonderful purpose that God has in mind for us.

I thank one and all for the honour and privilege of serving together in the common service of our constituents and country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your services and your patience with us, and especially, sometimes, with me.

[*English*]

I thank our colleagues also for allowing us this time. I thank colleagues from all parties who have shown me many times, in an undeserved way, measures of respect, which I will always appreciate and value. Often we do not get, maybe with some good reason, certain levels of respect beyond these doors, but I can say of my colleagues, all of whom I have met and worked with, that famous Latin phrase certainly applies: *Desiderantes Meliorem Patriam*, "They desire a better country". I can say that of the people with whom I have served.

Business of the House

I also have to reflect in a primary way and say that I thank God. I thank God that I can stand here and thank God and that I do not fear the fate of a dear colleague of ours only weeks ago, Shahbaz Bhatti, who for that crime paid the ultimate price. I thank God that we are an assembly where people can stand and say that they do not believe in God, that they can share equal ground in this place and that others beyond this place, who write and comment, can even ridicule either of those two positions and also not worry about that fate. Our forefathers paid a great price for that freedom.

I, too, thank my constituents. Responsibility and representation for one's constituents is truly the highest order of democracy. Recognizing that and recognizing the vote is a sacred trust is something that guides us all and must continue to do so. When I think about how we sometimes conduct ourselves here, myself included, I wonder, is this why my constituents sent me here. That elderly gentlemen whom I talked to in the voting line in one election said, "This is the only chance I get to have my say". I thank those constituents for the times that we have been able to do that and to represent them.

I thank the people who have worked for me and volunteered, and also different staff through the years, for the way they have been able to put up with me, the way they have helped me in my times of failing. On the few times I have had successes, they have been the ones who have literally got the puck to me so occasionally I have been able to put it in the net. I thank them.

I thank the people who serve in this place, who clean this large building, who take care of our security, who do all the things that we do not have time to do to make this place look presentable and represent the democracy for which it stands.

I thank the Prime Minister because of his respect for democracy. It is somewhat sad that people do not get to see how, in our places of discussion, we are able, as individual MPs, to bring forward the views of our constituents to argue and even to change his mind on issues when it comes to matters of importance to our constituents.

Last, Mr. Speaker, and I see you leaning forward and I know it is not to burst out in applause, I want to thank my family. My sons were younger when my wife and I first made the decision to go into provincial politics, recognizing that at the federal level we would not have wanted to leave them for long periods of time. It would have been a disaster in the house if we had not been there. Despite the fact that we were close during those years geographically, there were still times I had to apologize. Now that we are blessed with many grandchildren, I do not want to start another cycle of apologies. I have that in consideration.

Business of the House

●(1530)

My wife is here today so I have to be on my best behaviour, as I tried to be during question period. I have said many times that I might not have the perfect marriage, but I do have the perfect wife. Any deficiencies in the relationship are mine and the perfections are hers. She is president of the National Parliamentary Spouses Association. She shares a title of president with me. I can honestly say she is more popular among members here than I am. It was a former head of state of the nation of Israel who said of a good woman “her children rise up to call her blessed and her husband rises and praises her”, and I praise her this afternoon.

I close thinking of the words of my father, who passed away not that long ago. When we would go camping with him as kids and it would come time to tidy up as we packed up the tent, we would pick up all our stuff. However, there were times when he would tell us that there was some paper over there in the bush or there was an empty can over there by that tree and we would tell him that we had not put it there. He would remind us by saying, “Always leave the campground in a little better shape than when you found it”. I hope I have been able to do that.

●(1535)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, and colleagues in the House of Commons, I was elected to the House in November 2000 and have had the pleasure and honour of representing the riding of Charlottetown during the past four Parliaments. This has been a tremendous honour for me and one for which I will be forever grateful to the voters who live in that great and historic city of Charlottetown.

I have decided that I will not be a candidate in the next general election and, like the speakers who spoke before me, it is with mixed emotions that I address the House today, which will likely be my very last time.

I look back on the last ten and a half years with many fond memories, dealing with great people and, most important, having the opportunity to debate and decide upon some of the issues, great issues, that affect our country. There are many who helped me greatly along the way.

First are my parents, the late Bill Murphy and Kathleen Murphy. Unfortunately, my father died prior to me being elected to Parliament. I am sure if he had lived longer, he would have enjoyed watching the many debates that took place in the House.

My wife, Yvette, has been so tremendously supportive over all these years. When I first was elected to Parliament, Yvette really did not follow politics all that closely. Now she is a political junkie. I am sure there has to be some de-programming sessions available out there for people like her and me, and we will both sign on, but not until June of this year.

Our children, who were students when I first was elected and who are now adults, Kevin, Paul and Brian, have always been at my side with their support when that support was needed.

I have hundreds and hundreds of volunteers in the riding of Charlottetown who helped me out during and between campaigns. I

am not going to name them, but I want to thank each and every one of them.

To be an efficient, effective and productive member of Parliament, it really comes down to staff. I have been truly blessed with tremendous staff members who came to the job with the goal of serving the people of Charlottetown.

I will mention Corinne Reid who, after working with me for many years in a local law firm, joined me for the last ten and a half years in the constituency office; Barry MacMillan, who taught me the role of a politician as opposed to the role of the public servant; Mary Gillis, my administrative assistant, who has worked here for the past eight years and has done a tremendous job; and Lisa Callaghan, Michael Currie and the many others who have worked for me over the years and have all remained my close friends. I want to thank them. They have each contributed so much.

I want to thank all the clerks, analysts and other individuals who work for Parliament, some of whom are here today, and you, Mr. Speaker and your staff.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues here today, from this Parliament, the 40th Parliament and the previous three Parliaments, from all parties. I want to thank them for all their guidance, their support, the many words and acts of kindness and the encouragement they have shown me over the past ten and a half years. Most important, I want to thank them for their friendship. I will miss this place. I will miss each and every one of them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with a twinge of sadness that I address you today. I am winking slightly when I say that the reason I am in politics today is somewhat the Liberals’ fault, because of employment insurance in particular. I would also like you to know that the most important thing I take with me, after being here for four years as the assistant to Jean-Yves Roy and as a member since 2004, is two words: respect and honour.

I have always thought that no matter who comes to see us in our offices to ask for help, be it large or small—and ultimately, I do not think there are large or small cases, there are just cases—the first thing we have to do, and I think that most if not a large majority of the people here do this readily, through their staff, is treat the people who come to see us with respect, regardless of their political allegiance or their problem.

The second is honour. It is an honour to have been able to represent the people of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. I am very honoured. And I would invite you to visit the Îles-de-la-Madeleine in the next few weeks, for the seal hunt, which will start soon, or in the summer. The Îles-de-la-Madeleine and the Gaspé are wonderful places, and one day they will enjoy the benefits of greater development.

In closing, I would simply like to say that the work I have been able to do is also a matter of teamwork with my staff, both my assistants in Ottawa and my constituency assistants.

Business of the House

It is our supporters who make it possible for us to be elected, when that happens, or to be re-elected. I would like to thank the people in the Gaspé and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whom I will be seeing again soon. I am coming home.

● (1540)

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been thinking a lot about my future for the last while and have concluded that after 17 and a half years in active politics, the time has come to retire. I will therefore not be a candidate in the next election.

I will be 70 this fall. I am still in good shape, both physically and mentally, but at the dawn of a new decade, I can say my years are numbered. I would like to take a few of them, therefore, for the things I have always wanted to do but for which politics left me too little time.

First, spend more time close to my family. Then visit the two little twins our daughter has given us, their little cousin our son just had, and the grandchildren that will undoubtedly follow. Spend more and better-quality time with my wife of nearly 40 years, who has suffered too much from the absences forced upon me by the diabolical pace of political life. Share in some of the joy of my own children, who have become loving, capable parents, responsible adults, and professionals who are much appreciated in their workplaces and who also devote time to volunteer work in the community.

Travel, for sure. Read, listen to music, and take advantage of the wonderful cultural life in the city where I live. Spend more time with friends and more time doing my favourite sports: cycling and skiing—good balance sports. I will be just as active, but less stressed out.

I was most honoured to serve as a minister in Quebec City and a member of Parliament in Ottawa. Those are great privileges, given to few. I did my very best to be equal to these onerous responsibilities. The time has come, however, to leave that privilege to younger people.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been an honour to represent the people of Burnaby—Douglas. As a gay man, it has been an honour to represent the queer community in this place.

My work here has been possible thanks to that of many others, including comrades in my offices: Jane Ireland, Sonja van Dieen, Ayesha Haider, Caren Yu and Andrea Emond, Lynn MacWilliam, Corie Langdon, Gillian Chan and many interns. Their professionalism, creativity and service to the community and this institution have been outstanding.

I am inspired by my leader and caucus and many party activists. I salute my brothers and sisters in my union, CEP 232, for their dedication to ensuring that what we desire for ourselves we seek for all.

I want to thank the employees of the House of Commons without whom I could not have done this job.

I want to thank my family, my partner Brian Burke, my parents Bill and Pat, in what we came to know as the “Whitby office”, and to thank Keith Gilbert, Brad Teeter, Russ Neely and my brother David

and his family for their steadfast love and care. I have also been blessed with the best riding association, thanks to the commitment and talents of many folks, including Lil Cameron, Lila Wing, Michael Walton, Marianne Bell, Jaynie Clark and Doug Sigurdson.

I will miss working in solidarity with dedicated people. The transgender and transsexual communities have taught me so much about our humanity and courage. I wish we had a bit more time. I have learned much from peace, anti-war and nuclear disarmament activists; from gay and lesbian couples determined to walk through the front door of the important institution of marriage; from those detained and working to repeal security certificates; from war resisters; from local activists on homelessness and poverty, the environment and industrial and transportation safety; from animal rights activists; from the labour movement and refugees, immigrants and temporary workers and their allies; from supporters of CBC/Radio Canada and those seeking more open government.

My predecessor, Svend Robinson, once remarked that the highest duty of a member of Parliament was love. Love should be our daily agenda, a daring, justice-seeking and tender love. Some day, even here, we will find that path where all that we do we do for love.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour of representing the people of Brome—Missisquoi in the House. I am proud of being a sovereignist and proud of being a Quebecker and a member of the Bloc Québécois. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I have had the honour and pleasure of being responsible for the social housing and homelessness files, as well as natural resources and the environment. I have derived great satisfaction from my debates with all the hon. members, and I thank them for it. I also appreciated your way of presiding over the House, Mr. Speaker.

I leave very content with my time here and with having worked with a leader, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who is both so exacting and so nice. I thank him for having made a place for me on his team. I would like as well to thank all my colleagues for their support and solidarity.

I also want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank the voters for their confidence in me. Finally, my greatest thanks go to my wife, Estelle, for her support, her help and her love. I will now have the great pleasure of returning to live by her side.

Thanks to all and sundry, and farewell, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I would like to thank all those hon. members who spoke today.

[*English*]

I know that all colleagues have enjoyed them very much and I congratulate each member who has spoken. Since I am joining this group, I will say something tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

At 5:30 p.m., there will be a reception in Room 216.

The Budget

[English]

I invite all hon. members to join us for a celebration of the work of the members who have spoken today. I hope they can all come and that other hon. members can join us.

[Translation]

We will have an opportunity to say goodbye to our colleagues then. The reception will start at 5:30 p.m. in Room 216.

* * *

[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I would like to make one thing very clear: this budget is a good budget. As a member of Parliament, I take my job very seriously. I represent the wonderful riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar and I am honoured to have the important role of ensuring that this government delivers for my riding.

This budget delivers.

Unfortunately, the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition has already formed. It has indicated that it will vote against this budget. Let us look at what it is they are voting against.

They are voting against seniors. What is worse, they are voting against the poorest of the seniors. Through the prebudget consultations held in my riding, I heard one thing over and over, that seniors need more assistance.

We listened. There is real affordable help for seniors in this budget, but the NDP, with its Liberal leader, has said no to help for seniors. This is a great shame because the NDP used to stand for something. Its members claim to stand up for the little guy, but when push comes to shove they would rather try to grab power in a coalition government supported by the Bloc Québécois than support measures that make sense for Canadians.

Another common theme raised in the prebudget consultations in my riding is that we need to stay on track, keep taxes low and eliminate the deficit. That is exactly what this budget does.

While the opposition coalition is coming out firmly against the best interests of Canadians and the best interests of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, our Conservative government is delivering to Canadians exactly what it promised, focusing precisely on the priorities of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, this budget would see an increase in transfer payments to Saskatchewan of \$1.2 billion. That is \$1,182 for every resident of Saskatchewan. I asked the only Liberal member in Saskatchewan, the member for Wascana, how he would explain to his constituents that he voted against this.

This budget provides for tax relief for Canadians. In fact, the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition will vote against \$60 million in tax relief. It is voting against a family caregiver tax credit, which would provide \$2,000 for caregivers, or over \$13 million for Saskatchewan families, and against an investment of \$3 million toward the development of community-based end of life care. This is something I am particularly proud of as a founding member of the parliamentary committee on palliative and compassionate care.

I ask the following: How can someone claim to support hard-working Canadian families and vote against measures such as this? How can someone who claims to represent the middle class vote against the children's art tax credit, which would provide families a tax credit of \$500 per year? That is another \$19 million for Saskatchewan that the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition would rather families did not get.

What about our volunteer firefighters? Do they not deserve some credit for putting their lives at risk to help our communities? We have put a \$3,000 tax credit for them in the budget, and the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition members just cannot find it in their hearts to support it.

Conservatives know that we cannot go on with deficit spending indefinitely. Our Conservative government knows that fiscal responsibility is important to Canadians. That is why we are staying on track to eliminate the deficit by 2015 without implementing risky and reckless new spending programs that would force us to raise taxes or keep us in a deficit for our children and grandchildren to pay off. That is why we have taken action.

We have already cut the deficit by a third from last year and are on track to balance the budget by 2015. What we are not doing is balancing the budget on the backs of the provinces. We are not cutting transfer payments to Saskatchewan. In fact, we are increasing them.

The Budget

•(1550)

Our Conservative government knows that health care and education must be properly funded. The Liberals cut funding for health care and for education, but we did not. We know what is important to Canadians and we will keep fighting for their priorities. We know that infrastructure is of vital importance to cities like Saskatoon and rural municipalities like Delisle, Asquith, Biggar, Herschel, and the many others that make up my great riding.

This budget has delivered for municipalities. We are making an annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding permanent, so municipalities would be able to forecast accurately the funding for their community.

However, the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition voted against that as well. Actions speak louder than words, and it looks like the opposition does not support sustainable and stable infrastructure funding for rural municipalities. We should not be surprised because the Liberals and the NDP have a history of voting against what they claim to support. The Bloc, on the other hand, has always been very clear on its intentions, and that is to vote against the best interests of Canadians because the Bloc only cares about one thing, breaking up this great nation of ours.

I would not want to make these claims without backing them up. We know that today Canadians are still burdened with a costly, wasteful, inefficient, and useless long gun registry because the elected members of Parliament for the NDP broke their promises. They promised and even campaigned on scrapping the long gun registry. When push came to shove, though, the NDP could not be trusted. It pretends to understand rural Canadians, but it does not.

As for the Liberals, it is almost a waste of time to point out the hypocrisy. Everybody knows that the Liberal Party is the party of broken promises. Among them is its promise to remove the GST. That is another of the promises made, promises broken.

Conservatives do not make empty promises. We said we would cut the GST to 5% and we cut the GST to 5%. We promised we would fight to scrap the wasteful long gun registry and we have fought to do so. If the NDP did not flip-flop on campaign promises, the long gun registry would be gone right now.

We promised to work to reform the Senate. We have introduced legislation that would limit senators terms to eight years and provide an opportunity for Canadians to vote for their senators. The NDP claimed to support Senate reform, but when push came to shove, it voted with the Liberals instead of with its constituents.

I call on members opposite who claim to represent their constituents and not their leaders. I call on them to support this budget. Do not vote against Canadians. Do not vote against seniors and families, and jobs and growth.

If members vote against this budget, then they are sending a clear message to Canadians. If Canadians want a member of Parliament who will represent their interests and their priorities, they should elect a Conservative in the next election.

•(1555)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I put my question to the hon. member, I did omit one

thing in my final speech. First, I really wanted to thank the constituents of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for their enduring support. Second, I wish to thank those who work in my offices, Jeff Silvester, Vikki Simmons in Victoria, as well as Jesse Dickinson and Jeff Guignard in my office here. Without their help and support, I could not have done what I have. And, to the volunteers over the 17.5 years who have enabled me to do what I have done, our victories are their victories, and I thank them so much for what they have done.

To my hon. colleague, I wonder if she does not agree that we need an innovation agenda in our country where there are going to be strategic investments in the private sector for research and development, education and infrastructure. Does she have an idea of how the private sector could be incented to make those strategic investments so we could improve our productivity?

•(1600)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to the hon. member as well and wish him all the best in all of his future endeavours.

As far as the member's question goes, we are making tremendous investments in research and development. We are making tremendous investments through the P3.

We do understand that Canadians do not want an election. Because of these investments, we do not want an election while our economy is in recovery. We know that these investments are very important in terms of business development and in terms of our country moving forward.

This is why we have introduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that will ensure that we go forward through business development and by encouraging the private sector to get involved in research and development.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats put forward a proposal to lift every senior in this country out of poverty. We estimated that it would cost approximately \$700 million to \$800 million to do so.

The government responded by putting \$300 million toward seniors poverty in this country, which would mean that after this budget half of the seniors in this country who are living in poverty would continue to live in poverty.

I am wondering if the hon. member could tell me her view on this. In an economy where the government has just given \$3 billion in corporate tax cuts, does the member think that is a higher priority than simply adding another \$400 million to ensure that every senior in this country does not live in poverty?

Would the member not agree with me that shifting \$400 million from corporate tax cuts to seniors in poverty is a higher priority and a better use of Canadian taxpayers' dollars?

The Budget

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, time and time again during pre-budget consultations, as I mentioned in my speech, I understood, and heard from seniors, that we needed to do something to provide more assistance for seniors.

Again, that is why we have introduced the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It is a plan that will keep taxes low to promote jobs and economic growth while supporting Saskatchewan families and seniors. It includes supporting job creation, strengthening our families and communities.

It is a plan that Canadians expect in times of fiscal restraint. I believe that seniors across this country are going to thank our government for the measures that we have implemented in this phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my privilege to speak to our economic action plan, phase two, and our low tax plan for jobs and growth. I think it is especially important, following those very wise words of all the members who are just leaving. So, that actually was special to hear and I think really adds to the debate that we are having right now.

I think there are a few things that have been missing in this debate to date.

First, this budget has been widely described as responsible. It is looking at a return to a balanced budget. It is targeted. It is providing very special opportunities, whether it be through innovation, whether it be through seniors, but it is targeted because we know that we cannot, obviously, do everything that we might like to do. It is also reasonable.

The opposition is really standing in isolation of many people out there, many organizations out there, when it is critical of this budget because most people are saying this is a good budget, this is a reasonable budget, and this is a budget for Canadians.

It sounds like there is very little time left. This might be the only day of debate in spite of our House leader's optimism, so I think it is really important that we listen carefully. There is still a bit of time, perhaps, for members to change their minds.

To look at why this is really a budget for Canadians, I would like to first talk about the process in my riding, in terms of consultation. First, I made telephone calls that reached out to every single household in the riding. We had many people who provided input into this budget. We ultimately topped this off with a round table with the finance minister.

This was not a partisan approach to this budget. This was a Canadian approach. Included in this round table with the finance minister, we had people who represented all sectors, we had people who represented the aboriginal community, we had young, and we had old. So, again, it was a very representative group of people who sat down with the finance minister to provide their input. It certainly was not a partisan effort, in terms of our area.

What was really also very interesting was that the majority of them were very reasonable. They were very practical. They did not want to leave a legacy of debt for the children who were coming behind them. I certainly remember the words of one of the students

from the university who was there, imploring us to look in terms of the legacy of debt for even his children.

They did, however, recognize that some additional help was needed in some key areas. They also clearly articulated that there was a need for growth, innovation, education investment and training, and those would be the key things to drive our economy into the future.

Out of this conversation, they also got into some very specific issues. When I listened to the finance minister when he delivered this budget earlier this week, I listened with pleasure to hear 10 things that were at our table that were represented in this budget. We did not ever think that 100% would be included, like some of the opposition members that believe 100% of their wish lists can get in. The very practical, non-partisan group recognized that responsible governments have to make decisions.

I would like to share some of the things that did get in, and again I am not going to say it was just the input from our riding because I think there were similar messages, in similar forms, from across the country that drove the creation of this budget.

One item was the GIS. We really supported it. The Canadian Labour Congress said:

This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada and we're proud to have played a significant role in that campaign on their behalf.

Another was workshare. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce said:

The economic measures announced in today's budget will continue to support the economic recovery and help Canadian businesses prosper and compete.

It also was very appreciative of the low tax plan.

The mining exploration tax credit came up at our table. The Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada said:

—I am pleased that the federal government has proposed that the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit be extended for another year...it is encouraging to see the federal budget propose that the program be continued—

I can keep going and I am going to go through all 10.

Firefighters were absolutely thrilled. Not only did we lose someone in Listowel, we lost a volunteer firefighter in my riding just a few months ago. Again, it is a measure I have heard about since the start of my job.

• (1605)

On forest innovation and market development, the Forest Products Association of Canada welcomed "the forest industry measures contained in today's Federal Budget which support the industry and the 240,000 Canadians it directly employs..."

It went on at length to talk about how important it is.

The Budget

Eco-energy retrofit is a great program. The Canadian Home Builders' Association said, "This budget marks a careful and responsible transition from stimulus spending towards creating the conditions that will renew private sector—"

I will take a minute for a quick plug from Kamloops where there is a home that was built in partnership with the Canadian Home Builders' Association, the university students and CMHC. It is a net zero green home. It has had about 60,000 people through it to see what we have done to create a net zero home. Those people want to make changes in their own homes and they are looking for an eco-energy retrofit program.

I will spend more time later talking about the rural physician and nurse opportunities. We have the manufacturing flow through and I can quote from many industries in terms of that particular piece.

Unlike the opposition, people were not expecting 100% satisfaction, but they did believe that the measures were reasonable, appropriate and have broad-based support. It was quite stunning when the opposition quickly indicated, in some cases before they read it, that they were not going to support it. However, it is truly a budget for Canadians.

I will speak quickly on health care, especially after hearing the NDP critic in terms of the health care opportunities.

People might know that health care has a special place in my heart. I have long experience in that area. It is very easy to throw billions and billions of dollars at the health care system, but we responsibly had a partnership with the provinces and have given 6% more per year. The accord does not expire until 2014 and the provinces are getting a 6% increase. There is money through Canada Health Infoway for electronic health records. A responsible government would ask if we have had an impact on wait lists. We cannot just throw billions and billions of dollars at the health care system. Let us evaluate the very significant commitments we have had and move that forward.

To the suggestion that the manpower in Canada is evenly distributed in terms of doctors and nurses and that we do not need incentives to get people into rural communities, perhaps the opposition do not know that right now a new nursing graduate from Thompson Rivers University cannot get a full-time job at the Royal Inland Hospital. Other hospitals in rural areas are desperate for employees. Again, we need to provide incentive for a better disbursement of our resources.

In summary, we are heading towards a balanced budget. Our expenditures to GDP are going down. I ask the opposition to please come to its senses and support this very important budget.

•(1610)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments, but I have one question.

Is it of any concern to her at all that since the last election and change in government that it is recognized the portion of what the government has added to the debt per Canadian citizen is now \$30,000 greater than before the Conservative government first came to power?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, everyone recognizes that we had a global recession. We had some significant stimulus money that we had to provide and we had the support in the House to do so.

I find it ironic that one minute the opposition members are saying to spend more money and the next say they are concerned that perhaps the debt has risen.

It is very important to point out that Canada is in an extremely good position in comparison to many of the other OECD countries.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague on the government side. Employment insurance is intended to protect against loss or termination of employment. Both the employee and the employer pay premiums. The federal government does not contribute a cent to the employment insurance program. The only role it plays is that of employment insurance fund manager. The Liberals were accused of siphoning off \$58 billion from this fund at the expense of seasonal workers.

Moreover, 60% of people who pay into the employment insurance system are women and young people. We need a government that is prepared to have an independent fund established and run by those people who contribute to it, a government that will deliver genuine insurance by enhancing the employment insurance system.

And yet what is the Conservative Party doing in this budget? It has announced up front that it intends to siphon off \$17 billion from the employment insurance fund over the next five years. My remarks are therefore directed at those voters who are watching us today. They will have a choice to make. It is our hope that they will vote in Quebec for the Bloc Québécois because its members are the only ones who stand behind workers, the unemployed and seasonal workers. They are here in Ottawa to condemn the misuse of the employment insurance fund by both the Conservatives and the Liberals.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague brings up a very important point, especially when he noted that Liberals made very liberal use of this particular fund and moved the funds into general coffers.

One of the first things our government did was to create an arm's-length group to manage this fund. We made it arm's-length but also recognized that it was important for people like the self-employed to have access. Single mothers who have businesses now have access to this particular fund.

We believe things like job sharing are absolutely critical. We made important changes to make work sharing better, but we certainly do not believe in a 45-day work year.

The Budget

•(1615)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that there was a lot of consultation done on this budget. I have listened to a lot of British Columbians and they have told me they absolutely do not want the HST. They want affordable housing, quality child care and help with affordability issues of all types that are not addressed by the budget. Seniors have said that they need more than \$50 a month given to 50% of seniors living in poverty.

I am wondering if the member heard any of those voices when she did her consultation.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am glad I have the opportunity to respond very directly to this question.

Since the 1990s, the federal government has always had the role of facilitating what the provinces wanted to do in terms of the HST and we have done that. We have also stated very clearly that British Columbia is going to have a referendum and we are going to respect the decisions made at that time. The member is being very misleading when he talks in terms of British Columbia.

I would also like to talk about the economic action plan and what it has done for affordable housing throughout British Columbia. The member complains about the signs, but perhaps he has not read the signs because there are many signs throughout British Columbia with respect to affordable housing projects. We have made significant progress both urban and rural in terms of where we are going with affordable housing.

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Mount Royal.

I rise today in the House to take part in the debate in response to this government's very disappointing budget.

[English]

The media, the business and academic communities have all reached the same conclusion as we have on this side of the House. This is a lame duck budget and we give it a failing grade.

This budget is being called "a kind of half-hearted effort, incremental in nature, designed for political effect".

These are not my words, these are the words of Christopher Dunn, an academic at Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. He went on to say that there was some nominal social spending targeted at specific voters to "leave an impression of a government that hadn't forgot about average voters without actually doing that much for them".

The official opposition leader put it very succinctly in his question to the government yesterday when he said:

Mr. Speaker, spending billions of dollars on stealth fighters, corporate tax cuts and mega prisons means the Canadian family has to be shortchanged.

There is nothing in the budget on affordable housing. There is nothing in it on child care. There is nothing to support our health system. These are the priorities of Canadian families.

Why is the Prime Minister out of touch and out of control?

How does the government fail to support Canadian seniors? On page 109 of the budget document, low income seniors are expected to get a guaranteed income supplement of \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. Single recipients with an annual income, other than old age security and guaranteed income supplement, of \$2,000 or less, and couples with an annual income of \$4,000 or less will get the full amount of the benefit.

What is shocking about this is that the government is not making these increases permanent given that the benefit will be clawed back when the annual income level reaches \$4,000 for singles and \$7,360 for couples.

[Translation]

Residents in my riding of Laval—Les Îles pointed out to me that in real dollars, eligible seniors would receive exactly \$1.20 per day. Obviously the Prime Minister has not gone grocery shopping for a long time. Otherwise, he would have noticed that milk costs \$3.79 and sometimes up to \$5.00. So, \$1.20 will not even be enough to buy a quart of milk.

•(1620)

[English]

Let us imagine the Prime Minister or any of his cabinet members trying to live on that type of income with bread an average \$3 a loaf; eggs, \$2.69 a dozen; apples at \$3.34 a kilogram; canned salmon at \$3.15 for 213 grams. These were average prices in 2010.

What is the government's real commitment to supporting families and communities? The budget documents says:

The Government recognizes the contributions seniors have made and is committed to ensuring that they continue to have a good quality of life.

I am quoting the finance minister's own words.

Let me congratulate the finance minister and his team for co-opting my private member's bill, Bill C-481, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code (mandatory retirement age), which was reported to Parliament last Monday, as one of their priorities within the budget.

[Translation]

The budget indicated that the government clearly supports my bill, since the Minister of Finance wrote on page 112 of that document that:

The government proposes to introduce amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to prohibit federally regulated employers from setting a mandatory retirement age unless there is a bona fide occupational requirement. This would allow Canadians to choose how long they wish to remain active in the labour force. The government will review other acts to further this objective.

If the government truly believes what it says, why does it want to introduce a new bill when my private member's bill has already gone through committee?

The Budget

[English]

Why the delaying tactics? I strongly urge the government to pass the legislation through Parliament and the Senate as quickly as possible, instead of waiting to create a new piece of legislation. Let me take the opportunity at this time to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities and my colleagues on both sides of the House for their support in getting this bill as far as it has gone in the legislative process.

I want to remind the government that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, on which I am a member, undertook a major study on poverty in Canada. The report, which contained 59 recommendations, was tabled in the House on November 17, 2010. How did the minister respond? The government's response was to refuse every recommendation the committee proposed and it is a government that purports to value families.

The budget could have been a golden opportunity to state clearly that the government would immediately implement recommendation 3.1.1 of the standing committee's report and put in place a federal action plan to reduce poverty in Canada. Instead, we have a budget that ignores families and a budget that ignores children. Canadian parents are still waiting on the promised 250,000 child care spaces for their children, which have never materialized.

[Translation]

A Liberal government will return corporate tax rates to 2010 levels and tackle the deficit while strengthening Canadian families with investments in the following measures: a real family care plan, with a six-month family care EI benefit, and a new refundable tax benefit for working families worth up to \$1,350 per year.

The Conservative budget provides no EI benefits, but rather a paltry tax credit that does nothing for low-income caregivers and is worth only \$300 a year.

We are also proposing improvements to public pensions, by strengthening the base Canada Pension Plan with gradual increases to benefits and creating an option for topping-up savings with a new supplemental CPP, instead of just a modest GIS benefit that works out to only \$1.20 per eligible senior a day.

The Liberals are also proposing support for learning and training, so that all Canadians who get the grades can get the skills they need to get quality, full-time jobs, instead of the paltry \$34 per student that the Conservative government is offering. We are proposing quality, affordable early learning and child care, to give our kids the head start they need by offering working families a real choice when they need to find child care spaces for their kids.

What does the Conservative budget propose? It is offering just \$75 per year for art classes.

My colleagues and I fully intend to vote against this budget.

● (1625)

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of working with the member on the human resources committee.

I would like to ask the member how she will explain to the people of Saskatchewan and across Canada that she is voting against \$1,182 per Saskatchewan resident. She will be voting against \$2,000 for caregivers. That is \$13 million for Saskatchewan families. She will be voting against a \$500 per year art tax credit for middle-class families. That is \$19 million for Saskatchewan families.

In my riding, no Liberal candidate has been named. Does the member care about Saskatchewan? Do you care about what you are voting against for Saskatchewan? What will your answer be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would remind all hon. members to direct their comments and questions to the Chair rather than to one another.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles has the floor.

[English]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member to our committee. I say “our committee” because I have been sitting on it for a long time and I hope that she will have the chance to sit on it because it does a great deal of work. The report on poverty, to which I have referred, is the first of its kind in the House of Commons. It took a long time to produce it. We met with hundreds of people right across Canada.

Although I care a great deal for the people of Saskatchewan, we all need to look beyond one province and look to the population of all of Canada from sea to sea to sea.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for several years, the Bloc Québécois has been talking about its pre-budget consultations. It is asking the Minister of Finance for an increase in the guaranteed income supplement, which should be given automatically. If someone files a tax return and does not apply for the guaranteed income supplement, the government will not pay it. When the Bloc Québécois raised this issue, thousands of people who were entitled to the guaranteed income supplement were not receiving it. It should be automatic.

As well, the federal government should raise old age security. Seniors are increasingly being asked to stay in their homes as long as possible, with their families. Those people pay the same price for a pound of butter and a quart of milk, as the hon. member said, as everyone else. The Fédération des travailleurs du Québec has a program called “Une retraite à l’abri des soucis”—worry-free retirement—which the Bloc Québécois supports. My union representative on the north shore, Bertrand Méthot, will definitely be happy with my speech today on the budget.

The Budget

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, income security is an extremely sensitive issue. We have made representations to several ministers. I have done so myself, to enable all Canadians to have access to this program automatically.

At the time, we were told it was too complicated. I never understood that answer. It seems to me that today, in the 21st century, we can work miracles with computers. I firmly believe, as my colleague does, that when it comes to income security, the people who are entitled to it should receive it automatically.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, I must advise the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie, Champlain Bridge; the hon. member for Malpeque, Agriculture and Agri-Food; the hon. member for Western Arctic, Air Transportation.

• (1630)

[English]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise on behalf of the residents of my wonderful riding of Mount Royal, my remarks anchored in their values and visions, their principles and priorities for the budget, for the riding, for Quebec and for this great country, Canada. A budget is not only a financial statement, it is a statement of values. It is not only a balance sheet, it is a set of priorities. As the Minister of Finance himself put it, it is a matter of balancing the needs, in effect, identifying the priorities and of making choices.

These needs and these priorities were shared with me by my constituents on February 10 of this year on a prebudget consultation and then again at a second town hall meeting on March 17. They spoke to me and shared with me the importance of the needs of health care, to use the Minister of Finance's words, a cross cutting concern across this country, of the needs of early learning and child care, of the needs of access to higher education and of access to justice. They spoke of the concerns of seniors, a disproportionate number of whom inhabit my riding. They spoke of pensions and poverty, of the fact that 700,000 seniors in this country are living in poverty. They spoke of the need of a clean environment, of the need to invest in green technology. They spoke of the need for jobs, for social housing, for social justice, and always is the test of a just society is how it treats the most vulnerable in its midst.

What then do we find when we look at this budget? We find a budget that is disconnected from those needs that I have just shared and that my constituents shared with me. We find a budget of trinkets that has a kind of electoral orientation to it, but without a comprehensive strategy for health care, without a comprehensive strategy for environment protection, without a comprehensive strategy for early learning and child care and without a comprehensive strategy for jobs and for taking care of the poor. It is a budget, in a word, that is out of touch with the needs of not only of my constituents as they shared them with me at a prebudget consultation and which I then conveyed to the Minister of Finance on their behalf, but with the priorities of Canadians, as well as of my constituents.

When we look at the budget, what do we find? We find \$30 billion that is part of fiscal planning for an untendered contract for the purchase of F-35 jets. I must say, and it is a matter of interest and

note, that at the prebudget consultation on February 10, I then shared with my constituents that the cost at that time, as it was conveyed to us, was \$16 billion. I then said that I thought it was much higher, probably \$21 billion. We learned last week from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, after an international peer review, that it is \$30 billion, confirmed just yesterday out of the Pentagon.

The issue is not whether or not we need fighter jets. I have respect for the needs and the security of this country. The question is whether we should be spending \$30 billion and rising in an untendered contract that even the Pentagon has said that the costs are rising and where an international peer review itself suggested that we need an open, competitive contract with respect to this particular budget item.

I have more. Some \$15 billion have been set aside for the building of megaprisons at a time that crime is declining. I have to say, as a former minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, that I, too, was concerned with the question of crime. However, I knew that one of the ways to address the question of crime was to address it in terms of crime prevention. However, at the same time as there are \$15 billion for megaprisons, which may be even be more but we do not have the full disclosure of the costs, we find that the budget with regard to crime prevention is declining.

We have \$6 billion of corporate tax cuts for the very rich at the very time that we have 700,000 seniors who are living in poverty.

• (1635)

In a word, to borrow the Minister of Finance's own statement in terms of what are the relative needs, what is the basis of comparative need, I put this to the House on behalf of my constituents and Canadian citizens, to look at in terms of the Minister of Finance's prism and ask these questions in terms of comparative need.

This budget spends one thousand times more on fighter jets than it does on post-secondary students; one thousand times more on megaprisons than it does on youth crime prevention; more for a single day of the G20 than in a year for seniors given a paltry sum of \$1.20 a day; more on partisan advertising than on family care; and regrettably nothing for child care.

Yet we are asked to support a budget that has \$6 billion of tax breaks for the 5% rich. I was part of a government and I sat in a cabinet that reduced corporate taxes from 29% to 21%. I am not saying we do not reduce corporate taxes. I understand the validity. However, we did it at a time when we had eight successive budgetary surpluses. We did it at a time when we bequeathed to the Conservatives, when we were defeated, a budgetary \$14 billion surplus. We do not do it at a time when we have the highest budgetary deficit of \$56 billion and we do not do it with respect to the very rich 5%, while those in need are in fact given paltry crumbs. That is the point.

The Budget

We are asked again for a \$30 billion fiscal planning in an untendered contract for the jets when, at this point, \$30 billion would be an annual cost for health care. We are asked for some \$15 billion for megaprisons at the same time when not only is crime declining, but the proposed budget with regard to crime prevention also has been cut. As someone who has served as a former minister of justice and attorney general, these are wrong priorities. These are inverted values. This is disconnected from the needs of our country. This is disconnected from the needs of my constituents.

Moreover, the cost of the government's core spending priorities, these megaprisons and untendered contracts for fighter jets and corporate tax cuts for the very special rich, were not even included in the budget, thereby further undermining the very credibility of it. In fact, it is a stealth budget. It may not be surprising that it is a stealth budget that has \$30 billion that we cannot see for F-35 stealth planes. This came the day after a damning parliamentary report that recommended the government be found in contempt of Parliament for hiding this information.

It is not just a matter of not sharing the cost and not making a full disclosure so Canadians can make an assessment of the validity of the costs in the budget. Not to share that information is to show contempt for Parliament, for my constituents and for the Canadian people. That is why a parliamentary committee found the government in contempt, without precedent in that regard.

What we need and what we do not have in the budget is a comprehensive strategy on what Canadians care about, namely health care; a comprehensive strategy on what Canadians care about, namely early learning and child care; a comprehensive strategy with regard to access to higher education; a comprehensive strategy with regard to jobs and combatting poverty; a comprehensive strategy with regard to the needs of Canadians in terms of social justice, affordable housing and the like. We do not have these things in the budget.

I regret that the government had an opportunity to look after the real authentic needs of Canadians. The Minister of Finance spoke about the fact that this was a budget based on needs. However, the tragedy is the authentic needs of Canadians are ignored and it is a budget disconnected from Canadians.

• (1640)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member opposite to read an article that just came out at one o'clock today with regard to the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, which is supportive of budget 2011. I encourage him to read that as he spouts off a need to do something for health care.

The member brags about his time in cabinet and his time as a justice minister. It is unfortunate that I have to bring up the Liberal record yet again. While he was cabinet, there was a commitment made that led to the disappearance of \$1 billion in an HRSDC boondoggle. As well, \$363 million were taken during adscam. Yet we still do not know what happened to \$40 million of it. I ask the member if he could possibly help us find that and put it further to the poverty issues that he says need to be addressed.

There was also a commitment by his cabinet, \$2 million for a gun registry, that ended up costing Canadians over \$2 billion, \$2 billion that could have been used more wisely.

This government has done enormous things to ensure that poverty-stricken Canadians are going to live a better life. I would implore the member to answer this question. What does he plan to do in answer to those Canadians, particularly the seniors, who are begging to see this budget go forward?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to respond to the questions and comments of the hon. member.

First, with regard to medicine, if we speak to people in medicine across our country, and I have, with regard to the questions of tax credits for doctors who will go into the rural areas, which we support, they will tell us is that the document lacks a comprehensive strategy with regard to health care. I spoke to that.

What it lacks is a comprehensive strategy with regard to early learning and child care. What it lacks is a basis of assessment on comparative need.

There are \$30 billion for fighter jets, when the annual budget with regard to health care is \$30 billion in our country. We are talking about that. We are talking about comparative need. We are talking about whether one cares about the needs of Canadians.

I did not brag about what I did as a minister of justice. I just said that a minister of justice, and every other cabinet minister, as well as every MP, has a constitutional responsibility for oversight. Whether one is a government MP or an opposition MP, members have a constitutional responsibility to disclose the information that is needed to make an informed judgment and a constitutional responsibility to get up and hold the government to account.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question, through you, to the speaker who just spoke about homelessness and social housing.

I urge the government to leaf through the books of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which is a federal crown corporation. It will see the billions of dollars in surplus that the corporation is raking in. That money could be invested in society and in building social housing.

I also urge the federal government and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to work with the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ), which works in turn with the municipal housing offices.

When I was a municipal councillor in Hauterive and Baie-Comeau, the municipal housing office's waiting lists were extremely long. The people on those lists are people with low incomes.

Personally, I think that the 2011 budget does not meet the expectations of low-income families when it comes to housing for seniors and people with disabilities.

I would like the speaker who spoke before me to answer this question. Could the money that is lying idle in the government be invested in society, through investments in social housing?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: I agree, Mr. Speaker.

The Budget

Last week, I tabled a number of requests, particularly on this issue. I also moved a motion about combatting poverty and our efforts on behalf of the most disadvantaged in our community.

I agree. Fighting poverty must be one of our priorities.

● (1645)

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the most recent arrival in this honourable place, I have been listening to the opposition very intently and I am beginning to believe it is the opposition's position that the Conservative Party probably also sunk the *Titanic*.

I will be splitting my time with the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale.

It is good to have the opportunity to speak today about the budget. The global economy is emerging from the deepest and most synchronized financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression. In particular, I would like to talk about the significant improvements this budget would make in the lives of Canadian seniors.

Canada's seniors have made many sacrifices and contributions to our country, for which we are forever grateful. That is why we are committed to doing everything we can to improve their quality of life.

Our budget lays out a low tax plan for jobs and growth. As part of the plan, we will keep taxes low. We will undertake additional targeted investments to support jobs and growth. We will control government spending and stay on track to eliminate the deficit. We will not do what the previous Liberal government did when it cut \$25 billion from transfer payments to crucial services like health care and education. Nor will we impose massive tax increases or tax our way to recovery because we know that increasing the tax burden is not the way to build a robust economy.

We remain focused on securing our economic recovery. We are focused on improving the financial security of Canadian workers and families and especially helping seniors. Canada's seniors represent a generation of Canadians who helped us build a country and a quality of life of which we can all be proud.

Our government recognizes the need of seniors in communities across our great country. We are committed to ensuring that seniors have the opportunity to enjoy their retirements in comfort. This is part of a strong record of supporting seniors, their safety, security and quality of life.

Indeed, since taking office in 2006, our government has provided unprecedented support to Canadian seniors and pensioners. We have provided over \$2 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners. We completely removed 85,000 from the tax rolls. We raised the guaranteed income supplement exemptions from \$500 to \$3,500 and introduced pension income splitting. We introduced an automatic renewal of the guaranteed income supplement, meaning seniors no longer have to reapply each year. Our government has made significant investments in affordable housing for low-income seniors. We raised the age credit amount twice and doubled the pension income credit.

Since being elected a few months ago, I have met with hundreds, if not thousands, of seniors across the land. They have told me as recently as today that they are certainly in support of what we are endeavouring to do. Those seniors need to be heard. They told me about the hardships they faced. Many of them were never married or their spouses have passed away and they live alone on very low incomes. I heard loud and clear that we need to do more to help these vulnerable seniors.

I passed this message on to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and it is the message that is embodied in the budget submissions that have gone forward. It has been taken to heart. We listened to seniors and we responded.

This budget proposes enhancing the guaranteed income supplement by providing an additional \$600 per year to single seniors and \$840 to couples who are below the income threshold. Some people have trivialized this amount. According to the seniors I have spoken to, this is very meaningful and they are grateful.

● (1650)

These new measures are expected to help improve the quality of life for more than 680,000 of the most vulnerable seniors across Canada and this represents a significant commitment. In fact, the changes to the guaranteed income supplement proposed in this budget represent an investment of more than \$300 million per year. However, we believe that it is the right thing to do at this time.

We are dedicated to improving the lives of Canadian seniors. After living lives dedicated to their communities and families, low income seniors deserve the same quality of life as everyone else. Passing this budget would go a long way toward ensuring they receive the support they need and justly deserve. While important, this is only one of several measures in this budget that would benefit Canadian seniors.

This budget proposes providing \$10 million, over two years, to the new horizons for seniors program. This extremely successful program provides funding to support local community-based projects across Canada. These projects enable seniors to participate in social activities and contribute to their community. New horizons also funds programs to raise awareness of elder abuse and to give front line workers the training they need to recognize the signs of abuse, and know what to do when they suspect it. It is an important program that allows our seniors to live more active lives and helps protect them from exploitation and abuse.

This budget also proposes two very important measures for seniors and near-seniors who want to keep working.

The Budget

First, it proposes extending the targeted initiative for older workers for the next three years. The economic downturn was especially hard on older workers. While it is never easy to lose one's job, it is particularly hard for an older worker who has worked at the same job for many years. Thanks to our government's economic action plan, Canada has recovered all of the jobs lost in the recession. Since the beginning of our economic recovery, we have created 480,000 net new jobs.

However, there are still older workers who need our help, with training and support, to help them find new jobs.

The targeted initiative for older workers ensures older workers have access to training and employment programs that help them find new careers. It also opens training and employment programs to displaced older workers. This ensures that these workers have the support they need to find new jobs. It is a good program that is helping people in real need. I hope that everyone in this House will join us in voting to extend it.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan also proposes to make an important legislative change. It is a change that would benefit those Canadians who decide that they want to keep on working longer. Canadians are living longer, more active lives than ever before. Seniors who want to remain active in the workforce should have the freedom to make that choice. It should not be forced upon them. That is why we are proposing to introduce amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit federally-regulated employers from setting a mandatory retirement age. This would apply unless there is an occupational requirement for a mandatory retirement age.

Banning mandatory retirement would allow Canadians the freedom to choose how long they remain active in the workforce. This budget builds on the progress that we made through the economic action plan.

It is a responsible low tax plan that does not threaten the economic recovery by raising taxes. Instead, it lays out a path to a balanced budget by 2015-16, while making certain key investments. It does so while providing real, tangible support for Canadian seniors.

I urge members to listen to all of the people across our country who are looking to us to support our most vulnerable seniors. It is time to put politics aside and think of those vulnerable seniors who are looking to us for the help they need, for the help they so badly need.

If members want to support them, I ask simply that members do the right thing and support this budget, so that we can collectively continue to improve the quality of life of the very people who sent us here.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague when he says that seniors, or golden-agers as we call them back home, must be helped. When you meet with them, you realize that these folks are isolated because they do not have enough money for a decent quality of life.

I would like to ask my colleague the following question. Does he think that \$1.20 a day is sufficient to pull these folks out of their isolation when it is not even enough to buy a coffee at Tim Hortons or a bus ticket to go somewhere? Does he really think that \$1.20 will be enough to help these folks?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, I look at this from the point of view of what the seniors tell me, not what we perceive in this place. It truly is a significant amount. With utilities rising, another impact that seniors are facing today, it is a very significant amount. I pity anybody who trivializes that amount as not being very helpful and generous at a time of difficult circumstances in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of State for Seniors speak favourably about seniors, as one would expect.

I would like to ask him what he thinks about his party's budget, which allocates \$30 billion for the purchase of 65 F-35 fighter jets, when one considers the fact that the money spent on just one of these aircraft would be enough to subsidize 6,400 social housing units. I live in Laval, where over 1,000 people are waiting for social housing. The government chose to purchase military aircraft rather than invest in housing. Furthermore, it has invested \$40 million in new holding cells quite close to the neighbourhood in which I live.

I would like to know what this government's priorities are regarding seniors, given that billions of dollars are being spent on arms and on the excessive punishment of criminals.

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what I think has been a great misconception. I try to analyze things in a realistic and practical way. All the things that we are doing are not mutually exclusive. They are necessary and critical. Were it not so, these things would not come forward. Serious considerations are given.

Giving our military men and women the tools they need to do the job we are asking them to do is a responsible approach to what needs to be done.

Regarding prisons, I have been in law enforcement for some 48 years and I have put a lot of people in prison. I hate to think that we are now suggesting that we do not need to ensure that we have proper facilities to prevent people from continuing their life of crime and to protect victims. If we are looking for a crime prevention strategy that really does work, keep the recidivist criminals in jail and look after victims. Believe me, it does work.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very eloquent defence of our budget. It is a budget that is absolutely critical. When I look across the aisle here at the opposition parties, the coalition trying to bring down our government when this budget is so critical, I would ask my colleague about the kinds of impacts which failure to pass this budget will have on our economic prosperity and on our reputation as leading the world in emerging from the economic recession?

The Budget

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Speaker, I suppose the best way to look at that is to draw on our progress so far. This is a work in progress. We will continue to have a lot of work for years to come, no doubt.

Our government is committed to supporting low income seniors. We are proud of the fact that our actions have played a part in cutting the low income rate among Canada's seniors from 21% in 1980 to 5.8% in 2008. This most recent submission in the budget will reduce by 680,000 the number of seniors who would otherwise be adversely affected if we allow it to continue as we have.

• (1700)

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address the budget, our Conservative government's sixth budget since forming office.

I am well aware of the burning desire of the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition to plunge this country into an unnecessary election, no matter the cost.

However, the instantaneous rejection of this budget by the three opposition party leaders is nothing short of irresponsible. In a time of continuing global economic uncertainty, especially following the disaster in Japan and the upheaval across much of the Arab world, the economic recovery is still fragile.

The opposition leaders are showing reckless disregard for the Canadian economy by their knee-jerk reactions. I was appalled, in particular, by the Liberal Party's response to our budget. The Liberal Party's focus on the spending for new jets for our Royal Canadian Air Force and on prisons was both shallow and ill-considered.

Of course, there is no spending for new jets in this budget and there will not be until 2016 when we start to receive the new jets. And the cost of purchasing those jets is spread over the lifespan of the jets, which is 20 to 30 years.

I should also note that it was the previous Liberal government that set us on the path to purchasing these jets in the first place by spending \$100 million on developing them. The current Liberal leader seems to think we should just throw away the \$100 million. I do not think that is a good idea.

With respect to prisons, our government has provided detailed cost estimates to Parliament for housing the expanded prison population that may result from our tougher sentencing legislation.

While Liberals have focused on the modest increased cost for prisons, they have completely and totally ignored the cost to Canadian society of allowing repeat and violent offenders to quickly resume their lives of crime through early release.

They have forgotten the costs to the victims of crime, the property owners, women, children, seniors, and others who will be prey to rapists, murderers, fraudsters, and drug dealers.

The cost to Canadian society of a revolving-door liberal criminal justice system is at least an order of magnitude higher than the cost we will incur by ensuring criminals serve sentences proportionate to their crimes.

It is clear to me that in their blind pursuit of power, the opposition parties have forgotten about listening to Canadians.

We began preparing for this budget many months ago. We listened to thousands of groups and individuals from across Canada. I consulted widely in my community. The finance committee, of which I am a member, held hearings in my riding to hear from local groups and individuals.

Earlier this year I hosted a Canadian first, the first ever live telephone town hall meeting with the finance minister. Thousands of my constituents were able to participate, and provide their feedback and input into our budget.

Our Conservative government has listened to the people of Canada. This budget reflects the needs and concerns of Canadians during this time of economic recovery. We heard some clear messages from Canadians. We heard that despite our solid job creation numbers, over 480,000 new jobs since July 2009, we need to continue with our job creation efforts.

We heard that since our infrastructure spending is winding down, it is now time to get spending down and our budget back in balance. We also heard that some groups in Canadian society, such as low income seniors or families caring for an infirm loved one, need more support.

This budget reflects the comments, suggestions, concerns, and needs we have heard from Canadians over the last several months.

I would like to focus many of my remarks on the positive initiatives we have taken in this budget. As I mentioned earlier, our focus is on jobs and growth. One key to jobs and growth is lower taxes. We are continuing to reduce taxes for families and small businesses in this budget. I am particularly pleased with the incentives we have created for small businesses in my community to hire new workers.

The budget provides for a one time credit of up to \$1,000 to small businesses which hire new employees. This new credit will be available to approximately 525,000 employers, reducing their 2011 payroll costs by about \$165 million.

• (1705)

My riding has one of the largest populations of seniors in Canada. Canadians from across the country like to retire in the temperate climate of our beautiful west coast community. However, some seniors face financial challenges, and our Conservative government has taken steps in the budget to support them.

Our top-up to the guaranteed income supplement will provide up to an extra \$600 a year for low income single seniors, and up to \$840 more for low income couples. This measure will support 680,000 lower income seniors across Canada.

The Budget

I am also pleased with the tax credits for families. The children's arts tax credit will allow parents to claim costs of up to \$500 per year related to activities such as piano lessons and art classes. This new tax credit builds on the success of our children's sport tax credit, and I believe it will be popular and be used by millions of families.

Also the new family caregiver tax credit will be available to people who care for infirm, dependent relatives like a spouse and minor children. We have also introduced new measures to help students. In particular, the in-study income exemption will be doubled from \$50 per week to \$100 per week, allowing approximately 100,000 students to earn this income tax free while pursuing their education.

We are offering help to home owners, with a \$400 million extension of the eco-energy program to encourage home renovations that reduce electricity and heating costs, and we are making permanent the \$2 billion federal contribution to the gas tax fund, which funds our municipal infrastructure. These are funds that our city governments can count on for repairing our streets and sidewalks.

We have also increased funding for health care. This matters to my constituents in British Columbia. We are providing almost \$3.8 billion for health care in B.C., an increase of \$216 million over last year.

Finally, because our budget sets us on a path toward the elimination of the deficit and toward a surplus, Canadians can look forward to additional tax relief, hopefully soon. Indeed, my private member's Motion No. M-638 suggests that we make income splitting for families with children a priority as the budget comes back into balance.

The early analysis of people outside Ottawa is positive. The finance minister of British Columbia has endorsed our budget as good for British Columbia. The hon. Kevin Falcon said that he was encouraged by Ottawa's latest plan to reduce the federal deficit by a quarter this year and to continue progress until Canada is back to balanced budgets by 2015-16. He continued that the corporate tax cuts committed to by our Conservative government would combine with provincial rates to give B.C. the lowest corporate taxes of any jurisdiction, not just in Canada but among the G7 industrialized countries by next year. Let me repeat that. In B.C., thanks to our tax cuts and the tax cuts of the provincial government, we will have the lowest corporate taxes of any jurisdiction in the G7 next year. He also said that the investment incentives we had provided in the federal budget would help Ridley Terminals expand its capacity to ship B.C. coal and minerals overseas.

Jayson Myers, president of the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, said:

If the budget is defeated, it's a real concern for manufacturers.... This two year write-off [for investment in machinery and equipment] comes to an end at the end of this year and that extension is essential if we are going to keep investment going in the sector. It would be nice to have a little bit of certainty that companies would be able to take advantage of that over the next two years.

Craig Alexander, the TD Bank's chief economist, remarked that if we are investing in roads, bridges, et cetera, we want know that the government funding is going to be there and, therefore, that it is

actually a very positive thing that the government has decided to make the gas tax transfer to municipalities a permanent transfer.

Further, he stated that:

I think in general it's a business-friendly budget because of the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery and equipment investment. As an economist, I like it particularly because one of the core challenges facing Canadian businesses is productivity growth.

Craig Wright, RBC's chief economist, says that our projections are conservative and that we can expect to make good on our deficit-cutting projections.

Tom Courchene, an economist at Queen's University, said:

The budget looks after what falls under the federal jurisdiction in an excellent way. It's a continuation of the action plan and it keeps Canada being in the forefront of nations in terms of the recovery from the financial crisis.

● (1710)

That is what others across Canada are saying, with their messages of confidence about the steady hand we have applied to managing the nation's finances.

I would encourage my fellow MPs to consider whether this sensible and prudent budget is really an issue over which to plunge our nation into an unnecessary election.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the priorities of Canadians and the residents of Davenport are to invest in a real family care plan and strong public pensions based on the Canada pension plan, brought in by a Liberal government, and support for learning and training, health care, housing, the arts and a universal child care program. Their priorities are not to pour \$30 billion into buying fighter jets and borrowing \$6 billion for corporate tax cuts.

I would like the hon. member to comment on that statement, because I think it speaks to the priorities of Canadians.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I find it fascinating that the opposition is focusing on the fighter jets issue. As I mentioned in my comments, it was the Liberal Party that invested \$100 million in this project in 2005, a project that we are now proceeding with. That party is now thinking that we should throw that \$100 million away and proceed with who knows what. The opposition does not provide any solutions to that question.

It is clear that our forces need upgraded jets. The current fighter jets are beyond the life expectancy of their use and we need to proceed with something more.

Further, as my colleague notes, the opposition had supported the purchase of those jets just two years ago.

The member also talks about tax cuts, corporate tax cuts in particular. As a member of the finance committee, I found it fascinating to hear from so many experts who came to speak to us that corporate tax cuts are really transferred to individual Canadians. If taxes go up, those increased taxes are passed along to Canadians. If taxes go down, generally those taxes are reduced for Canadians.

I am not sure why he is opposed to tax cuts for Canadians.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the remarks made by the previous member and by the Minister of National Revenue were a little ridiculous, in my opinion. He said that the government had created and will create a lot of jobs, as a result of the budget. He also spoke about seniors.

Whole areas have been opened up on the north shore primarily thanks to the forestry industry. The mining and fishing industries obviously had something to do with this, too. What does the previous member think about the folks who lost their jobs at the Rivière-Pentecôte sawmill, the Kruger sawmill in Ragueneau, the Rivière-Saint-Jean sawmill and the Baie-Trinité sawmill? They lost their jobs because the federal government set aside a paltry \$60 million in the budget for 2011-12, whereas last year, in Ontario alone, the government allocated \$10 billion to the auto sector.

The north shore forestry sector needs loan guarantees from the government in order to reopen these sawmills and put people back to work at the pulp and paper mills. The government needs to give the forestry sector funding to modernize, so that plants and sawmills can remain competitive.

[English]

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue of the forestry, because it is a big part of the British Columbia economy.

I will tell him what our Conservative government has done in support of the forestry sector, because he is apparently not aware of it after all his years in Parliament.

Our Conservative government has provided significant support to aid the forestry industry to meet today's challenges. For example, by 2012 we will have lowered business taxes to 15%. We have provided \$1 billion for the pulp and paper green transformation program; \$170 million to support market diversification and innovation; nearly \$130 million for the forest industry long-term competitiveness initiative; \$100 million to support the development, commercialization and implementation of advanced green energy technologies in the forestry sector; nearly \$46 billion in financing for forestry companies through Export Development Canada and nearly \$430 million through the Business Development Bank of Canada.

We are doing a lot for that sector.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale touched on the whole issue of taxes. It turns out that other countries around the world see us as the lighthouse and the standard now for lowering corporate taxes. We just heard that Great Britain wants to lower taxes to perhaps even lower levels than in Canada.

I would ask my colleague to explain why it is so important that our business sector, the small, medium and large businesses, have a competitive tax rate that attracts investment into Canada.

• (1715)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, taxes have the biggest impact on the bottom line of small businesses. If their taxes are lowered, they are left with more income to hire more workers and to become more productive by purchasing more equipment and machinery. We are dealing with an environment where capital flows from one country

to another very quickly, and the more competitive we can be the more capital we will attract.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to participate in the debate on what is almost certainly going to be the last Conservative budget of this Parliament and, we hope, the last Conservative budget Canadians will have to endure for a long time.

Let me begin my comments this afternoon by reiterating what the NDP said on budget day. A month ago, the NDP leader, the member for Toronto—Danforth, met with the Prime Minister to discuss the budget. He set out a clear message: focus on the priorities of middle-class families or be prepared to go into an election. We proposed reasonable budget measures despite the fact this is a government we have not supported.

However, New Democrats do believe that it is important to try to make Parliament work and we owe it Canadians. Therefore, we told the Prime Minister that in this recession, middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever before to make ends meet. Household debt is at an all-time high and the costs of everyday essentials are going up.

After years of the well connected and big business getting all the breaks, we believe it is time for families to get a break. We want to build a Canada where no senior lives in poverty, a Canada where no family has to go without a doctor, where every Canadian can retire with security. Clearly, the Prime Minister does not. The Prime Minister had an opportunity to address the needs of hard-working middle-class families, but he missed that opportunity. He just does not get it.

In the midst of mounting scandals, the government could have put political games aside and worked with other parties. It could have achieved practical, affordable results that would help families now and show Canadians that Ottawa can work for them, but the Prime Minister chose not to do that.

We called on him to create new positions for doctors and nurses for the five million Canadians without access to family medicine. The Conservative budget does not do that.

We called on him to help Canadians with ever-rising energy bills by removing the federal sales tax from home heating. The Conservative budget does not do that.

Because a quarter of a million seniors live in poverty today, which is a national disgrace, we called on the Prime Minister to ensure that no senior lives in poverty. The Prime Minister's budget will not do that. Because every Canadian deserves to have access to financially secure retirement, we called on him to set goals to increase benefits to the Canada pension plan. The Conservative budget does not do that.

The Budget

Nothing in the budget has persuaded us that the Prime Minister has changed his ways and that he is prepared to work with others in Parliament to give middle-class families a break. That is why New Democrats cannot support the budget as presented.

Let us look at the budget in more detail. As I said, it was critical to my NDP colleagues and I that this budget be about helping seniors and the middle class. While the Prime Minister likes to point to soaring bank profit, taking that as proof that the recession is over, we have been focusing on an economic recovery that leaves no one behind. Clearly, hard-working families are far from enjoying any benefits from the so-called end of the recession.

Let me remind members in the House of the latest data. Yes, the government is right on one point: Canada's big banks are, indeed, raking in the cash. In the first quarter of 2011 alone, the big six banks earned over \$6.5 billion and a record-breaking \$21.58 billion for the past four quarters. Shamefully, the banks used half of those profits, a staggering \$11 billion, for executive bonuses. Then, just to add insult to injury, those same six banks received an annual bonus from Canadian taxpayers of almost \$890 million.

Are you kidding me, Mr. Speaker? We cannot afford \$700 million to lift every senior out of poverty, but we can spend \$890 million on corporate tax cuts just for the banks? I do not believe for a second that this will pass the nod test for anyone who is analyzing the Conservatives' budget priorities.

By reducing the corporate income taxes that government collects, the Conservatives are depriving the treasury of billions of dollars that could and should have been invested in Canadians. At a minimum, instead of giving tax cuts with no strings attached, they should have been focused on creating jobs. Job creation continues to be one of the most important issues for Canadians.

The government's own figures reveal that it has fallen 240,000 jobs short of its own targets. In fact, in the past three months, we lost almost 24,000 full-time jobs in this country. With the annual growth of population in Canada at 1.5%, there should be 280,000 new jobs created each year just to maintain our country's level of employment, but we are heading in the opposite direction.

When we look at the data, it is clear that the government's claim of creating hundreds of thousands of jobs is misleading. In February 2011, Canada had 156,000 fewer full-time jobs than before the great recession began in October 2008. It is no wonder that Canadians simply do not share the government's optimism about their economic futures.

The Conservatives' budget does nothing to improve the situation. Despite the title of the budget proclaiming it to be a plan for "jobs and growth", there is little in this budget that would give hope to the unemployed of a sustained job creation strategy. As the *Toronto Star* columnist, David Olive, warned so succinctly in his article entitled, "A budget worth defeating":

Continued meaningful stimulus programs are not necessary, [the Prime Minister] feels, since the nation's all better now.... As with a U.S. stimulus program that ended prematurely, Canada risks a return to slow growth as [the Prime Minister] turns now from stimulus to austerity.

● (1720)

In truth of course, it is very selective austerity. He had no problem finding \$6 billion for additional corporate tax cuts, or \$9 billion for U.S. style mega jails, or a whopping \$29 billion for shiny new F-35 fighter jets.

This budget spends \$10 for corporate tax reductions for every \$1 it has for seniors. When it comes to job creation, again there is no money to be had.

On the contrary, the \$4 billion in cuts to the federal public service will mean cuts in both jobs and services. The ministry that is tasked with helping Canadians through programs like EI, training and disability pensions is seeing its own cut of half a billion dollars over the next three years.

While I am on the topic of EI, let us look at another noteworthy fact from the budget. Over the next five years, EI premiums will exceed benefits by \$15 billion. Given that forecast, it is absolutely shameful that the budget did not include any progress on enhancing Canada's employment insurance system. This is workers' money and workers need it now to put food on the table for their families. We know that EI stimulates the economy because the money paid out will go directly back into the community. People who are unemployed are not socking their benefits away in tax free savings accounts. They are spending that money on everyday essentials like food, clothing and shelter, mostly in their local community. EI thus helps hardworking Canadians and the local economy.

However, clearly poverty reduction is nowhere on the government's radar. There is nothing in this budget for affordable housing either, nothing for childcare, no increase to either the child tax benefit or the universal child care benefit and no real commitment to lifting seniors out of poverty.

One of the key proposals that we put before the Prime Minister was to help Canada's most vulnerable seniors with an affordable increase to their guaranteed income supplement. With \$700 million, or half of what the government spent on the posh G8 and G20 summits, we could have ensured that no senior would have had to live in poverty. What did the budget do? It gave less than half that amount of money to three times as many people. It will not even come close to eliminating poverty for Canadian seniors. It is an absolute disgrace. Seniors have worked hard all their lives and played by the rules, but now everywhere they turn, every bill they open, they are paying more and getting less.

The Budget

Just look at consumer prices. Overall, they rose 2.2% in the last year. Everything is going up except people's incomes. Energy prices rose 10.6% over the last year. We live in Canada. Heating our homes is not an option. How are seniors and middle-class families supposed to cope with that kind of an increase? Simply put, they cannot. That is why we proposed to take the HST off home heating. It was a reasonable proposal, especially when the budget reveals that the federal government is raking in \$9 billion from the HST. We could and should have a longer discussion about how that is even possible when the government assured Canadians that the HST would be revenue neutral. I have to say there was no prouder moment for me in this Parliament than when my NDP colleagues and I stood in opposition to both the Conservatives and the Liberals and voted against the HST.

Let us look at the cost of gas next, another commodity that is not only rising in price but is also subject to the HST. Gasoline prices rose by a whopping 15.5% in the last year. Drivers faced double digit price increases for gasoline in every province except Manitoba. Every penny per litre increase in the cost of gasoline means an additional \$1 million per day in profits for the oil companies. The 20¢ increase over the past six months therefore means an astonishing \$20 million per day for the already super profitable oil industry and 95% of that price increase goes directly to the bottom line of the oil companies. Yet, the Conservative government is continuing to give these companies an additional bonus with taxpayers' money by lowering the tax levies on those super profits. Canadians are shaking their heads and saying enough is enough. It is time to cut off the support for these corporate welfare bums and start acting on the priorities of seniors and middle-class Canadians.

Let us get to the other two priorities that Canadians told us had to be in this budget, and that we submitted to the Prime Minister on their behalf. The first was ensuring that Canadians can count on their pensions when they need them, by strengthening the Canada pension plan. Specifically, we needed to see a commitment from the government that it move to an eventual doubling of the CPP benefit. Instead, the budget offered vague rhetoric with no real goal. Frankly, that is not good enough.

Only one-third of Canadian workers have a workplace pension.

● (1725)

Similarly, only a third of Canadians contribute to an RRSP, and those who do, just watched billions of dollars in precious savings vaporize during the recession. The current system is leaving too many people without the retirement savings they need. There is too much at risk and not enough security.

In past crises, Canadians have come together to create solutions, to minimize risks by sharing it. That is what we did when we created public health care and yes, that is what we did when we created the public pensions that are now the only reliable part of our whole retirement security system.

Let us face it, for more than a generation wages have failed to keep pace with the cost of living and most Canadians have not been able to save what they need.

The best way to help today's workers save enough money for tomorrow is through an improved Canada pension plan, which is

why we propose that over the next several years we lay the foundation to double CPP benefits for the future. The CPP has been proven time and again to be a safe, secure and efficient retirement savings plan. Plus the CPP is portable from job to job, across provinces, keeps up with inflation, and is backed by the government. Because the CPP operates independently from government, there is no cost to taxpayers. In fact, there is the potential for governments to save over time.

We all need to save more for retirement. Putting that little bit extra into the CPP makes more sense than investing it into risky RRSPs. It is safer, easier, in fact, it is effortless, and it earns more.

I know that my time is just about up, but I want to say at least a few words about our fourth budget ask, as well.

Currently, there are five million Canadians without a family doctor. What is the government's answer to this crisis? It wants to incent doctors and nurses to work in northern and remote regions. That strategy is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The Conservatives are not creating a single new doctor with that strategy. Instead, they are taking doctors out of urban centres and moving them elsewhere in the country. That is hardly a solution. The shortage of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals is acute in all parts of the country.

The Canada health accord comes up for renewal in 2014. I thought that this budget would have risen to the occasion and laid out a blueprint for the challenges ahead. But, instead, there is silence. I suppose I should not have been surprised. The Conservatives never did keep their promise of a comprehensive patient wait times guarantee. All we had was a handful of pilot projects that left most patients out in the cold.

The government's big plan to train more doctors, which was announced with such fanfare last month, turns out to have a target of just 100 doctors for the five million Canadians who have no doctor now.

As the president of the Canadian Medical Association rightly pointed out on February 28, Canadian health care is "deeply troubled" and the Prime Minister is failing to take any active role to fix it.

The Council of Canadians echoes that sentiment. Here is its reaction to the health care part of the budget:

The budget was released yesterday and health care is anything but a top priority.

We need a government who will invest in comprehensive community care (home care and long-term care) and is willing to look at sustainable solutions to the current health care challenges, not a government who listens to the pharmaceutical lobbyists hoping to pad the pockets of their investors and share holders.

This budget is a great disappointment for Canadians looking for the Conservatives to stop playing political games and get something done for them.

The Prime Minister had the opportunity to address the needs of hard-working middle-class families and seniors but sadly, he chose instead to manipulate an election call while trying in vain to blame others for it. He chose to ignore the struggles of families and instead spent tax dollars lining the pockets of corporate Canada and the wealthy.

In this budget and in the appalling behaviour of the current government, particularly in recently months, the Prime Minister has shown the House of Commons and the people of Canada nothing but intransigence, arrogance, small-mindedness and contempt—contempt for our democratic institutions, contempt for Parliament and therefore, contempt for Canadian families and seniors.

ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

March 24, 2011

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Rosalie Silberman Abella, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the schedule to this letter on the 24th day of March, 2011, at 4:02 p.m.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen Wallace

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and the Pension Act—Chapter 12.

• (1730)

[English]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ) moved that Bill C-612, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure today to speak to Bill C-612, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons). This is a bill upon which we have been working for more than a year. Many women's groups have been consulted, as well as victims' groups, police forces and even the Barreau du Québec. Before giving a brief outline of the bill, I would like to sketch a quick picture of trafficking in persons and provide some information, including statistics.

Private Members' Business

According to 2009 figures from the UNODC, 79% of trafficking victims in the world are trafficked for purposes of prostitution. According to 2005 figures from the International Labour Organization, 80% of trafficking victims are women and children, particularly young girls, and 40% to 50% of all victims are children.

Women and girls make up 98% of the victims of sexual exploitation. Hence the violence inflicted in this sort of trafficking mainly affects women. According to 2007 figures from the UNODC, the annual proceeds of this criminal activity are estimated at \$32 billion. This is estimated to be the third-largest criminal trade after drugs and weapons trafficking. Certain research even estimates it to be the second-largest. This trade is dominated by criminal groups, and the traffickers are difficult to apprehend since they are extremely dangerous and violent. Naturally, as one can understand, the victims are forced to remain silent.

Here is a picture of the situation in Canada: Canada is considered to be a country of recruitment, destination and transit, particularly transit to the United States. Unfortunately, Canada is also a place of sex tourism. Contrary to what one might think, this sort of thing does not happen only in Thailand. Criminal Intelligence Service Canada indicates in its 2001 report that, in Canada, the average age of entry into prostitution is 14. According to 2004 figures from the U.S. State Department, every year an estimated 1,500 to 2,200 persons are victims of trafficking from Canada to the United States. It is estimated that traffickers bring approximately 600 women and children into Canada to service the Canadian sex industry.

The main points of transit and destination for victims of interprovincial and international trafficking are Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. It is estimated that over 65,000 persons in Canada engage in the online exchange of child pornography, in photos and videos. And this is a fairly conservative figure, if one can say that.

The Sûreté du Québec estimates that 80% of the strip clubs in Quebec under its jurisdiction are owned by criminal groups, often under fronts. So this is an industry that is dominated by organized crime and, of course, street gangs. It is said that a girl can be ordered much as one orders a pizza. This is quite incredible. In the city of Montreal alone, it is estimated that 300 minor girls aged 12 to 17 are sexually exploited, whether through pornography or prostitution, although the figures vary depending on the research. Some studies talk about 800, others 488, or even 1,500 children and adolescents in the Montreal region alone.

The city that comes second to Montreal is Quebec City. The sites of prostitution are varied: bars, strip clubs, prostitution networks, escort agencies and massage parlours. A girl may be moved from Canada to the United States or from one province to another. With reference to sexual exploitation, the majority of prostitution networks can be found in the big cities such as Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Vancouver, Niagara, Peel, etc.

Girls recruited in Atlantic Canada can wind up in Quebec and Ontario, or in Alberta and British Columbia, and vice versa. Although this odious trade is dominated by organized crime, street gangs have now become new players in this trafficking. The Montreal police service has declared human trafficking to be its number one priority.

Private Members' Business

● (1735)

It is estimated that since the late 1990s, members of street gangs have changed from small recruiters to high-level procurers. They are also involved in interprovincial trafficking and of course in trafficking with the United States. Their preferred clientele, not to play on words, their target, is girls between the ages of 11 and 25. They specialize in child prostitution. One girl can bring in around \$280,800 per year. Twenty girls earn \$6.552 million a year, and 40 girls \$13.104 million. This is a business that is not very risky and that is also inexpensive and very lucrative.

The penalties are negligible. I will give you an example of a pimp in Peel region who exploited a 15-year-old girl for two years. This earned him \$360,000 per year. He received a three-year sentence. Unfortunately, the girls refuse to testify, simply because they are understandably afraid, for they are frequently beaten and tortured, and so on.

So you will understand the full importance of this bill, which targets a number of different points. Given the time allotted to me, I will try to review them very quickly for my colleagues.

The first point was to clarify the definition of the words “trafficking” and “exploitation”, because they were sometimes confusing. It was explained to me by the police community that sometimes, or even very often, the legal community regards trafficking as being international. All that we have done in subsection 279.01(1) of the Criminal Code is add “in a domestic or international context”. It must be made clear that trafficking is interprovincial, inter-country and transnational, in the same way as it can be from city to city or district to district.

We have also clarified the definition of the word “exploitation”, for the current definition is a bit of a catch-all, in the sense that it can cover anything from forced labour to sexual exploitation. So we have added a clause that clarifies and adds sexual exploitation and that in a way allows prosecutors, legislators and the police to pinpoint this type of crime. Section 279.04 of the Criminal Code is amended by adding the following at the end of paragraph (a): “(a.1) cause them to provide or offer to provide sexual services by the use or threat of force...”. Everything has been included.

In a way, this definition copies or is modelled on the Palermo protocol and would permit Canada to honour its signing of that text. I leave it to my colleagues to take a closer look at this. I continue with the reading of the clause: “...or of any other form of coercion, by fraud, deception, manipulation, abuse of authority or situation of vulnerability...”. So we touch upon different ways in which a pimp or a trafficker can cause a victim to be exploited.

In modifying this definition, Canada will thus be able to comply with and honour its signing of the Palermo protocol.

In listening to the police, we realized that the common complaint was that sentences were not harsh enough. We did not consider minimum sentencing because we think judges should have as much latitude as possible in handing down a sentence. Nonetheless, we focused on consecutive sentencing. When a person is charged with trafficking, prostitution or aggravated assault—quite often these types of charges go hand in hand with this type of crime—the judge, after all the legal steps, all the plea bargaining, could add up the

sentences he will impose according to the remaining charges. We are leaving it up to the judges, but at the same time we are leaving room for more substantial sentences than what we are currently seeing. This provision will apply to human trafficking—therefore sections 279.01 to 279.03—and could also apply to provision 212.01—or procuring offences.

● (1740)

What is more, we tried to resolve the issue of evidence. I believe we have done well. The police were telling us that it was often very difficult to get testimony from a victim. Victims do not necessarily want to testify, out of fear. The police suggested establishing reverse onus, as in subsection 212(3). If the police could have enough evidence, they would not need a victim's testimony to press charges. The wording for the provision was modelled after the wording for the provision on prostitution.

For the purposes of subsection (1), a person who is not exploited and who lives with or is habitually in the company of or harbours a person who is exploited shall, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, be deemed to be exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of that person.

This point has already passed the constitutional hurdle in regard to the provisions on procurement. I do not think there will be any constitutional problems in this respect, given that this was already tested regarding prostitution. I submitted it to the Barreau du Québec and have not heard anything back. We were very careful about proposing this.

The victims groups with whom I met were very happy with this provision because it removes the burden of proof from victims.

There is another very important point that will address what is reported to us from the field. This will be very beneficial financially of course, but also in terms of arrests, charges and denunciatory sentences. By introducing subsection 462.37(2.02), we are adding the offences of procuring and human trafficking to the existing section of the Criminal Code, which deals with offences committed by criminal gangs liable to sentences of five years or more, as well as all offences under section 5, 6 or 7 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

This section already exists in the Criminal Code. We are just adding the offence of procuring and human trafficking so that people charged with human trafficking can have the proceeds of their crimes confiscated. This is not done now, unfortunately, and these people continue to enjoy the proceeds of their crimes. When someone is charged with and found guilty of trafficking, he will have to prove that the millions of dollars he has in the bank, his big houses and cars, are not proceeds of crime.

Private Members' Business

Finally, our changes to section 7 of the Criminal Code are based on what the police told us, especially the child sexual abuse unit. They said Canadians could go abroad, commit human trafficking offences there, and return to Canada with impunity. They could not be prosecuted. I was told about three Canadians who went to Somalia and opened an orphanage, where they trafficked several children. They returned to Canada with impunity, without being charged with anything at all, because unfortunately there is still no provision in the Criminal Code providing that a Canadian or permanent resident, within the meaning of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, who commits such an act abroad can be charged as if he had committed the act in Canada.

We have worked very hard on this bill, which was supported by a number of groups and various police forces we consulted. I did not consult them all, of course.

• (1745)

I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill. Not only will it give police and prosecutors the tools they need to do their jobs, but it will also do justice to the victims, who will no longer have to bring a case before the courts. They can be better protected. Finally, the bill will make it possible to confiscate property.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand here and talk about this issue. It is one that has concerned me for some time, and certainly for the past five years.

I congratulate my colleague on her speech, as I support this. The identification and definition of exploitation is certainly a serious issue around the world that we struggle with in many jurisdictions. It is nice to see that we have legislation, albeit a private member's bill, that brings us in line with what many jurisdictions around the world are doing, especially in Europe right now as they look at that.

Some of the details around section 279 also concern me, but I do believe that in this particular situation we need to provide the identification of this for the international and domestic victims of human trafficking. The member pointed out, quite rightly in her speech, just how severe this is and how it ranks third to weapons and drugs.

I like this because now we can have a wholesome debate about the rehabilitation and identification of these victims so they can get the help they need. Specifically, we had a debate before regarding punishment, and I congratulate my colleague in the government for doing that at the very beginning.

I do want to add to this debate by talking about the social concerns. My opinion is that we need to open up a discussion with provinces for the services provided to victims.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is quite right. Very few resources are being made available to victims of trafficking. Nearly 80% of trafficking victims are used for purposes of prostitution. There are a few services, but not a great many, given the extent of the problem. Furthermore there are no services for women who want to get out of prostitution and out of the exploitation of which they are the victims.

In the course of my career, I have met with many female prostitutes and minors who were victims of exploitation. What is very clear to me is that when they want to leave that life, they do not have the necessary resources to return to work or school, for example, or to receive psychological assistance. When a girl forced into sexual exploitation at age 12, 13 or 14 gets to be 18 or 19, it is difficult for her to leave that life behind when she has nothing.

There is a huge lack of resources, and we have to address this: the hon. member is perfectly correct.

• (1750)

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for bringing this issue to the House of Commons again.

I listened very carefully to what my colleague had to say. We did share some time on the status of women committee on this issue. I appreciated her input at that time.

I was disappointed when my own bill came forward that the Bloc as a whole voted against it. I do feel very strongly that there was some pressure on the member not to participate, but I do not know that for sure.

This is a horrendous issue in this country right now. In reference to the man who was the first criminal convicted of human trafficking, his name was Imani Nakpamgi. I worked with his victim very closely. She was 15.5 years old when she was initially trafficked.

What would the member consider the most important thing for these victims to be able to recuperate?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I know that human trafficking is a major concern for her as well. I would like to explain that the Bloc Québécois voted against her bill not because it is against the principle of increased sentencing, but because it does not agree with minimum sentencing.

I have spoken with certain police officers and asked them whether minimum sentences worked. They told me they did not. When it is time for plea bargaining, the lawyers do everything they can to get charges that carry minimum sentences dropped. Unfortunately, this serves no purpose and prevents the judge from making an informed decision.

What I can say to my colleague is that this bill is a good bill. I hope that she is not overwhelmed by her disappointment and that she is able to move forward with this bill.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on private member's Bill C-612, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons). I would like to thank the member for Ahuntsic for this initiative, which seeks to deter people from committing these crimes and to ensure that those who profit from them are punished accordingly. I believe that we all agree that these objectives deserve our support. In fact, thanks to the hard work of the Conservative member for Kildonan—St. Paul, there is now a minimum sentence in the Criminal Code for those found guilty of trafficking in persons under the age of 18, an initiative that was supported by all opposition parties except the Bloc. It is a shame for this party and a sad day for Quebec's children.

Although we support the good intentions of the bill, I believe that, in its current form, it could prevent the desired objectives from being attained. I will spend my time pointing out some of the problems with the bill, but I will do so in a constructive manner and in the hope of making it as sound and effective as possible. In my opinion, changes need to be made to fill in the gaps in current criminal law and provide sufficient legal clarification so that such changes are useful to police and prosecutors. In the end, it would allow the member to attain her objectives of deterring and punishing this crime.

Human trafficking is a problem that comes up often. It garners a lot of attention from the public, media, police and legislators across the country and around the world. I believe that this interest stems from the fundamental human concern we have for one another and from the fact that we all recognize that no one should be treated as merchandise that can be bought and sold for profit. It is a form of modern slavery. Despite the attention that this crime garners, we are only just starting to comprehend the nature and scope of this crime in Canada and abroad. We do know, however, that women and children are disproportionately victimized by this crime.

According to the United Nations, in 2009, 66% and 13% of the victims were women and girls, respectively, compared with 12% for men and 9% for boys. The United Nations estimates that more than 700,000 people are victims of human trafficking every year. And this crime is clearly very profitable. The United Nations estimates that this crime nets nearly \$32 billion each year for the offenders.

Police investigations and prosecutions in Canada provide us with useful, albeit incomplete, information about human trafficking. These cases have demonstrated that the majority of victims were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. But there are also cases of trafficking for forced labour. Most of the victims were women and the majority of these human trafficking cases took place here in Canada.

In December 2010, RCMP statistics showed that there were at least 36 cases involving human trafficking before our courts. That is an encouraging number because it shows that the criminal justice system is becoming more comfortable with the relatively new offences involving human trafficking.

In light of this, we must ensure that we do not inadvertently make our laws less effective. I am concerned that certain proposals that have been put forth could do just that. And in that context, I would like to speak to the content of this bill.

First, it would grant the extraterritorial power to bring legal action in Canada against Canadians or permanent residents who commit offences related to adult trafficking abroad. This seems logical to me and I know that extending jurisdiction in this matter is encouraged under the relevant international law. In fact, other countries have taken measures in this regard, including the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Australia.

● (1755)

I believe—and I am asking members to think about this—that this type of amendment should have been extended to offences involving the trafficking of children, which fall under section 279.011 of the Criminal Code. This offence was enacted last year further to private member's Bill C-268, which was introduced and sponsored by the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul. The addition of a human trafficking offence involving both adults and children would allow us to ensure that Canadian laws and, of course, this bill, are consistent, as well as to take legal action no matter what the age of the victim.

I also support the bill's proposal to the effect that human trafficking offences should result in the reversal of the onus of proof in cases related to proceeds of crime. The existing regime limits this possibility to serious offences involving organized crime and other serious drug offences that are directly related to organized crime. We know that members of organized crime groups also participate in human trafficking. This amendment would target financial incentives and make this type of crime less appealing to criminal organizations.

This bill also proposes a “presumption” that appears to be an attempt to make prosecution easier. In cases involving adults, this presumption would require the court to find that the accused is exploiting a victim if he lives with a person who is exploited or is habitually in the company of or harbours a person who is exploited.

Presumptions help prosecutors prove an element of the offence by establishing a fact. However, as it is written, I do not think that the presumption achieves its goal. That said, I think that the goal could be achieved if the proposal could be amended to ensure that it produces the desired results and that it is compatible with the existing presumptions in the Criminal Code. I urge hon. members to think about the need to make such amendments to the bill.

Furthermore, I am concerned about a number of amendments this bill proposes to section 212 of the Criminal Code, which is commonly known as the procuring provision. Two amendments are proposed. The first would require that individuals found guilty of this offence must serve their sentences consecutively to any other punishment they have received. The second would apply reverse onus to this offence in cases related to the proceeds of crime.

Private Members' Business

As the House surely knows, our government is currently defending the constitutional validity of certain provisions regarding prostitution. Therefore, I think it would be ill-advised to make more amendments to these provisions before a ruling is made.

I would like to tell the member that I am absolutely willing to work with her to strengthen this bill in order to hold traffickers responsible for their horrendous crimes.

However, I am outraged that the Bloc has introduced this bill, since it knows that it wants to defeat the government. This is a case of opportunism. That party is trying to pretend that it defends victims, when all it does is defend the rights of criminals.

● (1800)

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Ahuntsic for introducing this bill, for having put so much effort into creating it and for introducing it here in the House. I am very proud to have the opportunity to speak to this bill during the first hour of debate at second reading.

On behalf of my party, I would like to say right away that I intend to recommend to my caucus that we support this bill when the time comes to vote to send it to committee, with the hope that there is one some day. If this bill dies on the order paper, I hope it will be introduced again in a future Parliament, so that it may be revived and find its way before a standing committee of the House.

I will not repeat the bill's objective. I believe the hon. member for Ahuntsic described it very well, as did the parliamentary secretary, although he concluded his speech with an absurd remark. Until then, I found his speech rather interesting. I thought the points he raised in such a thoughtful, serious manner were interesting and worthy of our attention. It is unfortunate that he chose to resort to petty politics and to attack the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc has a role to play, just like the Liberal Party of Canada or the NDP, in ensuring democracy in the House of Commons, in the Parliament of Canada. Our Parliament is the pillar of democracy in Canada.

We have watched this government, this Conservative government, attack our institutions one by one, finally arriving at the last bastion, Parliament. The Conservatives arrived at its doors and attacked with contempt of Parliament. I do not wish to stray too far from my speech, but I believe this is pertinent.

It is regrettable that we have a Conservative government that has not developed a national strategy on human trafficking in Canada. It is regrettable that they have left it up to private members to try to amend the Criminal Code, address its shortcomings with respect to human trafficking in Canada and trafficking committed elsewhere by Canadian citizens or permanent residents, and ensure that perpetrators are charged, brought before the courts, prosecuted and held accountable.

It is regrettable that this Conservative government has not taken this issue seriously and that it has left it up to private members to try to address the shortcomings of our system.

I congratulate the Bloc member for Ahuntsic. I would also like to say well done to the Conservative member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

[English]

The member made an attempt as well to try to close the gaps in Canada's legislation dealing with human trafficking. It is simply unacceptable that a government, like the Conservative regime, does not take this issue seriously. It does not see it as a priority to be dealt with in order to ensure that our legislative framework, our laws, deal with this issue with the gravity, the seriousness, and the severity with which it should be dealt with. The government has left it to simple MPs to attempt, through the laborious process of private members' bills, to fix the problem.

● (1805)

I find it shameful that the government has done nothing on this. I find it shameful that its own member had to come up with her own national strategy on human trafficking because her own government did not act and still has yet to act on the issue. It is shameful.

There are a number of issues which are of concern, such as the issue of the reversal of the presumption of innocence. I understand provisions already exist in the Criminal Code for other criminal offences on reversal. We look forward to examining this in committee should it get to committee, which is quite doubtful.

We also have a concern that by stipulating the sentences would be served consecutively to any other sentence removes judicial discretion. We prefer to see judicial discretion and, if necessary, if we find judges are not exercising their discretion in a manner that achieves the objective intended by the law, then we amend and put in criteria that the judge has to take into account in exercising his or her discretion.

Therefore, we would afford the opportunity to look at that. We are looking forward to hearing from expert witnesses, including the Quebec Bar Association.

I would like to give a bit of history on the Liberal position.

[Translation]

In 2009, in Volume III of the Pink Book, the Liberal women's caucus recommended that a national strategy be developed in partnership with the provinces and territories to prevent the trafficking of girls and women. As recommended by the Liberal women's caucus, this strategy would incorporate measures related to prevention, protection and justice, and increased funding to support victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women studied the issue of human trafficking in 2007. It released a report entitled, *Turning Outrage into Action to Address Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation*, which could also form the basis for a comprehensive national action plan.

It is simply unacceptable that, under the Conservative government, Canada is one of the few countries that does not have a national strategy to prevent human trafficking.

Private Members' Business

●(1810)

[English]

The Liberal Party has been calling on the Conservative government to act for the past three years. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women has been asking for that as have the other opposition parties. I know the Conservative member for Kildonan—St. Paul has also been calling for that.

Should this Parliament continue, which I doubt, and a vote happens at second reading, I call on each and every member of the House to support sending the bill to committee.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues from the Liberals and Conservatives in congratulating the member for Ahuntsic for her work on the bill.

It is obvious from the speeches we have heard so far that all parties are aware of the serious nature of human trafficking. I was just speaking to my colleague and we were wondering when we began to identify this.

From my own practice as a lawyer in the Windsor area, we began identifying it as early as the mid-eighties, seeing the biker gangs, in particular, trafficking women, ostensibly as exotic dancers, but often times doubling as prostitutes. Those women had very little control over their lives, all of it being controlled and enforced by the bikers. That was both domestic and international, because we had them moving back and forth between Windsor and Detroit. We have known about this for quite some time.

I want to echo the comments by my colleague from the Liberal Party that it really is a shame. We have seen the quite excellent work and the passion that the Conservative member for Kildonan—St. Paul has brought to this issue, both in the House and on the Hill and in the country as a whole. However, she has not had basically any support from her own government or party.

The bill that went through under her name earlier last year was a step forward. It addressed one part of this problem. Without taking, in any way, away from the work that was done, it was a relatively small part of the overall problem. It addressed it and it was a way of dealing with it. However, we need a much more comprehensive response to this, both in changes to the Criminal Code, some of which were seen in the bill presented by the Bloc member, but much more than that. In my own opinion, we also need much more practical resources being put into this battle. By that I mean greater police forces to do the investigation and additional prosecutors specifically trained in dealing with this issue.

It is a slavery issue. There is no other word to accurately describe it in the common vernacular. This is slavery. Violence is used on a regular basis, both physical, direct to the victims, and threats to them and their families. Quite significant resources need to be put into play above and beyond the amendments we need to the Criminal Code to make it easier for our prosecutors, in particular, to prosecute these offences, especially going after the gangs.

Because I do not want to take up a lot of time today, I will address the bill itself. Generally the NDP would be supportive of this. Even though it is a private member's bill, I can say that on behalf of my party. I do have a couple of reservations about it. I think the issue

around the presumption, around the exploitation issue, is open to a challenge. Because of the way it is worded, which is quite excellently, I hope we would survive that charter challenge. The challenge would be around whether it were specific enough to be clear what the offence would be. It will be interesting to see if we can get that through. I am optimistic we will, but I would expect we will have a challenge.

The other one that may be a greater problem in terms of its consequences, its usefulness, is the issue of how we would treat consecutive sentencing. The Supreme Court of Canada has been very hard, as have most of our courts across the country, on enforcing the concept of proportionality in sentencing. Even though we would say that a person committed this offence, assaulted the victim and also exploited her, because it is almost always a women that is being exploited, which would be two different charges, we would give the person a certain length of sentence for the assault but the exploitation would be consecutive.

●(1815)

Even if we do that, I am not convinced the outcome would be much longer sentences. The courts would refer to the proportionality principle, which would say that in total they want the person to be in custody for this length of time. Therefore, the two sentences in total, even though they are consecutive, may not be any longer than the first one would have been with the second one served concurrently. I am not sure we will see much change.

I will finish with again congratulating the member for having done this work. I just wish the government would take a holistic view to this problem and get at it both in terms of amendments to the code through this chamber and also at the street level where we need more police and more prosecutors to really get at this effectively.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ahuntsic introduced Bill C-612 after holding a number of consultations and having the legal rules explained—since this is not her primary profession—that need to be respected in order for her proposed improvements to have a legal impact and to make clarifications. When a private member's bill is introduced it is not enough to have good intentions. Such bills need to be translated into legal language that will have consequences.

That is where another hon. member went wrong. Her definition of human trafficking was so broad that it ended up only covering exploitation. It was clear that the Supreme Court would have rejected it because of the minimum sentence. It would have used the same reasoning as it did in the Smith case in the 1980s. In that famous case, the Supreme Court studied the minimum sentence of seven years in prison for importing narcotics. It found that the definition was so broad that even the smallest amount of imported marijuana would be punishable by a minimum sentence of seven years in prison. It found that to be unreasonable and declared that minimum sentence unconstitutional; it has not be reinstated since.

Private Members' Business

If a minimum sentence were established for simple exploitation, without regard for the duration, the type of exploitation or its extent, the Supreme Court would uphold the same reasoning. I have defended it without using authority as argument. Here we should naturally be concerned with applying the charter, which outlines the principles of justice we should all share. The charter in this case has made Parliament a little irresponsible. In this case, the changes are useful and it is clear that they were made following consultations with people who apply them. They fill the gaps that were hindering enforcement.

The first change has to do with jurisdiction. It is rare for Canada to claim, as France does, to oversee the conduct of all individuals on Earth. France claims that, no matter where an offence is committed, France has jurisdiction over it. Canada has applied its jurisdiction in a certain number of cases that were perfectly justified and it did so again recently. Canada assumes extraterritorial jurisdiction for crimes having to do with sexual exploitation abroad. That is the first amendment being proposed in clause 1.

Next, consecutive sentences are added. I would like to respond to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine by saying that, even when consecutive sentences are imposed, judges retain their discretion. Consecutive sentences have a certain amount of importance in this situation. Very often, the pimp lives with his victims. He sexually abuses them and changes victims regularly. His victims will not file a complaint about their situation. Nevertheless, the police can establish that the person is being exploited. Very often, the pimp who is living with the victim is the one who is exploiting her. A presumption is therefore created.

● (1820)

The presumption is created based on observations made by police.

I would like to come back to the consecutive nature of the sentence. The judge retains his or her discretion. Most of the time, the pimp leads a life of crime and has committed many other offences. When he is arrested, he will likely face a number of charges. Sexual exploitation of women, particularly if they are also young, is an offence that must be clearly indicated and he must understand that a specific sentence will be imposed for that offence. The sentence for this offence should not be buried under the other sentences he may have to serve, for example, if he has stolen goods in his home, if he is in possession of drugs, if he is in possession of a large quantity of drugs, if he has been trafficking in drugs. No. He must understand that the sentence being imposed on him is for the sexual exploitation of the woman. This does not take away from judges' discretion, but requires them to specify which punishments are for which crimes in a given case.

Indeed, one of the major shortcomings we found with Bill C-268, which was introduced by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, is that the definition of “exploitation” was too broad. I would like to remind the members of the wording of that bill:

Every person who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation is guilty of an indictable offence...

I took the time to read the entire clause, but the most important word is “or” because it indicates that any one of these acts is a crime.

It does not say “recruits, transports, and transfers, and receives, and holds, and conceals”. It could be any of those.

The word “harbours” is in there. We know that organized crime is often behind such exploitation, and they have groups of prostitutes. The girls are taken quite young and are sometimes taken from a foreign country. Consider a girl who starts at the age of 17 and a half. After eight months, when she is 18 and has an apartment, she is told that another girl will arrive the following day and they ask her to take this new girl in until she can find her own place. Or maybe they ask if she can stay there and the two could become friends. So the girl who is 18 years and 2 months old is harbouring the girl who is 17 years and 6 months old for the purpose of exploitation and for the organization. Does that warrant a five-year prison term? No judge would want to hand down that sentence. In all the cases the member who introduced this bill was worried about, I am sure that the judges would have given a five-year sentence, but there are clearly exceptions to be made.

There is another issue. It is clear that each of these acts—recruiting, transporting, transferring—must be for the purpose of exploiting a person. But what is exploitation? It is defined in the act, a bit further down:

...a person exploits another person if they

a) cause them to provide, or offer to provide, labour or a service by engaging in conduct that, in all the circumstances, could reasonably be expected to cause the other person to believe that their safety or the safety of a person known to them would be threatened if they failed to provide, or offer to provide, the labour or service.

In short, I would say that that is a form of intimidation.

● (1825)

But this is a matter of providing labour. For how long? Sometimes, when I go into a convenience store, I get the impression that some young people are very young. How did they come to be working at 11 p.m. when they are only 15 or 16 years old? Did someone make them feel that they should do it? The definition was too broad and that is why, I am sure, it will be declared contrary to the charter.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that I only have two or three minutes left, so I am going to have to compress my comments.

I first want to congratulate the member for her bill, Bill C-612. I think it is a very important bill. I want to also recognize the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for her work with her bill.

Just so that the members know, human trafficking is the third largest grossing sector of organized crime, after drugs and arms. Therefore, it is very important that the member has dealt with some specific changes to the Criminal Code. However, the one that I would like to point out that impresses me the most is the fact that the bill would allow for the confiscation of any proceeds of crime related to the commission of the offences of procuring and trafficking in persons.

Adjournment Debate

That is important. We see this happening in my home province of Manitoba as well, where we passed legislation that confiscates the proceeds of crime. If we can seize the houses, the bank accounts, and the money from criminals who are dealing in drugs and dealing in this type of activity, or any criminal activity, we can take away their reason for doing the activity in the first place. That is a very important part of the process here.

I believe I will have more time in the second hour, so I will deal with other issues then. However, just in the off chance that I am not returned in the election, I want to say that I have enjoyed working with all 308 members in the House here and I want to wish all 308 the best in all their future endeavours.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have eight minutes should this bill come back for the second hour of debate.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 is deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday I asked the government to commit to replacing the Champlain Bridge in Montreal. All I received by way of an answer from the minister of state was empty words, coming from a government that has washed its hands of its responsibility for the busiest bridge in Canada.

The Champlain Bridge is a critical artery, not only for my constituents, but also for all the people on the island of Montreal, in Quebec, and even in eastern Canada. It is a highway upon which a major part of our economy depends.

We know that the bridge is reaching the end of its useful life and we also know that a feasibility study will soon be conducted. The federal and provincial governments will be advised of the results and then the recommendations will be made public. The government must understand the importance of making the Champlain Bridge a priority. I know that the pitiful state of the bridge concerns everyone who uses it and that South Shore residents are tired of waiting for a permanent solution. We do not want a band-aid solution like the one proposed to us by a candidate and senator on March 18.

[*English*]

I was profoundly shocked by the cynicism and opportunism of the current government with regard to the serious problems that threaten our Champlain Bridge.

We can no longer believe that a few million dollars, spread out over three years, will be sufficient to address the fundamental issue in a sustainable manner. The government must take extraordinary

efforts right away to find a real long-term solution by replacing the current structure of the Champlain Bridge.

For as long as studies have been piling up over the past few years, the government had an obligation to find a solution, not an oversized band-aid.

I am flabbergasted that the government has refused to make a firm commitment regarding the necessary federal investments to ensure the sustainability of the Champlain Bridge.

[*Translation*]

I would remind the House that in budget 2009, the government announced funding to repair the bridge and said that the work would extend the life of the bridge by 20 to 25 years. In February 2011, the current Minister of Transport told *La Presse* that the bridge would be good for the next 10 years. In barely two years, the bridge's lifespan was reduced by 10 to 15 years.

Such scorn is worrisome, and the government's refusal to give us all the pertinent information is even more worrisome. Why does the government not consider the Champlain Bridge a priority infrastructure project? I am astonished that this regime refuses to make a firm commitment regarding the federal investments needed to ensure the durability, and more importantly, the safety of the Champlain Bridge.

Why does this government not regard the bridge as the top priority for the Montreal region? What is it waiting for to ask Transport Canada and Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated to come up with an appropriate, long-term solution as soon as possible?

I know that the results of the other feasibility study will be released shortly, but if we rely on the timeline the government has given us, we are running out of time to find a solution. Furthermore, my constituents are sick and tired of hearing about more studies. How many have been done? The time to act is now. We need a new bridge, and construction must begin as soon as possible.

[*English*]

If the government is serious about being transparent on this issue, why does the minister refuse to table the diagnostic tests conducted on the bridge? At least we would be able to have a clearer picture of the problems. Will it take a major catastrophe for the government to act and finally make the replacement of the Champlain Bridge a real priority?

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government is taking the issue very seriously, which is something different to what the past Liberal government did.

The member is a member of a Liberal Party and I would suggest that she could possibly have had more influence with that particular party when it was in government. It could have done something to solve this. It is like many things. We came across many Liberal government issues that just were not done. This is no different.

Adjournment Debate

We recognize that the Champlain Bridge is actually the busiest bridge in Canada, as each year some 60 million vehicles pass over it. It is actually used to carry approximately \$20 billion worth of trade. We do indeed recognize the importance of that bridge to the economy and to the economic conditions of the area. As a result of that, we have been taking very serious steps on this, something different from what was done by the previous Liberal government. We understand that the Champlain Bridge is absolutely essential to the Montreal area and, of course, its commuters. It is an integral part of what the continental gateway corridor speaks to.

We in this government understand that it is very important to invest in all corridors across this country, which is why we have seen a huge investment in the Windsor Bridge in the Windsor-Detroit corridor. We recognize that the goods that come from Montreal do not just stop outside of Montreal. Many of them actually go down to the United States and have to go through the Windsor corridor as well.

It is necessary to look at this as a system of corridors, which is what we are doing. We are making the best decisions for Canada and for Quebec in relation to this particular bridge. This bridge was built in 1962 and it is, quite frankly, reaching the end of its life expectancy. It now carries more traffic, in particular more commercial traffic, which is so good for the economy there, than it was ever envisioned for it to do when it was first built.

All aging infrastructure requires repair. It is no different for this particular bridge, and the Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated understand that. It is the owner and operator of those bridges. It takes these needs very seriously. There are regular inspections of the bridge by independent private sector engineers and their observations and recommendations are used to create the work plan for the repairs of the bridge.

There is no political interference in this. It is all about the safety, security and good commerce that is necessary to keep the people of Montreal content and happy and to keep them flowing.

As this has connectivity to other parts of Canada, it is very important that we work on this systematically and with the best approach, keeping in mind what is best for the people of Montreal.

The Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated has actually implemented these carefully designed work plans to ensure that this absolutely crucial and vital asset remains operational and safe for all its users.

In 2009, this government, the federal government, provided funding of \$212 million over 10 years. There is nothing insubstantial about that. In fact, it is quite a bit more than was allocated by the previous Liberal government, and certainly for the implementation of a major repair program that is absolutely crucial and necessary. It will actually result in the strengthening of many components of the bridge and those things that are identified as necessary by those independent contractors and engineers.

The program has been in place for two years and the Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated has assured us that it is very successful and is continuing to contribute to the safety of the bridge, the ongoing conditions of the bridge and the success of the use of that bridge.

Indeed we are acting and we are doing what is necessary to keep traffic flowing and to keep people safe.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is trying to accuse us of doing nothing about the bridge. The entire span of the bridge was almost completely refurbished in 1999, 2000 and 2001, causing a fair number of headaches and nightmares for people travelling between Montreal and the south shore. It is a bit rich to accuse us of having done nothing when we were in power.

The work was done. The bridge has had much heavier use than it was built for. This is one of the reasons why a number of studies have been carried out in past years. I believe we have arrived at the point where we have the studies. We have everything we need to set out a long-term plan. I believe that everyone who has studied the issue agrees that a new bridge should be built.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, clearly the people in Quebec understand that when the Liberals were in power they did absolutely nothing for them. They lined their own pockets and did what was necessary to help their friends remain happy.

Hon. Wayne Easter: That is not true and you know it. There are four Conservatives charged right now.

Mr. Brian Jean: People can listen to the member for Malpeque across the way but it does not change anything.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie had a question and it is important that we let the parliamentary secretary answer that question.

● (1840)

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we know that when the Liberals came to power they did absolutely nothing for the people of Quebec except line the pockets of their friends and continue to try to keep them in power and in the organization.

We know the Bloc members can do absolutely nothing for the people of Quebec ever because they will never form government. All they can do is be obscene on the other side of the House and vote against everything.

It is only the members of Parliament from the Conservative Party who deliver the goods to Quebecers. We will ensure that the Champlain Bridge is safe, and if there is a need to build a new bridge we will do that.

We will keep Canadians safe and secure, we will keep the people of Quebec happy and content and we will do it all in fairness.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December 3, I put a question to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on the crisis facing the hog and pork sector. The question arose on behalf of 900 beef and hog farmers who attended a conference in Stratford, Ontario, as well as the rest of the hog and beef producers across Canada who made it clear that the government's safety nets were not working.

As usual, the government responded by claiming, "What crisis?".

Adjournment Debate

Here are some of the facts that I am sure the government will deny.

I will begin with a quote from page six of the main estimates just tabled a couple of weeks ago. It reads:

The Main Estimates.... contains detailed information on the spending plans and authorities being sought by each department and agency.

According to the President of the Treasury Board, the main estimates outline more than \$10 billion in reduced spending for this year. He apparently was proud of that statement.

How he could be proud is a wonder to me. Cutting programs that matter to people, to communities and to primary industries in order to give tax breaks to the wealthiest corporations in Canada, to the oil and gas industry in particular, buy untendered jets and pay for U.S.-style prisons is just unbelievable to me when our primary industries are in difficulty.

For Agriculture Canada, the government has tabled a plan that will implement, and I am reading from page 47 of the main estimates, "a decrease in net spending of \$418.6 million".

While federal programs basically forced farmers to take on more debt, \$64 billion in fact, the federal Conservative government is cutting back on farm spending so it can increase tax breaks for the most wealthy in the country. That is just unacceptable.

For farmers on Prince Edward Island, the Conservatives have clearly failed them. The \$418 million of cuts in the estimates, cuts to business risk management for our hog and beef farmers, who are the core of our agricultural industry, is very serious. Does the government just not care about primary producers?

For consumers on Prince Edward Island and in the rest of Canada, there were cuts of 35%, \$53 million, for food safety and biosecurity risk management, programs that assisted farmers in developing the best on-farm food safety programs possible. Does the government not care about food safety?

When the government should be investing more in public research, innovation and value-added visioning for the future, the Conservative regime cut science, innovation and adaptation by some 38%, \$150 million. The government should be responding with more research, not less.

For the primary industry of fisheries on Prince Edward Island, the estimates for small craft harbours were cut 44% and the budget slashes DFO by an additional \$84.8 million over three years. Does the government just not care about the primary industries?

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this member for some period of time now, almost seven years, and I can say with assurance that he is the king of sucking and blowing. He says that he is going to stand up for farmers, but when it comes time to vote, he votes against them.

Maybe the people of P.E.I. should ask themselves, why is this poster child for the Canadian Wheat Board? It does not affect P.E.I. farmers; it affects Canadian farmers. Why he does he want to keep the Canadian Wheat Board? He does not listen to farmers. He only listens to himself and uses political opportunism when he can. He

wants an election that nobody wants in Canada. Why? It is political opportunism.

Unlike the Liberal Party and its reckless coalition, our Conservative government will always put farmers first. That is why we are represented in almost every rural seat across this country, not just in the last election or the one before but the election before that and some time before that. Clearly, budget 2011 once again continues to promote our commitment to Canadian agriculture. The member should actually take some time to read it.

Our Conservative government has, for instance, allocated \$50 million over two years to promote research and innovation through the agri-food innovation fund. This investment would help farmers become even more competitive on the world stage, which is important and we recognize that importance. Why will the member for Malpeque and his party not support this budget? It is because they do not stand up for farmers. They only stand up for themselves.

Clearly, over the next two years we have allocated \$24 million to help control disease in the hog industry, so that it can respond quickly to ensure animal health. We have also allocated \$17 million to fight plum pox that is affecting fruit trees in the Niagara region. Both of these investments clearly build upon the government's commitment to fight disease in the area of animal and plant health. Why will the member for Malpeque and his party not support this budget? It is clear the Liberals are only out for themselves. It is political opportunism. They are not interested in supporting the people of Canada or standing up for farmers. It is this Conservative government that does that.

Our Conservative government has actually allocated \$100 million to ensure that the food Canadians eat is safe. What could be more important to Canadians? Nothing. The investment would go toward enhancing food safety by ensuring our inspectors have the tools and training to get the job done.

This funding actually builds upon previous announcements and measures that our Conservative government, not the previous Liberal government but our Conservative government, has taken with regard to food safety. It was not done by the previous Liberal government. The people of P.E.I. should ask themselves why they sent somebody here who stands up against farmers.

That is my question for him. Why is it that every chance he has to stand up, represent farmers, support this government, and its great initiatives for farmers across this country he stands in his place against farmers? He should be ashamed of himself.

Adjournment Debate

•(1845)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I just have to ask, why does the parliamentary secretary provide such misinformation? He is right in terms of \$50 million being added in the budget for innovation, but what he fails to tell us is that on page 46 of the estimates, where the cuts really are, under “Science, Innovation and Adoption” there was \$150 million cut. Really, there is \$125 million less in science and innovation for next year. The parliamentary secretary spins a line, but we should look at the facts in the documents.

To make matters worse as to where the government is really at, the budget even cuts regional development in Prince Edward Island and Atlantic Canada. It is slashing the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency by \$31.9 million over three years. Does the Prime Minister just not care about Prince Edward Islanders and Atlantic Canadians?

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the humour of my friend opposite, but, frankly, let us talk about some of the facts. We know we have added 538 net new inspectors. That means new from the time the Liberals governed. That is 538 more people to make sure that Canada's food supply remains safe.

Do not listen to me. Let us talk about the executive director of the Grain Growers of Canada, who stated that the grain growers are pleased with the announcement of a \$50 million fund for research and innovation.

The Canadian Pork Council stated:

The Canadian pork industry is grateful that the government has recognized the importance of animal health...The funding extension...[will allow] the industry to continue to improve its capacity to react swiftly to emerging animal health challenges.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture and others all say the same thing. They support our governments initiatives and this budget, but the Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition is going to take down the government even though industry experts have said we are doing the right thing.

•(1850)

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members of the House are well aware of how like a vampire the government, through its ever-increasing fees, is sucking the life out of Canada's aviation industry.

According to a report released last year by the National Airlines Council of Canada, these extra costs can comprise between 30% and 70% of total ticket prices. In response, Canadians who live near the U.S. border are heading south to fly out of airports like Buffalo, New York and Seattle, Washington.

In desperation, Vancouver International Airport, for example, has frozen its landing and terminal fees until 2015. Toronto's Pearson International Airport has cut its airport improvement fee from \$8 a flight to \$4.

Part of the problem is the excessive airport rents charged by the federal government. In 2007, the actual airport rent collected by the federal government at Canadian airports totalled \$285 million. The elimination of these rents would result in a significant increase in economic activity. According to the Canadian Airports Council, this

economic activity would result in passenger traffic growth of over 590,000 passengers annually. This would increase airfare and traveller expenditures by \$304 million.

This increase in passenger traffic would create 2,700 direct person years of employment, which would mean \$90 million in direct wages, resulting in an additional \$140 million in direct GDP and would create \$300 million in direct economic input. That sounds pretty good, does it not? This increased activity would mean an additional \$50 million in tax revenues. That is one thing that we can do.

There is another. There is an air travellers security charge, which the government just increased. For domestic itineraries, the ATSC is \$7.12 one-way to a maximum charge of \$14.25. For transboundary itineraries, the ATSC is \$8 one-way to a maximum charge of \$16.

Unlike any other form of transportation, air passengers must pay for their own security in Canada. As the National Airlines Council told the transport committee, aviation security is a public good, an essential service in Canada and should not be solely the financial responsibility of Canadian air passengers.

Then there are numerous air and navigation service charges from NAV Canada. They just add up and add up. Annual charges for small aircraft, daily charges for propeller aircraft, en route charge, terminal service charge, en route facilities and services charge, it just goes on and on. We just bleed these airports to death.

We are still not done with the fees and taxes the government charges. There is a federal excise tax on jet fuel. There is the GST, which further increases the base fares for passengers. The GST is imposed on both domestic and transborder flights.

Added to this is the increased costs the government caused when it eliminated funding for providing police protection at airports. The government legislates police protection, but will not help cover the costs.

Though the government does not like science, the facts do not lie. Canadian airports are underperforming compared to their international counterparts.

A report to the National Airlines Council by Dr. Fred Lazar found:

Toronto has fewer passengers per population than all of its comparators with the exception of Barcelona and Philadelphia, and neither of these is the major hub for their respective hub airlines. Toronto lags significantly behind Atlanta, Dallas, Houston and Miami, even though geographically it is better located to connect both Europe and Asia to North and South America.

Vancouver underperforms all other similar airports and neither of these two U.S. cities that are similar in—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Four minutes are up.

I will turn the floor over to the parliamentary secretary.

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought I had seen it all and maybe it is the season, but I see now NDP members standing up for private industry, competitiveness and open borders. I thought I had seen it all in this place, but it must just be because the NDP plans to take down our government tomorrow, and they plan to challenge the government on the basis of the great work that the Prime Minister has done in regard to building the economy and protecting us from the economic global recession. I am not sure how and why the member has positioned himself for this. It just does not make sense and I think most people who listen understand that.

However, let us talk a bit about Canada and why it is different from the United States because the member suggested that we should compare it to the United States. First of all, we are a bigger country and we have about 10% of the population, so we have one of the greatest, most diverse and lowest density of populations in the world. Clearly, it is a different scenario for us than it is for the United States and I wish the member would understand that. Part of Canada's context is our extended border with our southern neighbour. Certainly most countries do not have this particular implication in their economies, but we do have that.

The close proximity of many of the American airports is of course a situation. The United States has 10 times the population and a little less than a third less land mass. So certainly this is a situation that is troubling, but at the same time it is good for consumers. We stand up for Canadian consumers because we understand that they want choice and they also want to have the opportunity of not having taxes levied for something they are not utilizing.

We have to look at that in context, because comparison of the Canadian air transportation system to that of the United States is very difficult indeed, given the various factors at play. As I said, the United States is 10 times larger with a passenger base almost 13 times larger than that of Canada. Unlike Canada, the United States also has an extensive network of low cost carriers that specialize in greatly discounted domestic airfares for United States leisure destinations. We do not have that same system here, at least not to the same extent.

The Canadian air transportation system subscribes to the user-pay principle, and I think most taxpayers do too. The United States does not adhere to that as much as Canada, believe it or not. So we are proud of that and most Canadian taxpayers want that. All elements of the Canadian transportation industry, including air carriers, airports and NAV Canada are operated by private entities. These are independent of the government. That ensures that they are not only trimmed and doing the right job on the basis of the economy and what they have allocated to them, but they are also independent of public interference. I certainly hope the member opposite is not suggesting that now we need to interfere in NAV Canada, airports and air carriers. That would be the wrong message to send to our economy while it is doing so well.

Like any private entities, these entities seek to recoup their costs through various fees and charges. Our government is committed to helping maintain competitiveness in the Canadian aviation industry. We have one of the most competitive industries in the world and one

of the most competitive airport systems in the world. Over the last decade, we have also provided over \$400 million to the industry for safety and infrastructure related projects. To be clear though, airport rent is not a tax. As a matter of policy and good business practice, on behalf of all Canadians the government chose to lease rather than sell its airports. Rent is charged to Canada's largest airports as a return on taxpayer investment. Taxpayers paid for those airports. Do they not deserve to receive that money back?

It is clear that this government has taken the right position, and the members opposite are only opportunistic, trying to have an unnecessary election at the cost of taxpayers. It is not necessary at all.

● (1855)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and his party of shopkeeper economics, do not mind giving very large subsidies to oil companies that are making record profits. However, when it comes to airports which provide the service and have the opportunity of expanding business around every hub, the Conservatives are determined to stifle them.

When my hon. colleague talks about the difference in population, the statistics are that Toronto has fewer passengers per population. In other words, for the population of Toronto and surrounding area, fewer passengers are going through that airport than through comparable airports in the United States. Why is that? Because those airports are cheaper. Through the provision of acceptable charges in the United States, those airports can provide their service at a cheaper rate.

No matter what the party in the House of Commons, if members opposite cannot see the sense in that, then they are just simply not getting it.

Mr. Brian Jean: I do get it, Mr. Speaker. The member is talking about the rent charge which is less than 1% of the total ticket price or an average of less than \$4 per ticket. Speaking of sense, that is actually what it is, just cents.

Is the hon. member suggesting that we should compromise the security and safety of Canadians at our airports? Is he suggesting that the airports should not have to pay a return on investment to the taxpayers who originally paid for all those improvements? Is he suggesting that we should provide to them free? They already have tax situations that are advantageous, but they should pay taxpayers for what the taxpayer invested in those airports, and certainly they should keep Canadians safe. That is what this government will do.

Adjournment Debate

I understand the NDP is not interested in that, but this Conservative government will keep Canadians safe and secure and keep the economy rolling very well, as we have been managing to do quite well.

•(1900)

The Deputy Speaker: It has been a pleasure to serve as Deputy Speaker in this Parliament. It looks like this will be my last shift in

the chair and it will be the last time I will say this. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7 p.m.)

Mr. Carrier	9191
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	9191
Ms. Raitt	9191
Mr. Carrier	9193
Mrs. Glover	9193
Mr. Carrier	9193
Mrs. Boucher	9194
Mr. Bagnell	9195
Ms. Gagnon	9195
Mr. Généreux	9196
Mr. Carrier	9197
Mr. Bagnell	9197

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Act of Bravery	
Mrs. Smith	9197
Susan Audrey Van Bibber	
Mr. Bagnell	9197
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mr. St-Cyr	9198
The Budget	
Mr. Gravelle	9198
Purple Day	
Mr. Fast	9198
Dining Out for Life	
Ms. Fry	9198
The Budget	
Mr. Stanton	9198
Homelessness	
Mr. Cardin	9199
Violence Against Women	
Mr. Richards	9199
Health	
Ms. Dhalla	9199
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mr. Casson	9199
Government Priorities	
Ms. Chow	9200
The Budget	
Mrs. Boucher	9200
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Asselin	9200
Government Accountability	
Mr. Rodriguez	9200
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mr. Young	9200

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Priorities	
Mr. Goodale	9201
Mr. Baird	9201

Mr. Goodale	9201
Mr. Baird	9201
Mr. Goodale	9201
Mr. Baird	9201

National Defence

Mr. Garneau	9201
Mr. MacKay	9201

Ethics

Mr. Garneau	9201
Mr. Baird	9202

Electricity

Mr. Duceppe	9202
Mr. Cannon	9202
Mr. Duceppe	9202
Mr. Cannon	9202

Natural Resources

Ms. Brunelle	9202
Mr. Cannon	9202
Ms. Brunelle	9202
Mr. Cannon	9202

The Budget

Mr. Layton	9203
Mr. Baird	9203
Mr. Layton	9203
Mr. Baird	9203
Mr. Layton	9203
Mr. Baird	9203

Ethics

Ms. Neville	9203
Mr. Baird	9203
Ms. Neville	9204
Mr. Baird	9204
Ms. Folco	9204
Mr. Baird	9204
Ms. Folco	9204
Mr. Baird	9204

The Budget

Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	9204
Mr. Flaherty	9204
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	9204
Mr. Flaherty	9205

Status of Women

Ms. Demers	9205
Ms. Ambrose	9205

Housing

Mr. Ouellet	9205
Ms. Finley	9205

Ethics

Mr. Kennedy	9205
Mr. Baird	9205
Mr. Kennedy	9205
Mr. Baird	9205
Mr. Coderre	9205
Mr. Baird	9206

Mr. Coderre	9206
Mr. Baird	9206
The Budget	
Mr. Hoback	9206
Mrs. Aglukkaq	9206
Ethics	
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	9206
Mr. Ashfield	9206
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	9206
Mr. Baird	9206
The Budget	
Mrs. Lavallée	9207
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	9207
Post-Secondary Education	
Mr. Dufour	9207
Ms. Finley	9207
Ethics	
Mr. Cuzner	9207
Mr. Ashfield	9207
Mr. Cuzner	9207
Mr. Ashfield	9207
The Budget	
Mr. Gravelle	9208
Mrs. Aglukkaq	9208
Mr. Julian	9208
Mr. Day	9208
Natural Resources	
Mr. Généreux	9208
Mr. Paradis	9208
Government Appointments	
Mr. D'Amours	9208
Mr. Ashfield	9208
Shipbuilding Industry	
Ms. Gagnon	9209
Ms. Ambrose	9209
Health	
Mr. Dewar	9209
Mr. Clement	9209
Public Safety	
Ms. Cadman	9209
Mr. Toews	9209
Business of the House	
Mr. McGuinty	9209
Mr. Baird	9209
International Women's Day	
Ms. Ambrose	9211
Motion	9211
Motion	9211
(Motion agreed to)	9211
Resignation of Members	
Ms. Guarnieri	9211
Mr. Abbott	9211

Mr. Cummins	9212
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9212
Mr. Strahl	9212
Mr. Day	9213
Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown)	9214
Mr. Blais	9214
Mr. Ménard	9215
Mr. Siksay	9215
Mr. Ouellet	9215
Message from the Senate	
The Speaker	9216

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion	9216
Mrs. Block	9216
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	9217
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	9217
Mrs. McLeod	9218
Mr. Cuzner	9219
Mr. Asselin	9219
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	9220
Ms. Folco	9220
Mrs. Block	9221
Mr. Asselin	9221
Mr. Cotler	9222
Mrs. Glover	9223
Mr. Asselin	9223
Mr. Fantino	9224
Mrs. Zarac	9225
Mr. Carrier	9225
Mr. Fast	9225
Mr. Hiebert	9226
Mr. Silva	9227
Mr. Asselin	9228
Mr. Fast	9228
Ms. Charlton	9228

ROYAL ASSENT

The Deputy Speaker	9231
--------------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code	
Mrs. Mourani	9231
Bill C-612, Second reading	9231
Mr. Simms	9233
Mrs. Smith	9233
Mr. Petit	9234
Mrs. Jennings	9235
Mr. Comartin	9236
Mr. Ménard	9236
Mr. Maloway	9237

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Champlain Bridge

Mrs. Mendes 9238
Mr. Jean 9238

Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. Easter 9239

Mr. Jean 9240

Air Transportation

Mr. Bevington 9241

Mr. Jean 9242

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>