



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 121 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 10, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 10, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*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 one petition.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, 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 to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the 11th Winter meeting held in Vienna, Austria, February 23 and 24, 2012.

* * *

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG TERM PROSPERITY ACT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have tried to reach out to the government to encourage a fuller debate on its budget implementation act, which is a very complicated and detailed bill that we believe needs more thorough examination.

Therefore, I would like to seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: that notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 52 to 67, 163 to 169, 315 to 325, 578 to 594, and 699 be removed from Bill C-38, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures and do compose Bill C-38A; that Bill C-38A be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion in order to give a full examination as parliamentarians to a very important and far-ranging bill.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have tried to compromise with the government in order to be able to examine this bill in a reasoned manner, given that it is massive, includes many provisions and amends many laws.

That is why I am asking for unanimous consent to move the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 132 to 156 and 411 be removed from Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-38A; that Bill C-38A be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion in order to have the full debate that this bill requires because of its broad scope and the number of laws it amends.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of reaching out to the other side and to have a full debate of a complicated omnibus bill, I would seek unanimous consent for the following: that notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, that clauses 223 to 303, 350 to 367, 432 to 467, 603 to 619 and 685 to 698 be removed from Bill C-38, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-38(A); that Bill C-38(A) be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion in order to have a full debate and be able to bring in expert witnesses on some very key changes that the government is proposing.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of a proper analysis of this bill, I would seek unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 218 to 222, 420 to 426, 468 to 472, 476 to 478, 516 to 524, and 711 to 712 be removed from Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-38A; that Bill C-38A be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion to ensure that this important and far-reaching bill be studied properly by various committees, given the number of laws it would amend.

• (1010)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of having a full debate on some important and complex legislation, and in an effort to reach out to our colleagues on the other side of the House, I would like to

seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: that notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 412 to 419, 473 to 475, 506 to 515, be removed from Bill C-38, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures and do compose Bill C-38(A); that Bill C-38(A) be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and, that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion because we believe Canadians deserve a full democratic debate on some very complicated and far-reaching changes that are included in the bill.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, in this same spirit of compromise and in the interest of having a reasonable and reasoned debate on a very broad bill, and also in an effort to honour democracy, I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, clauses 68 to 131 be removed from Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, and do compose Bill C-38A; that Bill C-38A be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources; that Bill C-38 be reprinted as amended; and that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

We are proposing this motion because Canadians and Quebeckers want a debate on the many far-reaching changes that are included in the bill.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[English]

PETITIONS

RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENCE

Mr. Garry Breitreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very large number of petitions that I want to present. The petitioners come from across Canada, virtually every province. They are asking Parliament to take a look at the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in regard to the right to self-defence and to make appropriate amendments in legislation for that.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to table a petition signed by literally tens of thousands of Canadians who call upon the House of Commons and Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known. They point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined, yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. They also point out that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to take note and ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers in the communities they live in, to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

•(1015)

CHILD CARE

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of many Canadians, most of them in my riding, which draws to the attention of members of Parliament that 21% of Canadian child care is publicly funded. In these tough economic times, in order to make ends meet, both parents need to work outside the house. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on Parliament to enact universal public child care.

FOOD SAFETY

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have another petition. This petition is calling on the government to bring forth legislation that would help prevent life-threatening anaphylaxis by requiring that peanuts and tree nuts, like walnuts to be sold either pre-packaged or in closed bins, and that necessary labels be mandatory.

Approximately 1.2 million Canadians suffer from food allergies. The petitioners believe that the legislation they are seeking will help to prevent the possibility of cross-contamination in stores selling foods and other commodities.

I want to thank the Nikiforos family for bringing that forward.

ABORTION

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions this morning. The first is from over 200 petitioners from southwestern Ontario. They

Routine Proceedings

point out that Canada is the only nation in the western world, and in the company of China and North Korea, without any laws restricting abortion.

They call on the House of Commons, and Parliament assembled, to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, the other petition relates to the definition of a human being. The petitioners, from the Waterloo region, call on the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a petition I am presenting on behalf of thousands of Canadians, mostly in British Columbia. They are concerned about stopping the proposed Vancouver Airport Fuel Facilities Corporation's transport of toxic jet fuel anywhere into the Fraser River estuary and the building of a marine off-loading terminal and fuel storage facility. They recognize that the Fraser River is a Canadian heritage river and its estuary lies within a globally significant Pacific migratory bird flyway. Eleven per cent of the wetlands of the estuary have survived human activity, and this is a critical area. They also recognize that the Fraser is one of the world's largest salmon rivers and is vital to the survival of the Pacific salmon.

The proposed VAFFC terminal is to be sited in the Fraser River, which is prone to flooding and severe shaking and liquefaction during earthquakes. They are very concerned about that, and they raise this issue through their petition.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of the House two petitions that call upon Parliament to confirm that every human being, even pre-born children, are recognized by Canadian law. Currently, Canada's 400-year-old definition of a human being says a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth, contrary to 21st century medical evidence. Therefore, children in the womb receive absolutely no legal protection in Canada.

The first petition calls on Parliament to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

Routine Proceedings

ABORTION

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition points out that 72% of Canadians would like there to be some legal protection for pre-born children. Petitioners call upon Parliament to open up a respectful dialogue on abortion in an effort to determine what sort of protection should be granted to children before they are born.

PENSIONS

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition from residents of Toronto—Danforth. Hundreds of residents have signed a petition protesting the raising of the eligibility age for old age security over time from age 65 to 67. This petition treats this as a direct attack on the poorest seniors, who rely on that money for daily living expenses. The petition states:

...we, the undersigned, citizens of Canada, call upon the Parliament of Canada to maintain funding for the OAS and make the requisite investments in the Guaranteed Income Supplement to lift every senior out of poverty.

● (1020)

ASBESTOS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and present a petition from concerned southwestern Ontarians, calling upon the Government of Canada to support the hundreds of thousands of victims of asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer by banning the use and export of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos, and by supporting international efforts to add chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous products covered by the Rotterdam Convention.

The science on asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos, is clear. It is dangerous to human health and accounts for roughly 100,000 deaths per year worldwide. If chrysotile asbestos is not safe enough to use in our Parliament buildings, it is not safe enough to export to developing countries where safety practices are unknown and most likely inadequate or non-existent.

ABORTION

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to stand in the House today and present two petitions.

The first petition that I have the honour to present is signed by my constituents from Alberta communities including Morrin, Caroline, Airdrie and Drumheller. The constituents have declared that the Supreme Court of Canada has stated it is Parliament's responsibility to enact legislation regulating abortion. Therefore, they have called upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I should also make mention that today is the day that we have the March for Life on Parliament Hill. Thousands of people will be on the front lawns. Members may read about it on page 92 of any of the papers tomorrow.

Therefore, the second petition is a petition signed by my constituents of Chestermere, Morrin, Calgary and Airdrie, who call upon Parliament to look into the definition of a human being. According to the current legislation, a child does not become human until the moment of complete birth. They would like section 223 of

the Canadian Criminal Code to be amended in order to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law.

It is my pleasure to present the petitions.

ABORTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am also honoured to present petitions. It sounds as if they are similar to those of other members in the House.

The first one states:

Whereas Canada is the only nation in the Western world and in the company of China and North Korea without any laws restricting abortion;

And whereas Canada's Supreme Court has said it is Parliament's responsibility to enact abortion legislation;

Therefore, we call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition states:

Whereas Canada's 400 year old definition of a human being says a child does not become a human being until the moment of complete birth, contrary to twenty-first century medical evidence;

And whereas Parliament has a solemn duty to reject any law that says some human beings are not human;

Therefore, we call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending Section 223 of our Criminal Code in such a way as to reflect twenty-first century medical evidence.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first is from residents of Shellbrook, Saskatchewan; London, Ontario; Peterborough, Ontario; Sharon, Ontario; and Ottawa.

These petitioners call upon the House of Commons to move to provide stable and predictable funding to our national public broadcaster, the CBC, noting that the CBC and Radio-Canada bring Canadians together from coast to coast to coast, and there is no commercial substitute.

● (1025)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Vernon, British Columbia, who have written to the House of Commons and petitioned, as have tens of thousands of British Columbians already, to call upon the current Conservative Privy Council to stop promoting the Enbridge project, which proposes a very risky pipeline scheme leading to an even riskier supertanker scheme along the coastal waters of British Columbia.

By a margin of three to one, British Columbians do not want this project approved, and they call upon the government to listen.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 562.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 562—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to clinical trials for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI): (a) what was the deadline for receiving applications for clinical trials for CCSVI and has the application process closed; (b) how many applications were received, and, for each application received, (i) from what institution and country was it received, (ii) are the researchers who submitted the application practiced in the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI; (c) why was it decided that an international review panel was needed to assess applications for clinical trials; (d) what was the specific process for and who was involved in choosing the members of the international review panel; (e) who had the ultimate decision-making authority on the appointments to the international review panel; (f) has the international review panel been chosen, and, if so, (i) who is on the panel, (ii) why was each member chosen, (iii) for each member, is he or she practiced in the diagnosis and treatment of CCSVI; (g) how will all potential conflicts of interest of members of the international review panel be (i) recorded, (ii) confirmed, (iii) publicly declared; (h) has the review process of applications begun, (i) is it in progress, (ii) by what date is the review expected to be finished; (i) what specific criteria have been established to review applications; (j) by what date is an announcement expected to be made regarding the chosen research team or teams; (k) what, if any, monies have been set aside for clinical trials, (i) how was the required amount of money decided, (ii) will the monies allow for an adequate number of patients to be included to demonstrate clinical efficacy at the 0.05 level of significance; (l) what timeline is being allowed for ethics approval; (m) by what date is patient accrual expected to take place; (n) by what date are clinical trials expected to commence; and (o) what is a detailed timeline of what can be expected over the next year in terms of significant dates for clinical trials, as well as any dates for meetings regarding CCSVI?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, on April 18, 2012, the Minister of Health announced that a team of researchers has been selected to undertake an interventional phase I/II clinical trial for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, CCSVI, in persons with multiple sclerosis. The objective of this trial, which is to be co-funded by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, is to determine the safety and efficacy of the procedure proposed by Dr. Zamboni.

The successful team will now need to obtain ethics approval from their relevant university research ethics board or boards before recruiting patients and conducting the trial. The funds will be released and the study will begin as soon as ethics approval is granted. The clinical trial is expected to begin in the fall of 2012.

The closing date to submit applications to conduct this clinical trial was February 29, 2012. Applicants were invited to devise the best possible trial with a sample size of 100 patients and then propose the budget required to implement such a trial. For this reason, the budget was not specified in the funding opportunity. Both the MS Society of Canada and CIHR are committed to funding the trial subject to positive outcomes at ethics review stages.

Further information concerning this announcement, evaluation criteria, conflict of interest requirements and next steps, such as review by the research ethics board of the research institute concerned, may be found at <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45249.html>, <http://www.researchnet-recherchenet.ca/rnr16/viewOpportunityDetails.do?progCd=10266&language=E&fodAgency=CIHR&view=browseArchive&browseArc=true&org=CIHR> and <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/193.html>.

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, If Questions Nos. 491 and 549 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 491—**Ms. Françoise Boivin:**

With respect to Canada's aid and reconstruction funding allocated to advancing women's equality in Afghanistan since 2006, for every project funded, what is: (a) the name of the project; (b) the location of the project within the country; (c) the amount of funding received by the project broken down by (i) grant or contribution, (ii) interest-free loan, (iii) repayable loan, (iv) non-repayable loan; (d) description of project; and (e) the department where the funding originated?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 549—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's trip to China that began February 7, 2012: (a) what staff and guests accompanied the Prime Minister and what were (i) their duties on the trip, (ii) the destinations they travelled to, (iii) the total expenses for each person; (b) for all meetings convened or attended by the Prime Minister or his staff and/or guests in connection with the trip, what were the (i) meeting dates and their purpose, (ii) meeting locations, (iii) meeting participants, including full name and position, (iv) costs associated with each meeting; (c) for each of the commitments and commercial deals signed or announced by the Prime Minister or his staff or guests during trip, including but not limited to the "very important deals and the billions of dollars of contracts we signed this week" (statement attributed to the Prime Minister in a Feb. 11, 2012, *Globe and Mail* article), (i) what is each commitment, agreement, or commercial deal, (ii) who are the specific parties of each commitment, agreement, or deal, (iii) what are the government's obligations under them, (iv) what is the cost of each commitment, agreement, or deal, (v) by what approximate date (i.e., month/year) will the government fulfill each obligation, (vi) what are the estimated economic benefits to the Canadian economy; (d) what specific actions or negotiating positions were taken that concerned (i) issues of fundamental freedoms and human rights, (ii) the connection between trade and "fundamental national values" (statement by the Prime Minister at a February 10, 2012, business dinner hosted by the Chinese ambassador to Canada), (iii) issues such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of belief and worship; and (e) what information or evidence does the government possess in support of the Prime Minister's statement about "foreign money and influence that seek to obstruct development in Canada in favour of energy imported from other, less stable parts of the world" (statement by the Prime Minister at a February 10, 2012, business dinner hosted by the Chinese ambassador to Canada)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT**

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am certainly proud to rise today in support of the budget 2012 implementation act tabled by the hon. Minister of Finance. This budget not only delivers strong results for today's economy; it holds sound promise for the future of all Canadians.

By identifying the economic challenges facing future generations, the government has developed a thorough plan to tackle these challenges and inspire hope in our young people.

Canada's economic action plan 2012 is a plan for jobs, growth and prosperity. It includes many important measures to expand our economy, and it preserves the quality of life for all Canadians.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities president Berry Vrbanovic, from my own city of Kitchener, Canada's municipal leaders welcome today's commitment by the federal government to continue working with cities and communities to rebuild the local roads, water systems, community centres and public transit that our families, businesses and economy depend on. Today's budget continues building a new infrastructure partnership that creates jobs and strengthens Canada's future economic foundations.

Let us take a look at some of the new initiatives introduced in this budget, which will deliver future prosperity for all Canadians.

One such measure recognizes the importance of a well-trained, highly educated workforce. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, I have had the opportunity to meet with plenty of youth who are attending our local institutions, Wilfrid Laurier, the University of Waterloo, Conestoga College and others.

In speaking with these bright young minds, I am constantly reminded of how essential it is that these individuals have jobs to look forward to on completing their education. This budget addresses their worries about finding suitable employment opportunities. It offers additional avenues for young people to train for careers in new and exciting fields.

The youth employment strategy began in 2011. It is a program created to reduce barriers to employment faced by some of our young people. It has helped to connect 70,000 young Canadians with job experience and valuable skills training. In particular, one of this program's streams, the skills link program, has had a significant impact in my riding, and I am pleased that our government has committed to deliver an additional \$50 million over two years to further enhance the youth employment strategy.

In addition to tackling the challenges of an uncertain job market for young workers generally, we cannot neglect the difficulties disabled Canadians are also facing. Improving labour market opportunities for those living with challenges has always been a

key agenda item for this government, and it remains so with this budget.

For example, economic action plan 2012 delivers \$30 million over three years to the opportunities fund for persons with disabilities. I know that this fund has provided opportunities to people in my riding, connecting them with valuable work experience. We can never overlook the importance of integrating the skills and experience of every Canadian into our economy.

We should also commend the government for its commitment to helping to expand small businesses. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, I am consistently amazed by many small business owners and their willingness to find innovative ways of doing things. This progressive spirit confirms to me why small businesses can and will be prepared to compete in an increasingly competitive global economy.

To illustrate this government's commitment to small business, I will start by noting that budget 2012 extends the temporary hiring credit for small business by one year, an investment of \$205 million. An investment like this not only reduces payroll costs but it helps small businesses to retain more of their earnings for expansion. It permits them to create new jobs.

Building on this dedication to expand small and medium-sized businesses, we have also proposed an additional \$95 million over three years to make the Canadian innovation commercialization program permanent. This program has shown exceptional results. It connects small and medium-sized companies with federal departments and agencies. It builds their capacity.

• (1030)

In supporting programs like this, we are providing a solid foundation for these companies to compete in the marketplace. We position them to further create high-value jobs and long-term economic prosperity.

In addition to our commitment to building the private sector and helping small businesses, budget 2012 offers much more. In keeping with our promise to ensure prosperity for years to come, we have also upgraded our social programs to ensure future generations have a secure retirement to look forward to.

We have given more than 10 years' notice of a gradual increase in the age of eligibility for old age security, not starting until April 2023. We are also allowing for the voluntary deferral of the basic OAS for up to five years, starting July 1, 2013. These important changes would ensure that the cost of the old age supplement remains balanced and proportionate for many years to come. Moreover, following a triennial review by Canada's finance ministers of the Canada pension plan, we have confirmed that the plan will remain sustainable for at least the next 75 years, giving our young people an assured sense of future financial security.

Government Orders

By making responsible decisions like these, we are able to make considerable investments in skills training. We can support our science and technology sectors, creating an optimal environment for high-value jobs. As financial situations change, older business practices are continually being superseded at a rapid pace in a knowledge-based economy. Following an extensive review conducted by an expert panel in the fall of 2011, a number of recommendations were made on how the government could improve our support for innovative businesses. Canadian businesses spoke and the government listened.

We knew that we needed a new approach to directly support innovation in Canada, and this budget delivers. Economic action plan 2012 contributes \$1.1 billion over five years for direct research and development support. It also makes \$500 million available for venture capital. This funding would go toward research collaborations, new procurement opportunities and applied research financing. Innovation leads to success, and I have seen many examples of this in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

Of course, a driving premise behind this budget and every Conservative budget to date has been keeping taxes low so that hard-working Canadian families can continue to thrive in challenging global economic times. Unfortunately, our friends across the aisle still seem not to understand the importance of this low-tax agenda. They believe that raising taxes will somehow magically create prosperity. I cannot stress enough the savings this low-tax approach will deliver for Canadians.

Our government paid down more than \$37 billion in debt between the years 2006 and 2008, before the global recession, and that maintained Canada's low net debt position throughout the recession. Even still, we were able to implement a remarkable stimulus phase included in Canada's economic action plan. Even in times of global economic fragility, the Canadian government is continuing to focus on the drivers of job creation and growth. Learning from the international landscape has shown us the importance of taking action now rather than delaying. We are prudent; we are far-sighted; we are planning for the future.

I am reminded of a comment made by one of Canada's great prime ministers, Wilfrid Laurier. "In 1908, Canada has become a star to which is directed the gaze of the whole civilized world. That is what we have done", he declared. Today, more than 100 years later, we can once again say that Canada has become a star to which is directed the gaze of the whole civilized world. That is what the government has done with our economic action plan, and that work continues with this bill. I am proud to support a government that will continue to support and put a priority on a balanced budget and building a strong economy for all Canadians.

● (1035)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, very deep down in the bowels of Bill C-38 is a clause that hardly anybody even noticed. It abolishes, it repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act for federally regulated construction projects.

Why would anyone want to abolish something called the "fair wages and hours of work" act? I will tell the House why, and I would like my colleague's comments.

It is a striking coincidence that now, in federally regulated projects like pipelines, a contractor can now post a job as follows: "Wanted: carpenters, \$10 an hour". Nobody is going to apply. Now, by this legislation, it will be perfectly okay to do so, and working for 70 hours a week with no overtime will be perfectly okay. No Canadian is going to apply, but guess what? The government has opened the door for temporary foreign workers, with a 10-day waiting period. No fair contractor in this country will ever win another job, because the government has eliminated the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act by virtue of this legislation.

Does the hon. member think it is fair for a budget bill to eradicate and destabilize the entire construction industry by eliminating the fair wages act?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question and for keeping his language clean and his tone high. We always appreciate that when it occurs in the House.

I want to specifically thank the hon. member for raising the issue of construction, because it gives me an opportunity to tell the House what the Canadian Construction Association president, Michael Atkinson, had to say about this bill.

He said:

The reforms promised by the budget to the environmental assessment process and immigration will ensure the country is well placed to take advantage of the more than \$500 billion in major economic projects expected in Canada over the next ten years.

I know the hon. member opposite is not that concerned about creating jobs and prosperity for Canadians, but the government is. That is why the construction association president is praising our budget.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre spoke about the Conservative government's having paid down debt from 2006 to 2008, before the recession began.

I know why the hon. member said that. In 2006, the government inherited a budget that was in large surplus, which it had inherited from the previous Liberal government.

Why did the hon. member end his period in 2008? It is because his Conservative government put the federal budget into deficit. As he said, that was before the recession began.

It is funny how government members can spin facts to make them sound good, when what they really do is explain how the government has mismanaged the fiscal matters of this country.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comment, although it proves to me once again that there is sometimes a need for the opposition members to train themselves how to listen.

Government Orders

What I actually said was that we had paid down the debt before the recession, and that as a result, we were able to maintain our low net debt to GDP ratio through the recession.

I suppose we should be honoured that the hon. member thinks it is our government that caused the recession, but I have to ask him to go back and reread his history. He will see that it was actually a global economic phenomenon and that our government did not cause the recession and did not cause the deficit. It was necessary—

• (1040)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I would like to ask for a little bit of order in the House.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre has the floor. If he would like to complete his comments, we will resume debate.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Canada has come out of that recession more quickly and in a better and stronger position than any other member of the G7, and that is thanks to our government.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague his thoughts on how the NDP is handling this issue of the budget before Parliament.

What I have seen is that NDP members are asking for more time, yet they are frittering away the time they have with procedural tactics, as we saw yesterday. As well, one of their members ended up talking for 13 hours. In my books, that works out to about 50 time slots that NDP MPs could have used to actually debate the budget.

Could my colleague share his thoughts on that?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Madam Speaker, it is a very astute observation that the NDP members refuse to actually debate what is in the budget. All they want to talk about is process, and that is because what is in the budget is really beyond debate. It has been so well received across Canada that there is nothing they can say to criticize it.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to add my voice to the debate on the omnibus budget implementation act, Bill C-38. The budget is being described as a Trojan Horse, and for good reason. It is yet another omnibus bill from a government that favours broad, sweeping legislation that defies appropriate scrutiny and oversight. It is another attempt to baffle Canadians with a huge bill that does too much.

To top it off, we have time allocation on it, which is no longer a surprise from a government that seems to consider closure as a normal feature of the parliamentary cycle. That is why we say it is a Trojan Horse, and it is on a fast track to boot.

However, as the official opposition we have given the government the opportunity to appear to be a little more democratic and have proposed a solution to make Bill C-38 better match the way that Parliament is supposed to work. In fact, New Democrats are really just calling for respect for Parliament and long-standing tradition when we say that the budget should be split into five separate, manageable pieces of legislation.

It is the right thing to do. At the very least, it would allow for proper scrutiny by this House and from the appropriate committees. Sadly, we know that the government feels the need to rush this bill past Canadian eyes and will not consent to the reasonable oversight that is the job of Parliament and parliamentarians. In that respect, we are not being allowed to do our job, and that is a shame.

[*Translation*]

Before I go any further, there is something I would like to address right away, and that is how the Conservatives apply their own logic to NDP decisions. I am sure there will come a day when the Conservatives will point out the few useful measures in this budget and criticize the NDP for not supporting them.

However, I would like to point out that we absolutely cannot support the budget because this is really an omnibus bill—and it is therefore impossible to study it thoroughly—and because blind environmental deregulation is the dominant theme.

I hope the Conservatives will remember this before they engage in their revisionist history, but I might as well believe in the goose that lays the golden eggs; there are so many other things that I would rather see and hope for. The NDP understands that this budget does not at all reflect Canadians' priorities.

[*English*]

New Democrats are listening, and we know that Canadians do not want their environment gutted in the name of economic expediency. Canadian families do not want regulations tossed aside because they are not convenient for big oil and foreign investors who only want to export Canada's resources with a minimum benefit to Canadians, but that is what the budget does.

Canadians do not believe there should be a time limit on processes designed to protect our environment. That speaks to a mindset that does not appreciate nature's delicate balance. I am reminded of the phrase "fools rush in"; those words are not the lyrics of a song, but an age-old maxim that speaks to the wisdom that time and perspective allow for. When we are dealing with things as sensitive as the great salmon and steelhead rivers that are part of the constituency represented by my friend the member for Skeena—Bulkeley Valley, there can be no such thing as taking too much time to make the right decision, and I am sure that the majority of Canadians feel the same as we do in the official opposition feel.

New Democrats know that Canadians do not want to gamble with our children's future, but that is what a full one-third of this budget does.

New Democrats get it. They get it that Canadians do not want power concentrated more and more at the cabinet level, but that is what this budget would do by allowing the cabinet to overturn National Energy Board rulings that it does not like. These are not the priorities of Canadian families, who want their environment to be protected; they are the priorities of investment bankers, who want to win at any cost, and that is not the Canadian way.

Government Orders

We are being asked to gut environmental regulations and legislation that other Parliaments have carefully considered. We are being asked to undo years and decades of work in just one week of debate. How is that reasonable? It is not, and Canadians will not be fooled.

•(1045)

Over these past few weeks we have watched the Minister of Natural Resources rushing about, claiming that the sky will fall if Parliament does not fast-track the budget and that somehow our energy reserves—the ones that the government cannot get out of Canada quickly enough—will be cast aside as undesirable by big oil and international investors if we do not move fast.

However, that is not the case at all. The only thing that will happen if we do not swiftly gut our environmental regulations and rig the deck for big oil is that Canadians will pay attention to what the government is up to and rain down a chorus of disapproval.

It shows us how the government is worried that downloading federal environmental responsibilities and dumping those costs onto the provinces, territories and future generations will come under the watchful eye of most Canadians who actually care about the environment, and that what is left of their support will disappear.

The government is worried that anglers will figure out what is happening to the Fisheries Act and that cottagers and campers will start to wonder if their lake is next. I know this much: Canadians did not want protection of fish habitat removed from the Fisheries Act and replaced with market-based language. Canadians get it. They understand that fish live in ecosystems that are complex webs of food items and interdependencies.

This is knowledge shared by elementary school students who study basic science, but it is ignored by a government keen to remove all barriers to development so that it can please its friends who want to fast-track a pipeline through some of the most pristine parts of British Columbia.

It is a bit much to see the changes to the Fisheries Act. They came just days after I received an update from the Bright Lake Association celebrating the fact that the water in the lake was so pure that it could sustain a population of northern redbreasted suckers, a fish that can be considered an indicator species for excellent waterway health, much like the proverbial canary in the coal mine. Those suckers will not receive any protection under the amended Fisheries Act; the preoccupation of the act is now commercial and sport fisheries, not habitat and systems.

If we ask someone who fly-fishes about how fish habitat works, that person will tell us about bugs that grow under rocks and mate in trees. They will tell us about prey fish, like sculpin and stickleback, that will lose protection if the Fisheries Act is changed to discard the protection of fish habitat. The government claims it is only helping farmers who have been hamstrung by the Fisheries Act, but the government is not acknowledging that there are other ways to fix those problems. It claims it is stopping the Fisheries Act from protecting unnatural habitats; we know that the government knows all about unnatural waterways and fake lakes.

We also know that the government has spent more hard-earned tax money for self-promotion in the past few years than it has for

protecting the Great Lakes. I and my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River and many communities across northern Ontario know that the government has actually cut funding for the Lake Superior Binational Forum, and we are extremely concerned.

It had no end of cash to tell us what a great job it was doing to build that infamous fake lake. I say Great Lakes over fake lakes every time, and the government should get back to protecting fish habitat in Canada or the anglers of this country will be casting for something in the next election that the Conservatives will not like at all.

What is obvious is that the budget marks a crossroads in Canada. It attempts to put an end to publicly scrutinized development of resources and puts blind faith in private sector self-regulations and regulators. It marks the end of a national vision and the ascent of a mindset that sees Canada as a corporation.

We now have two very distinct political parties in Canada. One believes in science-based, carefully considered regulatory practices and reporting. It is a party that sees the benefit of careful consideration and long-term planning for our natural resources. It cherishes the treasure we have inherited and must carefully steward and ultimately deliver to future generations.

The other party wants to rig the deck for its corporate friends. It guts our environmental legislative and regulatory framework. It wraps itself in small, divisive issues, but it sets to work on great sweeping changes that cut to the heart of the Canada most of us cherish.

•(1050)

The Conservatives see only opportunity and blind themselves to negative outcomes while they deafen themselves to dissenting opinion. They have little regard for things like endangered species, and are well on the way to becoming as—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear my NDP colleague refer to the two approaches. She was clearly referring to the Liberal Party of Canada when she was talking about the party that stands for a thoughtful, careful science-based approach to resource development and environmental protection, because that is what the Liberal Party has shown over many generations.

Government Orders

My question for the member is on rural economic development. I am concerned about the budget of the Canadian Tourism Commission being cut 20%. The commission promotes tourism, which is important to our rural areas. The economic development agencies are being slashed, WED out west is losing \$30 million and EI payroll taxes are going up.

Could my colleague comment on how the budget would impact small and medium-sized enterprises and tourism?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, I certainly was not referring to the Liberals. While the Liberals signed and ratified the Kyoto protocol, they did nothing to try to reduce our emissions until it was too late. They voted in favour of previous budgets, which began the Conservative government's work of unravelling environmental protection in Canada. They supported measures that rolled back navigable waters protection and weakened environmental assessment by exempting hundreds of projects. I certainly was not talking about them.

I am concerned with respect to the impact that this bill would have on small businesses and on the economy as a whole. The government is putting people out of work and it is telling us that its goal is jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. I do not know how it can do that.

I would add that we have a lot of concerns with respect to business, which is extremely important in northern Ontario especially.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, just for the purpose of historical accuracy, it should be noted that there were good climate plans put in place, although late in the day, by the previous Liberal government, that were cancelled by the current government.

My question for my colleague relates to the Fisheries Act. I am so thrilled to hear someone in the House talk about suckers and sculpins because they would not be protected by this new approach to fisheries.

The bill, probably unintentionally, would create an incentive for the mining industry to drain a lake, remove all the fish, destroy the habitat and to then have a dry hole into which it can place tailings rather than go through an approval process to add tailings to an existing lake. That is the kind of bad consequence that happens from a rushed piece of legislation.

• (1055)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, coming from Elliot Lake, I know a lot about tailings.

I will elaborate a bit more on the impact this would have on some of our communities. I have an email from Ian Ross in Elliot Lake with regard to the end of local weather reporting in that community. Mr. Ross told me that he was concerned on a personal level because it was convenient to know what the local conditions were. Now the planes landing in Elliot Lake, which bring workers to Elliot Lake at times, will not know what the weather is like there for them to land. That is extremely concerning. This is another way of seeing how the government's actions are negatively impacting our communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my opinion, the budget that was presented has a very short-term vision, despite its size. For instance, in terms of the environment, would my colleague agree that this short-term vision will be even more costly in the future?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, absolutely; we are very concerned about this. I touched on that in my speech. These changes will definitely have a huge impact on future generations. I do not know what they plan to leave for future generations, but we certainly do not want to see it, because we know what is going to happen.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, in advance of March's budget, I had the opportunity earlier this year to discuss creating job opportunities and economic growth in Canada with a wide variety of stakeholders in my riding of Barrie, Ontario. Included in these consultations were a number senior staff in the city of Barrie: cultural leaders, such as real estate brokers, hospital administrators, health care professionals, YMCA executives, outreach staff members, seniors issues advocates, faith leaders, lawyers, tourism representatives, grassroots media and business people from a wide variety of areas, including manufacturing, financial services, transportation, construction and home heating.

Each of those participants provided insightful contributions from different aspects of our city. Many shared the same concerns as all Canadians: ensuring good jobs are available, keeping taxes low, investing in long-term growth and ensuring sustainability for generations of retirees.

With over \$63 billion in targeted stimulus, Canada's economic action plan helped protect Canada from the worst of the global recession and the city of Barrie had tremendous support from the federal government during these tough times.

Through the steady leadership of our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance, we have seen Canada's economy expand for nine of the last ten quarters. We have seen Canada create close to 700,000 net new jobs just since July 2009. Canada's unemployment rate is significantly lower than that of the U.S., a phenomenon that has not been seen in nearly three decades.

Overall, since we have formed government in 2006, over 1.2 million net new jobs have been created. Even better, Canada has had, by far, the best rate of job growth in the entire G7 since 2006.

Canada has the lowest overall tax rate and new business investment in the G7. Our net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far and we have the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Both the independent International Monetary Fund, IMF, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, forecast that Canada will be ahead of the pack for economic growth in the G7 for the years ahead.

Government Orders

I am particularly proud to say that Canada has maintained its AAA credit rating through the period of economic downturn and uncertainty, something that has rocked nations from around the world.

However, the global recovery remains fragile, especially in Europe and the United States, and too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why I am so pleased to see that budget 2012 is clearly focused on jobs, economic growth and ensuring Canada's economic advantage remains strong today and into the long term.

One of the most important exercises in ensuring future success is for us to return to balanced budgets. Before the global recession hit, our Conservative government paid down over \$37 billion of debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in an astonishing 25 years. Our fiscal responsibility and aggressive debt reduction plan placed Canada in the best possible position to weather the global recession when the global recession hit. We made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit to protect our economy and jobs, and all parties in Parliament agreed.

Reducing debt frees up tax dollars that would otherwise be used to cover interest costs, keep interest rates low and, most important, ensure lower taxes for Canadian families.

Our plan to get back to balanced budgets is working. In the past two years we have already cut the deficit in half.

In 2010, we started down the road to balanced budgets by winding down temporary stimulus spending, putting into place targeted spending restraint measures and reviewing government administrative and overhead costs. In 2011, we continued to return to balanced budgets by delivering over half a billion dollars in new ongoing savings.

In 2012, we are building on our existing efforts by refocussing government, making it easier to deal with and streamlining back-office administration to achieve \$5.2 billion in ongoing savings for taxpayers. Almost 70% of the savings will come from eliminating waste in internal operations of government, making it leaner and more efficient. These modest savings, less than 2% of federal program spending, will help ensure that Canada returns to balance over the medium term, while also respecting taxpayer dollars.

Unlike what other parties in the House would do if they had the chance, our Conservative government will not raise taxes and, unlike the former Liberal government, we will not slash health, education and support for seniors through provincial transfers.

● (1100)

Economic action plan 2012 demonstrates our Conservative government's strong support for my home province of Ontario through record federal transfer support for hospitals, schools and other critical services. Totalling \$19.2 billion in the 2012-13 fiscal year, the transfer support represents an increase of nearly \$8.4 billion, or 77%, since the former Liberal government was removed from office by the voters of Canada. We are continuing the long-term stable funding arrangement with the provinces for health care social services that will see transfers reach historic levels of \$40 billion by the end of the decade.

As indicated by the recent Canadian Institutes of Health Research information data, federal transfers are projected to grow faster than average provincial spending in health care. We are leading in health care investment.

Federal support for health care will keep growing every year beyond the record levels the federal government already invested since 2006 and in a way that is both predictable and, most important, sustainable. This will help ensure Canada's health care system, including doctors and nurses, will be there when Canadians and their families need them most. This is very good news for all Canadians.

Balancing the budget and reducing debt interest costs help keep interest rates low and instills confidence in the Canadian economy, allowing families and businesses to plan for the future. It will also ensure sustainability of Canada's social programs, like health care, for future generations. I applaud our Minister of Finance for the responsible, realistic and common sense approach contained in this budget.

Another key area of prudent fiscal management is to stop unnecessary spending. There is probably no better example of this than the elimination of the penny. By stopping the production of the penny this fall, our government will do what should have been done years ago. An independent study estimated that the economic cost of maintaining the penny amounted to \$150 million. The penny has lost its purchasing power over the years and now most are hoarded, resulting in a useless expense for Canadian taxpayers. In fact, taxpayers pay 1.6¢ for each new penny made. This costs taxpayers \$11 million every year.

After hearing strong support from consumers, retailers and small businesses, a recent public study by the Senate committee recommended the elimination of the penny. I am pleased to tell Canadians that this government absolutely concurs. Eliminating the penny is a lot like the penny itself. Producing pennies may not seem like much in the context of the entirety of the federal budget, but every penny makes a difference. However small things may seem, they can certainly add up to something significant over time. Former U.S. president Ronald Reagan once said that government was the people's business and that every man, woman and child becomes a shareholder with the very first penny of tax paid. We have a responsibility to our Canadian shareholders. No amount of cost is insignificant, no amount of waste is acceptable.

Government Orders

Canadian families deserve the cleanest air, water and environment possible. That is why, since 2006, our Conservative government has made major investments to preserve our environment and to protect the health and well-being of Canadian families for today and tomorrow. Economic action plan 2012 builds on our Conservative government's impressive record for supporting a cleaner and more sustainable environment. The budget proposes \$50 million over two years for the protection of wildlife species at risk. The Species at Risk Act is one of the government's main conservation tools to protect wildlife species, maintain healthy ecosystems and preserve Canada's natural heritage.

We are also committing to the creation of a new near-urban national park in Rouge Valley, Ontario, only 40 minutes south of beautiful Barrie, Ontario. I am particularly pleased with our commitment to the continued support of Canada's lakes, including Lake Winnipeg and Lake Simcoe. In 2008, the federal government's unprecedented \$30 million funding for the Lake Simcoe cleanup was an extremely welcomed initiative for the residents of Simcoe county and Barrie. To see included in this year's budget a commitment to continue the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg and Lake Simcoe is a wonderful thing.

• (1105)

The cleanup of the lake has had dramatic effects. For four decades, phosphorous levels have gone up. High phosphorous levels mean a reduction of marine habitat. It means excessive weed growth. For the last four years, because of this federal funding, we have seen the lake become cleaner. We have seen phosphorous go down for the first time. It is a remarkable achievement in cleaning up our lake.

We are improving conditions for businesses, for environment and for Canadian families.

I want to commend the Minister of Finance for a prudent, responsible budget that I believe protects and enhances the best interests of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member from Barrie, who like me, represents a riding in Ontario where unemployment has been persistently high. How can he account for the fact that under the government, between 2007 and 2011, according to Statistics Canada, temporary foreign workers account for about 30% of all net new paid employment? This is before the changes that the government will bring in under the budget that will allow temporary foreign workers to be brought in on 10 days notice and be paid 15% less than the so-called going wage, which will drop as we get more and more temporary foreign workers. These workers, as we know, are not just working in agriculture or in northern Alberta, they are in workplaces across Ontario. How does he account for that?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Madam Speaker, there are things we can look at in our immigration system. The focus of my speech today is on the budget. However, in terms of job creation and foreign worker permits, there are some parts of the country where there are significant human resource shortages, which is an important tool of the immigration system.

Let me talk about the creation of jobs. I think that is what the member is interested in. One thing the budget does, this economic action plan, is it takes steps to encourage entrepreneurship,

innovation and world-class research, with over \$1.1 billion in significant investments for research and development, \$500 million for venture capital, support for increased public and private research collaboration and much more. These initiatives create jobs.

Supporting industrial research pays dividends. In my own riding of Barrie, there was a partnership with Wolf Steel to create a high efficiency furnace. It was mentioned on page 62 of the budget as an example of job creation through innovation. That is the type of job creation on which we need to focus.

• (1110)

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two questions on the budget. I see two big hits. The first is in Cape Breton, where the Conservatives are cutting jobs in Parks Canada and Veterans Affairs.

The other is with CIDA. There are over \$380 million in cuts. Many NGOs will be unable to help Canadians develop and deliver aid. Recently I heard about the Canadian Nurses Association that does great work around the world with CIDA, and the Conservatives have cut its funding.

Where is a good part for Cape Breton or international aid in the budget? I do not see it.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Madam Speaker, Canada, on a per capita level, has been one of the largest donors toward international aid. Canada still contributes huge amounts.

In February, I had a chance to go on an all party visit to Tanzania with the good member from Newfoundland. The Canadian contributions there made incredible differences. We can see in many areas of the world where CIDA has made huge differences, and continues to do so.

When it comes to this budget, every department looked at efficiencies and more effective ways of spending.

When the last significant recession hit in the 1990s, a Liberal government was in power. The decision was to slash particularly one area, health care. It also slashed the area of education. Those were areas that Canadians could not afford to have slashed. I am happy this budget has been balanced in the medium term. We have had a prudent approach with small efficiencies in a wide variety of departments, not focusing on one area like gutting the health care system. We still face the consequences of the Liberal gutting of the health care system in the mid-1990s today. We are facing doctor shortages and hospitals at capacity because of the short-sighted decisions made during that administration.

I am happy this budget took a much more responsible and prudent approach to ensure efficiencies were found across the board in a much more even manner.

Government Orders

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to stand in support of Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, the key legislation to implement the economic action plan 2012.

Our Conservative government, as demonstrated through today's act, is focused on what matters to Canadians, which is keeping the economy on the right track. In that regard, the nearly 700,000 net new jobs Canada has created since July 2009, 90% of those being full-time jobs, is a positive sign we are on the right track for Canadian families.

Indeed, a recent *Wall Street Journal* editorial praised Canada's economic leadership focus on private economic growth and its sound policies as a model for others to follow. As CIBC World Markets chief economist Avery Shenfeld recently declared:

Canada's federal government remains the very picture of health, standing head and shoulders above many developed countries in terms of fiscal sustainability.

Nevertheless, we recognize global economic turbulences remain today and too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why the economic action plan 2012, legislated through Bill C-38, takes responsible, positive action to support the economy now and over the long term, while keeping taxes low and returning to balanced budgets.

This plan has been largely welcomed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast, save the ideological NDP opposition.

For instance, the Vancouver Board of Trade, representing thousands of businesses in the Lower Mainland, assigned an overall grade of A to the economic action plan 2012, noting:

The federal government's reasonable and prudent 'game plan' continues to be the right one for British Columbia and Vancouver, and it remains the right strategy for Canada within a challenging global economic environment

For the remainder of my time today, I want to focus on the aspects of the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act that deal with responsible resource development and how we have found the right balance between economic and environmental priorities.

Let me be clear. Our Conservative government is committed to being proactive in our stewardship of our national treasures, preserving them so we can pass them down to future generations. However, unlike the ideological NDP, we recognize that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Major economic projects create jobs and spur development across Canada.

In 2011 alone, the natural resource sector employed over 790,000 Canadians in communities throughout the country. It is predicted that in the next 10 years more than 500 major economic projects, representing \$500 billion in new investments, are planned across Canada.

Increasing global demand for resources, particularly from emerging economies, will create new economic and job opportunities from which all Canadians will benefit. Canadians will only reap the benefits that come from our natural resources once investments are made by the private sector to bring the resources to market. Currently conditions are hardly ideal for any business that wants to do so.

Canadian businesses in the resource sector that wish to undertake major economic projects must navigate a complex maze of regulatory requirements and processes. Approval processes can be long and unpredictable. Delays and red tape often plague projects despite few environmental risks. In the federal government alone, accountability for assessments rests with dozens of departments and agencies, each with its own mandate, processes, information needs and timelines. This leads to duplication and the needless waste of time and resources.

The starting point of federal environment assessments can also be unpredictable, which can cause lengthy delays. This leads to delays in investment and job creation, and some plans are even abandoned because of them. Frankly, that is unacceptable.

As stated in a recent *Vancouver Sun* editorial:

Currently, worthwhile projects are needlessly bogged down in repetitive environmental and regulatory assessments that increase costs to industry without adding value for Canadian taxpayers.

That is why we have worked hard, since 2006, to streamline and improve regulatory processes. However, more work still needs to be done. A modern regulatory system should support progress on economically viable and significant projects and sustain Canada's reputation as an attractive place to invest, all the while contributing to better environmental outcomes.

●(1115)

That is why we are focusing on four major areas to streamline the review process for major economic projects in economic action plan 2012, specifically making the review process for major projects more predictable and timely, reducing duplication and regulatory burdens, strengthening environmental protection and enhancing consultations with aboriginal peoples. This modernized federal regulatory system will establish clear timelines, reduce duplication, regulatory burdens and focus resources more effectively to protect the environment.

We will achieve the goal of one project, one review, in clearly defined time periods, something long overdue, especially for my home province of British Columbia. In the words of British Columbia's finance minister Kevin Falcon:

The moving to a one-permit, one-process approach on environmental assessments is extraordinarily important for British Columbia...We have many major, major projects on the table today that are in the billions of dollars that could have important ramifications for jobs and employment. I'm really encouraged by that...

He went on to say that what they always said about the environment was that they should not measure the environmental process based on how long the process took, that it should be measured based on outcome and that was what they believed in.

Government Orders

Rest assured our Conservative government also understands that long-term economic prosperity and a high quality of life requires a healthy and sustainable environment. That is why protecting Canada's environment and the health of Canadians is a key priority of this government.

For instance, the safe navigation of oil tankers is very important to our government. Oil tankers have been moving safely and regularly along Canada's west coast since the 1930s. For example, 82 oil tankers arrived at Port Metro Vancouver in 2011. Nearly 200 tankers visited the ports of Prince Rupert and Kitimat over the past five years. They all did this safely.

Canada's regulatory system had a lot to do with that. Oil tankers in Canada must comply with the safety and environmental protection requirements of international conventions, and while in Canadian waters, with Canada's marine safety regulatory regime.

These requirements include double hulling of ships, mandatory pilotage, regular inspections and aerial surveillance. In fact, in 2011 almost 1,100 inspections were carried out across Canada, 147 of them on oil tankers.

We have a strong system, but any responsible government must continually work to make it stronger. That is why economic action plan 2012 includes further measures to support responsible energy development, including: new regulations which will enhance existing tanker inspection regime by strengthening vessel inspection requirements; a review of handling processes for oil products by an independent international panel of tanker experts; improved navigational products, such as updated charts for shipping routes; research to improve our scientific knowledge and understanding of risks; and to manage the impacts on marine resources habitat and users in the even of a marine pollution incident, and much more.

As I indicated in my introduction, we must be vigilant in guarding our spectacular natural treasures, but unlike the NDP, we realize that Canada's economic prosperity cannot be sustained without a healthy environment, just as environmental progress cannot be achieved without a healthy economy.

That is why I urge all hon. members to join with me in supporting Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, and supporting a stronger Canadian economy.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is very alarming. I cannot believe that the members opposite are talking about the budget as though it is something good for the environment. Just this past Tuesday, the commissioner submitted his report, which painted a very grim picture.

Bill C-38 will dismantle several tools related to the environment, including the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, which produces independent scientific studies on the environment. There are still 13,000 contaminated sites awaiting assessment and cleanup, and major oil development projects are on the way.

How can we trust a government that says one thing but does the complete opposite?

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Madam Speaker, I assure my hon. colleague that the environment is a priority for this government and will be into the future.

At the same time, we must also look at our resource sector. We must find environmentally sustainable ways to get our products and resources to the marketplace in other parts of the world as Canada is a trading nation. Therefore, we are making the review process for major economic projects more timely and transparent while protecting the environment, and helping realize the objective of one project, one review in a clearly defined period.

This is extremely important because those companies that are interested in investing large sums of money, perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars, need certainty with respect to finding out if their projects will be allowed to go forward within a specified time period.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, there are many topics that my hon. friend from North Vancouver touched upon in his speech, which I would love to probe further, but I want to focus on the tanker statements that he made.

This is a debate on Bill C-38 and nothing in Bill C-38 speaks to tankers, regulations for tankers or funding for tanker safety, so I will set that aside. That comes from other documents. There may be regulations in the future, but there is nothing in Bill C-38 on tanker safety.

I also would dispute the claim that the B.C. coast has had lots of oil tankers. There has been a moratorium against supertanker traffic on the B.C. coast, particularly the northern coastline, with the exception of Vancouver because it was grandfathered. Vancouver harbour was left out of the 1972 moratorium, which was respected by every level of federal and provincial governments since 1972. That is why there have not been tanker accidents.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Madam Speaker, I can say that from my home in North Vancouver I can see oil tankers go up Burrard Inlet on a regular basis. This has taken place since the 1930s without a single incident. It is responsible management. We have very strict regulations in place and it is because of those strict regulations that we have been able to keep our waters safe for almost 90 years.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fact is that eastern Canada has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions, while western Canada has increased emissions. Despite the provinces' ongoing efforts, the situation is still not under control.

Why is at least one-third of Bill C-38 about environmental deregulation?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the environment is a priority for this government and we intend to continue to protect our environmental treasures for future generations. At the same time, we are looking for ways of expanding the marketplace for our resources, which will be done in a responsible manner.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-38, the first implementation bill of budget 2012, an omnibus bill that should never have been.

If we want to talk about the budget that is one thing, but when everything is thrown into this bill, it makes it impossible for Canadians to have a real handle on exactly what it is that is in this budget, which causes a problem not only for me as a member of Parliament representing the people of Random—Burin—St. George's, but, I would expect, for all MPs who take great exception to what the government has done here.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast anxiously awaited this budget as they continued to struggle to make ends meet. I know that from first-hand experience as there are difficult times in my own riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, particularly when we are talking about reasonable industries, which is another issue that we need to deal with.

With sporadic job growth in the last six months and thousands of full-time jobs being replaced with part-time jobs, Canadians expected the budget to focus on jobs. Unfortunately, the government let Canadians down once again. Rather than focusing on much-needed job creation, the government has chosen to focus on dividing Canadians.

Since 2006, the government has sought to divide Canadians. It is obvious that budget 2012 is no different. Given the damage that will be done by this budget, it is impossible for anyone concerned about the future of our country to support its implementation.

As the government irresponsibly pits generation against generation, and we see that with the OAS changes, region against region, economy against environment, and when we consider that over 120 pages of the budget deal with the environment, it is reckless. In its reckless quest to divide and conquer, the government has done all of these things.

Canadians stand united in opposition to the government's dangerous politics and policies. The Liberals have never shied away from ensuring that government is run efficiently.

As members debate the implementation of this austerity budget, it is important to remember how Canada's economy reached this stage. The last Liberal government left the Conservatives with a \$13 billion surplus and the Conservatives promptly spent the Liberal surplus into a Conservative deficit well before the recession. In fact, the Conservatives have the distinction of being the highest spending, largest deficit creating government in Canadian history, and now they are trying to have Canadians take responsibility for that. The Conservatives are taking it out on the backs of Canadians.

Had the Conservatives not spent so much irresponsibly before the recession, Canada's deficit would be nowhere as high as it is today.

Bill C-38 is the first in a series that will attempt to implement the Conservative's slash-and-burn agenda and cause havoc in Atlantic Canada in particular as federal jobs and services are cut.

The Conservative government began its slash-and-burn agenda in the 2010 strategic review that saw \$32 million in cuts over three years to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, with an additional \$17.9 million in new permanent cuts. These new cuts in budget 2012 represent nearly 20% of ACOA's entire operating budget. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rely on ACOA to create opportunities for economic growth in their region, just as the rest of Atlantic Canada does.

Now is hardly a time to cut programs that stimulate the economy, help create jobs and increase federal tax revenue in the process.

Adding to the \$6.6 million in cuts over three years to Marine Atlantic, which occurred in the last budget, budget 2012 cuts an additional \$10.9 million in new permanent cuts. These cuts are especially difficult for my constituents when we consider that the Marine Atlantic ferry service is our connection to the rest of the country.

These cuts also include the closing of vitally important washing stations in Channel-Port aux Basques and Argentia. Some vehicles need to be washed off because they have picked up contaminated soil that is prevalent in Newfoundland and Labrador that carries the potato wart and the potato cyst nematode infected soil. Washing the vehicles ensures that the contaminated soil is not exported to other Canadian provinces where it could do irreparable harm, particularly in P.E.I. and New Brunswick, to the multi-billion dollar potato industry in this country.

History shows even a minor infestation in a potato-producing area can have serious consequences. In 2000, when a small area, a mere 24 hectares, of Prince Edward Island soil was found to have been contaminated by the potato wart fungus, the United States moved immediately to close its borders to P.E.I. potatoes for months. This resulted in a \$22 billion loss to P.E.I. potato farmers.

● (1130)

For a province such as Prince Edward Island where the potato industry is a major contributor to its economy, the loss of this industry would be as devastating as the cod moratorium is to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I can only explain how devastating that was when today that cod moratorium is still in existence. The cod has not returned and I can only imagine how it would be in P.E.I. if the contaminated soil were to impact the potato industry there to the extent that the cod moratorium has impacted Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of particular concern to my constituents in Random—Burin—St. George's and to the many coastal communities in Canada is the dangerous approach the government has taken to the fishery.

Government Orders

Last year's budget cut the Department of Fisheries and Oceans by \$84.8 million over three years, while this budget goes further, permanently cutting an additional \$79.3 million from the DFO budget. Worse, the government is rolling the dice when it comes to fish management strategy by cutting the financial capacity for evidence-based fish monitoring and protection of fish habitats and removing the protection of many freshwater fish species.

Even the Conservatives are upset with this attack on the fishery. Former Conservative fisheries minister, Tom Siddon, said, "This is a covert attempt to gut the Fisheries Act, and it's appalling that they should be attempting to do this under the radar".

In addition to the Conservatives' cuts to the fishery, they are considering sweeping changes to the fleet separation and owner operated policies, which would directly affect 30,000 jobs and destroy small rural fishing communities. If DFO were to cancel the fleet separation policy, allowing large processors to engage in the inshore fishery, the traditional harvester would eventually be squeezed out of the industry. Clearly, the Conservatives have no interest in seeing the fishery survive.

As I mentioned earlier, I also have concerns with the proposed changes to employment insurance in Bill C-38. While not all changes are negative, we know already from budget 2012 that instead of working to help create more jobs, the government is increasing a direct tax on employment by hiking the employment insurance premiums by \$600 million. EI recipients must apply for suitable employee vacancies to qualify for benefits. Bill C-38 would delete the provisions that deem employment opportunities to be unsuitable whether or not the opportunity is in the claimant's usual occupation and offers a lower rate of pay or working conditions that are less favourable than the claimant has a right to expect, only something that we would all expect.

This bill also would unduly grant the minister the power to make changes to the EI Act without legislation and parliamentary approval by giving the minister the power to change the definition of "suitable employment". What is suitable employment? There was no consultation whatsoever with either employers or employees with respect to these proposed changes to the EI. The Conservatives have yet to announce details of what they will consider suitable employment and yet they expect Parliament to grant them unrestricted power to do so. People are nervous and naturally scared not knowing what to expect.

One has to wonder if the government's end game is to force Atlantic Canadians to relocate permanently to Alberta for work or to accept jobs outside of their skill area. There is no discussion about appropriate training for people and, of course, when they get to the age of 55 or 60, particularly if they have been working in a fish plant all of their life and, in a lot of cases, in the seasonal industry in the fish plant, what are they going to retrain for? What other skill will they retrain for at that age in their life? It is a time when they would like to retire and they would like to retire at 65, as has always been the case. However, the government has seen fit to move that age of eligibility from 65 to 67, making it even more difficult on people who work in demanding environments.

In contrast to the government's attempt to implement its austerity budget is the government's shockingly expensive advertising

campaign to try to convince Canadians that the government is not failing Canada, not as badly as it seems anyway.

• (1135)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Madam Speaker, I respect the member for the passion that she brings to her speeches.

She began her speech by saying that our government was running deficits before the global recession. That is not true. It is misleading the House to say so. Our government had balanced budgets, and she should know this well. The global recession that took place was beyond Canada's control. She should also know that Canada is doing better than any other G7 country in handling the global recession. We have created 700,000 net new jobs, three-quarters of them are in the private sector and 90% of them are full-time jobs. We are doing incredibly well.

She said that our government has driven us into deficit, and then spent the last 90% of her time saying that we have a slash and burn agenda. She has completely contradicted herself. I do not know if she is aware of how contradictory she was and how badly she failed in messaging a position on this.

She should note that the Liberal Party, her party, voted for those budgets that she says were so devastating. She stood and voted for them but she thinks they were awful. If they were so awful, perhaps she should apologize to her constituents.

Later in her speech she said that "clearly the Conservatives have no interest in seeing the fisheries survive". Does she—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must give the hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's the opportunity to respond.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, obviously my hon. colleague is being very defensive, and rightly so, but it is impossible to defend what the government has done. The Conservative government spent a \$13 billion surplus. It ran the country into the highest deficit position ever and now it is trying to take it out on the backs of Canadians. Yes, slash and burn, because the decisions the government is making are hurting Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Why is the government increasing the number of seats in the House of Commons? I would like my colleague to explain that to Canadians. The government wants to increase the House of Commons by 30 additional seats. That is totally unacceptable.

Why is the government looking at spending billions on—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a quaint expression where I come from and it is "fair wages benefit the whole community". It is based on the notion that a well-paid, consuming, middle class is good for the economy.

Why then, deep within the bowels of Bill C-38 do we find this little jewel that repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act for the construction industry? It used to be the prevailing wage was somewhere close to union scale for federally regulated construction projects, like pipelines for instance. Now, a construction contractor can offer any salary and any hours of work with no overtime. If no Canadians apply within 10 days, that contractor gets temporary foreign workers in there who will work for peanuts and sleep six to a hotel room and undermine the entire prevailing wage set by the industry.

Some people have worked 100 years toward setting fair wages for the construction industry and that was manifested in the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. This piece of legislation would repeal that and enable pipeline contractors to build the next pipeline with temporary foreign workers.

Does my colleague realize that 30% of all the jobs created since 2007 in this country have been filled by temporary foreign workers? These are not landed immigrants. They are now being paid any wage they want.

• (1140)

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, what we are seeing is a reflection of the thinking behind the government and absolutely no respect for people who work in seasonal industries in particular. The government is suggesting that people will have to find suitable employment right away but they do not even get to decide what suitable employment is. The fact is, the minister will decide.

Absolutely no consideration is being given to Canadians who need and want work but for whatever reason are not able to avail themselves of work. They are being forced to take whatever is available. If this legislation is going to leave it up to the minister to define suitable work, then we have a problem in this country.

With respect to foreign workers, I too am concerned that we are going to end up driving down the wages of Canadians by going down this path.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to have the opportunity today to rise on behalf of the citizens of Winnipeg South Centre and to speak to my colleagues about the government's economic action plan 2012.

As a chartered accountant, I am proud to be part of a government that represents sound fiscal planning, job creation and economic growth. As a mother, I am grateful for the government's direction on long-term prosperity. We have to take care of future generations. We need to be responsible and make sure that our children do not start their lives with their futures mortgaged. It matters that we are good stewards. It matters to our children's futures and well-being. It matters to our country's future and well-being.

I would like to speak of our government's support in economic action plan 2012 for research and development and commercialization because it also matters for the future.

[Translation]

The Minister of Finance regularly consults private-sector economists to find out what they think about the future of Canada's economy. The economic forecasts in our 2012 economic action plan

Government Orders

are based on a survey carried out in early March of this year and take into account the viewpoints of 14 independent private-sector economists. The average of these independent private-sector economic forecasts has been used as the basis for financial planning since 1994, which gives our economic forecasts an independent dimension. This practice is endorsed by international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund.

In addition, since the 2012 economic action plan was tabled last month, Canada's leading economists have applauded its prudent outlook and Canada's solid economic performance.

[English]

For example, on March 29, economist Patricia Croft said of the budget's "initiatives in the job front and addressing the demographic challenge.... In both regards I'd have to give the budget probably an 'A'.... In a global context, I think Canada is in a fabulous position".

Avery Shenfeld, Chief Economist, CIBC World Markets, said in *The Toronto Star* on March 30 that the budget "makes sense in a world economy that is still not what we would like it to be... Relative to what anybody else is doing, we still come out with flying colours".

I mentioned that I am a chartered accountant. I would like to speak to comments made by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants regarding the government's budget. The CICA is a professional body representing CAs in business, government and public practice. It even represents a member of Parliament. In its budget brief 2012, it said that the budget "positions Canada well for the future while providing prudent fiscal management". These are the fiscal managers of Canada. It continued, "Budget measures being introduced are designed to serve the short-term while maintaining a vision that embraces the long-term."

Given those glowing remarks, I am going to share with the House today some of the initiatives being taken by our government to support innovation and create a reputation for Canada as a world leader in cutting-edge research, development and commercialization.

[Translation]

The global economy is changing. Competition for the brightest minds is intensifying. The pace of technological change is creating new opportunities while making older business practices obsolete.

Canada's long-term economic competitiveness in this emerging knowledge economy demands globally competitive businesses that innovate and create high-quality jobs.

Government Orders

•(1145)

[English]

As the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages just said, we have created over 700,000 jobs since the global crisis in 2009 and 90% of those are full-time positions.

[Translation]

Since 2006, the government has provided nearly \$8 billion in new funding for initiatives to support science, technology and the growth of innovative firms. Despite strong policy fundamentals to support innovation in Canada, Canadian businesses do not take full advantage.

Canada continues to lag behind peer countries in terms of overall innovation performance, including private sector investment in research and development and the commercialization of research into products and processes that create high-value jobs and economic growth.

Following a comprehensive review of federal support for research and development by an expert panel led by Thomas Jenkins, the government is committed to a new approach to supporting innovation in Canada by pursuing active business-led initiatives that focus resources on better meeting private sector needs.

In economic action plan 2012, our government announced \$1.1 billion over five years to directly support research and development and \$500 million for venture capital.

These investments and actions keep our economy strong, create high-quality jobs and ensure that Canada is a premier destination for the world's brightest minds.

Economic action plan 2012 implements important measures that will make it possible to meet the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the global economy, while maintaining sustainable social programs and sound public finances for future generations.

[English]

I engaged in significant pre-budget consultations within my community and I continue to consult widely to best serve my constituents. I recently had the honour of speaking with Mr. Kevin Dancy, the national president of the CICA. We discussed the budget. Of course, Mr. Dancy is very interested in serving his community of chartered accountants, and there were three areas that Mr. Dancy singled out and praised.

First, the new tax incentives for innovation, which I have already referenced.

Second, the significant reduction of red tape being undertaken by the government to assist small businesses in particular to create jobs and assist with continued economic growth.

•(1150)

[Translation]

Economic growth is truly necessary.

[English]

Finally, critical to Canada's accounting professions and to many other professions in Canada are the measures being taken by the government's commitment to support improvements to foreign credential recognition.

Economic action plan 2012 was developed with current and future Canadians in mind. It creates new opportunities for the brightest Canadians to create jobs through innovation and fosters long-term financial growth. Its prime focus is on job creation. The economic action plan focuses on economic growth and long-term prosperity. I am very happy to say that it recognizes the importance of support to science, technology and commercialization.

As the global economy changes, I am proud to see Canada remain proactive in preparation for a future of economic prosperity that will benefit our children.

To that end, I am so proud to be associated with a government that not only cares about the right now but cares enough about our future generations to make things possible. We do not just care about giving pensions to pensioners now; we care about making sure that our children and their children will also have those privileges.

I am proud to be associated with a government that is focused on creating jobs for Canadians and on ensuring we have une croissance économique extraordinaire et, franchement, le meilleur du monde and is focused on long-term prosperity.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-38 amends the Employment Equity Act so that it no longer applies to federal contracts. Women's groups have been fighting for pay equity for several decades.

Would the member, who has a federal contract, agree to be paid less for her work rather than having equal pay for equal work?

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member is aware, but all employees of the House are employees of the federal government and are working for Canadian citizens. We have taken a pay cut for three years. Members of Parliament have taken a pay cut.

Therefore, in answer to her question, I am very proud to do so because we are all doing our part.

[Translation]

We have a plan for economic growth, which is very important. The first part of our plan will create jobs, which is key. The second part of our plan will address economic growth and, as I mentioned in my speech, that is very important for long-term prosperity.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have worked with my Conservative colleague and I know that she really believes what she is saying. By the way, I would like to congratulate her on the continued improvement of her French.

Government Orders

She spoke a great deal about job creation. I would like to know how she reconciles this with, for example, what the Parliamentary Budget Officer told the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. He confirmed that the Conservatives' austerity budget will result in the loss of 43,000 jobs and slow the economic recovery, and that the budget and previous cuts together would result in a total loss of 103,000 jobs.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I take pride in her comments about the improvement in my French. That is important to me.

As I mentioned, Canada's economic growth has been tremendous.

• (1155)

[English]

We truly are the envy of the world.

[Translation]

We have been recognized by the International Monetary Fund, and publications such as *Forbes* magazine, *Fortune* magazine and *The Wall Street Journal* have published articles on our economy.

[English]

I will learn how to say this en français very soon, but we are the envy of the world.

[Translation]

We have created more than 700,000 jobs since 2009, which is incredible in this fragile global economy. Some of our counterparts in Europe are grappling with economies that are still too fragile. I am pleased with our approach to job creation and economic growth, but most of all, I am pleased with our current prosperity and the outlook for generations to come.

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be speaking today on budget 2012, which is going to be keeping our taxes low and returning Canada to a balanced budget over the medium term, which is good news for Canadians.

Economic action plan 2012 focuses on creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Budget 2012 also demonstrates the Conservative government's strong support for British Columbia through record federal transfer supports for hospitals, schools and other critical services. Transfers totalling over \$5.6 billion in 2012-13, represent an increase of over \$1 billion from the former Liberal government.

The average hard-working family is paying \$3,100 less in taxes under our government. It is also keeping taxes low for small and medium-sized business, and it facilitates the responsible development of Canada's energy and natural resource sector. We will do this without raising taxes and without cutting transfers to the provinces for services that families rely on, like health care and education.

There is more that our government can and will do in the years to come to ensure Canada remains competitive in the world market and provides great opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The natural resource sector employs more than 760,000 people in communities throughout the country. It is the engine that drives our great nation. Over the next 10 years, 500 major projects, representing \$500 billion in new investment, are planned across Canada. In the rich oil sands developments, the Canadian Energy Research Institute estimates that in the next 25 years oil sands growth will support, on average, 480,000 jobs per year in Canada and will add \$2.3 trillion to our GDP.

In my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, Teck Resources, the world's second largest producer of metallurgical coal, is expanding to ensure that it is able to keep up with the world demand for steelmaking coal.

We must ensure that the natural resource sector can move forward with projects in a timely and transparent manner, while effectively protecting the environment. With that in mind, our government will focus on four major areas to streamline the review process for major economic projects. We will be making the review process more predictable and timely. We will reduce duplication. We will strengthen environmental protection. We will enhance consultation with aboriginal peoples. With that, we are going to consolidate responsibility for reviews and have fixed beginning-to-end timelines. Panel reviews will be 24 months. NEB hearings will be 18 months. Standard EAs will be 12 months. We will institute a one project, one review process.

There are countless examples of companies having to go through a dual process for a project only to be approved at one level and denied at another. At best, this is extremely frustrating, provides no surety to investors in the project and further bogs down the process.

What are we going to do? We propose to invest \$54 million to renew the major projects management office to transform the approvals process for major natural resource projects by shortening the average review time from 4 years to 22 months and improve accountability by monitoring the performance of federal regulatory departments.

We propose to invest \$13.6 million over the next two years to support consultation with aboriginal peoples. We want to ensure that their rights and interests are respected and also facilitate discussions on how they can benefit from economic development opportunities.

We propose investing \$35.7 million over the next two years to support responsible energy development.

• (1200)

I have heard much about the concern of tanker traffic specific to our west coast. Oil tankers have been moving safely along Canada's west coast since the 1930s; 82 oil tankers arrived at Port Metro Vancouver last year, and over the past five years nearly 200 oil and chemical tankers have visited the ports of Prince Rupert and Kitimat. They all did so safely.

Government Orders

Tankers in Canada must comply with the safety and environmental protection requirements of international conventions, and they must also comply with Canada's marine safety regulatory regime. This includes double hulling of ships, mandatory pilotage, regular inspections and aerial surveillance.

We propose to invest \$13.5 million over the next two years to strengthen pipeline safety. We will do this by increasing the number of inspections on oil and gas pipelines from 100 to 150, and we will double the number of annual comprehensive audits from three to six, to identify issues before incidents happen. Why? Because we value the importance of economic stewardship. We want our natural resource sector to continue to be the safest and most environmentally responsible in the world.

Our government also recognizes that in order for our business sector to flourish, we must open new markets for it. That is why we will continue to explore free trade agreements with countries around the world. It is the best way for Canada to grow its economy and create jobs.

Our Conservative government recognizes the importance of clean energy and the opportunities available to those who wish to explore this avenue. As such, under the capital cost allowance regime in the income tax system, class 43.2 of Schedule II of the Income Tax Regulations, we will provide an accelerated CCA rate for investment in specified clean energy generation and conservation equipment. Here are some examples: using a renewable energy source such as wind, solar and small hydro; using fuels from waste such as landfill gas, wood waste and manure; and making efficient use of fossil fuels such as in high-efficiency cogeneration systems, which simultaneously produce electricity and useful heat.

This is an exciting opportunity for communities across Canada to look at investing in cogeneration plants that can create electricity and heat from solid waste, as it is something that every community across Canada must deal with on a daily basis. It opens up opportunities for companies across Canada to expand in new technology, which will benefit Canadians for generations to come.

Finally, I am extremely pleased that our government will invest \$150 million over the next two years to support repairs and improvements to existing community facilities. This will be done under the community infrastructure improvement fund. As a former mayor, I can say that keeping community facilities updated is vitally important to ensure they can be used in a safe and efficient manner. Every community in Canada can benefit from this program, and in turn it will promote healthy and vibrant cities and towns from coast to coast.

This touches on just a small portion of the economic action plan 2012. I am proud to be part of a government that continues to focus on jobs, growth and the economy. This is what Canadians want us to do: be responsible, forward-thinking and prudent.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my Conservative colleague, I would like to point out a glaring contradiction in his speech. He just said that the budget seeks to reduce conflicts between environmental

assessments, but Bill C-38 does exactly the opposite by allowing cabinet to overrule the National Energy Board's assessments. The NEB approves or rejects projects, but cabinet could overrule those decisions. What is more, Bill C-38 limits the review timelines for the NEB and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. That is serious. Canadians need more safety, not less.

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, one project, one review. It is what I have heard from my constituents in Kootenay—Columbia with Teck Resources, who go through a number of these every year. One project, one review for the oil sands, one project, one review for all natural resources.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives truly want to ensure that all Canadians live in prosperity, then how do they explain that there is nothing in the budget for social housing when everyone knows that the gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing?

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, by creating jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and not only the natural resources sector, but other sectors across this great land, we will be able to provide greater transfers to the provinces to allow those provinces to work with social housing and to assist those who need it.

I believe that by creating jobs it will do what the hon. member asked for.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, representing British Columbia, I would like the member to tell members of the opposition why they should consider voting for the bill. When it comes to our environment, one project, one plan, because of how important it is for the pipeline to go through northern Alberta and British Columbia.

I would like him to expand on how important that is for our economy.

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, it is important to everyone in British Columbia, not only for the Enbridge pipeline but for all natural resource projects in British Columbia to move forward. It is vastly important, not only to British Columbians, but all Canadians because of the amount of jobs that will be created. It is an awesome opportunity for everyone across this country.

I believe that when Canadians see how much opportunity is available in British Columbia, they will come, they will work, they will create families there and they will be able to do a lot of things that make Canadians prosper.

Government Orders

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member had to say. His interests are no different from mine or anybody else's in wanting people to have access to good jobs.

I wonder if he would comment on the fact that in the government's haste to create good jobs is the effect of taking away of the Fisheries Act or the environmental assessment legislation to sufficiently guard against the soiling, the contamination of rivers, streams, air and land that will not be fixed for generations. Is that not a distance too far to go in our haste to create a few jobs in the short term?

• (1210)

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, as well as across Canada, we have some of the greatest environmental assessment processes in place. I do not believe at all that by eliminating what we are about to do that we would jeopardize anything in any type of recognition of assessment.

I believe the EA process is one of the best in the world.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is inconceivable that the Conservatives could present a bill that is 421 pages long and then limit debate to the bare minimum. It is clear they want to pass this bill quickly, but does that not suggest that perhaps they are afraid of the public's reaction to the bill if we were to take the time to properly examine it?

I have examined this bill thoroughly and I can assure you that I have never seen such a hodgepodge in the House of Commons. In true Conservative style, this document is not at all what it claims to be: rather than a budget implementation bill, it is a bit of a free pass for businesses and politicians who have no use for transparency.

Bill C-38 is much more than just an omnibus bill, like those we have become accustomed to with these Conservatives. This bill constitutes a brutal and unreasonable seizure of power that leaves Canadians unable to challenge any of it. We are therefore very surprised as we watch this government getting rid of anything that could limit the damage caused by its blind ideology. After taking a *laissez-faire* approach for so long, now they want to dismantle everything.

This bill ridicules the institutions of the very government that introduced it. Is that not ironic?

We have already seen the Conservative government's bias in favour of employers in certain disputes, for instance, those involving Air Canada and Canada Post. However, this government does not seem to care at all about well-paid, stable jobs for Canadians, because this new bill will cause even more poverty.

This government is allergic to basic rights and has restricted the right of free association by giving a minister—a minister, mind you—the power to veto collective agreements.

In other words, this government thinks it is okay to scuttle a good-faith negotiation between two parties to further a partisan and ideological political agenda. That applies to all workers. In addition, a significant number of federal government workers will also be affected: women.

I have fought for women's rights for 40 years. There are no words strong enough to describe how angry I was when I realized that the government no longer intended to make its contracts compliant with the Employment Equity Act. The Conservatives seem to believe that father knows best and a woman's place is in the home. All the historic progress we have made toward achieving equality is being recast as purely cosmetic.

Women have the right to be treated fairly, and trying to make women pay the price for the government's penny-pinching is downright disgraceful. How can the government justify such an irresponsible decision?

By so doing, the Conservatives are saying that feminist struggles, which were particularly successful in Quebec, were simply a glitch in history's patriarchal plan. Well, that is not how I see this country and I am certain that many of my fellow Canadians agree with me.

While the Conservatives are throwing the door wide open to privatization, I am saying that we are soon going to take over this government and give the control and the benefits back to Canadians. This government, which seems to work harder for shareholders, has gone too far this time. Canadians are not fools and they can see that the Conservatives are trying to deceive them.

And what is all this for? Over a third of this giant bill is dedicated to doing away with environmental protection measures in a clear path that goes from the plains to the Pacific Ocean, where the Conservatives hope to get a share of Asia's wealth. What a plan.

Promoting the economy is not a bad thing in and of itself. However, Canada used the approach of putting all its eggs in one basket for too long for us to want to go back to it.

Focusing all our energy on oil can only lead to a historic dead end of monumental proportions. It is a well-known fact that the wealth of economies that depend on a single resource is short lived and poorly distributed.

In any case, sustainable development is not of interest to this government, which is also doomed to be unsustainable. The champions of “bigger and better” will end up realizing that irreversible climate change has already begun to transform things.

Although some believe that they are in the Texas of the 1950s, I would like us to be rooted in 21st century Canada.

In terms of the environment, it is not surprising to learn that the Conservatives intend to broaden the definition of prohibited political activities for environmental groups, but only so they can place more restrictions on these groups.

While this government cozies up to oil companies and eliminates all the so-called legislative constraints with respect to the environment, it is also limiting the fundamental right of freedom of expression for hundreds of Canadian groups.

Do Canadians who have been given the right to assemble under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and who choose to express their opinions, again by virtue of this Charter, not have the right to enjoy the full benefits of their citizenship?

Government Orders

•(1215)

On another matter, Bill C-38 confirms what we already knew: Rights & Democracy will be abolished. It was obviously an embarrassment to this government to support an organization that was neutral, independent and dedicated to the cause of democracy. Totalitarian governments, oil dynasties and, worse, communist dictatorships do not favour the independence of institutions. Have the Conservatives become communists?

For the Conservatives, it is all about the open market, except for matters under state control, which they manage with an iron fist. The Conservatives seem quite motivated to give more and more arbitrary powers to their ministers. That is the case for the Minister of Health, who will now be able to approve certain products without having them go through the usual inspection process, which is supposed to take place with any imported product.

Based on the government's priorities, Canadians' health has taken a back seat to profitability. But who will benefit from this profitability? When we consider that so much freedom is being given to business and so little to the people, we are justified in wondering who this government is working for. The answer is obvious.

More proof that this government does not care about well-paid jobs is that it thought it would be a good idea to enshrine in this bill the possibility of allowing 2,500 foreign workers to fill highly specialized positions in Canada and then leave again. Now the government wants to contract out Canadian citizenship.

Neo-liberalism loves outsourcing because it sets workers in a race to the lowest wages. This government has taken that to a new level. If it cannot outsource our resources, then it will import workers. Importing workers means the commodification of human beings by virtue of an ideology that would eliminate all trade barriers, but add many barriers to life for the general public.

With the Conservatives, it is law and order for the people and anarchy for big business. It was not enough for the Conservative government to considerably reduce the powers of the Auditor General and to completely get rid of the Inspector General of CSIS, who was getting in the way of its agenda; now the government is opening the door to privatizing the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

In other words, by playing with alliances and subsidiaries, a business could wind up doing its own inspections. Is that the kind of rigour that Canadians deserve? In addition to the Conservatives' devious behaviour and their refusal to submit their bill to thorough examination, we also see a threat to freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, transparency and oversight.

While perhaps not an outright coup d'état, this bill places Canada on a dangerous path towards dictatorship. This bill's shortsighted short-term vision is eclipsed only by the long-term, harmful effects it will have. We all want a prosperous economy, but that should not be a government's only goal, since a government has many roles to play. There are many important responsibilities that only a responsible government can assume with authority. Otherwise, it would be too easy.

With this bill, the Conservative government is undermining its own legitimacy and giving up on what it sees as inevitable. It is high time that this government started showing some leadership and did us the honour of behaving like a real government for this orphan country. Instead, it seems to be doing everything in its power to destroy our institutions, sully our international reputation and shoot down everything that reflects basic common sense.

The Conservatives do not think like us. They spend. They spend money on prisons, on F-35s and on \$16 glasses of orange juice, yet they slash away at the very essence of our democratic way of life. It makes no sense. This government already looks old, used up, wasteful and tired. It seems incapable of assuming the most basic responsibilities towards the public. The government must always remember this: Canadians are not fools. No, we are not fools.

•(1220)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her speech. I think she raised a number of interesting points that I agree with.

I am very concerned about the fact that the government is using its budget and its omnibus bill to attack environmental institutions. For example, it has significantly weakened protection provided by the Fisheries Act, including fish habitat protection. I think that is a mistake. In the long term, industries will suffer because of this government's obsession with abolishing all possible restrictions preventing companies from doing things like building pipelines across rivers. In the long term, that will cause tremendous economic harm to people who depend on natural resources such as fisheries.

Is my colleague as concerned as I am about the way this omnibus bill attacks environmental institutions and laws?

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a very good point.

Yes, I am very worried about our environment and about fish. Obviously, if our rivers and oceans are polluted, we will not have any fish to eat, nor other creatures, such as shellfish, because they will be too contaminated by chemicals such as petroleum. That is why we must protect our environment. That is the only way to ensure our food sovereignty.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her incredible and passionate speech.

She was saying that she has advocated for women's rights in her riding and in Quebec for a long time. I would like to know to what extent this budget does not meet the needs of the public and, by extension, the needs of women.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

Yes, I have been working for 40 years to advance the status of women, not to have it move backward. I did this work at an association in Quebec.

With regard to pay equity, this is another step backward. We are once again regressing. However, it is important to know that it is not only the situation of women that will be regressing, but also that of single mothers, who will have less income when they retire.

Government Orders

It is very important to achieve pay equity because, if not, women will still be poor at age 67.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments but under this government's leadership Canadians are better off.

Parents are recognized for the investments they make in their children's sports and arts. I had a group of seniors here from Aurora this week. When they visited Parliament Hill they thanked us for allowing the pension income splitting, because many of them are now able to stay in their own homes.

I know that constituents in Newmarket—Aurora are very pleased with the fact that our government has created over 700,000 net new jobs across the country.

This budget continues these kinds of investments in Canadians, creating opportunities for the next generation. We consulted across the country. When will the NDP get on board with the rest of Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

That is certainly not what I personally am hearing in my riding and it is not what I am hearing from my NDP colleagues. Back home, people are concerned and do not know how they are going to pay their rent or make their mortgage payments.

They are concerned about having to retire at 67 when they may no longer be able to work at 63 or 65. I am thinking, for example, of those who work in construction or of women who spend their days on their feet behind a cash register at a business of some sort. They are very concerned.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to highlight some of the key measures in Bill C-38, our government's plan to legislate economic action plan 2012, which will, undoubtedly, help to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Economic action plan 2012 contains numerous measures that would benefit Canadians, and I will highlight a few today. Today I will talk about something that is very imperative for any politician. As I stand here today and speak in the House of Commons, New Brunswick is in the midst of a municipal election. Members are probably wondering why I am raising this today. I have had the opportunity in the last weeks and months to speak to various organizations throughout my riding and, undoubtedly, the municipal election came up.

The comments that I provide with respect to the municipal election are that when people are approached by candidates looking for their support, they should ask what it is the candidates see as priorities for the communities and what they will focus on if they are elected. I believe that it is very important for governments to outline very clearly what it is they will focus on, what they see as priorities

and that they listen to the people they represent and understand very clearly what the priorities of the people are.

I have had the benefit, pleasure and honour of serving at all three levels of government in this great country. I have been elected to municipal office, provincial office and now I serve in a federal capacity. I believe that when we ask for support, we should outline very clearly what it is we will focus on if we are elected. Our government has done that. It has been very clear. Members are probably wondering where I am going with this. We are very clear when we talk about the need to ensure federal transfers to the provinces. The provinces are the lifeblood of our country, the very fabric of our federation. We have had governments in the past that have broken that trust, tattered the fabric and have brought great concern to the general public.

I speak from experience when I talk about how important federal transfers are to the provinces. I speak from experience in the province of New Brunswick where its federal transfers will be in excess of \$2.5 billion through this budget and economic action plan 2012. Why do I highlight this? It is because it is important that Canadians, New Brunswickers and the people of my riding of Saint John, New Brunswick know and understand that our government feels that this is a priority. Our government is committed to this priority because Canadians have told us that it is a priority. We will maintain that trust and certainly continue to grow the transfers. We have done that every year that we have been in office and in every budget that we have brought forward. This is not by chance or happenstance.

Many members in the chamber have had the same experiences I have. The Minister of Finance was a provincial politician before he came to this great House. The member for West Nova was the minister of finance for the Province of Nova Scotia and he understands. Many members in our caucus understand how important these transfers are to maintaining the services that our constituents in our provinces depend upon. It is very important that we maintain these transfers so that the Province of New Brunswick, in my case, is able to provide the health care and education programs that the people of New Brunswick desire, require, depend upon and have come to rely on our government and the provincial government for.

• (1230)

I did not come to this realization by just walking into this chamber. It comes from the experiences that I have had in my past life, whether in municipal or provincial politics. I served in a government that was very clear and focused provincially. I served with a premier who laid out priorities and strategies to the electorate and stayed very true to them. In my lifetime, he was the only premier in New Brunswick's history to deliver seven consecutive surpluses and the only premier in that province to ever pay down debt. Just so there is no misunderstanding, I am 48 years old. That is a long time. That is a huge commitment. However, that shows that when a government is prepared to focus on the priorities, it can achieve what it set out to do.

Government Orders

We have had governments in the past. We have had Liberal governments provincially and federally that did not maintain that commitment, did not stay true to their priorities and were not focused. They did not have the same level of respect for the provinces that make this federation great. They tried to balance the books on the backs of the provinces. The results were that we had less health care services in the province of New Brunswick and less money for educational and social programs. Was the federal government of the day concerned about that? No. It was not concerned because it did not see the provinces as a true partner. It did not see the value in the relationship that the provinces and the federal government needed to maintain. We in New Brunswick suffered, Atlantic Canadians suffered and this great nation suffered.

That Liberal government made a choice and today it is paying the price. Canadians did not give the Liberals the trust that they thought they deserved. Canadians put them out of office and put our government into office because we demonstrated that we understood the priorities of Canadians. We understand that Canadians value the relationship between the provinces and the federal government. We respect that and we will maintain it.

The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have been very clear in saying that we will not balance the books on the backs of the provinces. We see the provinces and the federal government in a true partnership. They have demonstrated that commitment over and over again.

Just recently the Minister of Finance announced that we will see health transfers continue to grow by 6% for the next five years and 3% at a minimum beyond that based on economic growth. That is an increase in health care transfers. That is quite the contrast to the days when the Liberal Party ruled this House. It did not understand how important it was for Canadians to see that partnership and its value.

I know my time is running short so I will talk about how important it is that we maintain this relationship. However, I also want to ensure that people know that this budget demonstrates very clearly that we value that relationship, that we understand the priorities of Canadians, that we are focused on those priorities and that we will deliver when it comes to jobs, growth and true prosperity. We will deliver for Canadians.

• (1235)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on my hon. colleague's mention of transparency. I certainly appreciate his point. I appreciate governments that are transparent.

However, I will focus specifically on one of the many changes that will happen as a result of the budget implementation bill, and that is the changes to the Fisheries Act. I submit that these changes will be huge. The fact that nobody knows about these changes and that nobody was consulted on them poses the question about how transparent the government has been with respect to one aspect. I know that 70 amendments to legislation have been included in this budget, most of which are non-finance related, including changes to the Fisheries Act, without consultation.

Would my hon. colleague comment with respect to those changes, especially with regard to the lack of transparency around those changes.

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question, but I wonder if he listened to my speech at all, because I did not talk about transparency but about a focus on priorities. I spoke about how we as a government are very focused on the priorities of Canadians.

Canadians have told us very clearly that they want to see economic growth and long-term prosperity, and we are taking the steps that are necessary to ensure economic growth and long-term prosperity.

That is what I am trying to say here today: that we are focused and that we are committed to ensuring that Canadians get the government they want.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague for Saint John spoke about his service in the New Brunswick legislature, where he served in the cabinet of a friend of mine, Bernard Lord.

In light of his service in the provincial government, he would undoubtedly be aware of a very important institution in Kent County, the Hervé Michaud agricultural research station. It is an experimental farm operated by the Government of Canada that has, unfortunately, been slated to close.

World-class scientists, people like Dr. Jean-Pierre Privé, have come to New Brunswick and have done world-class research, particularly with respect to small fruits such as strawberries and berries. They have developed a working relationship with local producers; as an example, my colleague representing Saint John will know La Récolte de Chez Nous, which brings together local producers. Very small local producers have developed a partnership with this experimental farm. They are very concerned that the loss of that farm and that research will have very negative effects on their ability to compete as a local agricultural industry.

I wonder if my colleague for Saint John would cast his mind a little east of Saint John and think of these poor farmers in Kent County that his government appears to be abandoning.

Mr. Rodney Weston: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows full well, in my time in government in New Brunswick I was the minister of agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, so I know full well what the member speaks of here today.

However, if the hon. member had been paying attention to my comments here today, he would know that we are talking about priorities. The member supported the previous government in New Brunswick, which had the ideology that we could be all things to all people. However, if everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

That is what we had. We had a government in New Brunswick that gave us the largest growth in the debt of the Province of New Brunswick in four short years. It was because they had no priorities, because they were not focused. In four short years we saw a \$3 billion increase in the debt of the Province of New Brunswick. We will not repeat those mistakes.

Government Orders

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition of Bill C-38. As the Conservatives' first budget as a majority government, the budget implementation act serves as a road map to the government's priority for these four years. Let me say that the future does not look very green.

The biggest theme I drew from this budget is the government's focus on large industrial projects as the key to Canada's economic success. Behind the guise of such words as "streamlining" and "modernization", the government is stripping away long-standing protections for our environment from short-sighted, unsustainable development projects such as, for instance, the Enbridge pipeline proposal.

One-third of the budget implementation act is dedicated to gutting environmental laws that protect Canada's fisheries, rivers, oceans and ecosystems. With the stroke of a pen, the government would eliminate decades of progress, condemning future generations to deal with its mess.

I would like to speak on the changes to the Fisheries Act the Conservative government is attempting to sneak through in this Trojan Horse budget implementation act. These changes are an undemocratic and egregious abuse of power that would do permanent harm to the ecosystem and to Canada's fisheries.

Let us make no mistake: these are radical and dangerous changes. Rather than prohibiting the harmful alteration, disruption and destruction of fish habitat, it would narrow habitat protection to apply to those activities that would harm "...fish that are part of a commercial, recreational or Aboriginal fishery, or to fish that support such a fishery". The Conservative government does not seem to understand the concept of an ecosystem or biodiversity. If the Conservatives did, they would know that they cannot protect only one species of fish and forsake the others.

The Conservatives would like Canadians to think that they care about creating jobs, yet Western Economic Diversification Canada would be cut by \$16.3 million by 2015. Our economy in western Canada is still facing economic challenges, and we need Western Economic Diversification Canada to assist in the development of new industry and jobs. Downturns in commodity prices generally lead to volatility in western Canada, particularly in forestry, agriculture and manufacturing. Canada's New Democrats believe we should invest more in research and development, encourage more participation by aboriginal peoples and get people properly trained for jobs for the future.

For months I have heard from constituents who are furious with the government for raising the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 to 67. Canadians understand that our demographics are changing, but these negative changes to OAS are motivated not by statistics but by ideology.

Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and the old age security program is sustainable in the long term. Seniors who would be hit hardest by these changes are those who have worked all their lives for modest incomes at jobs that often take a toll on their bodies. Instead of raising the age of retirement, Canada's New Democrats continue to put forward practical solutions that would

strengthen Canadians' retirement security. We propose working with the provinces to increase CPP, with the goal of eventually doubling benefits. We also propose increasing the guaranteed income supplement. This measure alone would immediately lift every senior in Canada out of poverty.

I have also heard from constituents who believe that the government's move to eliminate all funding for Katimavik is short-sighted. Past participants have written to me to describe the multitude of economic and social benefits that this program brings to communities across Canada. The government's cuts to youth programming come at a time when the youth unemployment rate in Canada remains at over 14%. That is double the national average.

Budget 2012 also outlines millions of dollars in cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, including the elimination of 100 food inspection positions. Canada's New Democrats are calling for the reversal of these cuts so that Canadian consumers can be assured that their food is safe to eat.

● (1240)

Despite repeated election promises to maintain support for our public broadcaster, the Conservatives are cutting CBC's budget by almost 10%. These deep cuts will result in significant programming cuts and hundreds of jobs lost. More troubling is the government's move to weaken the public pillars of Canadian culture rather than to invest in a more vibrant, innovative and creative future.

In my riding, constituents remain concerned about chronic overcrowding in the ERs of Royal Columbian Hospital and Eagle Ridge Hospital, as well as long surgery wait times and expensive prescription costs. They look to their federal government to provide leadership by enforcing national health care standards and implementing long-awaited reforms. Instead, the government seems more concerned with downloading responsibilities to the provinces and territories, which will inevitably result in increasing disparities in the quality of health care among the provinces and territories.

Small businesses are also looking to the federal government for leadership. While I was pleased to see that budget 2012 extended the hiring credit for small businesses, more needs to be done to ensure small and medium-sized businesses continue to be the job-creating engine of our economy. I have been consulting with small businesses in my riding; they overwhelmingly support an overhaul to regulations governing credit card processing fees. It is time to make the system more fair and more transparent.

Government Orders

I have heard from constituents who continue to be frustrated by the lack of adequate public transportation infrastructure in our communities. While the federal government continues to ignore this vital issue, cities across our country lack a mechanism for sustainable, predictable and long-term funding. Canada's New Democrats propose a national public transit strategy as well as immediately allocating another cent of the existing gas tax to public transit funding for municipalities.

Let us focus on getting more cars off the road and reducing commuter-caused pollution by ensuring municipalities have the tools they need to build public transit systems that are forward-thinking and that contribute to building healthy, sustainable communities.

While our economy is said to be in recovery, many Canadians remain unemployed or underemployed. The majority of Canadians live paycheque to paycheque and work hard to make their monthly budgets balance. Those who are close to retirement are worried about the security of their pensions and are upset at the government for mandating them to spend two additional years of their lives working.

As managers of the public purse, the Conservatives have shrunk national revenues by slashing the corporate tax rate to 15% and subsidizing the heavily polluting and highly profitable oil and gas sector. On the other hand, in the past few weeks Canadians have learned more about the Conservative government's secretive plan to spend some \$30 billion on F-35 fighter jets, as opposed to the \$10 billion figure quoted by the Conservatives in the last election.

Canada's New Democrats believe the Conservatives' spending priorities are out of line with the priorities of Canadians, which include ensuring the viability of the public services Canadians rely on, such as universal public health care, a strong pension system, affordable advanced education and a healthy environment.

It is time to address the growing inequality we see in our schools, our neighbourhoods and our cities. It is time to stop sacrificing the long-term economic, environmental and social health of our country in order to achieve short-term economic gains.

Budget 2012 makes it clear that the majority Conservative government has no intention of addressing these pressing issues. I will be voting against the implementation of budget 2012, and in doing so, I believe I will be reflecting the majority views of my constituents.

• (1245)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the parts of the budget is a program that will help small communities and small community centres. This program was particularly popular during the RInC program. Western Economic Diversification was key to delivering that program, so the moneys flowed through my department. The NDP voted against that program and has stayed firm on that. The member is saying today that he is going to vote against our budget.

The Department of Western Economic Diversification is again going to be delivering a program that would help small communities. Part of budget 2012 helps small businesses. Small businesses have not only asked for credit card regulations but have also asked that they be streamlined and made more efficient.

Is the member going to tell his constituents that he will be voting against some of the very programs and projects that his riding would benefit from?

• (1250)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I will tell my constituents that I cannot support the budget and the priorities within it. While there may be some good things in it, it is overshadowed by the overwhelming things that are not good for Canadians. I point to 70 amendments to legislation that are not even related to the budget. That alone should be worth not supporting the budget.

However, in terms of western economic diversification, there will be a \$16 million cut to that department by 2015. If we are looking at investing in western Canada, we can start by investing in western economic diversification, and that is not the kind of investment I support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

I would like to hear more about the consequences of abolishing the Katimavik program and, above all, environmental monitoring programs. We know very well that climate change is a serious concern for a majority of Canadians.

I imagine that my colleague could give us more details about the demise of Katimavik and all the benefits of this program for Canadian youth.

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of constituents and others who have written to me about their experience with Katimavik. One person wrote a letter to the editor, which was very insightful in terms of the economic impacts as a result of the visit of the Katimavik program to Yukon and the economic spinoff from the people in the program who went there. They participated and helped not only the community, but they spent money in the shops and on services.

She did an interesting calculation that showed the economic spinoff of those participants in that one area in that short period of time, then calculated all the projects in all areas across Canada. It is a tremendous benefit to the country, just in economies alone, not to mention the social impacts of the cultural exchange across Canada, as well as the knowledge gained by young people at a time in life when they make transitions and important decisions.

I am sure I will run out of time to talk about the environmental changes in the bill. One-third of the 450 or so pages of the bill are dedicated to weakening or changing the environmental protections to the Fisheries Act, to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and to many other important legislation. That alone is why I cannot support the BIA.

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act as this legislation is vital to the implementation of the economic action plan 2012.

Economic action plan 2012 is a positive plan that will ensure Canada's economy remains strong. It is already forecasted to be at the head of the pack for economic growth in the G7 in the years ahead by both the independent International Monetary Fund and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

In the words of former Liberal finance minister John Manley, current president of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives:

Budget 2012 builds on our country's reputation for fiscal responsibility, while at the same time establishing a more positive environment for private sector investment and growth.

In my time today I would like to focus on the necessary adjustments today's bill would make to the old age security program, or OAS, to ensure its long-term sustainability.

In 1952 the old age security program was launched, and I think we can all agree it was a very different world. At the time, life expectancy was significantly lower than it is today. Government policy-makers built the program around the understanding that seniors would be collecting OAS for only a few years after retirement. They also assumed there would always be a sufficient number of younger workers to finance OAS benefits through taxes. Because of these two assumptions, they were confident that the cost of the OAS system would continue to be manageable.

Those policy-makers could not have predicted 60 years ago the rise in longevity or the fall in our birth rates. They could not have anticipated how these two trends would threaten the sustainability of the OAS program. Let me be clear. This is not an issue of how much money will be saved, but rather whether the OAS program will be sustainable over the long term.

We want to ensure these benefits will be there for future generations when they need them. According to the World Health Organization, average life expectancy in Canada is one of the highest in the world. It is now almost 81 years, and it is increasing. Already one in seven Canadians is over the age of 65 and in 25 years nearly one in four Canadians will be a senior. The number of basic OAS pension beneficiaries is expected to grow from \$4.7 million in 2010 to \$9.3 million by 2030.

Canadians can be rightfully proud of our public pension system, which has been influential in dramatically reducing the incidence of poverty among seniors and enhancing their dignity and independence. As I said, the world has changed. When I say the world, I mean every country.

The demographic trends we are seeing in Canada are occurring all over the globe. Life expectancy is rising and birth rates are dropping. Population aging is happening more quickly in industrialized nations, which is why many of those countries have already moved to adapt their retirement support programs to account for this new reality.

In most cases, industrialized nations are raising the age of eligibility for retirement benefits, as this is the simplest and most

Government Orders

effective way to ensure the sustainability of the program. Of the 34 nations in the OECD, 22 have made or will make the kinds of changes we have now proposed. Thankfully, because of the strong economic leadership of our Conservative government, Canada has the fiscal room to bring in these changes over a longer period of time.

Our government has pointed out that by 2030 there will only be two working age Canadians for every retired Canadian. If we do not adjust OAS, those two working age Canadians will support the tax burden that is currently shared by four working age Canadians.

Times change and government policies and programs must change with them. I would ask the NDP members to pay close attention to the words of Keith Ambachtsheer, director of the Rotman International Centre for Pension Management. He said:

You can't put your head in the sand...When you look at the underlying economics of what's going on...It's perfectly logical in a general sense to say, yes we're going to have to look at all social programs because of these demographics that are baked into the pie. There should be nothing surprising about that.

This is why we are making modern changes to OAS to strengthen it for the future.

We will gradually increase the age of eligibility for OAS and the guaranteed income supplement benefits from 65 to 67. This change will start in April 2023, with full implementation by January 2029, and will not affect anyone who is 54 years of age or older as of March 31 of this year. We owe it to future generations to leave them a solid OAS program and an affordable tax burden. We understand that we have to make these changes in a sensible way. That is why these changes do not apply to seniors or near seniors, and there will be no reduction in benefits to seniors.

• (1255)

We are also making other significant positive reforms to OAS through today's act. To improve flexibility and choice in the OAS program, starting on July 1, 2013, we will allow for the voluntary deferral of the OAS pension for up to five years, allowing Canadians the option of deferring take-up of their OAS pension to a later time and receiving a higher actuarially adjusted annual pension.

We are also putting in place a proactive enrollment regime for OAS and GIS to reduce the burden on seniors of completing application processes and reduce the government's administrative costs, a major positive change.

In the words of noted personal finance author, Gordon Pape, writing in the *Toronto Star*, it is:

Government Orders

—a welcome elimination of bureaucratic red tape that should have the effect of putting a lot more money into the hands of seniors....This means that many people will no longer have to apply for benefits when they turn 65 – the payments will come automatically.... The potential gain for seniors is huge....any change that simplifies the process and gets some of that foregone money into the hands of needy seniors has to be welcome.

Our government is proud of our record with respect to seniors. We have increased the GIS to help Canada's most vulnerable seniors and we increased the GIS earnings exemption. We have provided \$2.3 billion annually in additional tax relief to seniors and pensioners. We have abolished the mandatory age of retirement in federally-regulated industries so older people have more choice as to when they retire.

We have increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program to support seniors who want to participate in community projects. We are supporting healthy and active aging through a number of initiatives and we are funding projects to combat elder abuse.

All of these policies and programs will be adapted to meet new needs and circumstances of seniors as they evolve. In the same way, old age security must also adapt to new needs and circumstances. That is why the provisions in today's bill are the right thing to do and why I call on all members to support it.

• (1300)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the member just told us does not make sense. The Conservatives want to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67 and are telling people who are 54 that they will be affected, but not those who are 55 to 65. In other words, those who are 63 today will not be affected and will not work until they are 67. We know that, at present, a large portion of the population is between 55 and 65. Most of the aging population is in that demographic.

Why should we punish future generations, 13 years from now, by forcing them to work two years longer when there will be fewer seniors and we will have the revenue to support them?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the hon. member that it is the future generation on which the government has its eye. We want to ensure we have a sustainable old age security system for future Canadian seniors. At the same time, we recognize it is completely unsustainable to require two future taxpayers to pay for what four taxpayers pay for today.

Clearly, it does not take a masters in mathematics to realize that when the number of people receiving the benefit is doubled and the number of people who are actually paying into that system is halved, that system is simply not sustainable.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the math.

According to the OECD, Canada's old age security benefits represent 4.2% of GDP, whereas the average for OECD countries is 7%, and the figure is much higher in other countries.

Comparing Canada to countries in trouble only throws fuel on the fire and scares people for no reason, because this program is sustainable.

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, what I will do is quote from a prominent economist in Canada, Patricia Croft, who says:

(Budget 2012's) initiatives in the job front and addressing the demographic challenge...in both regards I'd have to give the budget probably an 'A'...in a global context, I think Canada is in a fabulous position.

That stands in contrast to the hon. member's remarks. The hon. member suggests that we should going down a road and follow the same path some European countries are following, paths that have led some of those countries dealing with absolutely disastrous circumstances economically, circumstances that will take decades and decades to recover from.

Thankfully we live in Canada which leads the way economically and has a very bright future because of the measures the government has taken.

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke of the ability for Canada to enact these changes for sustainability in our old age pension system over a longer period of time because of Canada's relative economic strength. Some of the measures our government has taken over the last six years, including the competitive corporate tax rate, have ensured that economic sustainability leads to this long-term planning ability.

Would my colleague explain some of the measures in budget 2012 that will ensure Canada's long-term prosperity?

• (1305)

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, because of measures that we have taken over the past six years of government, Canada is the envy of the world economically. Organizations like the International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Forum and the OECD have commented that Canada is leading the way relative to other countries.

The corporate tax rate change the hon. member mentioned, reducing the corporate tax rate from 22% to 15%, is one of the things these commentators have pointed to as an absolutely critical step that has led to that result. We see on the other side suggestions to increase taxes across the board, corporate taxes, taxes on job creators and carbon taxes, a complete 180° from the measures we have taken to put Canada in this enviable position.

I hope that all members will take a really good look at the bill, and not just do what their leaders tell them to do when it comes to voting on the bill, but actually vote in favour of Canada continuing that positive momentum that we have made over the years.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we keep unearthing all these little treasures hidden deep in the bowels of Bill C-38 that we did not even realize were being snuck into this omnibus bill. Now we know why they were put there and their significance.

Government Orders

Bill C-38 repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. This is the construction fair wages act for the federal jurisdiction. For 100 years, we have been fighting for fair wages and working conditions for the construction industry. It is an industry with a transient workforce. Contractors and the like can exploit desperate working people in the construction industry if we do not have regulations that prevent them from doing so. This legislation took wages out of competition so that contractors would win their jobs based on their merits, skills and productivity, not on their ability to find cheaper labour because, by virtue of the fair wages act, it was agreed that it does not benefit anyone.

We have a quaint expression where I come from that “fair wages benefit the whole community”. It is virtuous to have a well-paid, consuming, middle class. It is good for the economy. Driving down the wages of Canadian workers is in no one's best interest. Members would know that the federal government is one of the largest consumers of construction industry services in the country. This act applied to any construction project contracted by the federal government, including military bases, prisons, ports, banking and telecommunications. The Canada Labour Code, which is the federal labour code, applies to all of those including projects that go across provincial borders. What comes to mind when we think about large projects that might span interprovincial borders are pipelines. We have unearthed now that deep within Bill C-38 the federal government has eliminated the fair wages and working conditions that are found in this act. It has completely eradicated that.

The act also states that contractors, whether unionized or non-unionized, have to pay the prevailing wage. This is usually determined by the Minister of Labour by consulting in that area what a normal prevailing wage would be, not the union scale but somewhere in the same living-wage ballpark. As well, it sets the hours of work, including that no construction worker has to work more than 48 hours without time and a half overtime.

All of that has been eradicated. Now, a contractor can bid on one of these federal jobs and post a job notice saying “Wanted: Carpenters, \$8 an hour, 84 hour work week, straight time”. No one will apply for that job, which opens the door to the other side of the coin, to mix a metaphor.

The other side of the coin is that the government has changed the laws for temporary foreign workers again by virtue of recent legislation to the point where a contractor can get temporary foreign workers within 10 days. Where do they come from? They are not some unemployed guys in Bangladesh who notice a job opportunity in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Rather, they come from international labour brokers who are peddling crews of temporary foreign workers all over the world for construction projects. We call them labour pimps. Unfortunately, many of the workers working for these international labour brokers are working in a form of bonded servitude for substandard wages with substandard living, health and safety conditions. Not only are they exploiting those temporary foreign workers, they are also driving down the wage and industry standards of Canadian workers by virtue of these contractors who will undoubtedly win every job.

I know construction. I am a journeyman carpenter. I spent my whole life in construction. I used to be a representative of the carpenters' union. I know the margins that construction contractors

play with. There is only 2% or 3% between this bid and that bid. It is very competitive. Contractors who bid a job by pricing out labour at 20% and 30% and 40% lower than their competitors will win every job, every time. They will drive down the prevailing wage, because those other contractors will now have to start bidding lower if they are to ever win a job.

● (1310)

To whose benefit is it to drive down the fair wages of Canadian workers? Let me point out a secondary problem this raises. How are we going to attract bright, young men and women into the building trades if the normal wage is now going to be \$8, \$9 or \$10 an hour instead of the \$20 or \$30 that it is now? Try feeding a family on \$8, \$9 or \$10 an hour. Nobody in his or her right mind is going to go into that industry. We are going to have temporary foreign workers all over again. This is a recipe for undermining the integrity of the construction industry. I believe it is set up specifically to enable the construction of interprovincial pipelines, which used to be subject to these fair wage standards. It is going to create an open door for contractors to avoid paying fair wages to Canadians and these things are going to be built with temporary foreign workers.

Let me provide a recent example. Unfortunately, the pulp mill in Gold River, British Columbia closed down due to normal market forces. The pulp mill was sold to China. Instead of hiring locals to tear down the pulp mill, the 400 men and women who worked there all their lives and knew every nut and bolt in the place, the mill owner applied for temporary foreign workers. The permit was granted. I have a copy of the application. It asked if the mill tried to find Canadians to do the job. The answer was yes. It asked for the reason it did not hire those Canadians. The answer was that the price was too high. Therefore, it brought in crews of guys from India, who sleep six to a hotel room, to tear down the pulp mill while Canadian workers were outside the fence looking in, wishing they had another 12 weeks so they could get a pokey claim at least.

These temporary foreign worker permits are being given away like party favours at Conservative Party conventions to anybody who asks for them. Now the rules have been changed to make it a 10-day turnaround. A company posts an ad in the paper saying carpenters are wanted for \$8 an hour, no overtime, no benefits. Nobody applies for the job. Within 10 days, that company has a crew from an international labour broker pimp who is going to provide all the manpower for that job.

Government Orders

Another example is the Winnipeg international airport. Winnipeg is very proud of its airport. Why is it that unemployed Canadian carpenters were outside the fence watching a crew of temporary foreign workers build that airport? It is simple. It asked the government for it. The crew consisted of 80 guys from Lebanon. The last job they came from was in Latvia, where they built another big concrete job. These guys are moved all over the world because it is cheaper than paying Canadians a fair wage. Companies would rather pay foreign nationals, not landed immigrants but foreign nationals, our wages. They are eating our lunches, and those jobs should be going to Canadians.

As if there were not enough to criticize in Bill C-38, the government has just repealed the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. It makes one wonder what kind of a government is opposed to fair wages for Canadian workers. How many trusting blue-collar workers look to their government for support, not to undermine their living conditions? In its zeal to smash the unions, the government is dragging down the standard of living for the largest-employing industry sector in the country: the construction industry.

I know who is behind it: the merit shop contractors. They are regular and frequent visitors in the PMO. They went to the PMO and said, "It would be really great if we could win all the jobs. We win some of the jobs now, but it would be great if we could win all the jobs". The government asked, "How can we help you?" They said, "Just eliminate the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act and then we can offer whatever wages we want, with no restrictions and no controls".

It used to be that companies had to pay employees time and a half after 48 hours when they should have been paying them time and a half after 40 hours, but that was not good enough. Now they do not have to pay time and a half at all. Minimum wage is the only prevailing wage now, and I mean the provincial minimum wage, on these projects. It is destructive and counterproductive.

It is in nobody's best interest to ratchet down the wages and working conditions of Canadian workers. It is bad for the economy. The government says it is doing these things because it is good for the economy. What is good for the economy are well-paid, consuming, middle-class workers who are buying cars, houses and jeans for their kids, not people who are driven into the poorhouse by their government.

• (1315)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the performance of my thespian friend from Winnipeg. I would like to make a connection to something his boss said, who is in favour of shutting down the oil sands. I would like to make the connection between the oil sands and the manufacturing industry in Ontario that he cares so much about, which I applaud, and the construction industry across the country.

Talking about cars and toys for kids, if his boss had his way and shut down the oil sands, there would be nobody in Alberta buying the cars that nobody in Ontario would be making. There would be no workers building, not just in Alberta but in other parts of the country. Could he make that connection for me?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is making stuff up. Nobody has ever said that he or she will shut down the oil sands.

People have said that they would develop the oil sands in a responsible and environmentally sustainable way.

Here is a fact that maybe my colleague does not know. I will bet dollars to donuts that he does not know that Bill C-38 repeals the fair wages act. I also bet that he does know that fully 30% of all the jobs created in this country from 2007 to today have been filled by temporary foreign workers, not by Canadians, and not just in high-paying jobs but at Tim Hortons and as chambermaids in hotels. Canadians are not taking those jobs because of their lousy wage. Maybe if people paid a living wage, Canadians would apply for those jobs.

Temporary foreign workers is not a human resources strategy. It is the polar opposite of a human resources strategy. It is admitting defeat.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech, which focused on workers' quality of life. In speaking of workers' quality of life, the hon. member spoke a lot about contributing to the economy.

I would like him to say a few words about the fact that contributing to the economy can go hand in hand with sustainable development and respecting the environment and workers' health.

A study shows that in the United States, corporations have invested roughly \$26 billion in green energies and technologies in order to adapt to climate change. They have earned up to \$533 billion. For every dollar invested, they have earned \$20, all while working toward preventing pollution-related respiratory disease.

What should the government do to improve the health of workers and contribute to the economy at the same time?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a compelling point.

When I was head of the carpenters union, I conducted a study that showed that job creation through energy conservation actually employed as much as seven times the number of people as the extraction of energy production. A unit of energy harvested from the existing system through the demand side management is indistinguishable from a unit of energy created at a generating station, except that it is available at about one-third the cost, creates seven times the person-years in employment, does not create greenhouse gases and it is available online immediately. In other words, as soon as one turns a light switch off, the unit of energy one saves is available to resell to someone else at the same moment instead of six, eight or ten years to build a new generating station.

The way of the future, the largest single source of energy in the country, is that energy wasted in the current system. Harvesting that energy out of the current system would put more people to work and would be more sustainable than the extraction option that we seem to be reliant on today.

Government Orders

• (1320)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House this afternoon and speak to the important investments and reforms our government is making in budget 2012. Economic action plan 2012 is squarely focused on what matters to Albertans and all Canadians: valuable new jobs and sustainable economic prosperity.

We are moving forward with a stable plan to encourage long-term economic growth and job creation by maintaining our focus on supporting entrepreneurs, business innovators and world-class researchers.

Alberta understands the importance of business innovation. Alberta's cities and rural communities are home to some of the world's most innovative companies and research institutions.

[*Translation*]

Our government is committed to fostering an economic climate that encourages business innovation. Business innovation is increasingly vital to maintaining our international competitiveness and our excellent standard of living.

Economic action plan 2012 contains over \$1.1 billion in significant investments for research and development and \$500 million for venture capital and for increased public and private research collaboration.

[*English*]

This direct investment will support private sector business projects that will develop new and innovative technologies demanded in the global market.

Our government will help increase the number of persons employed in high-paying research and development fields and will ensure long-term growth by enabling innovative Canadian companies to thrive in an increasingly competitive and global business environment.

In addition to strategic investments, our government is also committed to improving conditions for business investment. Our government will bring forward legislation to implement across the board changes to achieve the goal of one project, one review in a clearly defined time period.

This includes system-wide legislative improvements to the review process for major economic projects, which will establish clear timelines, reduce duplication and regulatory burdens and focus resources on large projects where the potential environmental impacts are the greatest.

In addition, Western Economic Diversification Canada will be launching the western innovation program, which is a new program that provides support to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in western Canada.

[*Translation*]

This budget also places a renewed emphasis on cutting red tape and making it easier to do business in Alberta and the rest of Canada. Reducing red tape helps businesses to better compete; it represents a low-cost way to enable economic growth and to boost productivity as Canada emerges from the global recession.

[*English*]

That is why our government will propose new legislation to modernize and streamline its regulatory system.

In addition, economic action plan 2012 proposes \$54 million over two years to continue to support effective project approvals through the major projects management office initiative, which has helped to transform and streamline the approval process for major natural resource projects.

Budget 2012's measures build on a strong foundation of investment and support for research and innovation in Edmonton, Alberta and all of Canada. For example, in May 2009, the Government of Canada committed \$195 million to the Government of Alberta as part of Canada's economic action plan through the knowledge infrastructure program. These funds facilitated the enhancement of the science degree program at Grant MacEwan University with the building of new and renovated high quality science labs. They helped to build innovative facilities, like the Alternative Energy Centre at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, and helped to upgrade the fume-hood exhaust systems in the chemistry and biological sciences building at the University of Alberta. These upgrades will improve the use and utility of high quality research space, ensuring that students and researchers have the best possible space to learn and conduct their work.

Since 2006, we have provided nearly \$8 billion in new funding for initiatives to support science, technology and the growth of innovative firms. With economic action plan 2012, our government would continue to invest in research and innovation in Canada.

Budget 2012 proposes to invest \$400 million to help increase private sector investments in early stage risk capital and to support the creation of large scale venture capital funds. Facebook, Google and Research in Motion were all at one time start-up companies financed by venture capital, and we want to help launch the next Canadian business success story.

The western innovation program is another proposal from budget 2012. Western Economic Diversification will soon launch this program to provide financial support to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in western Canada. Budget 2012 also proposes further supporting advanced research at universities and other leading institutions. Our government plans to invest \$500 million over five years to the Canada Foundation for Innovation to support new competitions, including the college industry innovation fund which we will begin funding in 2014.

These commitments demonstrate in concrete ways our government's commitment to following a new approach to supporting advancements in research and innovation by pursuing active, business-led initiatives that focus resources on better addressing the needs of the private sector.

Government Orders

However, we must remember what the lifeblood of our economic engine is. In the Alberta economy, as well as in the rest of Canada, our natural resources have given us a tremendously high quality of life.

• (1325)

[Translation]

These resources have also given jobs to hundreds of thousands of Canadians, which, in the current economic climate, is an extremely important asset. The oil sands in Alberta are merely one of myriad examples of natural resources that have helped to drive the Canadian economy forward with benefits to all provinces and territories.

[English]

In this global economy, we need to make full use of all of the assets at our disposal and, in this great country of ours, our natural resources are certainly one of those. In 2010, the natural resources sectors of our economy employed more than 760,000 Canadians in communities across the country. In the next 10 years, there will be more than 500 new major economic projects totalling \$500 million in new investments. The oil sands industry currently employs over 130,000 Canadians and generates wealth that benefits the entire country.

A recent study by the Canadian Energy Research Institute estimates that, over the next 25 years, growth of the oil sands industry will support approximately 480,000 jobs and will add \$2.3 trillion to Canada's gross domestic product. In addition to all of this, the increasing global demand for resources, particularly from emerging economies, will create new economic and job opportunities from which all Canadians will benefit.

However, our economy and our people will only benefit from these demands if investments are made by the most important driver in our economy and that is the private sector. We need the private sector, with all of its drive and innovation, to bring these natural resources to market.

Recently, however, those wanting to invest in our resources have faced an increasingly large and tangled web of bureaucratic rules and reviews before being able to bring these resources to market. Such obstacles can add costly delays, deter investors and undermine the economic viability of major projects.

In order to achieve the greatest value possible from our natural resources, Canada needs a regulatory system that reviews projects in a timely and transparent manner while at the same time effectively protecting our environment. We will adopt a balanced and responsible approach to protecting our environment that makes a significant tangible difference but does not transfer Canadian jobs overseas.

That is why in economic action plan 2012 our government proposes to streamline and modernize the review process for major economic projects. As part of our plan, major projects will have fixed timelines, panel reviews will be limited to 24 months, National Energy Board hearings will be limited to 18 months and standard environmental assessments will be held to 12 months in length. This will create clear, certain and predictable timelines for businesses that will lead to quality, well-paying and skilled jobs for Canadians. These measures will reduce duplication and burdensome regulations

while focusing resources instead on large projects where the potential environmental impacts are the greatest.

[Translation]

These improvements to the regulatory and approval process will benefit Alberta's economy and, therefore, Canada's and will position us competitively for long-term growth and future prosperity.

Canada is a great nation and we are in an excellent fiscal position. Budget 2012 keeps us on track to balance the budget, keep taxes low and create jobs and economic prosperity in the long term.

[English]

Many governments around the world would envy this budget and, if they were in the economic position of Canada, they might be content to rest on their laurels. Not us, not this government. We will not rest. We will continue to work hard to ensure that Canadian businesses, the industrial and educational sectors, are pushing the envelope in each of their respective domains. We will continue to ensure they have the resources and the environment they need to succeed and create jobs, deliver products to market, develop the next cutting edge technological innovation or make revolutionary scientific discoveries.

We will keep working hard as if it all depended on us, and, frankly, it does. Through all of our work, we will keep in mind the model of the Royal Canadian Air Force, which clearly sums up our goals as a government and the economic circumstances we have come through in the past four years: *per aspera ad astra*, which means "through adversity to the stars", and if our history and emergence from past adversities is any indication of our future prosperity, Canada's future is very bright indeed.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, can my colleague opposite explain why the Employment Equity Act will no longer apply to federal contracts? I believe this is a direct attack on women, aboriginal people, persons with a disability and visible minorities. Why make this change?

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to my colleague that I reject the premise of her question. We are working together in the interests of all Canadians, male, female, aboriginal, white, immigrant or whoever, to unlock the tremendous capacity that Canada has and that Canadian industry has in our scientific, educational, industrial and resource development areas.

We want to make the playing field as level as possible so that everyone from every part of the country can have an equal opportunity to share in the tremendous success that is Canada, and we will not pit one against the other. We want a level playing field for all.

Government Orders

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will read a quote:

In the face of tough fiscal choices, the government showed leadership by continuing its investments in research, innovation, research infrastructure and university-private sector collaborations. These investments will build a stronger future for our society and economy.

This was said by Stephen Toope, the chair of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada as well as the president of the University of British Columbia.

I share this view. I have a past history working with research administration, and especially our investments in the Canada Foundation for Innovation. I would like to hear from my colleague how he feels that investments in CFI will continue to ensure the development of highly qualified personnel and the continued growth of our economy.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, the CFI has been one of the driving forces behind innovation in Canada. Universities are hotbeds of research and development. I am particularly proud of the University of Alberta, which has been leading the way in a lot of areas. The University of Calgary and other great institutions across the country have been a big part of that. Without that kind of innovation, intellectual drive, curiosity and perseverance, Canada would not be the great country it is today. Therefore, I totally agree with the quote that was just read.

I know, from my association with the University of Alberta and the leadership there and in other institutions across the country, they are extremely happy with what the country has done with the economy and the budgets in the last several years because it is unlocking their potential, which will to the benefit all Canadians.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the CFI program. It is, indeed, a good program, but the problem that we have had for many years now is that we need funds to operate the infrastructure that we buy. We need to train technical people. That is why there was a program called the MRS program at NSERC, but that was just frozen. It has ended. There is no new money allotted for places like the Brockhouse Institute. Neutron scattering groups will be losing their MRS funding so they will not have the money to use the infrastructure that we have. That is a problem.

Why did the government choose to cut that money?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, that is not true. There are various ways to fund things. CFI does have operational funding. In fact, we have given a record amount of money to the tri-granting council to operate those kinds of enterprises. I am hoping that my colleague across the way will see fit to vote in support of that.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Environment Commissioner reported the other day about hundreds of contaminated sites across this country, the results, in effect, of lax environmental assessment laws and protection.

I ask the member opposite if he is not concerned that the gutting the Conservatives are proposing of environmental laws and the Fisheries Act would lead to further environmental devastation across this country.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. We would put some common sense into some of those rules and regulations. We would stop worrying about, on the fisheries side, for example, killing fish in a flooded farmer's field, which is absurd.

We would put our efforts, our expertise and our dollars where they would make the most difference, so that we do make sure we clean up contaminated areas in the country and we do operate in the best interests of the actual fisheries industry, for example, and not things that are completely extraneous.

● (1335)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a few minutes to talk about this omnibus bill, this huge 400- to 500-page budget bill, which is going to change the face of Canada. The bill is full of bundled information. I am disappointed that, instead of dealing with something that is maybe 50 pages, we have to try to dissect something that is 400 or 500 pages and full of all kinds of changes to everything we could possibly think of.

I have been here now for 13 years. I have been in cabinet. I have been on the back bench and I have been on the front bench. I have been in opposition and in government. I have never seen such a lack of respect for democracy in this country and for the Parliament of Canada and parliamentarians as this attempt to put all of this into an omnibus bill that would change so much with so little input from Parliament. The bill is designed specifically in a way that undermines the essential and historic role Parliament plays in writing and passing good and sound laws.

Bill C-38 attacks old age security and would implement budget 2012, which the Liberal caucus clearly opposes.

The bill includes many other items, including the gutting of 50 years of environmental protection.

Bill C-38 should not be a single omnibus bill, and for these reasons and many more, I will be opposing this legislation quite happily.

Bill C-38 would make sweeping changes to 60 different acts of this Parliament. It would rewrite a generation's worth of environmental regulation and oversight and roll back assistance for low- and middle-income seniors.

Government Orders

Bill C-38 would change program rules such as the employment insurance rules that would affect claimants' ability to reject jobs that are not within the field associated with their expertise. Just imagine being on employment insurance. Never mind being told one must take a job 50 miles away, but one must take a job possibly all the way to the west or to the east. Imagine what that would do to a family. It is bad enough to be unemployed without being forced to relocate away from family and all of the struggles that are there. It is all just part of the meanness that is clearly evident in the government. A lack of concern and a lack of compassion for Canadians is what it is all about.

I have no concern with change. Frankly I welcome change. I would welcome an opportunity to truly debate the bill, as would all of us. Our role here is to make Canada better, not to support making Canada worse and treating its citizens with disrespect.

Parliament has a constitutional role that includes spending oversight. Even the Conservative government cannot sidestep that, even though it is not for lack of trying.

The government has already moved and passed closure on the bill, limiting debate within the House. Rest assured; that will come back and the government will pay a price for that—if not today, then tomorrow.

The Conservative government has pursued a policy of forcing committees into closed sessions at every opportunity, further locking Canadians out of the parliamentary process. The Conservatives have set up special rules for senators, rules that they are refusing to allow for elected members of the House. What are they so afraid of? Openness, public debate and discussion are allowed in the Senate but not allowed here in the House of Commons, where we are truly supposed to be having that kind of debate.

We did have some success in the Senate, though. The Liberals asked that the bill be split up so that the relevant Senate committees could study it, just exactly the kind of thing we asked for a couple of weeks ago here in the House. The Conservatives would not allow that, because we might actually debate important issues that they might disagree with. There was a time when the Prime Minister rallied against the other place, but today he seems prepared to give it every consideration as long as it does what he wants.

There was also a time when the Prime Minister rallied against heavy-handed and reckless governing, but now that he is in charge, he seems to enjoy it. These are not his first policy reversals, though, since becoming Prime Minister. Conveniently forgetting his election promises seems to be a speciality of the Prime Minister.

The bill attacks a variety of things, including our immigration laws. The bill would allow foreign workers who have come to Canada, be they seasonal or temporary, to be paid less than people working beside them.

• (1340)

Just imagine what that would do to the reputation of this country. We are looking to exploit people who are basically just looking for a day's pay, coming from another country for a short period of time, leaving their families and homes to fill a need we have. We would pay them less than anybody else who is doing that job.

The bill would also raise the age at which seniors can get a pension. It would take \$30,000 out of the pocket of every Canadian, while the government members stand back and say they are reducing taxes, or doing this or that. They would take \$30,000 out of the pocket of every Canadian who is 54 years of age and under.

The budget would rewrite the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, handing power to cabinet to be used behind closed doors. It would amend the Canadian Oil and Gas Operations Act, the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, legislation that is all related, interestingly enough, to the northern gateway pipeline. One has to wonder what that is all about. It would not affect some areas, but specifically those areas, to get rid of what government members continue to see as roadblocks to their ultimate goal, which is to see that pipeline go through.

As I indicated before, the Prime Minister and the government are breaking a specific promise. The Prime Minister indicated two months before the election, in March 2011, that he would not change the health transfers. He would not cut health transfers or social payments or touch pensions. That was in March 2011.

Now what is the Prime Minister doing? He is ignoring the advice of the worldwide OECD, Canada's chief actuarial officer, his own Parliamentary Budget Officer and even the government's experts, who all agree this change is not necessary, as Canada's OAS program is already and will continue to be sustainable. Worse yet, he is betraying the trust of Canadians, as all the government members have done. None of them has stood up and opposed it. None of them has had the courage to do that. This change is going to hit Canada's most vulnerable people.

Some of these changes negatively alter federal protection of waterways and limit the list of protected species, without a scientific basis, which is always the way the government does it. Never mind evidence-based science that shows one should not do this or that; it is all about political expediency.

Some of those changes to immigration would affect 100,000 immigration applications made by people who want to come to Canada, which have been in the queue for years. What does the government do? It throws them all out. It does not care. Let people start all over again. They will never get to this country in their lifetimes. Some of those changes would fundamentally change the way we welcome new Canadians to this country.

We at least owe it to Canadians to fully vet and debate the changes. That is what democracy is all about. It does not work in secret. That is not the way it is supposed to happen in Canada.

Bill C-38 would radically shift power from publicly accessible oversight and regulatory mechanisms to the bloated autocracy found within the Prime Minister's office. Bill C-38 is essentially a document that wrests power from Parliament and Canadians and places it directly into the waiting hands of the Prime Minister.

I have to ask how long it will take before the Prime Minister will approve the northern gateway pipeline after environmental oversight is removed. I do not think it is going to take very long.

Government Orders

I ask what the next cuts are that are going to happen, whether to seniors or other Canadians. What are the other things that are considered by this government to be irrelevant, that it does not care about and has little respect for?

This is just the beginning of many, many changes that are going to come to this country of ours that we call Canada. Clearly, in 2015, with these changes coming through, Canada will not look the same.

I for one, as a parliamentarian, find it very sad that we are also being denied the chance to debate these issues. It is one thing to have a healthy debate on them in which we respect each other and something passes. That is the way it is. To have these changes made while muzzling everyone is truly a slap in the face for democracy in this country.

• (1345)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the sleeper issues that we are only just finding, deep in the bowels of Bill C-38, is that the bill repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. This came as a shock to me. Any federally-regulated construction project now has no federal fair wage employment standards. That includes military bases, prisons, telecommunication projects, banking, ports or cross-border, interprovincial projects such as pipelines.

Is it not a happy coincidence that pipelines no longer have any minimum standards, where the prevailing rates have to be paid to tradespeople, or any limitation on the hours of work they can work without any overtime? The Conservatives know full well these companies will not get Canadian tradespeople at \$10 an hour for a 60 hour work week with no overtime, but they open the door to temporary foreign workers. With only 10 days' notice now, companies can get as many temporary foreign workers as they want.

Why would the Government of Canada sell out Canadian construction workers, drive down the prevailing wages and open the door for temporary foreign workers to eat our lunch on one of the biggest construction projects in the history of North America?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, clearly the member and I know that the government does not give a darn about Canadians. It cares very little.

I believe repealing all of this is part of a master plan that has been in the works for a while. The government will repeal anything that will prevent it from facilitating fast action on whatever file it wants. Clearly, it will be able to bring all the foreign workers who are desperate for a day's pay. These workers will come in and will be the ones who will end up doing the pipeline and all the other kinds of projects, and all in the name of expediency.

It is just one more slap in the face to Canada and Canadians.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member says she believes we have a plan and we do. We will help youth gain skills and experience. We will help older workers. We will invest in small public infrastructure. We will connect Canadians with available jobs. We will remove disincentives to work. We will support families and communities. We will support Canada's reservists in the workforce. We will enhance the victims' fund. We will promote more active lifestyles. We will improve the registered disability savings plan. We

will have sustainable social programs, secure retirement, ensure OAS remains strong and that there is a future for generations. We will review government spending, as we have, and get rid of waste, and more.

What part does the member not agree with?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, that is just another sales job. Anybody can stand and talk about all the these great things that will be done.

When we look beneath the surface, most of the time the government is giving us a sales job and not telling us the truth about the things it is really going to be doing, like making all of the other changes. That is what it is not telling us.

I can stand and read off all the wonderful things I did yesterday. When will someone challenge me about whether I am telling the truth on these issues?

To what degree is the government making the changes? To what benefit are the changes being made to the country in the things that we all believe in, which is advancing opportunity for all at the same time as it is being fiscally responsible, also caring about Canadians and ensuring those Canadians are being protected as we move forward?

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the truthfulness of her remarks.

The issue of OAS and changing the age of eligibility from 65 to 67 is particularly poignant. It was in Guelph that the Prime Minister made the unequivocal promise that he would not change the OAS, would not reduce it and in fact would make it more robust, as if to suggest that 10 years from now people would not need two years of help. The very people, the aging, those who are suffering the most and needing the most help are going to be deprived of that help.

It is not enough to just criticize. I know the hon. member has been involved and engaged very heavily in the creation of an alternative program, the supplementary Canada pension plan, that would be better than changing the OAS. Could she talk about that for a few moments?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has done an enormous amount of work on behalf of the citizens of Guelph and the citizens of our country.

When we talk about an aging population, I stood in the House and challenged the government to introduce pension legislation and make some changes to the Bankruptcy Act to protect seniors. The idea is to bring in changes to pension regulation that allows those people, those who can do it, to better prepare for their retirement by saving.

Government Orders

The supplementary Canada pension plan is an add-on to the current Canada pension plan. Everyone who has a SIN, social insurance number, can contribute, whether they are a homemaker, a farmer or self-employed. This is the kind of the thing we need to do to prepare for the future and the aging population.

• (1350)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, giving a speech on Bill C-38, the budget implementation act, is a true honour for me. We are dealing with one of the most substantial budgets in decades and it is extremely important to the future of the country.

Before I get into that, I am very surprised at what I have heard over these last days of debate on the bill. I have heard members say, “That is there, and that may be all right, but there is something hidden, and it is such a big document, we cannot study it”. They say that they do not have enough speaking time, yet the member for Burnaby—New Westminster took 11 hours in a filibuster, which deprived 44 members of a chance to speak to the bill.

What were we to do? Were we to let every member of the House filibuster for 11 hours? We could have been years on the bill. We have to deal with the bill. We hear a lot of nonsense from the members opposite, but quite frankly that nonsense does not cut it. What is in the bill is very significant and important to the future of our country, and it is extremely positive legislation.

I will talk about one part of the legislation, and that is the responsible development strategy. This part of the legislation is truly the most significant change that any government in our country has made in decades. It is extremely important, and I will give hon. members an idea of why I believe that in the 10 minutes I have.

First, we have heard from companies across the country that they want to invest about \$500 billion in 500 major projects in the next 10 years. That is a lot of investment. That investment is not just in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. That investment is right across the country. There would be huge investments in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec. In Ontario the ring of fire is a mammoth project. It is almost unimaginable, judging from what we heard from witnesses at our natural resources committee.

This is extremely significant and important legislation, and the part on responsible development is pivotal in the future of the country. It will mean our children and our grandchildren, and even our great grandchildren, will have extremely good, top-notch, top-paying jobs, jobs that are fun to go to every day because they are exciting and people can really make things happen. This change in legislation will allow that to happen.

I chair the natural resources committee. We have been hearing from witnesses on various studies, most recently resource development in northern Canada. We did a major study on forestry in Canada. We did a study on the ring of fire in northern Ontario. We have done some fascinating studies and we have heard four main concerns from witnesses on development.

Almost all of them brought forward these concerns. This is not only from business owners and business managers. This is from union leaders who are concerned about future jobs for their members. It is from community leaders. It is from a wide range of

people right across the country. They say that these things have to change in order to allow Canada to develop these incredibly good jobs for our children and grandchildren.

From almost all of the witnesses, we heard there was an infrastructure need. Much of that infrastructure the companies themselves are willing to put in place. It is that important to their projects. A lot of resource companies have some cash right now so they are willing to do that. For those who follow, they are willing to make an arrangement so that they pay for the development of infrastructure they put in place.

That includes the obvious things like roads, bridges and that kind of thing. It also includes something else, which is an even bigger problem for many of these natural resources developments, and that is a power supply. They need a relatively small power supply for running a mine, for example, but they need a much larger power supply if they are to add some value right at the site and if they are to refine the ore into one of the end products, or all of the end products. That takes a lot larger electricity supply, and getting that supply is a major infrastructure demand.

Many companies can do that, working with other companies. Some have suggested that maybe there might be some need for either provincial or federal government lending or some such thing, but infrastructure is an important thing.

• (1355)

The second thing almost every witness talked about, and this is not an exaggeration as anybody sitting on the committee would know, is the shortage of skilled workers.

A lot of people think the shortage is only in western Canada. However, that is not the case. The shortage exists in every province and territory in the country. Now it is not in every town. As we know, some communities have very high rates of unemployment. However, that shows another problem that we will start to deal with in the budget implementation act and in our budget. It makes that connection between the areas of relatively high unemployment and the desperate need for skilled workers. I will talk more about how we will do that a little later, but it is a connection that we have gone a long way to make in this budget. We have done some of that over the past few years, but there is more to be done.

As there is an incredible need for skilled workers, we have put more money into post-secondary education, universities, technical schools and community colleges so our kids can get their education closer to home. All of that is helping to solve this problem.

Also, this shortage has become a huge opportunity for first nations across the country. Almost every one of these resource development projects is near or involves a first nation community. We know that in many of these communities there is a high level of unemployment, so this opportunity is there.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]*

Many of our companies across the country are taking advantage of that source of workers by offering not only training but teaching these people how to get into the workplace to get some of the top-notch jobs that are available. That is a benefit of the skilled worker shortage. We are getting first nation people much more involved, sometimes through their own companies and sometimes through working for someone else.

Third, if we are going to have these developments take place in Canada, we have to become more competitive.

Canadians simply are not very competitive. For example, we are not competitive compared to our American neighbours. Therefore, if we want to keep these high wage jobs and if we want to create more, then we have to become more competitive. We have to do that through new innovation, new technology, et cetera. We have a major focus in the budget on exactly that and we will move ahead with it. This third area is of great concern to all companies and we will deal with it along with them, because they often take the lead on that.

Fourth, we need a better regulatory system. These companies have made it very clear that they can either invest their \$500 billion in Canada or they can take it anywhere else in the world, and they mean it. They are not married to our country; they can go anywhere. Therefore, we have to ensure we get these projects in Canada and that means improving our regulatory approval system. A lot of the budget is about that. We have to improve the process for not only for large projects, but for small projects as well.

I have heard from municipalities across the country about the difficulty they have when they put a larger culvert in to move water across the road. The cost of doing that is triple in many cases because the regulatory process runs interference.

For large and small projects, we need to have a streamlined regulatory process. Does that mean we will ignore the environment? It is exactly the opposite. Instead, we will have a focused environmental process that will bring together the federal, provincial and local governments, first nations and private business. Together they will go hand in hand sharing information and expertise. The end result will be a better environmental assessment process and there will be more certainty in that process. Therefore, these companies will be willing to invest their money if there is certainty. If they know the government part of the process for a major project will not take more than two years, they can live with that and go ahead with their investment.

I cannot overstate the importance of what is being done through the budget, particularly through the common sense approach to the regulatory process reform. I am proud to stand as a member of the Conservative caucus. I am proud to be a part of what will be the most significant government action taken for generations to come.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. The time for government orders has expired. Therefore, the questions for the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright will take place when this matter returns before the House.

MOTHERHOOD

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to pay tribute to those who take on the most difficult, yet most rewarding, responsibility one can ever have: being a mother. These extraordinary women raise their children with love, care and devotion. A mother's wise words guide a child through life's most difficult challenges. A mother's kind heart fills her child's future with hope. Mothers sacrifice, inspire and encourage. They always put their children first.

My own mother, Eva Horvath, did just that. As a Hungarian immigrant, she learned English, established a successful family business and instilled in my brothers and me a deep respect for the importance of education, hard work and loyalty—but above all, family.

[Translation]

Now that I am also a mother, I am raising my son Jeffrey with the same values.

[English]

To my mom and all great moms across this amazing country, happy Mother's Day.

* * *

NURSING

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is National Nursing Week. It is into the care of Canada's 266,000 nurses that we put ourselves and our families at our most critical and vulnerable moments, at birth and often at death.

My friend and constituent Jane MacIver won *The Toronto Star* Nightingale Award three years ago. She is tough, often irreverent, but also a deeply caring professional who does nothing short of saving lives. My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue is also a nurse. She serves her constituents like the rest of us, but also in ways that the rest of us cannot: as a nurse. She continues to maintain her skills because it is her calling not just to serve but to heal.

Nurses keep us healthy, heal us and take away pain, and this week we recognize the sacrifices they make for the health of others. Nursing is an emotionally and physically gruelling job. To my friend Jane, to my colleague and to nurses across Canada, this week we celebrate and thank them for their contributions year round.

* * *

*[Translation]***AIR SERVICE OPERATIONS**

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to salute two great Canadian companies that are working together to spur Canada's economic growth and create jobs in this country.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Last week, WestJet Airlines announced that it has selected Montreal-based Bombardier Inc. to supply up to 45 of its Q400 turboprop planes for the launch of its new regional carrier late next year. This partnership is excellent news for Canada's manufacturing sector and economy as a whole. I would also like to congratulate WestJet, which will see the delivery of its 100th aircraft later this year and has just reported record growth.

The launch of WestJet's low-cost regional airline in 2013 will see not only the addition of these new Canadian-built aircraft to the WestJet fleet but also the addition of new destinations to WestJet's service grid.

[Translation]

I have no doubt that Canadian communities will welcome the new routes serviced by Canadian-built planes in the near future.

[English]

Two great Canadian companies are helping to build one great country.

[Translation]

Congratulations to WestJet and Bombardier.

* * *

*[English]***HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK**

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I joined many parliamentarians and staff who fasted in solidarity with the millions of Canadians who wake up not knowing where their next meal is coming from. I want to congratulate everyone who participated.

This morning I certainly enjoyed a healthy meal. Regrettably, hundreds of thousands of children across Canada wake up hungry and have to count on food banks for their breakfasts. In my own community, the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society deserves kudos for collecting and distributing food for over 25,000 people weekly through 16 food depots and over 100 community agencies.

Let us bring the plight of hungry Canadians into the open. Let us work to reduce the income inequality that shamefully continues to rise in Canada. Let us work to put food banks out of business.

In the meanwhile, I ask all Canadians to join me during Hunger Awareness Week and consider donating food, money or time to help reduce hunger in our communities.

Together, let us make food security a reality for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1405)

ORANGEVILLE BLUES AND JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from June 1 to June 3 the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival will be celebrating its 10th anniversary. This outstanding and award-winning annual event, which takes place in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, has been rated one of the top three festivals to attend in

Ontario for the past two years running. It has significantly grown from its humble beginnings to a three-day open-air event involving local businesses, organizations and exceptional musicians from the U.S., Europe and Canada, including a wide variety of Juno Award winners.

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, I sincerely congratulate the festival's founder, Larry Kurtz, for bringing his vision of a free Saturday afternoon concert to the community, which is now a premier tourist attraction for Orangeville and surrounding areas. I also congratulate the 165 volunteers and many sponsors who enthusiastically support this event and ensure its success each year.

* * *

*[Translation]***HUNGER AWARENESS WEEK**

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is Hunger Awareness Week, and I would like to salute the tremendous and absolutely critical work done by organizations that help society's most vulnerable people get enough to eat.

I would like to thank Moisson Sud-Ouest and Moisson Rive-Sud for supplying 50 food banks in my riding, Beauharnois—Salaberry, including Service alimentaire communautaire, Café des deux pains, Bouffe additionnelle, Sourire sans faim, Un coin chez-nous and Coin du partage, to name but a few.

This past year alone, a total of 302,563 kilos of food worth \$1.5 million was distributed to over 94,000 individuals. I urge people to continue to be generous with their gifts of money, food and especially time to these organizations all year long.

We, the NDP, will keep fighting for better living conditions for all Canadian households. We will continue to press for affordable housing for all, better pension plans and child tax benefits, and improved access to employment insurance benefits.

* * *

*[English]***SUICIDE PREVENTION**

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal framework for suicide prevention act received first reading last September. In the seven months since then, more than 2,000 Canadians have likely died by suicide. Suicide prevention is more than a mental health issue; it is a public health issue that costs our economy an estimated \$2.4 billion each year.

The best way to combat suicidal behaviour is through open conversations. I recently participated in a bowlathon organized by the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, which raised \$27,000 for suicide prevention efforts. What is more important than the funds raised, though, is that the 150 bowlers engaged many hundreds of donors in a vital conversation. For too long, we maintained a failed approach of not talking about suicide.

I ask all hon. members to join in a genuine solution and encourage conversations on these sensitive issues in their communities. The most important leadership this House can provide is by example.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, arts and culture play an important role in creating a healthy and strong society. They help bring us together as Canadians, preserve our heritage and create jobs and economic opportunities across Canada.

I am proud to recognize two important investments in my riding of North Vancouver. Our government has invested \$350,000 toward the construction of the Gordon Smith Gallery of Canadian Art. The gallery will showcase works done by some of Canada's finest artists, including Robert Bateman, Bill Reid and Ted Harrison. It will also house an art education facility that will help inspire young Canadian artists. Our government has also invested over \$15 million toward the Nat and Flora Bosa Centre for Film and Animation studies at Capilano University in my riding. This state-of-the-art film and animation centre will help train the next generation of Canadian filmmakers.

Our government is committed to supporting Canadian artists from coast to coast. We will continue to invest in projects that support arts and culture and create jobs and economic growth.

* * *

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during this National Mental Health Week, I would like to take the opportunity to remind the House of the contribution made by Dr. Camille Laurin to psychiatry in Quebec. He would have been 90 years old this week.

Dr. Laurin was a long-time activist and an outstanding psychiatrist. He was also a teacher with a desire to change the practice of education. He was responsible for major reforms in teaching and the practice of psychiatry in Quebec. By speaking out against the conditions in psychiatric hospitals, he managed to mobilize an entire generation of psychiatrists and change society's perception. This may have created some waves, but major changes were required to address pressing needs in this area.

He believed that patients with mental illnesses should be treated the same as any other patients. Nevertheless, stigmatization still exists and mental health care is still lacking. We need only think of our soldiers or of female inmates.

Statements by Members

I invite my colleagues to think about Dr. Laurin's contribution and about the quality of care and of the systems in place in our country.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP shadow cabinet says a lot about its party and its true beliefs and motives.

The Leader of the Opposition appointed the member for Vancouver Kingsway as the critic for international trade. The member was previously critic of the immigration portfolio and served as a continual advocate for radical activist groups such as No One Is Illegal. This group is not just another noisy activist group; its members are hard-line anti-Canadian extremists who believe all violent criminals and foreign war criminals have the right to stay in Canada on our streets and in our communities.

The NDP's willingness to associate with such groups may explain why the NDP has strongly opposed our reasonable reforms to the Canadian immigration and refugee system. The leader of the NDP has chosen a team that demonstrates a disturbing willingness to put the interests of a narrow band of activists ahead of the interests of ordinary Canadian families. It is becoming clear that the NDP does not stand for the interests of everyday hard-working Canadian families.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is outrage today in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, a long-simmering outrage that has reached the boiling point over the latest unbelievable example of how the federal Conservative government is failing our mariners.

News broke Tuesday that medical calls for help from ships off Newfoundland and Labrador, and only off Newfoundland and Labrador, were being routed 5,000 miles away to Italy. The calls were being directed to a Rome-based non-profit organization that has been described as "the soup kitchen of telehelp".

It was bad enough that the Conservatives closed the marine rescue sub-centre in my riding, directing distress calls to Halifax and Trenton, Ontario, but mainlanders have a hard enough time understanding my people, let alone Italians.

Our search and rescue response times are among the worst in the world. Our mariners have died waiting for help that did not come, and so did 14-year-old Burton Winters of Makkovik, Labrador.

The Conservative government has written off our fishery and now our mariners. The resentment toward the government is turning to disdain.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our economic action plan 2012 is a commitment to a pro-trade plan that opens new markets for Canadians in the world's large, dynamic and fast-growing economies. Today our government announced Canada's fifth consecutive monthly trade surplus, despite challenging international economic difficulties.

Our efforts to increase Canada's trade and investment ties with the Asia-Pacific are yielding results, and our exports are reaching new records. This is great news for our forestry sector. Led by British Columbia, Canada is now the world's number one exporter of lumber to China. B.C. softwood lumber accounts for nearly 95% of all Canadian softwood shipments to China, making it China's largest global supplier.

It is just another example of how our government's pro-trade plan is bringing jobs, growth and long-term prosperity to British Columbians and Canadians all across the country.

* * *

CO-OPERATIVES

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the hard days of the depression in Cape Breton, Reverend Moses Coady started the co-op movement. This effort helped rural communities across the Maritimes and improved their economic and social circumstances.

The influence of the movement Moses led spread across Canada and around the world. Today, these co-operatives are celebrating 75 years of success. The Coady International Institute at St. François Xavier University is teaching this to many around the world.

I was a proud member of Bras d'Or Farmers Co-op and the United Farmers Co-op. In Cape Breton, there are now 14 co-ops along with 9,000 across Canada.

Recently, the Conservative government decided to cut this \$4 million co-operative development program. Ironically, 2012 was also the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives.

These co-operatives provide stable employment for hundreds of families. At a time when rural Canada is struggling, the co-operative movement should be given due recognition and deserves much more support from the government.

* * *

● (1415)

TELEVISION BROADCASTING

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick and tired of having to reach for the remote control every time a commercial is aired on the TV. That is why I proposed legislation last year to regulate the loudness of television commercials.

While my bill did not come to a vote due the spring election, it did spur the CRTC into action with nationwide consultations. This week, final regulations will become effective on September 1, implementing the measures contained in my bill.

No longer will Canadians be tormented by loud commercials on their TVs. Now seniors, citizens with sensitive hearing and everyone else frustrated by loud commercials can rest easy, because the deadline for broadcasters to comply with the regulations is fast approaching. In a matter of months, advertisers will no longer be free to jack up the volume on commercials and we will all be able to watch TV in peace.

* * *

[Translation]

FRENCH LANGUAGE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière had the gall to say that “the orange wave is causing French to disappear from this House” and that “all the NDP MPs from Quebec...ask half their questions in English.”

What a grotesque, ridiculous and false statement. We know how much the Conservatives hate facts. This statement is another example of that.

Since the member for Outremont was elected as the leader of the NDP, Quebec members have asked only 17 of a total of 185 questions, or 6%, in English. However, 60% of the questions asked in French by our Quebec members have been answered in English. So much for a government that says it wants to protect the French fact.

When the Conservatives utter such nonsense, we can see why Quebecers chose the NDP a year ago to represent them and defend their interests and to give every Quebecer a voice in Parliament.

* * *

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the leader of the NDP described measures to hold offenders accountable for their actions and to show respect to taxpayers as “stupid gestures”.

In the NDP's world, convicted murderers and rapists should have their own personal shoppers sent out to collect personal effects from the outside world, all at taxpayers' expense. We find that position absolutely ludicrous and offensive to law-abiding Canadians.

Our Conservative government will continue to take action to make offenders more accountable and to put victims first. I call on the NDP to finally start putting the rights of victims ahead of the rights of offenders.

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

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are slashing public services, gutting environmental protections and dismantling their own accountability act, all this thrown into a budget bill in the hope that Canadians will not notice. How can the Prime Minister justify trying to slip these policies past Canadians without a proper debate?

When he was sitting in opposition, the Prime Minister felt quite differently about that sort of thing. He said, "I would argue that the subject matter of the bill is so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles".

What happened to those principles?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's economic action plan is indeed comprehensive. We are operating in a world with a very fragile global economy. The government is determined to take a range of actions necessary to create jobs and growth and to secure our prosperity in the long term.

We have set aside a record amount of time for debate. I would urge the NDP to actually debate the legislation rather than just trying to obstruct and delay.

* * *

*[Translation]***PENSIONS**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the worst part is that the Prime Minister is asking hon. members to vote without having all the information. For example, we know they are going to cut old age security, forcing people to retire at 67. That is \$12,000 less per person in retirement income. However, the Conservatives have not disclosed what the OAS cuts add up to. The Prime Minister told us we have had ample time to discuss this, but one number is still missing: how much money in total will the government save with these cuts?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as old age security is concerned, there will be no reductions for the people who are currently receiving a pension. That was one of our promises. We have to safeguard pensioners' incomes. For the long-term stability and sustainability of this fund, we will make changes, but we will not start until 2023.

* * *

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they will never start because they will be replaced well before that.

That is the problem: the Prime Minister says he wants to save money, but he cannot even answer a single specific question.

He is making things up as he goes along. The budget will take \$56 million away from the Food Inspection Agency. The

Conservatives say that the cuts will not affect front-line services, but that is not true. There will be no more money to pay for inspecting meat imported from the United States.

Can the Prime Minister tell us which other food inspection services will be cut because of his budget?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as we have said many times before, those services will not be scaled back.

[English]

In this, as in so many cases, what the government has done is found modest administrative savings by eliminating duplication, and doing that over a significant period of time. Certainly, in the area of food inspection, we have no intention of cutting the inspection of our food.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are cutting food inspection of meat coming in from the U.S., a \$56 million cut.

[Translation]

This is another example of the government's lack of transparency. The Conservatives go around tooting their own horn and saying how tough they are on crime, yet they have cut public safety funding: \$143 million from border protection, \$295 million from inmate supervision, \$195 million from police services and \$700 million from public safety.

Does being a law-and-order government mean slashing funding for public safety?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the NDP leader criticize our public safety services even though the NDP is against our public safety measures. That party has opposed every one of our initiatives to protect our communities and our streets from criminals. That is one of our priorities, and that is not about to change.

* * *

*[English]***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative cuts are putting the security of Canadians at risk, plainly and simply.

I have another example. Just days after the closure of the maritime search and rescue centre in St. John's, we find out that medical emergency calls made from waters off Newfoundland and Labrador are now being routed to a call centre in Italy. Callers report being connected to doctors who cannot even understand them. That is a net result of Conservative cuts. Public safety is being put at risk.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House how long the lives of people will be put in danger before the government corrects the situation?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, because the NDP decided to oppose and try to block the budget a few minutes after it was tabled, that party has not bothered to look into these matters.

In the case the hon. member mentions, there is no change to procedure here. The first response to these calls has always been to medical facilities in Halifax. There is backup in case those calls are backed up. That has been the case and that will continue to be the case.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on that particular score, surely the Prime Minister is not denying the fact that Mr. Rideout, in calling about the health of his father, was routed to a doctor in Rome. The doctor in Rome did not know where the call was coming from and wanted to know what kind of fishing was going on. Mr. Rideout was so frustrated he hung up the phone, came back and phoned the CBC about the rerouting that had taken place.

Why would the Prime Minister stand in his place and give the House false information with respect to the situation of the—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of National Defence have provided radio medical service to mariners in Atlantic Canada through service providers in Halifax for many years, and we continue to do so.

As in the past, an internationally recognized service provider has been used in the event that backup is required.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Some backup, Mr. Speaker.

There is so much in the bill that would give additional powers to the cabinet, which effectively means giving additional powers to the Prime Minister, particularly with respect to the issues around environment, environmental assessment and environmental regulations. The Prime Minister's reaction in opposition was so completely different when all of these powers were being accumulated around the office and person of the prime minister.

What is the government going to do to resist the inevitable, dictatorial tendencies to give power to one person and one person only with respect to public policy issues?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party should actually read the sections of the bill in question. They cannot be adequately categorized in that way whatsoever.

What is being done in the area of environmental assessment is to ensure we still have thorough environmental assessments but that there will be a defined timeline within which judgments and advice have to be rendered. That time can be up to two years, which is plenty of time. That is the kind of certainty that investors are looking for.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I did read the bill, and it is here and here and here. This bill gives extraordinary powers to cabinet.

Everyone knows what cabinet means. It is the power held by one man, in this case, the Prime Minister. This is a huge change that gives even more power to the Prime Minister and none to Parliament or to Canadians. That is the problem.

Why is the Prime Minister doing this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. What we are doing with environmental assessments is ensuring a clear timeline. That is vital to the certainty of our investments.

I completely reject the Liberal leader's analysis.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the budget cuts, 12 different government agencies will lose their internal auditors. That is Conservative-style transparency.

The role of the auditors is to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent properly. The Conservatives are therefore in favour of allowing millions of dollars to be spent without any oversight. They are leaving the door wide open to abuse.

Why do the Conservatives think that government spending does not have to be supervised? Are they hoping to spend money however they want?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, funding agencies have reviewed some back office operations, and this is something they do internally to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

The Office of the Comptroller General of Canada already serves 47 government organizations and has all the necessary know-how to provide auditing services for all the regional development agencies.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen examples where the Conservatives' lack of transparency led to abuses. Look at the G8 slush fund. Indeed, there is cause for concern when the government announces its intention to cut the auditing powers of the Auditor General.

We have even seen the Conservatives refuse to allow the Auditor General to testify before the parliamentary committee. They want to silence the person responsible for ensuring that taxpayers' money is spent properly.

Why do the Conservatives want to take away the Auditor General's powers?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe in the particular case the hon. member is referencing, the Auditor General makes his own decisions on what audits he does. That is independent of the government and indeed, I would think, of this House. He is an independent agent who reports to this chamber. We have not had any impact on his decisions.

* * *

• (1430)

*[Translation]***PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE**

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the creation of the Parliamentary Budget Office and the 2006 Accountability Act were to mark the beginning of a new era of greater transparency. Six years later, though, the Conservatives are dismantling their own law.

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer tries to do his job, he is muzzled by the government and attacked by Conservative ministers. In fact, 75 of 83 departments have even refused to reply to him.

This government established the Parliamentary Budget Office, so why is the government preventing the Parliamentary Budget Officer from doing his job?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to report to Parliament by the normal means, including the estimates, quarterly financial reports and the public accounts process.

[English]

Of course our budget 2012 is a plan that is focused on jobs and opportunity throughout our country, and part of that is reducing the deficit by a total of 2%. In terms of reductions, I think that is fair, modest and moderate.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from name calling by the Minister of Finance to attacks by the Minister of National Defence for revealing the real cost of the F-35, make no mistake, the PBO is under attack by Conservatives who want to hide from oversight.

Out of 83 departments, 75 ignored his requests for basic information about planned cuts, and 90% of government departments even refused to answer him. When did Conservatives become so afraid of accountability? Will the government stop obstructing the PBO and let him do his job?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said before, and the hon. member, I am sure, knows this, we have obligations to report to Parliament, which we take very seriously.

We will continue to report to Parliament through the normal means, including the estimates, the quarterly financial reports and the public accounts process of this chamber. We do have some

obligations to our employees to inform them first if there are any changes in their status. We take that seriously as well.

* * *

*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP always supported the creation of a public appointments commission, in spite of the tall tales told by certain Conservatives saying the opposite.

What we refused to support was the nomination of a controversial commissioner, Gwyn Morgan, who is no more nor less than the chairman of the board of SNC-Lavalin and who is also famous for his insulting comments about certain ethnic communities.

Why do the Conservatives want to rewrite history when the only controversy here is the one they created with that nomination?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have instituted a very rigorous process for our appointments. Unfortunately, the Public Appointments Commission and the establishment of the chair were opposed by the opposition parties. Then they rose in this House frequently to decry the spending of any money on that commission. We responded to that by stopping the spending of the money on that commission to help us move toward balancing the budget.

At the same time we are pleased to report that our appointments process is rigorous. It is working and ensuring that all appointments are made based on merit. That is why we have had such outstanding people stepping forward to take part in public life.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to think that the only people who are qualified happen to be buddies of the Conservative Party.

Let us go through some of the more notorious ones. We have Leo Housakos' good buddy, Tom Pentefountas, who has zero qualifications, and the Conservatives gave him the vice-chair of the CRTC. We have Margaret F. Delisle, appointed to the National Battlefields Commission. Her qualification? Oh, right, she is the sister of Michael Fortier.

The Conservatives promised they were going to clean up Ottawa, but instead it is the same old pork barrel, rum bottle politics. Why are they trying to undermine the accountability act?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very pleased with the appointments process, in which has ensured that first-rate people step forward and offer to provide public service.

We have seen it made more rigorous in a number of ways. As a result, the appointments made by the government are second to none. We are very pleased with the calibre of the individuals put forward. It is a surprise that they are prepared to do that in the face of criticism from members of the opposition who stand up and attack the people who dare to put in their time and their effort to serve their country.

Oral Questions

●(1435)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what was that? That sounds like a political party that is circling the drain because people are getting tired of the pork barrel patronage that it is engaged in.

Let us go through a few more other stellar examples of those who come forward to help us and help themselves. There is Bruce Carson, a good buddy of the Prime Minister, appointed to the Canada School of Energy and Environment. How about Gary Valcour, riding president of the Minister of Finance, and now on the Oshawa Harbour Commission?

All of them are Conservative buddies. All of them are feeding at the trough. Why are they engaged in the same old tired politics that Canadians got fed up with when they kicked out the Liberals?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when people who step forward to serve their country are attacked by the opposition.

Let us take the example of Mr. Valcour. He is a highly qualified individual, a graduate of Dalhousie Law School, a distinguished criminal and civil lawyer for several decades, who served as chairperson of the Oshawa Harbour Commission, was a member of the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority and was reappointed on the basis that his outstanding performance merited reappointment.

Those is the kind of people who are attacked by the opposition. Every Canadian should be afraid of a party like that, that wishes to engage in personal attacks on individuals who want to serve the Canadian public.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one has to wonder who is at the controls now.

Donations to the Conservative Party from the directors of SNC-Lavalin flooded in between November and December 2009. During the same period, Pierre Duhaime, the ousted CEO of SNC, was lobbying the Conservatives about federal nuclear development policy.

By pure coincidence, surely, the federal government announced on December 18, 2009, that same year, that Atomic Energy Canada was going on the market. And guess who hit the jackpot? Yes indeed: SNC.

Is there a connection between the Conservative funding and the awarding of that contract?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government followed a fair, open and transparent process. An independent firm reviewed the process followed to reach an agreement and conclude the sale of AECL. In addition, we appointed two independent advisers to ensure the fairness and integrity of the process, from start to finish. We acted in accordance with their advice at all times.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party received \$25,000 from SNC-Lavalin and then Atomic Energy of Canada was sold for peanuts. We are entitled to have questions about that.

On another subject, we learned this morning that well-known entrepreneur Tony Accurso has discovered a new trick for cheating the government.

According to *La Presse*, by buying a company on the edge of bankruptcy that had nothing to do with his construction business, he is going to be able to save \$45 million in taxes.

While the Canada Revenue Agency is going after charitable organizations, Tony Accurso pulls a fast one on them.

When is the Conservative government actually going to do something about the problem of tax evasion?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has acted ethically on all of these points.

The question is this: knowing that the Leader of the Opposition received \$7,000 from a vice-president of SNC-Lavalin, why are New Democrat members attacking us now, when we accepted donations that were legal and ethical?

I also have another question. This member who has just asked me a question made donations directly to Québec solidaire, one of the most ultra-radical parties in Canada. Why did he make that kind of donation?

* * *

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we found out that MDA was having to lay off some highly qualified people because there was no contract to build the strategically important RADARSAT constellation.

In response to my question, the minister stated, and I quote, "...we are committed to the RADARSAT project and we are working on delivering in a cost-effective way".

The Prime Minister has had a very big photo op, and he has made all sorts of promises about ensuring better sovereignty for this country and saving lives. Now the question is, what is the government waiting for to start this project? Is this going to be another example of a project that gets delayed and mismanaged?

●(1440)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was right in quoting me, because we are committed to this project and we will deliver it in a most cost-effective way.

We are taking action for the space sector. For the first time, we launched a review for the aerospace sector to make sure that we remain a leader in the world. This is real action.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what does this kind of answer mean? They are working on delivering this project, but in the meantime there is no contract for the company and it is likely to lose some highly qualified employees.

The RADARSAT satellites are making Canada proud and we are waiting to build the three-satellite RADARSAT constellation. We cannot wait much longer. It is extremely important for security and sovereignty as well as for monitoring the changing environment in our far north.

Is this another example of a poorly managed project that will be slowed down by this government?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we are committed to the RADARSAT project. We are taking it seriously and we are going to deliver this project in the most cost-effective way. It is a matter of sound cost management.

As I was saying, we are taking concrete measures. Instead of cutting in science and technology, as they did in the past, we have invested more. In fact, we are investing \$1.1 billion over five years. I wonder how they are going to vote. It is time, in fact, to hold a meaningful vote on the budget implementation.

A review of the space and aerospace sector has also begun. This is a first in Canadian history.

* * *

[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the issue of search and rescue, based on what we have just heard in the House. This is a serious issue, especially for the Rideout family.

Mr. Speaker, picture yourself in the north Atlantic, 130 kilometres out, with no presence of the Government of Canada to help you out.

Here is an email that was discovered by the media. I would like to ask the minister to respond to this specifically. “Effective May 7, MCTS centres in Newfoundland and Labrador region shall use CIRM Roma for all radio medicals.” That is from the regional director of maritime services, Canadian Coast Guard.

What does the minister have to say to that? First of all, he should apologize to the Rideout family and second of all, reopen these centres in St. John's and Quebec City.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the Canadian Coast Guard and DND have provided radio medical services to mariners in the Atlantic region for many years through the Halifax companies, and they continue to do so.

In the event that there are emergencies of sufficient consequences that would require that we have to go to a backup, we do in fact use an internationally recognized company to perform that task.

[Translation]

RADIO-CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, following the closure of Rights and Democracy and the ending of grants to the International Council for Canadian Studies, now it is Radio-Canada International's turn to be squeezed dry.

Clearly, this government's aim is to control everything that goes out and everything that comes into Canada and everything about Canada.

When did the Conservatives receive a mandate to destroy our international reputation? When did they receive a mandate to destroy all the respected institutions that make it possible to understand the diversity of the information culture here and elsewhere? When?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my view, it is clear that we have made this type of commitment. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has the funds it needs to carry out its mandate and continue with the action plan until 2015.

We have made this kind of commitment in each of these fields: culture, language and cultural infrastructure. The CBC is part of that. It has the investments it needs to build these foundations throughout the country and to fulfill these commitments to our culture.

It is clear: we have the commitments, the investments and the policies, and they are ongoing.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may not like the CBC, but just about everyone, from Christopher Plummer to Russell Peters, has cut their teeth on Canadian radio drama. Artists are Canada's most well known exports. This is a big part of our economy. I know the heritage minister is going to get up and try to hide behind past Liberal cuts, but that is not going to cut it here today. It is his government that is responsible for the demise of CBC radio drama.

Why does the minister continue to attack Canadian culture and the Canadian economy?

● (1445)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is such utter nonsense if we look at our budget and all the investments that we have made with regard to culture.

It is a simple fact that this government is the only government in the G20 that made a precise decision not to cut, not to maintain, but to increase funding for arts and culture during the recession. We increased our support for the Canada Council for the Arts by 20%. We have created two new national museums. We have created the Canada media fund, which is a \$100 million investment every year into Canadian television, the audio-video sector and films all across this country. We are providing funding at a record level, but in responsible ways, to arts and culture to make sure that it continues to contribute to our national identity and to our economy.

*Oral Questions***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, closing down the marine rescue coordination centre in St. John's was not bad enough. An ailing fisherman off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador had his call for help routed to Italy. That is right: Italy, as in Europe. It speaks volumes about the Conservatives' lack of understanding or concern for the challenges faced by fishing crews and mariners on our coasts. It—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for St. John's East has the floor.

Mr. Jack Harris: It is funny, Mr. Speaker, but it speaks volumes about the Conservatives' lack of understanding or concern for the challenges faced by fishing crews and mariners off our coasts. We never imagined that medical emergency calls would be routed to Italy, all calls. Coast Guard emails confirm this new procedure for all medical calls will be in place effective May 7.

How can the government explain such an outrageous decision?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated a couple of times now, the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of National Defence provide radio medical services to our mariners in this important work they do, and their safety is of our utmost concern, in Atlantic Canada through centres in Halifax.

As in the past, and we continue to do so, we use an internationally renowned, recognized service provider in the case of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we cannot close the barn door. The horse has gotten out on this one, and I have lost count of how many times the government has taken wrong decisions on search and rescue. It is poor management and a lack of priority.

People who make a living working off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve far better than having their calls for help taken by a doctor sitting in an office in Rome, who did not even know where Newfoundland was. When will the government take search and rescue seriously for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and for all Canadians? Who signed off on this outrageous experiment and will the government open up the centres in St. John's—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the service provider that was used as a backup, as I said, is internationally known and has provided backup service to our centres for many years. It is the same service centre that provided backup for the Swissair disaster. It is a renowned company, well known. We use it as a backup only and normally operate through channels in Halifax.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the French just recently elected a new president of the

Fifth Republic. Canada has a long-standing close relationship with France, and trade liberalization only serves to strengthen those ties.

I have a question for the Prime Minister. Can he give us an update on the most recent developments with regard to the ongoing relationship between Canada and France?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the president-elect of France, François Hollande, on Sunday evening to congratulate him and tell him that the Hon. Lawrence Cannon would be the next Canadian ambassador to France and that Mr. Cannon has my full confidence and the experience needed to represent our country.

This shows the importance we place on our relationship with France, a country with which we have economic, cultural, linguistic and historic ties. Clearly, we would like to thank the former ambassador, Marc Lortie, for his service.

* * *

• (1450)

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of groups throughout Quebec have submitted projects under the homelessness partnering strategy.

Funding was supposed to be renewed by April 1, 2012. However, only the projects in Quebec are still awaiting approval by the minister. The partnership agreement, duly signed with the Government of Quebec, has been in place for 12 years. Many groups depend on this funding, but there has been nothing but silence from the minister.

Since there is agreement on all the projects and the parliamentary secretary to the minister has confirmed that the funding was available, then why the delays?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, access to housing is a very important step toward gaining independence, and it helps at-risk Canadians contribute fully to society.

We are working with the provinces to help people find housing. That is why we invested in almost 700 projects in Quebec in 2011.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the money is there; the minister simply has to sign off on it.

For the past 12 years, everything has gone like clockwork: there have been no problems with any HPS applications and all projects approved by Quebec received funding. Now HPS applications, including the one from RAPSIM, are facing closed doors and silence from the minister, yet these projects are supported by the community—and they work.

Why does the minister refuse to respect the HPS agreement with Quebec? Is this yet another way to muzzle those who dare stand up to the Conservatives?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was our government that invested in that program. It is a five-year program, for which we want to ensure a predetermined amount of nearly \$2 billion invested in Canada. This program aims to help homeless people, in partnership with the provinces. Every decision is made in partnership with the provinces, but there is a fixed amount, and we want to invest that money in the best possible way.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unemployed workers who need help are ill-served by this government. Soon, they will have to accept any job that the minister deems acceptable or risk losing their employment insurance benefits, yet the minister refuses to explain what the word “acceptable” means.

The Conservatives' Trojan Horse bill directly attacks unemployed workers by lowering their incomes. Why are the Conservatives so doggedly attacking unemployed workers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's priority is to create jobs, promote economic growth and get Canadians back to work in their communities.

This bill includes measures to help unemployed workers find jobs. This is the best way to help them because it is good for them, their families and the Canadian economy, particularly right now since there is a shortage of skilled workers.

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that under the Conservative government, fewer Canadians have access to EI than ever before, and now the minister will be able to kick people off EI if they do not take a so-called suitable job. However, she refuses to say what suitable is.

To avoid accountability, the Conservatives chose to sneak these changes into their Trojan Horse budget bill.

The Conservatives are even cutting back on the ability of unemployed Canadians to appeal EI decisions. Can the minister tell Canadians how just 74 people are going to fairly adjudicate the over 31,000 cases each year?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to Canadians, and that was to respect the spending of their taxpayer dollars. That is why we are undergoing changes to ensure we do things both more efficiently and more effectively, while maintaining or increasing our services to Canadians.

Let us face it: across this country we have and will have growing shortages of both skills and labour, so we need to make sure that those people who are unfortunate enough to lose their job have every opportunity to become aware of jobs that are available in their area, to have the help they need to access those jobs and to get those jobs. That is the best for them and for their families and for the economy.

● (1455)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the chickens are coming home to roost with the government's bad punishment policies.

In Canada's overcrowded jails, prison violence has already increased 37% over five years, and it will only get worse. That is not only dangerous for staff and guards but it is also dangerous for the Canadian public when these prisoners are released back into their communities.

When will the government pay attention to the overwhelming evidence that its crime agenda creates more victims and is doing more harm than good?

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the opposition has been continually criticizing us and saying that we will be building new prisons. We will not need to build new prisons because our legislation will not create new criminals; it just ends the revolving door.

We would ask the opposition to support our initiatives to make offenders more accountable, which, for example, as we announced yesterday, includes asking offenders to pay for some of their expenses. Canadians pay for their room and board. We are asking that offenders pay for some of their room and board. It is reasonable, and we ask the opposition to support these initiatives.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contaminated sites put the health, safety and economic interests of Canadians at risk for generations to come. Radioactive material may pose cancer risks, and one litre of gasoline can render one million litres of water undrinkable.

Does the minister understand that 13,000 sites may need to be cleaned up, that he should stop congratulating himself on a job half done and instead stand up for the environment, develop aggressive timelines and provide the necessary resources to protect Canadians?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague does not seem to understand the context of the federal contaminated sites program. Hundreds of these sites fall under the responsibility of 16 departments and agencies. The federal contaminated sites program, \$3.5 billion announced by our government, is to address the largest, most serious of the federal contaminated sites. We are 50% of the way through those target sites and we will continue.

*Oral Questions***RCMP**

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is in the news again today for the wrong reasons: the ongoing failure to act on sexual harassment against female officers.

The RCMP Public Complaints Commission is investigating. The RCMP commissioner is doing a gender audit of RCMP policies. However, for too long the government has failed to set any deadlines for concrete action on this crisis, in effect ignoring the stress this places on those officers who serve to make our communities safer.

Where is the government's sense of urgency? Where is the minister's commitment to getting a timely resolution to this unacceptable situation in the RCMP?

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us in the House are concerned when we hear allegations of any individual, including any RCMP individual, having to deal with sexual harassment. We are very pleased that the new commissioner is taking this very seriously. He has taken a very tough stance on this. He is investigating and we are waiting for the reports and recommendations that come out of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really time that the government started walking the walk.

The problem of sexual harassment within the RCMP is not new. We have known about it for years. What is the minister's solution? He has washed his hands of the issue and referred it to a commission.

Do the Conservatives think that RCMP officers, who risk their lives every day to protect Canadians, deserve only empty words, or will they finally give the RCMP the resources it needs to combat sexual harassment?

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member opposite. All of us are concerned about these allegations. We are concerned with any prospect that any member of the RCMP would face harassment. That is why we have taken action. We are pleased that the commissioner has taken this seriously. He has made strong statements on this. He is taking action. There is pending litigation, so we will wait to see what the outcome is.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, history has shown that in severe economic times and challenge, the global economy is revived through lowering trade barriers, not raising them.

However, concerns have been raised about an amendment to a buy America provision in the transportation bill before the U.S. Congress. Shamefully, the NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster has called the buy America a perfectly logical policy.

Could the Minister of International Trade please share with the House how our government is defending a strong Canada-U.S. partnership and creating jobs for Canadian workers and their families?

● (1500)

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Yellowhead for his excellent work as chair of the committee. Canadians know that our government always has and always will defend their interests.

When buy America provisions were introduced in 2009, we negotiated an exemption for Canada. When they were reintroduced last year, we aggressively but respectfully engaged with the United States and the legislation died.

I am confident that our American cousins share the view that we must all do our part to ensure that the Canada-U.S. partnership, which is the envy of the world, grows even stronger as we go forward during these very difficult times.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Frank Valeriotte (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 2011 Census of Agriculture shows a 10% decline in farms and farm operators. Young Canadians are not returning to the farm, with the average age of farmers now 58 years.

Making it worse, the government is removing the ability of local industry and farmers to identify innovative measures to improve competitiveness funded through the agricultural adaptation program. Now it will be a political decision of the minister.

Will the minister please listen to farmers and industry and return the delivery of federal funding to local agricultural councils in regions across Canada?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this side is very proud of the work we have done on behalf of Canadian producers and processors. They are exporting record amounts throughout the world.

Yes, we have less farmers doing a far better job and producing more product than we have ever seen. Innovation and efficiency has taken over. They are no longer waiting for the Liberal cheques in the mailbox. They are out there in the world marketplace doing a great job for us.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, the Minister of Transport was visibly overwhelmed by a simple question about the Smugglers Hill Farm wind turbine project in Vermont, on the other side of the border from the town of Stanstead.

People are worried about their health and safety, and the minister knew very well what I was talking about. He was so confused, or paying so little attention, that he thought I was talking about a project in Quebec—and they claim to care about the interests of Quebecers.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm that he is now in contact with the mayor of Stanstead, Mr. Dutil, and that he is going to make sure that the concerns of the residents of his town are heard on the other side of the border?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his work on this issue. We are aware of this matter and we have spoken with the mayor of Stanstead, the Government of Quebec and the State of Vermont.

The government will continue to make the best possible decisions for Canadian and to stand up for their interests. We will be monitoring the situation closely, and I will be pleased to work with the member on this very important matter.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the reckless NDP used tactics, which even the leader of the Liberal Party called absurd, to eliminate debate in the House of Commons on an important bill that would benefit Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Would the Minister of State for Finance please update the House on the status of Canada's economic action plan 2012, a plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government remains focused on jobs and growing the economy. That is why, in Canada's economic action plan 2012, we ensured that it was full of measures to promote job creation, including investments for training, infrastructure and new opportunities for young Canadians, first nations, newcomers and the unemployed.

It is frustrating when the opposition plays games with Canadians' future. Canadians want us to get this passed. They want this to happen. We need to focus on that and get it done for everyone.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of northern Manitoba. Despite the progress of the last 100 years, there are still communities in

northern Manitoba without all-weather roads and with third world conditions.

First nations lack basic safe drinking water and are even getting a special visit from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

Liberal governments ignored first nations and the Conservative government has turned its back on them too. When will it partner with the provinces and first nations to put an end to the unacceptable living conditions aboriginal people face?

● (1505)

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our record of collaborating with first nations, with our partners, in terms of improving economic opportunities and infrastructure on reserves. We are very proud of our nutrition north program, which has meant a reduction in the food basket costs for the average family in those 103 communities that it applies to. We think we are making major progress.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after the closing of the Quebec City rescue centre, which was able to respond to fishers and pleasure boaters in French, and after the removal of valuable artifacts from Quebec's history to be put on a shelf far from their place of origin, it is now the turn of the military in Quebec to bear the cost of the Conservative government's cuts.

While members of the military were able to use French-language mediation services at CFB Valcartier and in Saint-Jean, now the Conservatives are eliminating 10 of the 25 mediator positions, including all the positions in Quebec.

Why does the government want to deprive members of the military in Quebec of easy access, in French, to this essential dispute resolution service?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does not have enough information. The decision was made to expand our service, but it is sometimes necessary to review certain services, and that is what we are now doing.

[English]

We have taken the view that we are looking to provide direct services in many cases, particularly in areas of mental health services. We have made decisions to make those professionals closer to bases, closer to where the service is needed, and we do so in both official languages.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of two points of order, but we will do the Thursday question first and then hear the points of order.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

*Points of Order**[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the government does not want to listen to Canadians, does not respect parliamentary conventions and does not want to split Bill C-38, the Trojan Horse.

[English]

This bill will gut environmental protections, take money out of the hands of pensioners and further reduce the powers of the Auditor General.

I am wondering what else the government has in store for Canadians.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's priority is, of course, the economy. We are committed to job creation and economic growth.

As a result, this afternoon we will continue debate on Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act. This bill implements the budget, Canada's economic action plan 2012, to ensure certainty for the economy.

For the benefit of Canadians and parliamentarians, when we introduced the bill, we said we would vote on it on May 14. The second reading vote on the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act will be on May 14.

After tomorrow, which will be the final day of debate on this bill, we will have had the longest second reading debate on a budget bill in at least the last two decades.

[Translation]

On Monday and Tuesday we will continue with another bill that will support the Canadian economy and job creation, especially in the digital and creative sectors.

We will have report stage and third reading debate on Bill C-11, the Copyright Modernization Act.

This bill puts forth a balanced, common sense plan to modernize our copyright laws. Committees have met for over 60 hours and heard from almost 200 witnesses. All of this is in addition to the second reading debate on Bill C-11 of 10 sitting days.

After all that debate and study, it is time for the measures to be fully implemented so Canadians can take advantage of the updated rules and create new high-quality digital jobs.

[English]

Should the opposition agree that we have already had ample debate on Bill C-11, we will debate Bill C-25, the pooled registered pension plans act; Bill C-23, the Canada–Jordan free trade act; and Bill C-15, the strengthening military justice in the defence of Canada act in the remaining time on Monday and Tuesday.

Wednesday, May 16, will be the next allotted day.

On Thursday morning, May 17, we will debate the pooled registered pension plans act. This bill will help Canadians who are

self-employed or who work for a small business to secure a stable retirement.

In the last election, we committed to Canadians that we would implement these plans as soon as possible. This is what Canadians voted for and this is what we will do.

If it has been reported back from committee, we will call Bill C-31, the protecting Canada's immigration system act, for report stage debate on Thursday afternoon.

* * *

● (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to clarify an answer given last night in the committee of the whole.

In my enthusiasm to talk about the medical system, in particular the mental health system that we have in place in the Canadian Forces, I referenced the Canadian Forces health care budget as having “ongoing capital” of \$439.6 million as opposed to saying “including capital”. Therefore, I am simply correcting the record.

To be clear, I should have said, “This brings the ongoing budget to \$439.6 million for the Canadian Forces health care system.”

The Speaker: Order. The House appreciates the clarification.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to bring to your attention that prior to question period the member for Kootenay—Columbia used his Standing Order 31 statement to launch a personal attack on me, no less on a completely baseless and false matter.

This is the second time this has happened, and I raised a point of order two months ago on this very point.

You have repeatedly ruled that is an inappropriate use of Standing Order 31 for members to attack other members of this House.

Ironically, just today the government House leader stood up in question period and decried the use of personal attacks on those who want to serve the public, which I presume includes members of Parliament, yet the current government continues to do that very thing with Standing Order 31 statements every day.

I ask that you uphold your own ruling of this House and require the member for Kootenay—Columbia to withdraw his comments forthwith.

The Speaker: Order. I will certainly take a look at what was said and come back to the House after reviewing the matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: Before statements by members, we were on questions and comments for the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright. Questions and comments.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech that my colleague delivered just before question period. He was making some excellent points.

I would really appreciate it if the member would take a little more time to elaborate on some of the environmental implications of what he was saying. I think the House would appreciate hearing what they are.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question from my colleague.

One of the comments that I have heard most often from the opposition in response to our budget is that because the time government spends on the environmental process would be shortened, the process would somehow not be as thorough.

I mentioned in my comments that just the opposite is true. If the members opposite are really serious about doing their job of critiquing this legislation, they should probably read the legislation, tie the legislation in with other legislation that is in place and think about the consequences.

The opposition would find that we are proposing a streamlining that would allow the federal government to work with the provinces, to work with first nations, to work with municipalities, to work with the private sector and individuals who have an interest, and to work through a process side by side, together, whereby all of the information can be put together. We will end up with a better result.

This is just the opposite of what the opposition members are saying is true. I wish they would take a serious look at that and come to the realization that such is the case.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member needs to recognize that the government is actually using the budget debate, Bill C-38, as a back door for passing significant pieces of legislation, which is a precedent in itself.

Over 400 pages are in the budget bill, a bill that should have had 20 pages. There are well over 400 pages, of which 120 deal with the environment. This will have a profound impact on generations of Canadians during the years ahead. It should have been brought in as separate legislation. That approach would have afforded the House the opportunity to debate the legislation, take it to committee on its own, have experts from across Canada come and contribute to the debate, and then bring it back to the House for third reading. That would have been due diligence. That would have been the right way to do it.

Government Orders

Why has the government used a back door for so many piece of legislation that should have been brought in separately?

• (1515)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the member must really have very little to complain about when it comes to this legislation, because he focuses on the process, as do so many others opposite.

Quite frankly, Canadians do not care about process; what they care about is what the end result will be. What they care about is having ample time for debate, and there has been a record amount of time for debate on a budget bill.

The member is quite correct in saying that this is a substantial budget. There are a lot of really important components of the budget, but the important thing is not how we arrive at scrutinizing it and ending up with a good product; it is that everyone is involved, and sincerely involved, instead of complaining about the amount of time they have had. It is a record amount, and one member from the official opposition took 11 hours to filibuster, which would have allowed 44 members to give speeches on the budget.

Instead of complaining about process, members should get engaged, do their homework, read the bill, tie it in with other legislation and give some constructive input. That would be a much more productive way to go.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that last comment from my colleague across the way about Canadians not being concerned about process is a keeper. Democracy is all about process and the opportunity for the public to engage in their political process.

However, today I take great pleasure in rising to speak to Bill C-38, the Trojan Horse bill.

My riding of Beaches—East York is an urban riding, and it is through that lens of urban reality, not exclusively but primarily, that my constituents look at Bill C-38, which is before the House today.

This is not just true of my riding. In our mind's eye this is a country of great lakes, rocky mountains, craggy coastlines and broad expanses, but about 80% of Canadians live in urban centres. We are an urban nation. This is important to recognize, because it is this reality, not some romanticized mythical or historical place, that the Conservatives have been elected to govern. However, the urban fact of this country is something not at all recognized by the government, as evidenced by this and successive budgets and this budget implementation bill. Simply speaking, cities and the urban experience do not seem to form any part of the government's understanding of our country or its citizens. Cities have been left out of this budget and this bill, as have those who live in them.

We all know by now the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' estimate of the urban infrastructure deficit. It is about \$120 billion. That is an old number now, and surely an underestimate, because so little has been done to address this deficit and so few investments have been made in our cities. Another year comes, another budget comes; another year goes and another budget goes, with nothing done that can be considered remotely meaningful to address the matter.

Government Orders

There is no commitment to urban transit, even though many studies by many credible organizations—including the OECD, the Toronto Board of Trade in my own city and Statistics Canada—tell us that at least in Toronto, our lives are wasting away in traffic jams and on inadequate public transit. Our economy is losing billions of dollars annually in lost productivity because of that.

There is no commitment to affordable housing, even though in Toronto 70,000 households—about 200,000 people in all—wait interminably on a waiting list for affordable housing. Last week a constituent of mine, Paul Dowling, took me on a tour of 40 Oaks, a new 87-unit affordable housing project in downtown Toronto. The project has been much celebrated in the media and the community, not just because of its architectural and design features, which are wonderful and spiritual, but also because new affordable housing is so very rare. It is so hard to get built and yet of such tremendous value. It took Paul and the Toronto Christian Resource Centre eight long years and countless hours of volunteer time and fundraising to build a home for people who needed a home and a community hub for people who needed a place to be with others. There could be, should be and need to be many such buildings in our cities, but of course the current government is not a government to respond to these needs, because it is a government that creates these needs.

Blame for the state of our cities cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the government. It is following a path set out by its predecessors of both Liberal and Conservative persuasion. It has all been quantified by the OECD. Canada has the seventh-greatest level of income disparity among 29 advanced countries. The richest 1% of Canadians saw their share of total income increase by 65% from 1980 to 2007, and the richest 0.1% of Canadians saw their total income more than double over the same period, as successive Liberal and Conservative federal governments took down the very barriers we had once erected to offset income disparity.

Toronto, my city, had for a long time been known as a city of neighbourhoods. It was an apt description, at one time, of a Toronto largely made up of mixed-income neighbourhoods. In 1970, two-thirds of Toronto's neighbourhoods were middle income. In just over a generation, our city of neighbourhoods has become, as David Hulchanski describes in his “The Three Cities Within Toronto” study, “a city of disparities”. The middle has been, and continues to be, hollowed out. If we continue down this path, less than 10% of our neighbourhoods will be middle income in just a decade or so.

A number of factors are responsible for what has become of Toronto. In large part, it is the result of a dramatic change in both the number and quality of jobs available to Torontonians.

● (1520)

Toronto has lost about 100,000 manufacturing jobs in less than a decade. The broader economic region of southern Ontario has lost about 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Many of these jobs have been lost as the result of a trade policy that establishes bilateral trade agreements with low-wage economies. The outcome, alongside the creation of a ballooning current account deficit, is the destruction of good manufacturing jobs and an expansive middle class that goes along with them. The government's commitment to pursue more vigorously such trade agreements will only hasten the decline of good jobs in Toronto and the demise of the middle class.

A recent study lays out about half of these job losses at the feet of so-called Dutch disease; that is the decline in the manufacturing sector caused by increased development of natural resources and corresponding currency escalation. This bill's savaging of environmental protections will only again hasten the demise of good jobs in Toronto and the demise of the middle class.

In place of good jobs are jobs that all too often leave workers in poverty. According to a recent Metcalf Foundation study, as of 2005, nearly one in ten workers in our city are living in poverty, but too many more cannot find work, especially Toronto's youth, with an unemployment rate creeping up on 20%.

Finally, and most offensively, it is into such a labour market the government proposes to force our seniors. With this budget, the government has at last decoded for us the Prime Minister's remarks in Switzerland in January about transforming our pension system. With Bill C-38, the government is about to implement these changes. Effective 2023, all Canadians not yet 65 years old can anticipate having to work longer before receiving their old age security and corresponding guaranteed income supplement.

As the federal budget and its implementation bill reveal, the government cannot imagine Canada as anything other than resource dependent. Most Canadians, certainly the 80% of us who live in cities, have been hoping for a different and more promising future for a long time. This lack of vision will be felt across urban Canada and in Toronto, most certainly.

There are ways to unwind the vicious spiral that has gripped our city, but our course will not change without adequate leadership from the federal government. In other G8 countries, governments have become major players in the financial, economic and cultural life of their cities. It is well past time for ours to do the same.

Canada's cities await the chance to be great. We await a federal government that finally understands that a city must be organized and its resources must be marshalled for the benefit of all of us who share the space. None of us succeed, much less thrive, as citizens of Canadian cities if we do not build cities that serve us all well. With this federal budget, we are forced to wait longer for cities and their citizens to fulfill their great potential.

● (1525)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen that the government does not really believe in facts and figures. The crime bill illustrates that. There has been much research that has indicated this is not the direction we should go.

Government Orders

We see it with this omnibus bill. The government is trying to take money away from seniors. The PBO's research and the government's own research indicate that these draconian measures are not needed for our OAS to be sustained.

The government is taking money away from seniors, yet it is putting it somewhere else. Could the hon. member highlight where the money is going?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. It is not entirely clear to me.

We certainly see a high level of hypocrisy on the issue of financial management and public administration.

I am very familiar with the F-35 file, where the government has disclosed a \$15 billion life cycle cost for those planes and yet has books that claim the life cycle cost will be \$20 billion. We still have not heard the actual life cycle cost, the cost of ownership.

What we find from the government is, frankly, an attack on accountability. We see attacks on the offices of auditors and on the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In fact, just about every independent agent of the House has been attacked. We have even heard attacks on the environment commissioner in recent days, since the release of his report.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had a late night yesterday and the member for Beaches—East York pulled the night shift. The Minister of National Defence and some of his cohorts were in the chamber in committee of the whole. As frustrating as that was, we now can appreciate what Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, goes through.

There is a lot of rhetoric on the other side. The comment has been made a couple of times that the government has allotted more time to this debate than ever before. Off the top of my head, I know the last Liberal budget we presented was only about 120 pages. This one is 450 pages or so. It was about a quarter of the size and the second reading of the last Liberal budget certainly went longer than this.

I am sure my colleague is feeling a sense of frustration coming out of last night's committee of the whole. Opposition members and journalists have known for a long time about frustration the Parliamentary Budget Officer has felt. He has been stifled. What did he experience last night with the stonewalling of the government on so many aspects of the F-35 contract?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, last night was interesting. It was clear from the get-go in committee of the whole on National Defence matters that it would not be a night where we would make much progress in getting facts and truth out of the government. Stonewalling, the word my friend used, is in fact a very apt description of what we were confronted with last night.

With respect to his comment on the amount of time that has been allotted, I have no independent verification of the House leader's suggestion that this is the longest debate in a couple of decades. All I can say is it is not nearly long enough. This is a 420-odd-page omnibus bill incorporating lots of issues that are not relevant to a budget and do not properly belong in a budget bill. They deal with environmental issues, changes to the authority of auditors, the accountability of CSIS, the repealing of the Fair Wages and Hours of

Labour Act, all sorts of things that do not properly belong in a bill related to the implementation of a budget.

• (1530)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-38, the economic action plan for 2012.

I want to make a bit of a contrast between what our Conservative government is doing in our budget and what the Manitoba NDP is doing in its provincial budget.

One thing I am glad to see in the federal budget and economic action plan 2012 is the mention of further funding for Lake Winnipeg to support our initiatives for clean water, clean air and clean land.

Overall, we have been investing for the past four years, through the Lake Winnipeg Basin initiative, which included the Lake Winnipeg water stewardship fund and which really has helped community-based projects. It assisted with science and research that looked at reducing algae and nutrient loads in Lake Winnipeg, ensuring we would have less beach closures due to contamination as a result of municipal and agricultural runoff and natural nutrient loads in Lake Winnipeg and throughout the entire watershed.

This watershed carries on, not just immediately around Lake Winnipeg. It includes almost the entire province of Manitoba, almost all of North Dakota, half of Minnesota and a bit of South Dakota. All of the southern prairies, including Saskatchewan and Alberta as well as northwestern Ontario all flow into Lake Winnipeg. It was a \$14 million project over four years that invested heavily through Environment Canada into the scientific community, working with academics at universities throughout the watershed.

Unfortunately the Manitoba NDP provincial budget is completely mute on any new initiatives to protect Lake Winnipeg, to reduce nutrient loads, to ensure we can move ahead for a healthy rural economy and have a good fishery in Lake Winnipeg.

One of the things we have been talking about throughout Bill C-38 is the changes to the Fisheries Act and how those focus on improving the approval of drainage projects through rural Canada, especially those around agricultural lands.

All too often municipalities and farmers, in dealing with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, had nothing but delay after delay to do things as simple as cleaning out a ditch, replacing a culvert, replacing a crossing on a provincial drain or ensuring a drain was expanded to handle the excess moisture that could be falling in agricultural areas from time to time. It was always classified as fish habitat.

Government Orders

We know it is not fish habitat. Most of the year those drains, ditches and culverts are dry. There is not a fish in them. The bill would remove that burden from the federal fisheries, allowing it to focus on actual fish habitat, being rivers, creeks and lakes. It would ensure that any project occurring in those natural habitats would be done quicker and assessments would be done expediently, so those projects could be done in an environmentally sensitive manner and enhance and protect fish habitat. There will not be overly cumbersome processes on municipalities and farmers in conducting their drainage projects.

My area of Selkirk—Interlake has been hit extremely hard over the past five years by excess moisture. Therefore, we want to address this critical issue. We will do that through the federal budget.

In Manitoba, the province has enhanced permit processes happening through water stewardship and more delays happening for things like lagoons, grey water from farmyards and farmhouses, making it more difficult for people to live in rural Manitoba. That just does not fly very far. I represent a rural area and most people are getting quite perturbed by the attack on rural Manitoba, which the provincial NDP has done.

This all relates to flood protection. In economic action plan 2012 and Bill C-38, I am glad we are increasing funding for permanent flood mitigation efforts by \$99 million over the next three years, which is available to the provinces and territories. We are particularly concentrating on ensuring we have flood mitigation in place to deal with the flooding we experienced in 2011.

Whether it was the flooding in the Richelieu Valley in Quebec, or the excess flooding in southern Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan or the excessive flooding we are still experiencing along Lake Manitoba in my riding, this will help the provinces and municipalities build those permanent dikes, put in place proper controls and infrastructure to protect farm land and property and to ensure cottage owners and people who live in those beautiful pristine areas along our lakes and rivers have the protection they deserve, the same type of protection they would get in urban centres, especially like the city of Winnipeg.

• (1535)

This is in addition to all the money that we are going to be pouring into Manitoba through disaster financial assistance arrangements. We are going to be paying eligible expenses based upon the size of the flooding and the cost of the flood. Over 90% of the funds will be coming from the federal treasury because the province of Manitoba has complained so much that it is being overburdened with the cost of the flooding. We provided a cash advance of \$50 million to help it pay for upfront costs and to help homeowners, farmers, communities and municipalities deal with all the excess costs that they had in dealing with the flood last year.

Manitoba has essentially not given us any credit for doing that. It continues to complain, saying that its costs and its budget shortfall of \$930 million is because of the flood. Its flooding costs have just been over \$300 million to date, cash out of pocket.

The Manitoba budget this year was an admission of mismanagement. It had to hire more adjusters. It is a year after the fact and those adjusters have still not finalized claims. People are still waiting for

their money. Municipalities have still not been paid for damage that was done, roads that were replaced and dikes that were built. It is just too little, too late from the Manitoba NDP government.

I am proud that over the years since we have been government we have been reducing the GST. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. That has been a huge help to taxpayers and consumers. It keeps the cost of everything lower, mitigating the increases that happen every time a tax is put in place. It just keeps snowballing out of control.

What did the provincial NDP do? Let us look at the example of gas. If gas is \$1.25 a litre, reducing that gas by 2% creates a 2.5¢ per litre saving for Manitobans. But what did Stan Struthers do in the last provincial NDP government budget? He put in place a gas tax of 2.5¢ per litre. That is a tax grab. That takes away the savings that we had passed on to Manitobans and to all Canadians. That is highway robbery because everybody has to drive. In Manitoba, it is unfairly hurting seniors and those living on fixed incomes. It is a direct attack on rural Manitobans because they have to drive the farthest and the most often. They are carrying that burden.

The other thing I want to point out is the income tax difference. We have continued to introduce tax measures that reduce the amount of taxes Manitobans and Canadians are paying.

I want to look at an average income of \$40,000. In 1999, the year that the provincial NDP came to power, the federal tax was 17% on the first \$29,590 and 26% on the next \$10,410. The total payable federal income tax at that time was \$7,736. In Manitoba, the tax at that time was 48.5% of the federal tax. If the federal tax was \$7,736, the provincial tax would have been \$3,752. Premier Selinger, who was the minister of finance at the time, delinked the provincial tax from the federal tax.

In 2011, federal tax was reduced to 15% on personal income and the tax bracket was moved up, so it is 15% on the entire \$40,000. An individual would owe \$6,000 in federal income tax. The Manitoba tax, though, is 10.8% on the first \$31,000 and 12.7% on the remaining \$9,000 of the \$40,000. That is a total provincial tax due of \$4,495—

• (1540)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I fail to see the relevance to Bill C-38. The member is speaking about things in the Manitoba legislature. That is not relevant to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): As the member and others are no doubt aware, members are routinely given latitude in terms of relevance. This is particularly true when the House is dealing with the throne speech and budget. There have been many references to the scope of the bill. I would encourage all hon. members to speak of things that are related to the bill, realizing how broad it is.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I know your ruling makes the member across the way uncomfortable. However, I want to talk about how Manitobans are feeling after the federal and provincial budgets came down and make a comparison so people understand, in Manitoba and right across Canada, the dangers of an NDP government.

As I said, in 2011, in the example, federal tax due is \$6,000 at a 15% personal income tax rate. The Manitoba tax is just shy of \$4,500. I am not talking about all the different tax credits introduced, such as tax reductions because of age, children, education or sports. I am talking about only the reduction in the bracket creep and in the personal income tax base. The taxpayers in Manitoba are enjoying a savings in federal income tax of \$1,736, which is down 22.5%. However, they are paying \$743 more in provincial income tax. That is up almost 20%. Instead of enjoying a tax savings of \$2,578, thanks to the NDP in Manitoba, they are only enjoying a \$993 reduction in personal income taxes. That is a personal tax grab of \$1,585 by Stan Struthers and Premier Selinger.

We hear that Manitoba needs the money because it is not getting enough money from Ottawa. In this budget, we are maintaining our transfers to the provinces. Since we came to power, we have increased our overall contributions to the province of Manitoba by \$648 million. That is a huge increase from the \$2.7 billion from the federal Liberals to the \$3.4 billion that the Conservatives are giving Manitoba. The problem is that Manitoba does not have a revenue problem. It has increased taxes and it gets more money from the federal government. It has a spending problem.

I wanted to talk about the dangers of what NDP policies present to us and what the NDP would do with a federal budget. What sums it up best is in a letter that Sean Hutton wrote to the *Winnipeg Sun*, "For anyone out there who's crazy enough to envision a national NDP government take a look at the disaster they've created in Manitoba! Who's crazy enough to want that?"

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I admire the vigour of the member across the aisle when it comes to making his political points. I wish he would use a closer lens to look at exactly what his party is doing when it comes to gutting the rural Manitoban economy especially and the economy in his own part of the region that he represents.

I would like him to talk about what this budget and his government are doing with respect to the elimination of the community pastures program and what it means for ranchers in his riding. I would like him to talk about what it means for the federal government to withdraw, a few months ago, \$10 million in the cattle enhancement program that it had committed to. I would like him to talk about what it means to lose the Canadian Wheat Board and to have so many prairie farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta who do not know what next year is going to look like.

Those seem to me like some pretty severe measures when it comes to not only gutting the economy but putting at risk the livelihoods of the people he is supposed to be representing.

• (1545)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I know that the speech I just gave hits her pretty closely and personally since her dad sits in the cabinet

of a provincial NDP government. I have a lot of respect for him because he is reaching out and trying to work with his federal counterparts, unlike some of the other cabinet ministers who have constantly attacked us rather than try to work with us.

Unfortunately, it was while he was sitting at the cabinet table that the decision was made to intentionally raise the levels of Lake Manitoba and flood hundreds of thousands of operations, properties and communities around Lake Manitoba. Over 100,000 cattle had to be removed from the area because all the ranch land was flooded. Today, a year later, people are still living in communities outside their own areas, like Winnipeg and Pinawa, instead of living in their own reserves, municipalities and communities. Houses are still under water because the Manitoba government has failed to develop a natural outlet for Lake Manitoba or to provide dollars to allow individuals to fix their homes. This has carried on far too long.

As for agriculture, we are working for our agriculture producers. We are going to allow them to take control of their own PFRA pastures and set their own rates rather than having government dictate to them how much they are going to get charged for grazing in community pastures.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member points out the badness of what is being considered. He mentioned 2¢ or 2.5¢ a litre on gas and the effect that would have on the average consumer.

In 2008, the government promised to reduce diesel by 2¢. What happened to that?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I thought reducing the cost of diesel fuel by 2¢ a litre was a great idea at first. Diesel fuel is the lifeline and lifeblood of rural Canada. All our goods and services, and our food, are produced using diesel. However, one of the fears that I had about this idea is that every time we vacate taxation levels, somebody else always backfills them.

That is what we have just experienced in Manitoba. We have decreased the GST, which reduced the costs of fuel in Manitoba by 2.5¢ a litre. What did the provincial NDP government do? It increased the price of fuel 2.5¢ a litre.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have experienced some of the devastation of the current government in Manitoba.

It is interesting that the member for Churchill would raise the issue of support for rural communities and rural parts of Manitoba. We have gone to great lengths to improve the conditions in Churchill, particularly with the port, and to improve economic activities.

Government Orders

Would the member comment on that and perhaps even elaborate further as to why the member for Churchill would vote against such an opportunity for her own community?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to learn today that OmniTRAX, the owner of the Hudson Bay rail line, had the dollars that we allocated in the budget to help offset the costs of moving grain into Churchill, to deal with the issue of moving grain up into the Churchill port.

I learned today that the entire program has been oversubscribed, meaning that over the next five years there will be more than enough grain moving up into Churchill, more than what was there in the past.

As well, OmniTRAX is pursuing the purchase of grain terminals and more marketing opportunities across the Prairies so that it can be another variable in the marketplace, allowing farmers a different place to sell and a different way to ship grain via the Churchill line.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of my constituents of Toronto—Danforth and all Canadians who are deeply worried by the Conservative government's assault on democracy in the form of this omnibus budget implementation act.

[*Translation*]

A full one-third of Bill C-38 is dedicated to the gutting of environmental regulation and protection. In addition, the bill includes a series of previously unannounced measures that will contribute to a less transparent and more secretive environment.

These measures include a massive gutting of the powers of the Auditor General'. In addition to the content of the bill, we take issue with its undemocratic nature.

• (1550)

[*English*]

The Conservatives truly are trying to hide from oversight and avoid accountability with this bill, both in terms of how it is going through the House and its content. It is inappropriate to put so many sweeping changes to so many different areas in a single budget bill. This is purely inappropriate legislative behaviour.

I will touch on just some of the areas hammered by Bill C-38, starting with the environment. This week, 10 of the leading environmental organizations launched a protest campaign to raise awareness of the huge threat the Conservative budget represents to the environment. However, they equally wish us all to understand the onslaught against democracy itself represented by this bill. Parliamentary democracy is under assault by the wholesale regressive transformation of federal environmental law without serious opportunity to debate and scrutinize, and much of the change in the budget bill is transparently intended to cripple the elements of participatory democracy that are part of current environmental law.

The campaign of these 10 brave groups is called Black Out Speak Out or Silence, on parole! in French, and it asks Canadians to darken their websites on June 4 as a form of collective national protest. Why do I say that they are brave? It is because members of the Conservative government have already attacked them as being radical, extremists and money launderers, and the budget itself seeks

to chill their participation in education and advocacy around the environment by encouraging Revenue Canada to go after its charitable status. They know they will be targeted by the government and its big-oil partners and front groups.

In fact, the government has earmarked \$8 million at least to help the Canada Revenue Agency go after charities ostensibly engaging in political activity or being funded by so-called foreign sources. In the hands of a government at war with environmental and social justice organizations, this is a frightening new spending initiative.

Finally, on the theme of the environment, I will mention a matter close to the hearts of the people of Toronto—Danforth. There is no renewal of the ecoenergy home retrofit program that was very popular with Toronto residents, including those in my riding and, most important, very valuable as a sustainability measure.

I will now pick up on the theme of removing oversight and accountability. The budget implementation bill would create a much more secretive and non-transparent government through removal and closure of oversight powers and bodies. Bill C-38 would eliminate the mandatory Auditor General oversight of financial performance and reporting by no less than 12 agencies by removing provisions that require the Auditor General to audit accounts, financial statements and financial transactions. This includes the Canada Revenue Agency, ironically enough.

As if that were not enough, it would also eliminate the position of the Inspector General for the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, which would drastically reduce accountability at CSIS, especially since we know that the Inspector General's recent reports have been critical of CSIS and the government. I think it is fair to assume that this critical scrutiny is most probably the reason the Inspector General would be eliminated as an institution. Once again, this shows that the government is dealing another, not just hammer blow but sledgehammer blow to the core foundations of our democracy.

I will now briefly speak to old age security, OAS. I hope to speak later in the day on the private member's bill. I will simply say the obvious. The Conservatives did not campaign on cutting OAS. Davos was the context for the Prime Minister to spring this on us. Now we know that the age of eligibility will rise over time from 65 to 67.

“Rise over time” are the key words because that has allowed the government to spread the disingenuous message that it is not current seniors who need to worry about this budget, but those coming afterward who just have to plan their affairs. This is the ultimate in wedge politics.

Government Orders

Seniors who now know they are “safe”, in the government terms, however, are among the most outraged. I can attest to that by virtue of the most recent byelection campaign I was part of and talking to people since. They are thinking of those coming after them, unlike the government, and do not buy into the crass assumption that they will not care and, therefore, will vote for the Conservatives because they are shielded from the immediate effect.

On housing, the people of Toronto—Danforth are extremely disappointed that there is nothing for affordable nor social housing in the budget bill and this has been condemned by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which stated:

A healthy housing sector, able to meet a broad range of needs, is a vital part of the economic and social wellbeing of any community.

Local governments have been implementing an array of initiatives to increase and preserve the supply of rental and affordable housing. ...municipalities are doing their part; but they can't do it alone.

Cities have clearly been left out on housing, on transit and on other fronts.

Furthermore, yesterday, the Mental Health Commission of Canada released its mental health strategy and stated the importance of affordable, secure and safe housing for people living with mental health problems and illnesses and yet there is nothing in this budget for them.

Other important cuts are buried in the bill and/or indirectly created by the bill, such as cuts to CBC Radio drama. As we know, all drama programming of Radio One has been eliminated. I have been receiving many complaints from my constituents. One wrote the following:

...cutting the CBC's budget is detrimental not only to the Canadian arts community and the listening public, but to political culture in Canada.

I could not agree more.

As demonstrated by an article in the *The Globe and Mail* on April 12 by Kelly Nestruck, drama programming nurtured numerous playwrights and actors and allowed them to gain national attention while furthering the public's understanding of politics and society.

Afghanada, for example, not only “was the source of employment of an astonishing number of young Canadian playwrights”, but it also was the only drama to further our understanding of the causes and the legacy of the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan until the very recent wave of stage plays have finally rolled out.

It is a shame that the government is cutting spending on areas like CBC Radio drama that have had a long and culturally valuable history of informing, stimulating and, yes indeed, entertaining Canadians.

●(1555)

[Translation]

To conclude, the Conservatives clearly do not understand the connections between healthy communities and the health of the economy.

So what are we doing about it? These sweeping changes are going through the wrong forum. They should not be hidden in a budget bill in this manner. Trojan Horse budget bills should not become the new normal.

If the government is not afraid of being held accountable, it should agree to work with us in order to split this bill up into several bills.

[English]

Unfortunately, it appears that the government has already rejected the possibility of splitting this bill into more manageable tranches for Parliament to study. I hope there is still time for it to reconsider.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech on this matter.

Since he arrived in the House relatively recently, I would like to ask him if he is disappointed at the level of democracy that is currently being practised in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I will hold off in my judgment for just a little bit longer. However, I do feel like we are on the cusp of perhaps the most anti-democratic era in the history of this country. There are too many signs for us to ignore and, if we keep ignoring them, we will be in deep trouble.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would my hon. colleague give us his thoughts on the proposed changes to the OAS where the government has talked about this supposed crisis?

The government claims that the OAS will be unaffordable and yet it cannot really point to any expert opinion that says that. Its own government reports say that it is not in jeopardy and that there is no issue of affordability. The OECD says that there is no issue with affordability.

We know that 40% of the people who receive OAS have incomes of \$20,000 or less each year and yet the government wants to make them wait two more years, which could cost them as much as \$30,000 and cause real hardship as they are waiting to receive this assistance.

Would my hon. colleagues like to comment on this decision by the government?

●(1600)

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halifax West did a good job setting out some fundamental premises with which I agree.

It is very important to note that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown that it is not necessary to do what the government is planning to do and that the OAS is sustainable.

However, quite apart from whether or not, for a certain period of time of 30 to 40 years, a certain percentage of the gross domestic product will need to be added to what is needed for OAS, the whole question is one of choices. We organize ourselves around that need. We know it is coming and we organize around it. We do not treat this as a permanent crisis.

Government Orders

It was also a little disappointing to hear in the House today during question period that one of the approaches the Conservative minister is taking is to reassure seniors that they will not be affected and emphasizes how important OAS is to them. However, even though in 10 years from now it will be equally important to those seniors, the Conservatives are after them now, which is unacceptable.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my hon. colleague from Toronto—Danforth, who I am thrilled is with us in the House.

I had the opportunity to visit his constituency along with him and to meet a lot of young people who are very concerned about their future. I was wondering if the member could comment on how disastrous this budget is when it comes to Canada's young people?

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that youth are ignored as a specific concern in the budget.

The government has taken care to say that its overall motivation is to stimulate prosperity even as it is predicting a loss of jobs as part of the budget. Hopefully, if it is correct, and we all hope it is correct, we will see some jobs out of this.

However, that is really not what youth expect right now. There is a great degree of worry and alienation among the youth with whom I have spoken. I have to say that the environmental provisions in this bill are probably bothering the youth in my riding as much as anything. They understand that they are ahead of the curve and ahead of the rest of us on the environment, and they are deeply disappointed with this part of the budget.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about how economic action plan 2012, our plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity, is benefiting Canada and, in particular, my area of southwestern Ontario. Southern Ontario is a region that was hard hit by the global recession. That is why our government responded with targeted action to develop and attract the high-paying, high-skilled jobs of tomorrow.

Our budget continues that good work and, in my riding of Brant, is moving in the right direction. In fact, budget 2012 is bursting with good news for southwestern Ontario and our economy, as the region continues to reposition itself for growth in the 21st century global economy. In particular, our budget will benefit many businesses in Brant, and in particular, manufacturers.

In our community, manufacturing has a very storied history. In fact, Brantford, at the turn of the century in the industrial revolution, was the third largest economy in this country, only behind Toronto and Montreal. Through the years, that manufacturing has evolved and changed. Some of it has gone to other jurisdictions. Some of it has become not relevant in today's economy.

Our community has survived through the years, and it is through the approaches of this particular action plan, this budget, that we will continue to look to companies to invest, to upgrade, to cut costs and enhance productivity, to increase their market share and to give them a competitive edge. These manufacturers know this is the goal of our government. It is to support them to create the jobs of tomorrow.

We have provided unprecedented support. We have lowered business taxes to 15% to help manufacturers keep more of their own money and invest and hire more employees. We are making Canada

the first major economy to be a tariff-free zone for manufacturing to boost new investment and job creation. We have introduced temporary accelerated capital cost allowance tax relief to manufacturers to become more competitive when upgrading their machinery and equipment, and we are extending that tax relief in our 2012 action plan. We are also extending the domestic powers of Export Development Canada to provide financing support to Canadian manufacturers and exporters.

However, our government is not just investing so that manufacturers can create jobs today. Through unprecedented support for research, development and innovation, our government is ensuring that our region can create and retain the jobs of tomorrow.

We know the global economy is changing, and the pace of technological change is creating new opportunities every day. We also know that competition for the brightest minds is intensifying. To secure our long-term competitiveness, southern Ontario must lead in the knowledge economy, and we must foster global competitive businesses that innovate and create high-quality jobs.

Our government realizes this reality. That is why we have already provided almost \$8 billion in new funding to support science, technology and the growth of innovative firms. That is why we continue to invest.

Budget 2012 provides another \$1.1 billion in direct support for research, development and innovation. This funding builds on our government's technology strategy, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring that federally supported research contributes to the commercialization of new products, processes and services. Also, this funding acts upon key recommendations of the Jenkins report, by investing to make it easier for entrepreneurs to access venture capital.

It is all about supporting Canadian innovation from the idea phase to commercialization and distribution. Our commitment to research and innovation will benefit our students, families and businesses for years to come. Our commitment in this regard has not gone unnoticed. Here is what Stephen Toope, chairman of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada's board of directors had to say:

● (1605)

In the face of tough fiscal choices, the government showed leadership by continuing its investments in research, innovation, research infrastructure and university-private sector collaborations.... These investments will build a stronger future for our society and economy.

AUCC president Paul Davidson went on to note that, "We're also pleased the budget recognizes the importance of deepening international education and research linkages".

Government Orders

Recently, I had the privilege of joining the AUCC on a mission to Brazil. While there, it was announced by the Brazilian president that 12,000 Brazilian students would be fully funded to study in Canada. This is a superb example of how our government is moving forward to have the best minds, the best students, graduating from our institutions on an international basis, so that we can collaborate with our international partners in making sure we can compete in the global economy. Many of these individuals who will receive these scholarships will end up having connections to businesses; they will have experience in apprenticeships with Canadian companies; and they will have the ties to create the linkages to businesses of the future.

The budget, our 2012 budget, takes the long-term view for Canada's prosperity. It is prosperity that will last for generations as we go forward.

In my riding and others like it, we did experience hardship in the wake of the global economic downturn. Our local economy is turning the corner. Local companies are recognizing new opportunities in the global economy and taking action to capitalize on these opportunities.

Our businesses are forging those strategic partnerships with our blossoming post-secondary institutions. Our municipalities are attracting new investments and highlighting the benefits of locating or expanding in our region.

For many years, my community suffered with high rates of unemployment because of the evolution of manufacturing and the fact that the new knowledge economy was replacing, in many ways, the older manufacturing of the past. We are survivors and have survived it.

However, we must recognize that Canadian business, to compete globally, must have a competitive advantage. One of the great advantages we see in the future is investing in the brightest and the best in the areas where our country needs expertise to move us forward.

The budget is long-term thinking. It is one on which I have heard so much positive feedback from different sectors, the educational sector, the business sector, as the right way to go at this time for our country.

I encourage all parliamentarians to support the budget.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain why this government cannot demonstrate accountability and transparency with respect to its omnibus Bill C-38.

In their 2011 election platform, the Conservatives promised not to reduce transfer payments to individuals or the provinces for essentials, such as health care, education and pensions.

Then, on June 7, 2011, the Prime Minister rose in the House of Commons and said, "Our government has been very clear. We will not cut pensions."

Why are his statements so unacceptably inconsistent? I would like the member opposite to explain to me why the Conservatives misled Quebecers and Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth, as far as inconsistencies go. This has been a consistent thread of our government's budget policies for the last six years.

I might mention to the member that in actual fact, if he cares to look at the actual expenditures of government through the budgets, we have increased the funding to provinces and territories over the last six years consistently and have said we would increase their budgets.

Now, we are responsible, as the federal government, to make sure long-term funding is in place. In fact, in my province of Ontario, it is at record levels. It is just under \$20 billion of funding that we have provided in this last fiscal year to our province. The provinces, of course, take on their responsibilities and decide what they are going to do with that money.

The actual fact is, and the record shows, that we have been funding provinces and territories far beyond any government previously.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is absolutely correct; budget 2012 is a plan for economic growth and long-term prosperity, which is a unique position for Canada. With the strength of our economy now, we can look forward five years out, decades out.

My question centres on innovation and the support for science and technology, which we have consistently seen grow with every single budget we have ever had. We hear some concerns from the opposite side about how big the budget is. Of course it is big. We have an opportunity in Canada to take advantage of leading many of the industrialized nations. We have an opportunity, and in 20 years we would be ashamed of ourselves if we had not taken it.

I believe we should vote yes for this budget because it signifies a change and an innovation. Would the member agree?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent description of exactly what we are intending to do and have staged in actual previous budgets leading into this one. There is an opportunity ahead for the next generations, for my children and for my grandchildren. Creating the platform now will give them the prosperity in the future that makes this country the greatest country in the world.

We have at times undersold the great resources that we have, and our best resource is our people. Therefore, rewarding the best and the brightest now will pay dividends for many generations to come.

Government Orders

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I will join many of my colleagues in opposing the legislative monstrosity that is Bill C-38. The stated purpose of this omnibus bill, which is over 420 pages long, is to implement budget 2012, but it contains numerous measures that have nothing to do with the budget per se and that were never announced to Canadians.

Bill C-38 constitutes a direct attack on transparency, in terms of both its substance and the way the government is imposing its ideological vision of the country on Canadians by attempting to stifle and discredit all opposition to its dogmatic approach.

The Conservatives began by limiting the amount of time opposition parties could spend studying and debating this massive and destructive bill. They know that the devil is in the details, and they do not want to give us a chance to warn Canadians about what they are doing.

The fact that members had very little time to carefully review and analyze this bill makes it practically impossible to get an accurate picture of how Bill C-38 will affect people. This way of doing things is unacceptable and proves the government's contempt for Parliament and our institutions.

The Conservatives also have an unfortunate tendency to make fun of those who oppose their vision and their way of doing things, which, frankly, are better suited to an autocracy than to the Parliament of Canada. Those who oppose Bill C-38, whether they be parliamentarians or ordinary Canadians, are often described by the members opposite as people who are trying to create division in Canada or who simply do not understand what the government is trying to do.

Opponents are described as big bad socialists who are manipulating the media and public opinion and who simply want to impose their will on Canadians no matter what the cost and with no thought for the common good. This typically Conservative way of talking about opponents is an insult to Canadians' intelligence.

Did the fall of the Wildrose Party not teach them that Canadians do not like mean-spirited generalizations? In my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, I have even met people who were members of the Conservative Party but who sent their membership cards back to the party in protest at this way of doing things. They approve of the ideas being put forward by the Conservatives, but they refuse to support this lack of democracy and the way the Conservatives are forcing positions on Canadians that they do not share.

Canadians have the right to accurate and honest information about what the government is doing on their behalf. In its election campaign, this government promised everyone that it would be a transparent and accountable government. But that has not been the case since it came into power. Quite the contrary.

Bill C-38 is further proof that the Conservatives cannot be trusted. Canadians hesitated for a long time to give a majority to this government because they were afraid of its hidden agenda. They were right to be afraid.

As I mentioned before, this budget implementation bill goes well beyond the budget and contains a number of important changes that were not mentioned in the election campaign or even afterwards. This bill will forever change Canadian society, and it will not be for the better.

At least one-third of this bill seeks to greatly undermine if not virtually decimate the system of environmental protections, assessments and regulations that protect Canadian fauna, waterways and ecosystems, to permit the unrestricted development of our natural resources, just like in the Duplessis era.

The Conservatives do not have a strategy for developing renewable energy and reducing the use of fossil fuels. Pipeline projects, which are so near and dear to the Conservatives' hearts, will be imposed on Canadians against their will in order to export our natural resources. Decidedly, with this government, the great darkness is back.

Bill C-38 considerably diminishes the Auditor General's oversight powers, including by eliminating his mandatory review of the financial statements of 12 government agencies. In light of the giant fiasco that is the F-35 procurement process and the lengths this government has gone to in order to hide the real cost of this purchase from Canadians, I can see why the government does not want the Auditor General to have too many powers.

This legislative Trojan Horse also seeks to raise the eligibility age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement from 65 to 67. This change, which will not affect many MPs here right now, will directly affect my generation and will make our seniors in need even more vulnerable. The Prime Minister knows full well that the current system is still viable for many years to come and that these draconian cuts are unnecessary.

The government would save more money if it stopped wasting money on its plans for building megaprisons and on its questionable military procurements. It would not have to punish future generations, as it is doing right now.

•(1620)

We understand why the Prime Minister wanted to escape to Switzerland, rather than make that announcement here in Canada.

I could go on for hours about the devastating effect that budget 2012 and Bill C-38 will have on Canadian society and its institutions.

However, I would now like to focus more on how this bill will affect the people of my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Contrary to what the Conservatives seem to believe, not everyone in this country shares their vision and supports their way of governing—far from it, in fact. Every day, people come and see me and tell me how ashamed they are of this government, of Canada's image in the rest of the world and of the Conservatives' lack of environmental conscience.

Government Orders

The people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier cannot relate to this government, since it does not share their values and it prefers to ignore their needs and requests. People are feeling betrayed and abandoned by the Conservatives, who appear to be governing only for the benefit of their friends.

This government keeps repeating that the budget focuses on job creation, yet the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that over 43,000 jobs will be lost, including over 19,000 in the public service.

The fact is that this budget forecasts higher unemployment, of all things. How is that good news for the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier who have lost their jobs or are about to? It is very hard to follow this government's logic.

The first round of cuts at CFB Valcartier has been announced. At least 160 military support jobs will be lost, and that is just what we know so far.

The government is so stingy with the details that information comes out in dribs and drabs. That makes it very hard to get a clear sense of how their decisions will affect people.

With its 7,000 employees, CFB Valcartier is the largest federal employer in my riding, and I know that job losses there will have a very negative impact on the region's economy.

The cuts will affect about 100 families in my riding and the surrounding area, and merchants in neighbouring municipalities will feel the pinch as well, because local people will have less and less money to spend on their products and keep the economy going.

I cannot understand how Conservative members from the Quebec City region can endorse measures that will have such a negative impact on the local economy in their own ridings. That makes no sense to me.

In addition, if these cuts in support services to the military are combined with the cuts in direct services provided in the offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs, questions may well be asked about the real consideration that this government has given to the military in the Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and Quebec City regions.

Furthermore, absolutely nothing has been done to help the forestry workers in my riding, who have seen their mills go bankrupt one after another and who find themselves unemployed and unable to support their families.

There is no investment in helping the forestry industry, which is a very important sector of Quebec's economy, and particularly in the Portneuf region.

The Conservatives boast about having done more than anyone else to create manufacturing jobs, but where are the results? Where are the jobs in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier?

Finally, the residents in my riding are particularly concerned about the major changes that this government wants to make to our system of environmental assessments for the benefit of big oil companies.

Have the Conservatives learned nothing from past experience? This week, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable

Development reported that there are tens of thousands of contaminated federal sites, whose decontamination would cost more than \$7 billion.

One of these sites, located in Shannon, is well known to Quebeckers. This tragic story of groundwater contaminated by TCE is unfortunately still going on today, and this government is refusing to live up to its responsibilities and take quick action to decontaminate the affected sites.

All possible measures must be taken to prevent toxic chemicals from finding their way into our ecosystems. One of the best ways of doing so is to ensure that comprehensive environmental assessments are carried out before each new natural resources development project. The time period over which these assessments are carried out must never be reduced, and the opportunity to speak out on such projects must never be restricted, yet two of the new measures this government wants to impose on us would do just that.

The residents of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and particularly the residents of Shannon know only too well the devastation caused by the contamination of water and soil and do not want these sorts of tragedies to happen again.

How can this government justify putting the lives of Canadians in danger with Bill C-38? It is absolutely unthinkable.

In conclusion—and I know I only have a little time left—I want to use my time to congratulate my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, who proposed a first-rate motion to amend this bill, which is totally unacceptable in its current form. I would like to congratulate her on her outstanding work on this issue. The solutions she is putting forward are sensible, rational and reasonable and should be implemented. My colleagues and I will continue to work with this aim in mind.

• (1625)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague. She gave a brilliant speech on the hidden aspects of this budget.

I would like to ask her to come back to the issue of retirement at age 67. My grandfather worked all his life in a factory, and I must say that when he retired at 65, he was completely burnt out. My father was a firefighter. I have difficulty picturing a 67-year-old firefighter climbing a ladder to save people from a burning building.

Could my colleague comment on that, that is, on the case of construction workers and all those who have physically demanding jobs or even those whose jobs involve more intellectual activities but who, as time goes on, may not be able to do them as well as they once did? I find this situation ironic given that productivity is a priority in Canada.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord for his very relevant question.

Government Orders

People who work in more physically demanding jobs, who have to do heavy lifting and the like, will not necessarily be able to continue working until they are 67. It is extremely difficult for these people who work, who are productive members of our society and who do not abuse the employment insurance system. These people are productive and essential. It is the government's duty to ensure that they have the support they need so that they can enjoy a well-deserved retirement and live in dignity.

This measure that the government wants to impose does not follow this logic at all and will not give the needed support to these people, who deserve to be taken care of when they are no longer able to take care of themselves.

[English]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment on a comment. The member for Rivière-du-Nord said that the change in the pension plan would affect his father. If his father is 54 years of age or over, there will be no change in his plan. I do not quite understand where those numbers came from. Maybe the member could share that with us.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, the member is saying things that I never said. I would like my comments to be checked. I did not say that.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The Chair will look at the comments that were made and come back to the House, if there is a need to.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I can provide an explanation for the member opposite, if he is still paying attention.

Considering the profession of the father of my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, if these changes had taken place when he retired, he would have suffered the consequences.

I see that he is clapping. That was the clarification needed.

We have to establish the facts. The NDP looks at the facts. Contrary to what some members opposite have said, our positions and our party's platform are based on facts. I hope that this positive influence will be felt on the other side of the House also.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her excellent speech. She seems to have a good grasp of time and space, unlike the members opposite.

For days I have been hearing about “future generations”, “long-term growth”, “our children” and “our grandchildren”. In my riding of Laurentides—Labelle, thousands of my constituents are affected by the forestry crisis and the government is doing absolutely nothing about it. I wonder whether, amongst all this rambling rhetoric and everything they stuffed into Bill C-38, there is a single concrete measure for the people living in today's reality.

● (1630)

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I think there may be some measures for the people living in the Conservatives' reality, but for the other ordinary Canadians, I am not so sure there is anything that is really going to help them.

As far as the forestry situation is concerned, I am seeing the same thing in my riding. I talked about this in my speech. In Saint-Raymond de Portneuf and other municipalities in the region, people are affected by the forestry crisis and are not receiving any help from the government. This may be due to the restrictions that the government imposed on itself with certain free trade agreements that need to be given some thought. This needs to be taken into consideration the next time this type of agreement is negotiated. The government needs to provide help for the manufacturing sector, and the forestry industry is a big part of that sector. Just because this problem is in Quebec does not mean it should be forgotten.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest, Employment; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, National Defence.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Oxford.

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity today to stand in support of Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, and highlight some of the key initiatives in economic action plan 2012 that would legislate.

When our Conservative government introduced Canada's economic action plan in January 2009, it was designed to fight the effects of the worst global recession since the Great Depression. It did so by providing significant stimulus to safeguard jobs and protect incomes, while making important productive investments that contribute to Canada's long-term economic prosperity. It worked, as those prudent decisions allowed Canada to emerge from the global recession in a position of strength.

Nearly 700,000 more Canadians are working today than in July 2009. This is the best job growth record in the entire G7. Last March alone, Canada's economy added 82,000 net new jobs, the single biggest monthly jump in national job creation since September 2008.

Canadians are looking to our government to build on that success and that is exactly what we will do with economic action plan 2012, a plan that has been praised by some of Canada's top economists.

This is what Avery Shenfeld, CIBC World Markets chief economist, had to say about budget 2012 and Canada's economy. He said:

—makes sense in a world economy that is still not what we would like it to be... Relative to what anybody else is doing, we still come out with flying colours.

This is what Craig Alexander, TD Economics chief economist, declared:

Government Orders

When combined, the various measures included in today's budget [2012] are aimed at improving productivity and boosting private sector growth...In addition to being fiscally prudent in the medium-term, the government is taking action to pursue fiscally sound policies for the long run.

Even in southern Ontario we have heard great support for economic action plan 2012. Just listen to what Peter White of London Economic Development had to say:

—the plan includes several points of good news...including research and development dollars, venture capital dollars for public-private partnerships and job-skills training for young people.

The measures in today's bill focus on the drivers of growth, innovation, business investment and people's education and skills, as others on this side of the House will highlight.

What I would like to focus on today is how our ongoing commitment to keeping taxes low and responsibly managing the tax dollars of Canadians underpins all of the measures in today's bill.

Lower taxes support businesses by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned money to invest, grow, undertake innovative research and hire more Canadians.

Canada's reputation for low taxes to create jobs is something in which we take great pride. Noted business magazine *Forbes* said recently, "Canada was the best place in the world to do business". Today's bill builds on actions taken by our government by continuing to keep taxes low.

In order to keep taxes low, the tax system must be upheld. Canadians expect their government will take action to protect this fairness and integrity. That is why, since 2006, our Conservative government has closed over 40 tax loopholes to improve the fairness and the integrity of the tax system.

Economic action plan 2012 takes further action on this front through the introduction of a number of additional initiatives. To be clear, our Conservative government is committed to take aggressive steps to close tax loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to take advantage of hard-working Canadians who pay their fair share of tax. By broadening and protecting the tax base, these actions also help to keep Canadian tax rates competitive and low for all Canadians, thereby improving incentives to work, save and invest.

We understand Canadians willingly and honestly provide a portion of their hard-earned income to fund health care, social programs and other vital services, asking only in return that governments both manage their tax dollars wisely and ask no more from them than their fair share. For our government, this is a solemn responsibility and one that we take seriously. We are committed to managing the hard-earned tax dollars of Canadians.

It is in the spirit of fairness that the government and the Governor General have agreed that the income tax exemption for the Governor General's salary should end and that the Governor General's salary should be subject to tax in the same manner as the salaries of other Canadians.

• (1635)

This historic exemption, likely unknown to most Canadians, has been in place since the introduction of income tax in Canada. It is an exception to the general rules and principles of the income tax

system. As is often the case, however, traditions change over time. Recently other Commonwealth countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, have implemented legislation to make the salary of their governors general subject to income tax.

This may be a small measure in comparison to the significant tax reduction measures our government has introduced since 2006, but to us it is a principled one. In the words of the noted *Winnipeg Sun* columnist, Tom Brodbeck:

Governors general of Canada will no longer enjoy tax-free status on a portion of their salaries: The Queen's representatives will have to pay taxes just like the rest of us. I didn't even know they had tax-free status. Good.

I would be remiss if I closed without quickly mentioning one other important initiative in economic action plan 2012, the elimination of the penny. Forgotten pennies take up too much space on our dressers and far too much time for small businesses trying to grow and create jobs.

An independent study estimated the economic cost of maintaining the penny amounted to \$150 million. The penny has lost its purchasing power over the years, and now most are hoarded, resulting in useless expenses for Canadian taxpayers. Taxpayers pay 1.6¢ for each new penny made now. This costs the government about \$11 million a year. After hearing strong support from consumers, retailers and small business, a recent public study by a Senate committee recommended eliminating the penny.

In recent years, more and more countries, like Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands and more, have removed their penny from circulation without any impact on consumers. Following these successful examples, Canada will no longer distribute pennies.

The penny's elimination will have no negative impact on consumers. Pennies can still be used indefinitely. They will continue to retain their full value for payments and can be redeemed at banks. Prices will continue being set at 1¢ increments, and payments by cheque or credit card will not change.

Our Conservative government is also actively working with and encouraging charities in communities across Canada to organize fundraising activities to benefit from the elimination of the penny. Indeed, in southern Ontario, we are already seeing local penny drives. For instance, Habitat for Humanity, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin, a great charity, is looking to collect one million pennies to help those in need.

To quote Jeff Duncan from Habitat in the area:

I know \$100,000 is an awful lot of pennies...But this is a grassroots thing and Habitat was founded on a grassroots principle. We thought this was a fun way to engage kids. We need the whole community to help.

Government Orders

Economic action plan 2012 sets out a comprehensive agenda to bolster Canada's fundamental strengths and address the important challenges confronting the economy over the long term, all the while keeping taxes low and managing tax dollars responsibly.

This provides an opportunity for the government to take significant actions today that will fuel the next wave of job creation and position Canada for a secure and prosperous future. That is why I encourage the House to support the measures in today's act.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about pennies. I imagine he was talking about cuts regarding food safety, for instance. Pennies will likely be saved, but the health and safety of Canadians is being jeopardized.

Does my hon. colleague believe that a scandal like the one that happened in Walkerton a few years ago could happen again?

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I wish my colleague across the floor really knew the story of Walkerton instead of reading something that someone has provided for him.

The Walkerton story may not be as he perceives it to be, but it was a provincial matter. In fact, when the member talks about the cuts to the food inspectors federally, that is not really true. If my colleague would spend a little time talking to my good friend, the Minister of Agriculture, he would make it clear to him that those suggestions being promoted are not accurate in any way, shape or form, that in fact we have added food inspectors to CFIA over the years and continue to do so.

I have every faith in the community of Walkerton to monitor its water supply. More important, I have every faith in the Minister of Agriculture that our food supply is safe and secure.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to ask my colleague from Oxford, just south of my riding. He does such a good job of representing that area.

He mentioned a couple of things in his speech about the tax rates being low. Members understand that currently a family of four is paying \$3,500 roughly less in taxes than it was when we took office. I get a lot of appreciation for that in my area. As well, the seniors comment about pension splitting and how that benefits their bottom line.

What I took note of in my colleague's speech was when he talked about our government's research, development and innovation agenda. I have the honour of having Conestoga College in my riding, which is partnering with industry to have research done at the college so it can help the industry with the innovation and commercialization of some of its new ideas.

Would my colleague comment on the importance of the innovation, research and development? Our colleague from Cambridge, the hon. Minister of State for Science and Technology, has made some incredible investments in that.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, research and development is one of the pillars of our economy as we go forward.

Conestoga College and Fanshawe College are both in my area. I am fortunate to represent a riding that has campuses for both. As my colleague said, the innovations and the money that has been flowing through from the federal government to them has been of great benefit in many respects, not only in the automotive industry, and I have two automotive plants, both Toyota and General Motors, in my riding, but that has also been well-received by the agricultural community, which is a real cornerstone of Oxford.

This government knows where the future is. It is in the future of our young people and in research and development.

That is the finest minister of science and technology we have had in the House. However, at the same time, the Minister of Finance is the finest we have had in the last 15 or 20 years.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the comment about the Minister of Finance, he is the finance minister who actually put us into a deficit before the recession.

Perhaps the member would like to comment on that.

• (1645)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, it is quite an interesting comment coming from the Liberal side of the House. Before the worldwide recession hit, this government had paid off nearly \$50 billion of debt that the former Liberal government had helped us get into.

The member has played the straight man to the question. The Minister of Finance has done a wonderful job. As we go forward and see that steady hand, it is like saying my friend is the finest weatherman we have had in the House in a long time.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to rise in debate on Bill C-38. I have to agree with at least the last point made by my colleague who just spoke, which was that the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor was in fact an outstanding weatherman. He is an outstanding member of Parliament as well, although members might want to talk to him sometime about some of the stories he has about some bloopers he may have experienced during his time as a weatherman. They may be on YouTube, as a matter of fact. They would have to ask.

However, when my hon. colleague praises the current Minister of Finance, I find it rather humorous and remarkable, considering that the finance minister and the government inherited a \$13 billion surplus and that by April and May of 2008, six months before the recession began, the government was already in deficit.

Members may not believe that, but if they doubt it, I invite them to Google “deficit April-May 2008”; they will find CBC and Reuters stories dated June 25, 2008, pointing that out. They could probably find out more about that later. In addition, that fall there was a further deficit.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have been trying to claim for a while that the deficit we have today was the result of the recession and stimulus spending. The fact is that there was a deficit in that fiscal year of 2008-09. The stimulus budget that the government brought in was not even announced until the end of January 2009, and it was for the 2009-10 fiscal year. It did not start until well after the deficit was in place. If there was a deficit for the year 2008-09 and the stimulus budget was for the year 2009-10, how can Conservatives claim that the earlier deficit was caused by the later budget?

In fact, articles even in December of 2009 talked about how the stimulus money was just getting going. There are articles about municipalities complaining about how long it was taking for that stimulus spending to get started. It took a long time.

Therefore, to claim that the deficit is a result of the recession is an outrage. The claim that this was one of the greatest finance ministers has no basis. By increasing spending dramatically, at three times the rate of inflation, the minister put the country back into deficit before the recession began. That is the context we are in when we come to this budget. That is the history of this government. It is outrageous for the government to claim that this was in any way a good finance minister. It is ludicrous.

Let me talk about Bill C-38. We even have well-known Conservatives criticizing the bill. Here are some comments from Andrew Coyne. He is not exactly a Liberal voice in Canada, but he is a well-known, respected commentator. What does he say about this? He says:

The bill runs to more than 420 pages. It amends some 60 different acts, repeals half a dozen, and adds three more, including a completely rewritten Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. It ranges far beyond the traditional budget concerns of taxing and spending, making changes in policy across a number of fields from immigration...to telecommunications...to land codes on native reservations....

He goes on:

So this is not remotely a budget bill, despite its name.

He says further:

Moreover, it utterly eviscerates the committee process, until now regarded as one of the last useful roles left to MPs. How can one committee, in this case Finance, properly examine all of these diverse measures, with all of the many areas of expertise they require, especially in the time allotted to them?

How indeed, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Coyne has made some very good points about the budget, and my hon. colleagues across the way would do well to take note of the comments from this Conservative commentator about their own budget bill.

However, let us look at the budget. What do we expect from it? What are Canadians looking to the government for in the budget bill?

• (1650)

After Canada experienced no job growth during the last six months, I think Canadians expected this bill to have one focus: jobs, job creation and helping our economy strengthen. Instead, what does it have? It has dozens of disconnected themes that will do nothing to grow jobs or address Canada's skills shortage.

In fact, when I think of jobs, I think of the issue of what has happened with foreign investment. This bill is a complete

abandonment of the industry minister's promise of a serious review of the Investment Canada Act.

The bill has so many parts. It is 425 pages long. For those who have not looked through or read it, I will just give a sense of how big this bill is. Division 28 of part 4 does authorize the minister to communicate or disclose certain information in relation to foreign investments, but it does nothing to prevent Canada from a repeat of the PotashCorp takeover fiasco that the government mishandled so badly and it provides no advance understanding of how it would handle matters like this and no explanation for its decision.

In fact, the Conservatives pledged in late 2010, after abruptly killing BHP Billiton's hostile bid for the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, to undertake a serious review of the Investment Canada Act. In fact, the minister talked about having a committee do this, but instead we get a few lines in a 425-page omnibus bill. The industry committee will not even study this measure.

I would like to see that happen. I put a motion before the committee to have that happen. Of course, as we know, the government insists that everything involving a decision about what a committee will study be done in camera, behind closed doors, so that the media and the public cannot follow it. As a result, I cannot talk about what might have happened to that motion, but I can say that it is no longer before the committee. If I put forward a motion and it is no longer available to be discussed and it has not been adopted, I think people can draw their conclusions about what might have happened to it and what the Conservative government, having a majority, decided to do.

What happened to the promise to clarify the key test used to judge foreign takeovers, the so-called net benefit determination? That was a promise the Minister of Industry made, another promise relegated to the trash bin.

It is the same with the minister's public declaration in June 2011 that he would ask the House of Commons industry committee to review the Investment Canada Act. Where is it? Why is that Conservative members would not be anxious to do this, considering their own minister was talking about it nearly a year ago and asking for it to be done? Perhaps he is not so keen anymore. We do know that members on the Conservative side tend to do what they are told by the Prime Minister's Office and by the ministers.

This review has not happened, despite several attempts from opposition members to call for a review of the act by the committee. Instead, the industry minister gets new powers to disclose a little more information about takeovers without betraying commercial secrets. It is all well and good, but it is too bad that there is no such commitment to prevent ministers from betraying their own promises, such as the one made in this case.

Government Orders

The fact is that this country needs to modernize its foreign investment policies. It is too bad that instead of moving on significant change, we get half measures buried in a budget bill. That makes it very clear the government is more intent on maintaining its ability to insert its political bias into these decisions than it is on focusing on and doing what is best for the Canadian economy and Canadian jobs.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was really good. How is that for a profound speech on an afternoon like this?

Members keep bugging me about doing the weather. For the record, I decided to leave the weather business. I got tired of lying for a living, so I got into politics. I am going to get angry emails from meteorologists; I appreciate that.

Nonetheless, we are talking about the budget. I get a lot of calls. I am inundated with calls on income security from seniors.

The pattern is very simple: it is that they are struggling to stay above the poverty line with a combination of old age security and GIS payments. A lot of them still live in larger homes that are difficult to heat. The extra money being put into the OAS program, of course, is not sufficient to cover the costs of things such as rising heat prices or gas for their cars in case they need them to get to the hospital or visit their families.

I would like my colleague to comment on two things. First, how is raising the age from 65 to 67 going to affect seniors? Second, how much of an extra burden is this change going to place on the provinces, which have to provide those social welfare services to help these people cope with extreme poverty?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, particularly for his glowing and effusive comments about my speech. He went on at such great lengths.

However, he makes a very important point about the old age supplement and the changes in this budget bill. In fact, I am looking forward to the debate later this afternoon—or this evening, for those living in Newfoundland or Nova Scotia—on Motion No. 307, which concerns the old age security program. I have more I would like to say about that.

The government's attitude to increasing the age that people would receive the OAS is similar to its attitude toward the CAP, the Canada access program, whereby people can get use of a computer.

In the other place, the Leader of the Government in the Senate was asked about this and said that people can use their iPhones. I do not know if she will be called Marjory Antoinette for that, but that comment does not really show much sensitivity to the real problem of people who are facing hardship in not having access to the Internet. People who have a need for OAS and GIS will be cut off by the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question about the community access program. It is enough to make you cry, if you

really think about it. Someone said that people just have to use their iPhones. I cannot believe we are hearing such things.

In the member's opinion, how many people who rely on the community access program are likely to have an iPhone?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I do not imagine it would be very many. I imagine that only a few of the people using the program have iPhones.

I talked to the people who run the program. In places where the program is available, many people are poor. They typically use computers and the Internet to access government programs so they can look for jobs and do various other things.

I find the decision appalling.

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of our Conservative government's economic action plan 2012 to be implemented through today's legislation, Bill C-38, jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act.

This is a positive plan that would ensure Canada's economy continues to emerge from the global economic recession better than nearly all other industrialized countries. Indeed, Canada has seen nearly 700,000 net new jobs created since July 2009, the strongest job growth among all G7 countries. Even better news is that 90% of those jobs have been full-time jobs.

What is more, both the independent IMF and the OECD are forecasting that Canada will be at the head of the pack for economic growth in the G7 in the years ahead.

Clearly, those are all positive signs that we are on the right track for Canada's economy and for Canadian families. It is little wonder that a recent editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* praised Canada's economic leadership saying that "Canada is focused on private economic growth", and also pointing out our "sound policies as a model for the world to follow".

However, our Conservative government recognizes that we still have considerable global economic turbulence, especially in Europe where we see that continues, and too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why economic action plan 2012 takes responsible action to support the economy now and over the long term while also keeping taxes low and returning to balanced budgets in the medium term.

Despite what the NDP and others would have us believe, economic action plan 2012 has been warmly greeted throughout Canada, especially in my region and riding of Kitchener—Waterloo.

I would like to share with the House and Canadians who are watching some of the positive feedback that has come from my region.

First, from the Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, it says:

Government Orders

We are pleased that [the Minister of Finance] has extended the program that allows small businesses to receive a credit of up to \$1,000 against employment insurance...premium increases. ...this extension will provide an incentive for additional hiring. ... The Chamber strongly supports measures proposed to restrain government spending and return the federal budget to a balanced position by 2015-16. Other positive measures include no tax increases or cuts in transfers to the provinces, which are critical for health care and other social services.

Overall, the government wants the private sector to step forward, create jobs, and compete on global markets.

Iain Klugman, the chief executive officer of Communtech, a local technology association, said:

I'm really encouraged to see the focus on job creation, innovation. I see a real acknowledgement of the importance of business commercialization.

I could not agree with Iain more.

Kitchener mayor, Carl Zehr, stated:

We're encouraged by the fact they [the federal government] have yet again confirmed a commitment to have an infrastructure plan in place when the Building Canada Fund expires in March 2014.

As one last example, this is what a *Waterloo Region Record* editorial declared. It said that economic action plan 2012 was:

...an intelligent and visionary plan to preserve a progressive, prosperous Canada in a global landscape filled with both upheaval and promise. And for this reason it is the most ambitious and important federal budget in a generation. Underlying it all is an astute recognition of how this nation and the world around it are changing.

...the budget envisions a scaled-back government that leaves people free to do more in their lives and with more of their own money. But it will still be an active government that aims to grow Canada's economy with generous venture financing and research and development funding for businesses.

• (1700)

It is clear that economic action plan 2012 sets out a comprehensive agenda to bolster Canada's fundamental strengths and address the important economic challenges confronting the economy over the long term.

I am pleased to have the opportunity today to spotlight a handful of the measures in today's bill that would accomplish that and play a significant role in securing the well-being of Canadians today and in the future.

The first area I will focus on is targeted reforms to the employment insurance program, or EI. EI, as we know, is Canada's single largest labour market program, providing income replacement to help individuals and their families, as well as training and other labour market support to help Canadians return to employment.

Today's bill would make a number of targeted changes that would make EI a more efficient program, one that would promote job creation and quickly connect people to jobs that would improve the quality of life and Canada's economy.

Our Conservative government recognizes that Canadians want sustainable EI premium rates and a transparent rate-setting mechanism. That is why we will ensure predictability and stability with the EI premium rate.

Over the next few years, we will limit annual rate increases to 5¢ until the EI operating account is balanced. Once the account has returned to balance, the EI premium rate will be set annually, on a seven year break-even rate to ensure that EI premiums are no higher

than needed to pay for the EI program itself. After the seven year rate is set, annual adjustments to the rate will be limited to 5¢.

Along with sustainability, matching workers with available jobs is critical to supporting economic growth and productivity. In the words of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB, which plotted our reform in this area, "There was some major progress on employment insurance". It went on to say:

There was...early action on changing the EI rate-setting process. Any future increases will be capped at 5¢ for employees and 7¢ for employers, which will provide a great deal more certainty to job-creating small businesses.

Also, EI rates will be allowed to break-even on a seven year basis, which will help keep rates smooth and avoid the creation of large surpluses.

However, there is more in economic action plan 2012, including a \$21 million investment to connect EI claimants with the necessary skills with available jobs in the same local area, including through targeted information and compliance sessions. Along with providing relevant and timely job information, the government will strengthen and clarify what is required of claimants who are receiving regular EI benefits and who are looking for work.

Through our measures, our government is helping Canadians who are looking for work, but we realize that true success only occurs when they can find work with minimal delay. The evidence backs that up. EI claimants who stay active in the labour market find permanent jobs faster than those who do not stay active. That is why our government will invest \$74 million in a new national EI pilot project to ensure claimants are not discouraged from accepting work while receiving EI benefits. This new pilot project will cut the current earnings clawback rate in half, to 50% of earnings, and apply to all earnings while on claim.

Those three amendments would keep our economy strong. I am sure the opposition, if it is predictable, will perhaps vote against it yet again, after all, that is what it has done in the past. Every time our government moves to protect jobs, the NDP and the Liberals oppose it, as they opposed extending the EI hiring credit to help over 500,000 employers defray the cost of new hiring.

In that spirit, I urge all members to vote in favour of today's bill, which would help Canadian families, businesses and the Canadian economy grow and help fuel more job creation.

• (1705)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about EI and the way it would fundamentally change by moving people who are on EI into that permanent workforce. I would like to paint for him a scenario and perhaps he can respond with yes or no on how this would work.

Government Orders

Let us assume for a moment that we have a seasonal worker, say in Newfoundland and Labrador, who claims EI for part of the year but the other part of the year works at a fish plant making a wage of between \$15 and \$20 per hour. The person has been doing this seasonal work for about 20 or 25 years and this fish plant is the mainstay of this particular community. Will that person be forced to work at a local retail outlet in a job that pays half the wage but is full-time not seasonal? Would that person be pushed, encouraged or forced to go from that fish plant to the retail outlet?

• (1710)

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on the career change and the conversion that came to him some years ago.

As I explained, we are proposing to make changes to the EI program because we want EI to be an incentive to work, not an incentive to not work. We also want to ensure that workers who are finding themselves unemployed are better matched because of their skills with available jobs and occupations. At the end of the day, this is about ensuring that Canadians can have the fulfillment of employment.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, my neighbour in the Waterloo region, for the great speech and for specifically outlining the improvements to the EI system. These are crucial, have been a long time coming and certainly will be welcomed by Canadians from sea to sea.

I wonder if my colleague would care to highlight some of the initiatives that our government has taken in terms of research and development. He has the honour of having two post-secondary education institutions in his riding, the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, and I have Conestoga College. We have seen many examples of partnerships between industry and these post-secondary education institutions as it relates to research and development and then specifically to the commercialization of that research and development.

Could he comment on the forward-looking aspect of this in terms of future jobs and growth for the graduates of our post-secondary education institutions?

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the riding next door to my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga for that stunningly excellent question. Both he and I are very proud to represent the Waterloo region, which is the centre of innovation in Canada.

Economic action plan 2012 contains numerous excellent initiatives that will support science, technology, research and development, the knowledge economy of the future. In fact, it is a major theme of economic action plan 2012. Over \$1 billion will be dedicated from the budget to advance research, science and technology. For example, there is a doubling of IRAP. I hear consistently from SMEs and high-tech companies in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo that IRAP is a particularly valuable program. We heard what they had to say, we listened and we are acting. There is \$400 million to help the venture capital industry in this country to create the next Research in Motion down the road.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to our Conservative government's economic action plan 2012, jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

In March, the Minister of Finance introduced our government's pragmatic and prudent vision for the future of Canadians, one that looks forward to not only the next few years but also to the next generation.

Since 2006, our government has worked to build a strong economic foundation for Canadians. While the effects of the economic downturn of 2008 were felt in homes and businesses across the country, it was the steady leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, as well as the rest of our Conservative government, that ensured the Canadian economy emerged from the recession well ahead of every major developed economy in the world.

We have delivered for Canadians, and our strong record speaks for itself: the creation of more than 700,000 net new jobs since July 2009; a 3.9% increase in a year-over-year growth in manufacturing output; a reduction for personal income taxes and cuts to the GST; income splitting for seniors' pensions; the creation of the landmark tax free savings account; and lower taxes on Canadian businesses, with Canadians having the lowest tax rate on new business investments among major advanced economies.

Our banking system is regarded as the most stable in the world. Our net to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7. The OECD and IMF predict Canada's economy will be one of the international leaders over the coming years.

When we sift through the partisan rhetoric and inaccurate numbers and figures thrown about by my opposition colleagues, our government's strong economic record is laid bare.

While there is work to be done going forward, Canadians voiced confidence in the direction we have taken when they voted for a strong, stable Conservative majority government in May 2011, ultimately providing us with the mandate to continue our pragmatic economic agenda.

During the election, we committed to remain focused on job creation and economic growth, and with economic action plan 2012 we are doing just that.

We are continuing our job creation agenda and we are focused on the long-term prosperity of the Canadian economy, for all Canadians.

As a country, however, we must remain cognizant of the many challenges and uncertainties that are still confronting the Canadian economy. The recovery is not complete, and too many Canadians are still looking for work.

One only needs to look to the recent elections in Europe to recognize that the global economy still remains fragile. Canada does not want to become the next Greece or Ireland.

Canadian businesses face increasing competition from countries with emerging fast-growth economies, and our aging population will put pressures on public finances and social programs.

Economic action plan 2012 takes important steps to highlight these structural challenges in ensuring that the changing demographics do not harm Canada's public finances and social programs for the future.

My constituents in Simcoe—Grey elected me to be a strong voice here in Ottawa for them, to ensure that I work to bring jobs to our riding; to ensure that our government creates a climate where businesses can thrive without the burden of bureaucratic red tape; to ensure that our seniors are taken care of so they can receive the respect they have earned through their decades of contribution to our country; to ensure that our agricultural sector is supported in the manner that allows it to grow and be profitable; and to ensure that our health care system is protected by continuing our government's stable health care funding to the provinces.

My constituents do not want government handouts or a government that throws money to the creation of more bureaucracy. They want a government that will lower taxes and create a pro-business environment, while continuing to support Canadians by maintaining transfers for health care, education and social programs to the provinces. This is the surest way to create jobs and stimulate economic growth, and these represent the fundamentals of our Conservative economic approach. This is what our government campaigned on. This is the economic agenda I promoted in my riding of Simcoe—Grey. This is what our Conservative government has delivered on in economic action plan 2012.

Our government is committed to sustainable social programs and a secure retirement for all Canadians now and for future generations.

The facts on OAS are clear. The number of Canadians over the age of 65 will increase from 4.7 million to 9.3 million over the next 20 years. The OAS program was built when Canadians were not living the longer, healthier lives they are today.

• (1715)

Consequently, the cost of OAS would increase from \$36 billion per year in 2010 to \$108 billion in 2030. Meanwhile at 2030, the number of taxpayers for every senior will be down to two, down from seven in the 1970s and from four in 2010. In order to ensure the sustainability of OAS, the age of eligibility will gradually be raised to 67 starting in 2023 and fully implemented in 2029.

We have ensured that the changes that are being made have substantial notice and an adjustment period. These changes would not affect current retirees and those close to retirement. It would give people plenty of time to adjust to the changes and plan for their own retirement. Our changes would ensure OAS is put on a sustainable path so it is there when Canadians need it in the future.

Economic action plan 2012 takes action to create jobs now and provide more opportunities to Canadians. To create jobs, we will extend our one-year hiring credit for small businesses, a practical, proven measure that encourages businesses to hire more workers. For example, Rick and Susan Lloyd, in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, can utilize this program for their small business, Smart's Flowers, and continue to grow their business.

Government Orders

We will make new investments in local infrastructure through the community infrastructure improvement fund. Already our government has made significant investments in infrastructure, particularly in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, where mayors like Mayor Linda Collins and Mayor Sandra Cooper in Collingwood have praised our government for helping create opportunities in their municipalities, and for our constituents in Simcoe—Grey.

Moreover, we will provide more opportunities to Canadians. We will continue to help older workers transition to new jobs and new opportunities. One way we are going to achieve this is through the government support of the ThirdQuarter project, an innovative approach to help employers find experienced workers who are over the age of 50 and who want to utilize their skills in the workforce.

We are increasing funding for skills training and career experiences for young Canadians and for Canadians with disabilities. This is building on investments our government has made already in my riding. For example, most recently, I made an almost \$0.5 million announcement for Tracks Employment in Collingwood, where more than 40 students will benefit from an initiative to provide them the skills they need in order to enter into the workforce, supported by the government's youth employment strategy.

Our government is also making improvements to the EI program to ensure it is fair, continues to meet the needs of Canadians and is responsive to local labour market demands, both now and in the future. Our focus is on the long-term prosperity of Canadians.

As we face unprecedented labour shortages, it will be critical that we work directly to help Canadians find available jobs more quickly. We are providing support to Canadians to help them find those jobs through more timely and relevant labour market information, as well as earlier access to skills training and job searches.

With our government's focus on jobs and economic growth, we will also introduce changes on how to calculate EI benefits to better align them with local labour market conditions. Canadians want to return to work. We are enhancing the tools to support them in doing so.

Budget 2012 presents itself as a historical opportunity for Canadians. It allows us to position our country in a way that will protect and strengthen the Canadian economy and continue our job creation agenda. Economic action plan 2012 will help create high-value, good-paying jobs by investing in entrepreneurship, innovation and world-class research. It supports jobs and growth through responsible resource development.

Government Orders

It invests in training, infrastructure and opportunities to create jobs while providing new opportunities to young Canadians, seniors, new immigrants and Canadians with disabilities. These are the types of initiatives our country needs, and they will continue to ensure the long-term prosperity of the Canadian economy.

I am proud to be part of a government that has delivered for Canadians. I would like to commend the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for tabling this historic budget.

• (1720)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague her thoughts on the performance of the Minister of Finance in the fall of 2008, at a time when the government was in deficit. It had inherited a surplus of \$13 billion back in 2006, and it had put Canada in deficit by the beginning of the 2008-09 fiscal year.

As we all know, the recession started in the fall of 2008. By September or October it was pretty clear we were in it. However, in November, when it was very clear, the Minister of Finance brought forward a fiscal budget update, suggesting that nothing was wrong, that there was no need for any stimulus measures and no need to react to this global recession that was developing.

What sort of a finance minister fails to recognize a problem and has to be forced into taking the measures for which he now claims so much credit?

• (1725)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance did such a fabulous job that, in 2009, he was voted the best finance minister in the world.

His decisions and those of the Prime Minister were to inject \$63 billion of targeted stimulus money through Canada's economic action plan to protect Canada during the worst global recession since the 1930s.

What did that do? It put Canada on a footing such that, in the last number of months, we have had a record number of net new jobs, more than 690,000 net new jobs.

Canada has been number one with the strongest fiscal position in the G7, reported by Fitch Ratings, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. This government has been focused on jobs and the economy and the long-term prosperity of this country.

The Minister of Finance of this government has been the leadership to make that happen.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite amusing that the basis by which the Minister of Finance received this award was because of things like a strong banking system, good fiscal structures and that sort of thing, set down prior to when he arrived, which was certainly around the time of Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien.

To say that the current Minister of Finance is the best finance minister is like Milli Vanilli winning a Grammy, for goodness sake. That too was based on someone else's work.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I am not really sure if there was a question in that, but that is perfectly fine. It gives me a great opportunity to reiterate what I said before.

It was not just the Conservatives on this side of the House who stated that the Minister of Finance was the best finance minister in the world. This was an award provided to him by the international community.

That was because this government, our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance moved forward quickly and effectively to make sure the Canadian economy was protected in 2009, and they have continued to do so.

In economic action plan 2012, we have moved forward even more initiatives to protect and grow the jobs market in this country.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Simcoe—Grey for an excellent speech. I know she has been very supportive of our jobs and growth strategy, particularly with our manufacturing sector. She lives in Ontario, as I do, and she has automotive interests, as I do.

We are getting hit with a double whammy in Ontario. First, we have the radical Liberal government that put in an energy program with the feed-in tariff. People actually have solar panels and they are paying, I believe, 80¢ per kilowatt hour, and when there is excess, they are selling it for 5¢ per kilowatt hour. How the Liberal government came up with the business plan or how that works, I am not sure, but how it is affecting me is serious.

Our manufacturers, our business community, are really concerned about doing business in Ontario because of the cost of energy, and now we have the NDP wanting to bring forth a program with a carbon tax added to the price of energy.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could contrast our sensible strategy for jobs and growth with the radical plan that the NDP and the left in this country have, and how it affects her in Ontario and the fears—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, give a short answer, please.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the question of my colleague from Oshawa gives me an opportunity to speak to the manufacturing industry in our country and what the Conservative government has done to support it.

Since 2006, the Conservative government has proudly supported manufacturing across this country, so whether that be lowering business taxes to 15% or eliminating the job-killing corporate surtax, this government has been focused on aiding the manufacturing companies, unlike our opposition colleagues, who only want to raise taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. Minister of State for Science and Technology and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario has two minutes remaining in government orders today.

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this amazing budget. Budget 2012, yet again, builds on the foundation that the government has worked to create over the last number of years to create a country that is the envy of most of the industrialized nations around the world. In fact, not only do we have some of the strongest growth and some of the best employment indicators, we are the envy in terms of our banking system.

We have the opportunity to build a budget of the future. We obviously have had great success under previous budgets in creating jobs, as has been indicated by many of my colleagues. Almost 700,000 net new jobs have been created. Leaders around the world are looking to Canada and wishing they had put in place those kinds of budgets for their countries, the kinds of budgets that have put Canadians in a really good position financially, securing their futures.

Of course, the opposition members have voted against those budgets time and time again. One would think that after making that many mistakes, they would not buy the same stock a fifth time. Therefore, we encourage the NDP members to look at the budget as the next step in Canada's prosperity.

The budget has more investments for science and technology and innovation that will create the positive job opportunities of the future. We have already done a great job creating jobs right now, as we can tell.

I know the NDP members voted against it. We are trying to encourage them to change their ways and understand the positive nature of creating, not only jobs today, but the good quality, high-paying jobs of tomorrow as well. That is what the budget is about.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member. He will have eight minutes left when the debate resumes, and of course, five minutes of questions and answers.

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

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to debate on M-307. It is a subject that is very important to my constituents. Judging from the correspondence my office has been receiving from people in Halifax West, it is an issue that is very much on the minds of Canadians.

Let me begin by thanking the hon. member for Charlottetown for introducing M-307, and the hon. member for York West, the Liberal Party critic on pensions and a champion for thousands of Canadians on this very important file.

Private Members' Business

I am reminded that M-307 is the result of a petition signed by tens of thousands of Canadians who believe the neo-Conservative government is trying to disenfranchise them. Many Canadians believe their country is now in the hands of a mean-spirited government intent on punishing the very seniors who spent their lives building this country.

I am sure many Conservative backbenchers feel the same way but they are afraid to voice their true feelings for fear of invoking the wrath of the minions over at the PMO. I do not know what lines Conservative members are feeding the folks back home, but I do know what my office has been hearing from Canadians. Let me share a few of the heartfelt sentiments I have heard. I hope the hon. members will listen carefully and take seriously these comments from real people who are going to experience real impacts of this budget.

One says, "Moving the age to 67 would have a real impact on my mom. She's a single woman and a low-income earner." There is a real Canadian with a real concern. Another one says, "I became a widow at the age of 40. I'm on disability and do not have much money in RRSPs. I find it difficult to pay my bills now. I don't know how I'll manage with a two-year interruption of income." This is a very scary situation. That is a real problem. Some people express confusion and anxiety over the OAS changes. One of them says, "There is a concern because I'm currently on Canadian pension disability. I need to know if that will continue until I am 67."

Perhaps in this debate, if Conservative members are going to claim they have a response to this, let them tell the House if they can point to a section in the bill that deals with this in some fashion, or a section that deals with the people who are currently on social assistance or provincial programs. Which section will provide provincial governments with the funds they will need to provide that kind of assistance for two more years, when they are already hard-pressed in terms of finances?

Another person notes, "I have spent my entire working life paying into CPP, only to hear at this point in my life that my retirement goals are not aligned to the Conservative government's fiscal agenda? I am fortunate enough to hold a good job, and I will work harder to prepare, but I can only imagine the panic of individuals who are not employed or minimally employed. What will these Canadians do, and how many more impoverished seniors does there need to be for the Prime Minister to get the message? Shame."

This is a very important point about people who are not employed or are minimally employed, who are relying on a variety of social programs. I think of people who have work that is very physical or difficult. I think of women who have worked their whole lives, 35 years perhaps, in fish plants, standing on concrete floors, their hands in cold water all day long. The government feels it is no problem for them to work two more years after they are 65.

Is that not a problem? Is there nothing to worry about? Should we not be concerned about those kinds of people? Is that really a government that considers the reality of people living in this country every day, especially people who are older in our society?

Private Members' Business

I am reminded of the old adage that a society should always be judged on how it treats its weakest members. History will indeed judge the government and the Prime Minister appropriately, as a government that was always there to assist its rich and powerful friends and contributors, but told the rest of the people, bootstrappers, to fend for themselves, a government that said, "They can look after themselves".

● (1735)

The Prime Minister, a year ago, made the following promise, "We're not going to cut the rate of increase in transfers for health care, education and pensions. That is job number one". Those are not my words. That is the line the Conservative leader fed Canadians in the last election campaign.

That was the election campaign in which he also said he had a contract to buy F-35 attack jets and they would only cost \$16 billion. That is what he told Canadians. This is the same Prime Minister who also promised seniors he would never tax income trusts and quickly broke his word. He broke faith with Canadian seniors and imposed a tax on income trusts, totally contrary to what he had promised. This is a Prime Minister who was hanging out with his rich, elite pals in Switzerland when he decided to drop a bombshell on seniors and wipe out the dreams of thousands.

One of my constituents, describing the chaos and confusion that the initial OAS announcement caused, said the following in an email to my office, "We struggle with trying to understand how we are in this state of confusion over the OAS. We struggle to find a balance in our day to day lives despite...the chaos....All this information came to us via...the media with minimal reassurance from...the Prime Minister, who started all this fuss while grandstanding in a foreign country."

Those are not my words. That is a person in my riding who wrote to me concerned, worried, frustrated and confused, asking why on earth a prime minister of Canada would make an announcement about pensions for Canadian seniors in Switzerland, at a meeting with the richest and most powerful people in the world. What was that about? Was he trying to show off and say, "Look at what we are doing. You are going to love this one"? Was that it?

Madam Speaker, you can see why I appreciate having a few minutes today to talk about the old age security program. I urge all members to look into their hearts, do the right thing and support this motion. They should tell the government that it should (a) recognize the contributions that the baby boomer generation has made in building Canada, (b) affirm their support for the old age security program, (c) commit to maintaining the 65-year qualifying age contained in section 3 of the Old Age Security Act and (d) recognize that the old age security and guaranteed income supplement programs, both designed to help low-income seniors, are inextricably linked and ensure they continue to have identical ages of eligibility. That is what Liberals are asking with this motion. Those are reasonable requests if we think about the future of the country and are concerned about the future of our seniors, especially low-income seniors.

Fifty per cent of the people who receive OAS earn less than \$25,000 a year and 40% earn less than \$20,000. That is who we are talking about. Those are the people, not making big money, not in

easy jobs often, who are being asked by the government to work two more years, to wait two more years, to do without for two more years. What kind of a government is that?

● (1740)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight to speak to the motion.

Let me make our position clear. We could have been in favour of Motion No. 307, as we agree with many of the points in the motion. However, we cannot agree with the text that calls for the age of eligibility for OAS to remain at 65, as such a move would threaten the sustainability of the program.

Our government attempted to reach a compromise with the member opposite to amend the motion, but the member expressed no interest in negotiating with us on this matter.

Unfortunately, the opposition continues to play political games with this most serious of matters. Our government will not be so irresponsible. We have introduced changes to the OAS program that would gradually increase the age of OAS eligibility from 65 to 67 years of age, starting in 2023.

We have witnessed the spectacle of the opposition members trying to scare current OAS recipients into believing their benefits will be affected. I can assure all current OAS recipients and all Canadians over the age of 54 that as of March 31 of this year their benefits would not be affected and they would see no change to their OAS eligibility.

The opposition seems to still, after many hours of debate on this topic, not understand the facts of the situation or choose not to understand the facts.

The OAS program is the single largest problem the Government of Canada has. It was established in 1952, at a time that was quite different from the one we now face. All of this needs to be reviewed, viewed and looked at in this context.

In the 1970s there were seven working age Canadians for every senior. Currently, there are four working age Canadians per retired senior. In 20 years there will only be two working age Canadians for every senior. It would seem obvious that some action and something needs to be done.

How does the member opposite believe his program is sustainable on its current path? Is it fair to Canadian workers 20 years from now, who would see serious job-killing increases in taxes, to pay for the short-sightedness of previous generations, or would that future worker see other government services cut to the bone to pay for an ever-increasing expense of OAS? What kind of legacy do we want to leave to those who come after us?

In 1970 the average 65-year-old could expect to live to 81. Today, that has increased by four years. With people living longer, they are collecting OAS benefits for an increasing number of years. Put them all together, and the cost of the OAS program, if left unchanged, would go from approximately \$38 billion in 2011 to \$108 billion in 2030.

Therefore, something had to be done to ensure that the OAS would be sustainable in the face of demographic realities. A responsible government does not shirk from its duty in the face of such a challenge. Even if it is difficult or uncomfortable, the responsibility is there to act.

A responsible government acts in the best interests of Canadians, including those who will come after us. That is why we have announced specific steps in our last budget.

The age of eligibility for old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement would be gradually raised from age 65 to 67, starting in April 2023, with full implementation by January 2029.

Given that life expectancy has been increasing, even with the increase in the OAS eligibility age to 67, people who turn 65 in 2030 can expect to receive OAS benefits for about the same number of years over their lifetime as seniors who turn 65 today.

The economic action plan will ensure that the OAS program will be on a sustainable path to ensure that it will be there for future generations.

Our government will also ensure that certain federal programs, including those provided by Veterans Affairs Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, currently providing income support benefits until age 65 will be aligned with changes in the OAS program.

Our government will discuss the impact of the changes to the OAS program on CPP disability and survivor benefits with provinces and territories, which are joint stewards of the CPP, during the next tri-annual review of the CPP. We will also compensate the provinces for the net additional costs they may face resulting from increasing the age of eligibility for OAS benefits.

• (1745)

Starting on July 1, 2013, we will give people the flexibility to voluntarily defer receiving their OAS pension for up to five years in exchange for a higher actuarially adjusted pension. This will give Canadians a choice of taking up their OAS pension at a later time if they decide it is better for their individual retirement plans.

We have taken steps to make these changes gradually to OAS. The increase in the age of eligibility of OAS and GIS benefits will not affect anyone who is 54 years of age or older as of March 31, 2012. The increase in the age of eligibility of allowance for survivor benefits will not affect anyone who is 49 years of age or older as of March 31, 2012. The 11-year notification and the subsequent 6 year phase-in period will allow those affected by these changes ample time to make adjustments to their retirement plans.

As members can see, we are allowing Canadians the time needed to plan for their retirement.

Private Members' Business

Many other countries have recently increased or announced plans to increase the eligibility ages of their public pension plans. These include Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan and Korea.

As David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada and deputy minister of finance, said recently in an interview, "we're at least 15 years late in getting started in raising the age of entitlement for...OAS. We can't wait any longer to make these changes. Inaction is not an option in this situation".

He makes a good point that is shared by many.

The cost of the OAS program is poised to soar as the baby boomer generation retires. In fact, the first of the baby boomers started to turn 65 in 2011.

In summary, it is the responsibility of the federal government to think of the future and to act in the long-term interests of Canadians. Sadly, the opposition has refused to acknowledge the realities of our aging population in order to play political games. Private sector economists, financial institutions and former Bank of Canada governors have confirmed that we must act now to make the OAS program sustainable.

Our goal is to strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers and families over the next few years and over the next generation. The OAS program was a great step forward in 1952. We now need to take another step forward and bring it into the 21st century. We want to position Canada as one of the world's advanced economies, a country that looks after its own and builds towards its future.

That is why I am asking the member for Charlottetown to cooperate with us, and all members of the House, to ensure the sustainability of the old age security program.

I hope the opposition members, particularly the member for Charlottetown, have been persuaded by these arguments. I would therefore give them another opportunity to do the right thing and work with our government in the interest of future generations.

I move the following: That this motion be amended by substituting the words in sub-point (c) with the words, "commit to maintaining the sustainability of the OAS program", instead of the original wording of, "commit to maintaining the sixty-five year qualifying age contained in section 3 of the Old Age Security Act".

• (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the consent of the member for Charlottetown to move this motion?

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, no.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, this matter has been before the House, motions by the official opposition, on at least two other occasions since we had this announcement from the government, post-election announcement I would point out, that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I would like some order in the House. The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh has the floor.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, as I said, the NDP official opposition has already forced two votes on this motion in the House. My colleague who just finished his speech said that it was sad that we opposed this. I want to be very clear that on behalf of our party, we are very proud of the fact that we have fought against this change, that we will fight against this change and that, when we take government after the next federal election, we will reverse this decision by the federal government.

When I first heard that the Prime Minister had been in Davos with his rich buddies trying to satisfy the international monetary community with this kind of an endeavour, it reminded me of a battle we fought within the labour movement through the 1960s and 1970s to try to lower the age when people in the auto manufacturing centres would be able to receive pensions at an earlier age than 65. There was a caption for it, "30-and-out". No matter what age they started, after 30 years of work they would have a pension that was quite substantive enough for individuals to finish raising their families and live in significant dignity.

The push for that was this fact. Up until that point, people had to be 65 before they received any pension benefits from the auto manufacturers. The analysis the economists for the labour movement had done at that time was that the average labourers retiring in the auto sector at age 65 received pension for just slightly more than 12 months before they died. That image struck me very hard when again I heard the Prime Minister, outside the country, announcing this decision. That is still a factor we have to consider in raising the age of retirement.

It is National Nursing Week. Nurses work very hard from a physical labour standpoint. Yet we are saying to them that they will have to wait two more years to receive this benefit, one that they have contributed to very clearly by the tax dollars they paid all of their careers. We have to recognize the forestry worker, the farmer, the fisher and all those people who work very hard lives, very difficult, back-bending, back-breaking labour for a great deal of their lives.

I hear this from the Jack Mintzes of the world and the economists. They have a picture of people perhaps like me. I have been a lawyer all my professional career and then a politician. I have not done that heavy labour work. However, that is the image the Conservative Party has, that it is not a big deal, that they can work a couple more years, and that is probably true. I think of me and most of the members of the House.

However, there are a lot of Canadians for whom that does not apply. Think of the waitress who spent her whole career working, slugging heavy trays. We can just go down the list of people. The majority of Canadians still work a physically demanding heavy workload and we are saying to them that they have to do it for two more years.

We can say they could have planned better and saved more, but we know that is not the reality of the Canadian economy.

• (1755)

We know that private pension plans have been a gross failure in terms of providing sufficient incomes for people to retire. If Canadians are to retire above the poverty line, they will need the

OAS and a better CPP. We need massive reforms with respect to CPP. Again, my party has been the leader in pushing that issue in the country.

The previous speaker talked about how all these other countries have done it. If the government had done any kind of analysis, it would see that in the vast majority of cases, those countries have also provided for alternative plans for people who cannot continue to work or who are at very marginal levels.

What is also interesting is that pension benefits in the vast majority of those other countries are substantially better than they are in Canada. The member was right when he said that we are 15 years behind, but not about raising the age; we are 15 years behind in providing pension benefits from public sources, not from private sources, that are adequate for the average Canadian to retire in dignity. We are way behind the rest of the developed world.

We are quite happy to support this kind of motion, even though it is coming from one of the other opposition parties. We are proud to continue this battle.

I see that I still have a couple more minutes. Let me go to the other reforms that we need to make.

We fought the government in advance of the last election. We had very concrete proposals as to how much we needed to increase the guaranteed income supplement. When the government implemented the measure, both before the election and subsequently, it did so at a level that was less than half of what was required to move people above the poverty line, or at least up to the poverty line. These were primarily elderly women, 65 years of age and older, who did not have any other pension benefits. In a lot of cases they did not qualify for the CPP. They only had the OAS and the GIS.

The government made this one increase, and of course the Conservatives tout it constantly all over the country and in the House, but the reality is that people who are only eligible for the OAS and GIS are living below the poverty line today in this country and will continue to do so as long as the figures remain at that level. There has to be a significant increase made by this country to honour our elderly citizens when they retire, to make sure that they can live above or at least at the poverty line.

Similarly, with respect to the proposal the Conservatives have coming with regard to this pooled pension fund, the RRSP has been a colossal failure in terms of providing personal private pensions to people who have adequate incomes. It simply has not worked. We can go through the figures of how few people have used it or used it to its maximum. Now they are talking about a collective one. The RRSP has failed in that regard, and a pooled pension plan will not do any better; in fact, it will probably do more poorly.

Reforms to our public pension plans are needed quite badly and are needed fairly soon. However, increasing the age of eligibility is simply a mechanism used by the government to continue to give tax breaks to the oil and gas industry, the big financial institutions and the very wealthy in this country. Increasing OAS non-payment by two years is taking money out of the hands and pockets of those who are really poor in this country and putting that burden on their backs.

• (1800)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to join in the debate today and to support the motion put forward by my colleague, the member for Charlottetown. It is a very important motion and one that has really seized from my own riding and across the country.

Canada enjoys one of the lowest seniors poverty rates in the world. A large part of this success was the introduction of the old age security and guaranteed income supplement and Canada pension plan by Liberal governments in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Conservative government's plan to increase the OAS eligibility age from 65 to 67 is a regressive move at a time when the number of low-income seniors in Canada is on the rise. In fact, the numbers have doubled between 2007 and 2009. This move will force thousands of poor, vulnerable seniors, including women and disabled people who depend on OAS and GIS to keep them out of poverty, to wait two more years and forgo over \$30,000 in payments. Seniors groups, poverty groups and disability groups have all taken issue with the OAS change and how it will adversely affect the poor people they represent.

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities points out that Canadians with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty. Between 45% and 60% of those living on provincial social assistance programs are persons with disabilities. Increasing the entitlement age for OAS and GIS will keep these people living in poverty for two years longer than necessary.

Women also will be disproportionately affected. They receive fewer Canada pension benefits than men, leaving them with less income at 65. Statistics Canada reports that 18% of women living alone over the age of 65 are indeed living in poverty. A 2009 report prepared by the human resources department was very clear in stating that over 35% of women between 65 and 69 would fall below the poverty line without OAS or GIS.

These facts should be telling the government that we have to do more, not less, to assist low-income seniors.

Maybe the government will silence its critics and release a national poverty strategy that would ensure low-income seniors, such as women and the disabled, do not fall between the cracks with the change in this eligibility. Could it be that the government would finally implement some strategies and recommendations made by a number of reports on poverty in the last few years, including the Senate's report, "In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness", or the House's own report, "The Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working In Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada"? These are both very well-respected reports. Maybe it could be the National Council on Welfare's own report, "The Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty"?

Private Members' Business

Sadly, I have to say no. The government's response to these reports is to disregard, discredit and then dismiss them. In the case of the National Council on Welfare, the government just did away with the organization completely.

The Conservative government has used nothing but false and misleading claims for its reason to change the eligibility. It says the program is unsustainable, but does not say what is sustainable. It says it needs to increase the age of eligibility to save OAS, but will not say how much the move will save. There is no information and no debate on an issue that will affect every Canadian that will be born from this day forward and every Canadian under the age of 54. Does this sound reasonable? Is this what one would expect from a government that claims to be open and accountable for its actions? From a reasonable government, yes; from the Conservative government, no. Killing debate, silencing opponents, shredding the truth and using propaganda to create fact from fiction are just par for the course, and it is no different with the OAS than it is with the F-35 scandal.

• (1805)

The government declares a crisis and paints an apocalyptic picture of OAS bankrupting the country if something is not done. One would expect, therefore, that it would introduce the age change immediately. In the face of this supposed impending crisis, this financial apocalypse, the government is going to wait 18 whole years before fully implementing the change. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development has said:

What we're going to do is make sure that people...have time to still prepare for our own retirement.

This may sound reasonable and sensible, but I would argue it is neither. The OAS crisis, the government argues, exists because the baby boomer generation will be a bulge that will cost the system progressively between now and 2030; however, what does not make sense is that the peak of this bulge is predicted to be, ironically, in 2031, at almost the same time the OAS change will take full effect. By that time, the cost train will have already left the station. The relative cost of OAS will actually start to decline soon after. In fact, the cost of OAS to GDP is projected to be lower by 2060 than it is today, so the measure will be largely ineffective. There is no crisis, just politics and fearmongering.

Private Members' Business

The delay in full implementation is also completely unreasonable to low-income people, who the Conservatives are basically saying need to save more for their own retirement or go on provincial welfare when they reach age 65. How insulting to the over half million working Canadians who live below the poverty line. How do the Conservatives expect these people who barely get by week to week to save an additional \$30,000? For people who are poor, knowing that they need to save and having the ability to save are two completely different things.

The Conservatives cite the fact that Canadians are living longer, but what they fail to realize is that the human body can only work at physically demanding jobs for so long. It is not that people working in these jobs do not want to work past 65, but that many people will not be able to do it physically.

As well, in 2006 the government's Chief Actuary found that the average life expectancy at 65 of people receiving GIS is much shorter than the life expectancy of those too rich to receive OAS. He found that for men, poorer seniors are dying four and a half years earlier than the rich. For women, the difference is three and a half years. Reducing effective retirement years by two will be far more punishing on the poor than the rich.

Although the government has not produced any evidence that OAS is not sustainable, independent experts have studied the issue and have reported that it is. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, in his report earlier this year, said that the federal fiscal structure "...now has sufficient room to absorb the cost pressures arising from the impact of population aging on the federal elderly benefits program."

A recent report prepared by OECD states:

The analysis suggests that Canada does not face major challenges of financial sustainability with its public pension schemes.

It goes on to say:

There is no pressing financial or fiscal need to increase pension ages in the foreseeable future.

The Conservatives say other countries are raising their retirement, so we must do the same, a sort of monkey see, monkey do approach. They cite many countries that have raised their retirement age. What they fail to mention is that several of these countries are increasing their retirement age to below or equal to Canada's current age. For example, France is increasing minimum age from 60 to 62. As well, some of these countries allow for early retirement at reduced benefits. The United States allows early retirement at 62.

Finally—and I think this is critical—although countries like the United States and the U.K. have a higher retirement age, their public pension systems cost relatively more now than Canada's system will ever cost over the next 50 years. According to a 2011 OECD report on pensions, the U.S. system in 2007 cost 6% of their GDP and the UK system cost 5.9%; ours is 2.34%.

● (1810)

This is just another attack on those most vulnerable in our society, those most vulnerable Canadians. I very much support the motion put forward by my colleague from Charlottetown and I will be voting in favour of the motion.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find it unfortunate that the member for Charlottetown did not see fit to work co-operatively with the government to ensure the sustainability of the old age security program. Given the clear facts regarding the demographic realities our country is facing, I had hoped that the opposition would be interested in a more than short-sighted political rhetoric but, apparently, this is not the case.

It is particularly hypocritical, as it was the Liberals in the mid-nineties who first floated the idea of addressing the sustainability issues facing the old age security program. It was their then finance minister, Paul Martin, who attempted to bring forward necessary changes to the old age security program.

Unfortunately, the Liberals lacked the principle to do the right thing at that time. I am hopeful that they will see that the time is now to correct that inaction and join with us in making these common sense and reasonable changes.

I will be clear on the government's proposed changes to the old age security program. Current recipients of OAS and those aged 54 and older as of March 31 of this year will not be affected by these changes.

Starting in 2023, which is 11 years away, we will gradually raise the age of eligibility from 65 to 67. We are making these changes to the OAS because we want it to be there, not only for the baby boomers who are mentioned in the motion, but the generations to follow, people just like me.

Since we announced an increase in the age of eligibility, we have been very straightforward in telling Canadians why we are making this change. This government is taking action now to ensure that the OAS will be there for future generations before it is too late, and we are doing this without impacting current or near seniors and without putting an undue tax burden on younger generations.

We agree with this motion in recognizing the contributions of the baby boom generation and the positive impact that they have made in building Canada. The opposition, by using the term "baby boom generation", implies that it knows something about demographics, which is why it continues to amaze me that the opposition does not accept the reality that demographics will challenge the sustainability of this program.

I will put this in perspective. In the 10 years from 1946 to 1956, the population of Canada increased by an unprecedented 20%. The baby boomers were economic drivers from the time of their birth. During the good times that followed, baby boomers themselves contributed to building a country that enjoys one of the healthiest economies in the world, as well as freedom and democracy. That is something for which we should be grateful proud.

Private Members' Business

Today, the boomers form our largest demographic group and the first of them started turning 65 in 2011. This has significant implications for our country. Canadians are living longer and healthier lives. In 1970, the average 65-year-old could expect to live to 81. Today, that has increased by four years. At the same time, Canada's birth rate is much lower than during the immediate post-war era. This shift has had an impact on our labour market.

In the 1970s there were seven working age Canadians for every person over the age of 65. In 20 years there will only be two working age Canadians for every senior. This means there will be fewer workers to take the place of baby boomers when they retire. Over the next 20 years, the number of Canadians over the age of 65 will jump from 4.7 million to 9.3 million. This will be a staggering increase in a relatively short period of time and it will come with a high price tag. The annual cost of the OAS program is expected to triple between 2010 and 2030, from \$36 billion to \$108.

● (1815)

At the same time as our seniors' population rises, the ratio of workers to retirees will be falling.

Unlike the Canada pension plan, the OAS is financed entirely from tax revenue that workers pay that year. Canada is changing rapidly and the old age security program must change with it to remain affordable. That is why we announced that the age of eligibility for OAS and the GIS will gradually increase from 65 to 67 starting in April 2023. These changes will be fully implemented by January 2029. The changes to the eligibility age for the OAS pension and the GIS will not affect anyone who was 54 or older as of March 31. For the allowance and the allowance of the survivor, anyone who was 49 years of age or older as of March 31 will be unaffected.

I will put this into perspective. People are living longer and, therefore, collecting OAS benefits longer. A 65-year-old today can expect to receive OAS benefits for 20 years compared with 16 years in 1970. By 2030, people who start receiving OAS benefits at 67 would also receive them for about 20 years.

Many OECD member countries have recently planned or announced increases to the age of eligibility for their public pension programs, including the United States.

The increase in the age of eligibility to the OAS will not affect current seniors. The 11 year advance notification and the subsequent 6 year phase-in period would give those who are affected ample time to make adjustments to their retirement plans. All Canadians can find a wealth of information on the Service Canada website regarding planning for retirement.

It is about ensuring a program that has served Canadians for generations will be there for generations to come.

We owe a lot to our seniors. They built our country and they deserve a secure and dignified retirement. Our government is determined to take responsible, fair and prudent action to ensure that the OAS program remains sustainable. It is the responsibility of the federal government to think of the future and to act in the long-term interests of all Canadians.

Sadly, the opposition has refused to acknowledge the realities of our aging population. The opposition parties have chosen the low

road. Their baseless fear-mongering and wilful ignorance of the need for change does not serve the interest of Canadians. We will not follow the opposition approach of sticking our head in the sand and pretending we are oblivious to the coming challenges.

I ask all members of this House to consider our duty to our constituents and to this great nation, to rise above petty partisanship, to reflect on the actions that need to be taken and to ensure the fiscal sustainability of our cherished social programs. As such, I ask all members of this House to reject the opposition motion and support the actions our government is taking.

● (1820)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to talk about such an important issue and, as my party has outlined, a motion that we in the NDP will be supporting.

This issue has been at the forefront of our attention for some months but it really hit home last week when I was in my office in one of the communities I represent in The Pas. I was meeting a man in his 50s who is disabled. He is a leader when it comes to fighting for disability services for people living with disabilities in his community in the north where many challenges still remain. He was talking about his own personal challenges of being able to make do with the little money he received as a result of his disability payments.

As he started to tell me what everyday was like for him and the kind of financial decisions he made he said, "I can't wait until I can start collecting OAS". When I asked him when his birthday was, we found out that he was just under the cut off. This man, who gives all the energy he has to making life better for people in his community who live with immense challenges, including himself, does not have a federal government to turn to, a federal government that has been there to work with Canadians to ensure that at the age of 65 and upward they can live with the dignity that they deserve.

That is the story of what the government is doing. I find it pretty rich that government members say that we should calm down because this is not coming about until 2023. How does that change anything? The changes will be destructive when it comes to the standard of living that seniors in Canada deserve. The worst part is that the Conservatives have created the argument that changes are needed based on a message of crisis and fear-mongering, a message that they know how to deliver very well and a message completely void of fact.

Just a few months ago, in February, the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted in his report that the cost of the OAS was manageable and that there was no fiscal reason to raise OAS. Mr. Page's findings were similar to another report prepared for Finance Canada in 2009 that found Canada's retirement obligations were sustainable and that there was no pressing need to raise the retirement age and yet here we are.

Private Members' Business

What I would like to specifically note is that the impact of changing the age in terms of the OAS will have a disproportionate impact on women as well. OAS and GIS are the only source of income for many women in Canada where they are guaranteed to receive the same amount as men regardless of their labour force history. For women between the ages of 65 and 69, OAS and GIS make up about 38% of their total income. For men of the same age, it is 26%. For women between the ages of 65 and 69, OAS and GIS reduce poverty by 21%. For men of the same age, it is a 15% drop. It is clear that rolling back the age of OAS is not gender neutral and will impact even larger numbers of senior women who already live in poverty.

Perhaps even more egregious is how this legislation brought forward by the Conservative government would have a disproportionate impact on my generation. We heard a long and extensive speech about baby boomers and how great things are and so on. However, the reality is that things are not great for my generation. There was an article recently that talked about the lower standard of living that my generation now has compared to our parents at the same age.

• (1825)

What could be more basic than the ability to have a pension, retirement security, to count on? Unfortunately, that is something the Conservative government is taking away from Canada's young people. I believe that is the greatest shame.

This follows a pattern, whether it is cuts to environmental regulations, Canada's failure to stand up and protect the environment; whether it is a lack of investment in education and training while we see costs for getting an education increase; whether it is a refusal to enforce a national housing strategy that would allow young people to afford a home, something their parents could do in a much bigger way when one looks back in Canada's recent history; whether it is the way that rights for women, half of the Canadian population, have been rolled back, or the challenges that young Canadian women will now have.

It is the story of a government that fails to look to the future, and most importantly, fails to look out for future generations. That is why I am proud to be part of a party that has always been at the forefront of fighting for pensions, dignified retirement and proper security for seniors. In saying so, we also fight for young people and the future.

I am proud to stand up and not just support this motion but also oppose the government's measures every step of the way.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to close the debate today on my motion to protect old age security.

I first want to thank my colleagues from Halifax West and Cape Breton—Canso for their speeches today, and also my NDP colleagues from Churchill and Windsor—Tecumseh. I know they care about protecting old age security.

Now I would like to address a couple of the points that were raised by the government members who spoke here today. One of the points raised by the members of the Conservative Party is that there are other countries that are raising the age of eligibility for old age security. What they have not said is that right now in Canada we

spend 2.5% of GDP on old age security and GIS. At the height of the bubble, it will be 3.18%.

We heard a lot about what OECD countries are spending. The average for old age security in OECD countries is 7%, yet at the height of the bubble we will spend 3.18%. Quite frankly, the international comparisons do not hold water.

What I also heard tonight is that the member for Charlottetown is being unco-operative in not going along with the government in its efforts to ensure the sustainability of old age security. That is simply not true. In fact, when my motion was initially presented back in March, I received a letter from the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development proposing the very amendment that was presented here tonight. That amendment essentially removed any reference to the increase in the age. Therefore, to suggest that I am not being co-operative because I will not agree to have my motion gutted is quite simply fallacious.

I am sorry to have to say this, but the Conservative government is not telling the truth on the matter of old age security. In fact, old age security is not in crisis, yet the contrary has been repeated and repeated by obedient Conservative backbenchers. The old adage is that if one repeats a lie often enough it takes on a character of truth.

A little over a year ago, during the election, the Prime Minister made a solemn promise. He stated:

We're not going to cut the rate of increase in transfers for healthcare, education and pensions. That is job number one...

However, about four months ago the Prime Minister announced, in Switzerland of all places, as we are fond of saying, from his Alpine perch, that he intended to institute massive changes to old age security in Canada.

Members should think about this. About a year ago, during an election, the Prime Minister told Canadians he would not touch pensions. Four months later he announced wholesale changes to old age security, predicated on a falsehood. The Conservatives know there is no crisis, but the facts do not matter. All that matters is blind, mindless loyalty to the leader.

There is no OAS crisis. Experts on pensions have said that there is no need to make changes. We heard in debate earlier tonight the view of Edward Whitehouse of the OECD. Jack Mintz, the government's own research director for the working group on retirement income, said this past January:

The overall view that was taken about our pension system in total, when you look at Old Age Security, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, as well as Canada Pension Plan, was that it is relatively financially sustainable...

It is simply not true for the Conservatives to stand in the House and say there is a crisis in old age security and, because there is a crisis, we need to fix it. There is no crisis; there is nothing to fix, and the Conservatives know it.

I hope that next week at least some of the Conservatives will escape the whip and do what is right, vote to protect pensions.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 16, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about the important employment insurance issues in my riding.

London has been hard hit by the downturn in the economy and the collapse of the auto sector. The manufacturing sector in particular has been devastated in the London region, and it is not just in London. Statistics Canada reports that automotive parts manufacturing lost more than one-quarter of its employees from 2004 to 2008, while motor vehicle manufacturing lost one-fifth. Parts manufacturing saw job numbers go from 139,300 to 98,700, which completely cancelled the strong growth from 1998 to 2004. For their part, motor vehicle manufacturers lost 15,900 jobs between 2004 and 2008 following a rather modest job growth of about 5% from 1998 to 2004.

Canada has lost nearly 400,000 manufacturing jobs since the Conservatives took office in 2006 and we lost over 40,000 manufacturing jobs in the last year alone. We are currently at an historic low in terms of manufacturing jobs, going back to when statistics were first gathered in 1976. I would like to note at this point that this low is quite significant because both our labour force and population have grown significantly over that same period. In other words, there are fewer manufacturing jobs in Canada now than there were in 1976.

In my own community of London, we have been particularly hard hit. The city's manufacturing sector has been shrinking at a rapid rate and the auto sector jobs, as I have mentioned, have all but disappeared. Electro-Motive Diesel was one of those few plants in

London offering good jobs. That was in operation as late as December of last year. Those jobs were well-paying jobs that helped support a family and support an entire community. To add insult to injury, the plant is gone now, the jobs have been lost and families have been devastated, and yet orders are rolling in for that same diesel engine that was built at the Oxford Street plant. These orders are coming from Canada but the locomotives will be made in the state of Illinois. It is frustrating to note that the company maintained that it needed \$30 million out of workers' pockets to keep the plant open but it spent \$38 million to close it and then gave a \$15 million bonus to the CEO. The workers in London were left waiting for EI payments to kick in, feeling violated by the company and by their own government.

The members opposite like to talk about job creation and yet no one stood up in defence of the good jobs that we already had at Electro-Motive Diesel, jobs that were shipped across the border.

The only support that remains for these auto workers and EMD workers is employment insurance. With the cuts made to Service Canada, there are fewer front line workers who can process claims in a timely fashion and help my constituents and others struggling to navigate through the system.

These are families just like ours, people who had their income revoked suddenly because their job got shipped to a plant in Indiana.

I will repeat my question of March 7. Why did the Conservatives raise billions of dollars on corporate tax giveaways instead of supporting out of work Canadians and the services they need? Tax cuts, I should add, do not guarantee a single job. I want to know why the government did not help to reinvest in Canada.

• (1835)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for London—Fanshawe on the layoff situation of Electro-Motive Canada and the support Service Canada is providing.

[*Translation*]

I can tell the House and Canadians that Service Canada has worked very closely with the union and the workers.

[*English*]

Service Canada officials are helping workers understand how to access employment insurance and are providing the required information and assistance to establish claims.

Our thoughts are with the 465 workers who have been put out of work by the closure of the plant. We are focused on helping the workers make the transition. This means making sure workers, if eligible, receive employment insurance benefits to support them as they seek alternative jobs.

Following the plant closure, the employer advised that a settlement had been reached with the union on the payment of separate monies. The records of employment were delivered to the Service Canada centre and entered within a week of receipt.

Adjournment Proceedings

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

I will not get into the details of the settlement other than to say that it includes a lump sum separation payment, a lump sum ratification bonus, wages and vacation pay, and settlement of outstanding grievances.

[*English*]

A dedicated team in Service Canada has been working with laid-off employees on how to separate monies which had been affected by their EI benefits. Individual letters will be sent to each claimant detailing the impact. Service Canada has provided information sessions to the employees and will continue to work with them.

General information on other applicable Government of Canada resources, such as income supports, skills development training and market information, as well as provincial programs and services, are also being provided to the laid-off workers.

[*Translation*]

I can assure my House of Commons colleagues that Service Canada has the situation under control.

[*English*]

I would like to reiterate that our government is dedicated to helping Canadians get back to work.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I have to say that the hearts that go out do not move my heart. Where was the government when 465 workers were being told to take a 50% cut in pay, to lose their benefits, to lose their pensions?

In terms of Service Canada workers in London, Ontario, they are magnificent. They work hard, they do their job and they are committed to helping people in my community. The problem is that there are not enough of them because too many have been laid off.

It is women in particular who have difficulty accessing EI. Many of them waited weeks to get employment insurance. In terms of women who work part-time or have caregiving obligations, employment insurance is simply not there for them. There are more hurdles to access it than I can begin to describe here. People are left without the money they need. There are too many restrictions and the Conservative government sits and has the audacity to say all is well.

All is not well and it is up to the Conservative government to make amends and fix it.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, Service Canada is working to ensure that those who have been laid off through no fault of their own can have access to the benefits to which they are entitled just as quickly as possible. Service Canada works closely with affected workers when there are massive layoffs. It provides workers with assistance to fill out application forms for EI and ensure documentation, such as records of employment, is available.

Canada has created 690,000 net new jobs since the dark days of the recent recession in July 2009. Canadian businesses continue to create jobs. When it comes to supporting workers, our government has delivered. Through our economic action plan, we have offered a

wide range of supports such as extending the targeted initiative for older workers. We have provided unprecedented funding for training through the provinces and territories to help those who have lost their jobs to get the skills they need for new jobs today and tomorrow. I wonder why the NDP continues to not vote for these initiatives.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Madam Speaker, on February 17, I rose in this House and asked when the government would finally help Toronto families deal with rising inflation and higher gas prices, and help them to make ends meet.

I asked specifically when the government would come up with a real jobs plan, a plan that would provide jobs to help support families instead of low-wage, part-time jobs many families depend on. The government has not created jobs in Toronto. The people in my riding of Scarborough Southwest know and live it every single day. There are fewer and fewer good jobs in Toronto, and therefore more and more families continue to struggle.

When I asked the question of the government, I received a glib, meaningless, puerile response from the Minister of State for Finance. The citizens of Scarborough Southwest, Torontonians and indeed all Canadians deserve much more respect from the member for Macleod and indeed from any member of cabinet in the Canadian government. This would include the parliamentary secretary actually paying attention to a question when it is being posed to her, which she failed to do last night.

We need the member for Macleod and the whole Conservative government to take the needs of Canadian families seriously. The Conservative government has no jobs plan. Canada is losing quality jobs under the Conservatives. Since the Conservatives took office, we have lost over 400,000 good manufacturing jobs. Since September alone, we have lost 60,000 more full-time jobs.

Unemployment now stands at 1.4 million Canadians and three-quarters of the new jobs created since May 2008 have been part-time. Now with the cuts coming as a result of the recent federal budget, 102,000 more may be added to the ranks of the unemployed.

This is shameful, and the government should indeed be ashamed. Yet the Conservatives are sticking with their failed approach of blind, unconditional tax cuts for profitable corporations. They are not creating jobs. Too many multinational companies are taking their tax breaks and then turning around and shipping good jobs overseas, as the member for London—Fanshawe was mentioning with Caterpillar in London as it closed the 450 job Electro-Motive plant.

New Democrats have a practical, affordable plan to create good, full-time jobs, offering targeted tax credits for new hires, implementing investments to help businesses that create jobs, investing in job-creating infrastructure and ensuring foreign investment keeps good jobs here in Canada.

Adjournment Proceedings

The job situation is getting worse under the Conservatives, not better. Their policies have failed Canadian workers and failed to create Canadian jobs. Now, the Conservatives have introduced a budget which will do nothing to create jobs but, according to journalist, Don Martin has everything but the kitchen sink in it. Believe me, we have looked at it, and we found the kitchen sink in Bill C-38.

Frankly, the bill is just an end run around accountability and transparency from the very Conservative government that made commitments to govern better than the Liberals and to be accountable to Canadians.

• (1845)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, I did receive the question for this evening's debate and response. Yesterday, as the member opposite may recognize, the question was surprisingly almost exactly the same as the question this evening that was presented to us.

Surprisingly, I am sure very surprisingly for the member opposite, our position has actually not changed since yesterday evening. I ask the member opposite to refer to that answer. He can have the opportunity to do that, and that will be my comment.

Mr. Dan Harris: Madam Speaker, it would seem that the member wants to refer to an answer that she gave last night when she was not even paying attention while the question was being posed. She was a little busy chatting with a colleague.

The question was about jobs, and the parliamentary secretary got up and gave an answer about early childhood education. Then tonight she says to refer back to that answer.

Has she absolutely no respect for Canadians or for Parliament? I would like the hon. member to give a real answer.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, the question that was posed, I know, was provided to you, and it was the same yesterday evening as it is this evening.

I will answer that question as I did yesterday, but my answer is quite simple. I ask the member opposite to please refer to the answer I provided yesterday in response to his question that he provided to the House.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I still have not received a response to the question I asked on February 15 about the F-35s and the government's plan B. Of course, the debate has gone on in the House, but there are still many contradictions that have not been explained.

When we ask about these contradictions, we ask simple questions such as "Why does the government not have a plan B?" and "When will we get these aircraft?". I would like to point out, from the outset, that the government has said that we need to replace our old fleet of CF-18s by 2020. This is something we all agree on.

According to the government, the fleet will be too old to be in acceptable condition to fly after 2020 and the cost of maintaining the

CF-18s so that they could continue to be used would be astronomical. The government has also assured us that the Canadian fleet of F-35s will be ready to replace the CF-18s in 2020 so that our air force will not be left without fighter jets.

One of the main criteria for a new fleet of aircraft was that the jet selected was to be operational in 2020, according to what was said. Since 2010, the government has maintained that a fleet of F-35 jets would be operational in 2020. However, there have been delays in the past two years and the government has not changed the delivery dates. On April 11, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence stated that a contract would not be signed before 2017-18.

It seems to me that the timeline for delivery of the aircraft will be a little tight if it is expected that the contract will only be signed in 2017-18 for 2020 delivery of a fleet of 65 jets that will be operational and tailored to the Canadian Forces. Furthermore, yesterday, in committee of the whole, my colleague asked if the government thought it would keep the CF-18 jets in service until 2025. The Associate Minister of National Defence responded as follows:

Madam Chair, again, contingency plans are being developed. We are in a position of having to make some of the decisions once other answers are forthcoming. There is work being done.

My first series of questions is as follows: When does the government plan to purchase these fighter jets? When will they receive them? When will our armed forces be able to pilot an operational fleet of new fighter jets? When will the CF-18s be retired?

Another question remains unanswered: how many F-35s will they buy and for how much? For months, the government has repeated that a \$9 billion envelope will be allocated to the procurement of 65 F-35s. Now they have changed their tune a little. They are talking only about the \$9 billion that has been frozen. We heard the government say that studies had established that our air force needed 65 planes.

Yesterday, however, when my colleague asked whether the government could confirm that it would be procuring 65 F-35s, the minister said that we clearly needed fighter jets.

The government is no longer giving us any figures. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that 80 was probably a reasonable number of fighter jets.

I would like to know how many fighter jets the government wants to buy, how much it will cost, whether the \$9 billion envelope remains unchanged, and how many planes we will be able to buy with that envelope. Could the government provide some clearer answers with regard to these figures?

The other thing we do not know is where this money is going. This program does not respect the traditional standard of equivalent economic domestic spinoffs. When we sign military contracts, we usually ask for that clause. This contract does not include this clause, which means that the guarantees are hypothetical. I would like to know what the government's plan is for that.

Adjournment Proceedings

What is the government going to do to guarantee economic spinoffs for Canadian businesses and Canadian workers if they are not formally negotiated in the contract itself? I would also like to know if it has begun any negotiations with Lockheed Martin to demand industrial offsets.

What can Canadian workers expect?

•(1850)

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House before you and my hon. colleague, whose interest in this very important matter regarding the future of the Canadian Forces, and the Royal Canadian Air Force in particular, never seems to wane.

Her questions are entirely relevant and are questions that we must consider very carefully, given the importance of this issue. I appreciate having the opportunity to respond.

When will we have the planes to replace the CF-18s? It is impossible to know, and I am giving a very honest answer here today in the House. Why? Because we are nowhere near the point of procuring any planes to replace the CF-18s and because we have a plan—as we have mentioned repeatedly in this House—that will govern our actions over the months and years to come, before any spending of any kind takes place to replace the CF-18s.

We are being very careful in this matter. We are very aware of the complexity of the matter. I repeat, we are fully aware of the complexity of developing a new high-tech aircraft, with eight other partners, because the development is not yet complete.

We have made a lot of progress so far, but we are not there yet. As all members of the House are well aware, no decisions have been made about what will replace the CF-18s. That is why, in response to the Auditor General's spring report, we launched a better, broader framework to guide our decision-making process with respect to replacing the CF-18s.

The hon. member probably already knows all seven points by heart, but there are really three key elements among them. First, no decision will be made without presenting all of the costs to Parliament, and that includes not just estimated costs, but full life-cycle costs for the aircraft. Those costs will have to be tabled in the House and verified by an independent authority commissioned by the Treasury Board. That is part of our commitment and our plan, and we will keep that promise.

Second, we will continue to compare Canada's options. Of course, we are participating in developing the F-35. Our involvement started 15 years ago in 1997, when the member was very young and perhaps still a member of the Canadian Forces, or maybe even before she embarked on her military career.

Fifteen years is a long time. We have a certain amount of experience and a certain amount of expertise. However, that does not mean, even today, that the F-35 is definitely Canada's choice. We have to follow the steps set out in our plan before making such a decision. And we are going to compare the F-35 with the other options.

Third, it is very important to ensure that our procurement exercise complies with Canada's military production laws. There is a law in this regard. The Minister of Public Works is responsible for it. These three things are very important.

•(1855)

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, if I understand correctly, the Conservatives were not telling us the truth before. They were giving us information that may not have been verified. Now, at least, we may have made some progress, since they are telling us the truth. However, the truth is that we still do not have an answer. So, I am not sure if this can really be considered progress or not.

I would like to come back to one last question: which plane?

In July 2010, the Conservatives announced that Canada would be purchasing 65 F-35s and, until the beginning of this year, they were assuring us that only the F-35 could meet our operational requirements.

We have learned that, for now, the F-35 does not meet all those requirements, particularly, in terms of the 360-degree helmet display. What is more, we do not know whether these planes will ever be able to meet those requirements.

Since that time, the Conservatives have changed their tune. The ministers are saying that a definite choice has not been made. But it is 2012. If the government wants to have an operational fleet in 2020, I hope that it will examine the possibilities very carefully.

I would therefore like to know whether the government has definitely decided against the F-35 and whether it is aware that the only way to—

The Deputy Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Madam Speaker, we have not eliminated any of our options. We have not decided against the F-35 development project. That is a different program from the one to replace the CF-18s.

However, we do know the operational costs of the CF-18s. We have spoken about them at length in committee and in this place. We will have to cost out the options for replacing the CF-18s. How many aircraft will we purchase? We shall see. We have a budget and we will work within it.

However, we must really prove, show and verify the cost before giving a definitive answer.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is not true that the benefits for the Canadian industry are hypothetical. I know that is what the Leader of the Opposition believes; he denied that the F-35 purchase would create jobs in Montreal and other regions in Canada. These jobs are already real. We have invested more than \$300 million—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a debate that will have to be continued at another time.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:00 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, May 10, 2012

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lukiwski	7839
Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Allison	7839
Jobs, Growth and Long Term Prosperity Act	
Ms. Nash	7839
Mr. Caron	7839
Petitions	
Right to Self-Defence	
Mr. Breitreuz	7841
Asbestos	
Mr. Martin	7841
Child Care	
Mr. Karygiannis	7841
Food Safety	
Mr. Karygiannis	7841
Abortion	
Mr. Albrecht	7841
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Albrecht	7841
The Environment	
Mr. Donnelly	7841
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Allison	7841
Abortion	
Mr. Allison	7842
Pensions	
Mr. Scott	7842
Asbestos	
Mr. Valeriotte	7842
Abortion	
Mr. Sorenson	7842
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Sorenson	7842
Abortion	
Mr. Warawa	7842
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Warawa	7842
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	
Ms. May	7842
The Environment	
Ms. May	7842
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	7842
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lukiwski	7843

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity Act	
Bill C-38. Second reading	7844
Mr. Woodworth	7844
Mr. Martin	7845
Mr. Hsu	7845
Mr. Lemieux	7846
Mrs. Hughes	7846
Ms. Murray	7847
Ms. May	7848
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7848
Mr. Brown (Barrie)	7848
Ms. Nash	7850
Mr. Eyking	7850
Mr. Saxton	7851
Ms. Quach	7852
Ms. May	7852
Mrs. Day	7852
Ms. Foote	7853
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7854
Mr. Martin	7854
Ms. Bateman	7855
Mrs. Day	7856
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7856
Mr. Wilks	7857
Ms. Quach	7858
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7858
Mrs. Yelich	7858
Mr. Chisholm	7859
Ms. Raynault	7859
Mr. LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	7860
Ms. Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	7860
Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	7861
Mr. Weston (Saint John)	7861
Mr. Donnelly	7862
Mr. LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	7862
Mr. Donnelly	7863
Mrs. Yelich	7864
Mr. Rousseau	7864
Mr. Lake	7865
Mrs. Day	7866
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7866
Ms. Rempel	7866
Mr. Martin	7866
Mr. Hawn	7868
Ms. Quach	7868
Mr. Hawn	7869
Ms. Raynault	7870
Ms. Rempel	7871
Mr. Hsu	7871
Mr. Chisholm	7871
Ms. Sgro	7871

Mr. Martin	7873
Mrs. Yelich	7873
Mr. Valeriote	7873
Mr. Benoit	7874

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Motherhood

Ms. Adams	7875
-----------------	------

Nursing

Mr. Kellway	7875
-------------------	------

Air Service Operations

Mr. Tweed	7875
-----------------	------

Hunger Awareness Week

Ms. Murray	7876
------------------	------

Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival

Mr. Tilson	7876
------------------	------

Hunger Awareness Week

Ms. Quach	7876
-----------------	------

Suicide Prevention

Mr. Albrecht	7876
--------------------	------

Arts and Culture

Mr. Saxton	7877
------------------	------

Mental Health Week

Ms. Perreault	7877
---------------------	------

New Democratic Party of Canada

Mr. Wilks	7877
-----------------	------

Search and Rescue

Mr. Cleary	7877
------------------	------

International Trade

Mr. Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	7878
--	------

Co-operatives

Mr. Eyking	7878
------------------	------

Television Broadcasting

Mrs. Grewal	7878
-------------------	------

French Language

Mr. Dionne Labelle	7878
--------------------------	------

New Democratic Party of Canada

Mr. Leef	7878
----------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Budget

Mr. Mulcair	7879
Mr. Harper	7879

Pensions

Mr. Mulcair	7879
Mr. Harper	7879

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Mr. Mulcair	7879
Mr. Harper	7879

Public Safety

Mr. Mulcair	7879
Mr. Harper	7879

Search and Rescue

Mr. Mulcair	7879
Mr. Harper	7880
Mr. Rae	7880
Mr. Ashfield	7880

The Environment

Mr. Rae	7880
Mr. Harper	7880
Mr. Rae	7880
Mr. Harper	7880

Government Spending

Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	7880
Mr. Clement	7880
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	7880
Mr. Clement	7881

Parliamentary Budget Office

Mr. Ravignat	7881
Mr. Clement	7881
Mr. Ravignat	7881
Mr. Clement	7881

Government Appointments

Ms. Péclet	7881
Mr. Van Loan	7881
Mr. Angus	7881
Mr. Van Loan	7881
Mr. Angus	7882
Mr. Van Loan	7882

Ethics

Mr. Boulerice	7882
Mr. Oliver	7882
Mr. Boulerice	7882
Mr. Poilievre	7882

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Garneau	7882
Mr. Paradis	7882
Mr. Garneau	7883
Mr. Paradis	7883

Search and Rescue

Mr. Simms	7883
Mr. Ashfield	7883

Radio-Canada International

Mr. Nantel	7883
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7883

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr. Cash	7883
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7883

Search and Rescue

Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	7884
Mr. Ashfield	7884
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	7884

Mr. Ashfield	7884
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Galipeau	7884
Mr. Harper	7884
Housing	
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7884
Ms. Finley	7884
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	7884
Ms. Finley	7885
Employment Insurance	
Mrs. Day	7885
Ms. Finley	7885
Ms. Charlton	7885
Ms. Finley	7885
Public Safety	
Ms. Murray	7885
Ms. Hoepfner	7885
The Environment	
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7885
Mr. Kent	7885
RCMP	
Mr. Garrison	7886
Ms. Hoepfner	7886
Ms. Doré Lefebvre	7886
Ms. Hoepfner	7886
International Trade	
Mr. Merrifield	7886
Mr. Fast	7886
Agriculture	
Mr. Valeriote	7886
Mr. Ritz	7886
Canada-U.S. Relations	
Mr. Rousseau	7887
Mr. Baird	7887
The Budget	
Mr. Chisu	7887
Mr. Menzies	7887
Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Ashton	7887
Mr. Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	7887
National Defence	
Mr. Fortin	7887
Mr. MacKay	7887
Business of the House	
Mr. Cullen	7888
Mr. Van Loan	7888
Points of Order	
Committee of the Whole	
Mr. MacKay	7888
Statements by Members	
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	7888

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity Act

Bill C-38. Second reading	7889
Mr. Breitzkreuz	7889
Mr. Benoit	7889
Mr. Lamoureux	7889
Mr. Kellway	7889
Mr. Sandhu	7890
Mr. Cuzner	7891
Mr. Bezan	7891
Ms. Ashton	7893
Mr. Simms	7893
Mr. Tweed	7893
Mr. Scott	7894
Mr. Nantel	7895
Mr. Regan	7895
Ms. Ashton	7896
Mr. McColeman	7896
Mr. Jacob	7897
Mr. Goodyear	7897
Ms. Michaud	7898
Mr. Dionne Labelle	7899
Mr. Boughen	7900
Mr. Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	7900
Mr. MacKenzie	7900
Mr. Jacob	7902
Mr. Albrecht	7902
Mr. Simms	7902
Mr. Regan	7902
Mr. Simms	7904
Mr. Nantel	7904
Mr. Braid	7904
Mr. Simms	7905
Mr. Albrecht	7906
Ms. Leitch	7906
Mr. Regan	7908
Mr. Simms	7908
Mr. Carrie	7908
Mr. Goodyear	7909

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Old Age Security

Motion	7909
Mr. Regan	7909
Mr. Komarnicki	7910
Mr. Comartin	7911
Mr. Cuzner	7913
Mr. Butt	7914
Ms. Ashton	7915
Mr. Casey	7916
Division on Motion deferred	7917

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Employment Insurance

Ms. Mathysen	7917
Ms. Leitch	7917

Employment

Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest).....	7918
Ms. Leitch.....	7919

National Defence

Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue).....	7919
Mr. Alexander.....	7920

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>