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Monday, November 21, 2011

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 21, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved that Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, and my entire party from coast to coast to coast for their support during the six years that I have been trying to get the bill passed. This is the sixth year that Bill C-215, in its many forms, has come to light.

First I would like to thank Roger Boutin, Mel Pittman and John Labelle from Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, for bringing this matter to my attention over six years ago and helping me with this legislation.

When individuals in the military or RCMP retire at age 65, the amount of money they receive from the Canada pension plan is deducted from their superannuation. Also, if they become disabled in their forties or fifties, for example, whatever amount they get from CPP disability benefits is deducted from their superannuation. That is wrong.

Most people do not know that all federal and provincial public servants who receive an annuity from their government, from the Canada pension plan, get that deducted from their superannuation when they retire at age 65, except for senators, judges and your friendly members of Parliament.

In 1965-66, when the scheme came into place, nobody in the military or the RCMP was advised of this. They had no options, yet somehow this great scheme avoided members of Parliament, senators and judges. As I have asked repeatedly over six years, if it is such a great deal for members of the armed forces and the RCMP, why did members of Parliament not get into it? It is quite

obvious that somebody was looking out for our personal interests at that time.

In 1966, people paid a certain amount into one pension plan. When the Canada pension plan came into effect in 1966, the system was blended. Members of Parliament have what is called a stacked system. However, most people have a blended system which is divided into superannuation and CPP. The argument is that they did not pay enough into both to merit both when they retire.

If indeed that is the case, then why is it that at age 60 a person can fully retire, receive his or her superannuation and then apply for the Canada pension plan? He or she would get a reduced amount in CPP, but everybody does.

For example, a person receives \$3,000 in superannuation. If he or she applied for the Canada pension plan at age 60, then instead of, say, \$800, he or she would get \$600. He or she would still get both, the superannuation and the Canada pension plan, until age 65.

Here is what happens for those in the military or the RCMP.

The government sends the dreaded letter, and anyone in the military or the RCMP at retirement age knows about this letter. It is from their friendly government officials: "Congratulations on reaching age 65. If you were collecting CPP at this time, you would have received this amount of money." The letter informs them, for example, that they will keep the \$500 or \$600 in CPP that they presently receive, but the government is going to deduct more from their superannuation. They will actually lose money, but the government tells them not to worry because the old age security will kick in and should offset the loss of their Canada pension plan clawback.

I remind everyone that old age security, OAS, has nothing to do with defined plans. It comes from general revenues. Therefore, to say that something else builds that up is simply misleading. It is simply wrong.

Private Members' Business

For example, and this is true story, a gentleman in my riding who had 32 years of service with the RCMP had a stroke at the Halifax airport and was rushed to the hospital. When he woke up in the morning the doctor told him that he had good news and bad news for him. The good news was that he was going to survive his stroke. The bad news was that he had cancer. He was sent to London, Ontario for treatment. While he was there, he was told by his senior officials that, after 32 years of service with the RCMP, he would never work again. Then he was told to apply for CPP disability benefits because he was unable to work.

• (1110)

He said, "Okay, my pension is around \$3,000 from the RCMP." He thought that if he applied, he might get about \$800 in Canada pension plan disability benefits. He calculated that if he got both amounts, and if he survived his health problems, that he would be okay with \$3,800 a month. He was told, "Oh, Jim, we are so sorry, but that is not how the game is played." He would get the \$800 in Canada pension plan disability benefits, but it would be deducted dollar for dollar from his superannuation. He said, "Why am I applying for CPP disability benefits?"

That is the \$64,000 question. Why should he have to go through all these hoops, all the trials and tribulations and do all that paperwork when it is going to be deducted from his superannuation, not at 65 but when he is 52? What the government did not tell him is that when he turns 65, the Canada pension plan disability benefits will stop for him. Then he will go on a reduced CPP, which is clawed back from the superannuation.

If he dies, his wife will get 50% of the clawed back pension. That is the big thanks he gets for 32 years of loyal service to his country as an RCMP officer. This also applies to military personnel. It also applies to all federal and provincial public servants.

The reason we focus on members of the RCMP and the military is that they do not have unions or associations that could argue this at the bargaining table. In fact, PSAC and others have gently refused to support this legislation. I believe I know why. They are waiting to see if we are successful. I believe that they themselves may wish to argue this issue at a future round of bargaining.

The heroes of our country, the RCMP and military, should not have to suffer the financial indignation of clawbacks at age 65 or when they are disabled.

I would like to deal with a couple of myths. There are roughly 740,00 to 750,000 retired military and RCMP officials, along with their spouses.

This bill only affects about 96,000 of them. They would have had to have served over 20 years in order to get superannuation. Now, for the modern military personnel, it is 25 years. If they served five years in the military, this bill does not apply to them. Everybody knows that.

What I have also heard from some people is that the bill is retroactive. It is not. It will only come into force when it becomes law. Everybody is fully aware of this.

On the cost, we heard the former parliamentary secretary to the minister of defence once say in a committee that the bill would cost

about \$100 million. He is about right. To run this program every year is another \$100 million. People who serve for over 20 years in the military or the RCMP can get superannuation.

However, one thing they pay into, which by the way members of Parliament do not pay into, is employment insurance which, if they retire from the military, they cannot collect. We, as members of Parliament, do not pay into EI because we cannot collect it.

Can we tell the average person serving their country in an RCMP uniform or a military uniform the fairness of that little scheme? It is simply wrong.

And \$58 million of the superannuation could be easily transferred by cancelling the EI deduction and moving it over to superannuation. That is a simple deduction right there.

Also if they received more CPP money at age 65 or if they were disabled, they would receive less old age security at age 65. This would be another savings to the government.

The average person would get about \$200 extra a month. What would a disabled hero of our country, someone who is 65 years old, do with an additional \$200 a month? Well, that person might buy prescription drugs. He or she might buy heating oil, or take the granddaughter and grandson out for lunch. That money would be put right back into the economy, right back into the tax system.

The bill itself, when we look at the overall picture, is fairly revenue neutral. The most important aspect of this is these people are the heroes of our country, and they require financial dignity when they retire.

Why is it that we as members of Parliament, the leaders of this country, do not suffer this indignation, but they do? It is simply wrong. I have case after case of individuals showing me the letter, showing me how much they made at age 64, for 364 days, and then on their 65th birthday how much they are making. An awful lot of them lose money. It is tough enough in our economy now without them losing more of their income.

• (1115)

Why would we do this to them? Why did they not have any say back in 1965-66 when this was done behind closed doors? In the 1960s and 1970s, most of them were not advised this was happening. Although it was in the book they received, it was written in language that was difficult to read. I have to admit the government is correct, everyone leaving the military now is fully aware of what will happen to them if they become disabled or if their benefits are clawed back. However, it is simply wrong.

Private Members' Business

Here is the case of Roddie O'Handley, from Nova Scotia, a disabled gentleman from the RCMP. He was supposed to receive 75% of his pay from the RCMP, which he got. Great-West Life, the insurance company, was supposed to cover him for two years of long-term disability. He received that. After two years, Great-West Life said it would not pay him any longer, that he would have to apply for Canada pension plan disability benefits. He did that, and he received benefits. However, all the money he got from CPP, backdated for two years, had to be paid back to Great-West Life. This happens to everyone. He had to pay it all back. Then, of course, CPP was deducted from his RCMP superannuation. Therefore, he did not gain any money; he lost it.

He asked, "If I'm supposed to receive x number of dollars from the RCMP for my disability on my superannuation, why is it that they can deduct it from my superannuation?" He should not be losing money for being disabled. Those additional funds are required in order to help him move forward.

There are probably many veterans watching us debate this on the great channel, CPAC, right now. I encourage members of Parliament to talk to the Royal Canadian Legion, to the ANAVETS and to the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. They are fully supportive of this initiative.

At the end of the day, when the heroes of our country become disabled, or when they retire at age 65, they should not suffer receiving the dreaded letter.

We have already outlined in previous Parliaments, in committee, and everywhere else how this can be paid for. At the end of the day, when these men and women were on the front lines in the country and around the world, no one asked them how much money they made. When they had to pick up a bunch of kids off a vehicle that rolled down a ditch and all four of them died, no one asked them how much money they made. On the front lines in Afghanistan, or in World War II, or wherever they may have been, no one asked them that. Now we are asking them how much money they make and we are going to deduct it from them.

This is not to be confused with the SISIP clawback. That is something completely different. This is the annuity clawback, the pension benefit reduction at age 65 or when disabled.

Most of my colleagues on both sides of the House know that the disability part is a real sore thumb for them, and they want to fix it. We can fix that quite easily if we want to, and we can work on the other aspect later if they like.

The reality is, people who serve our country deserve no less. They deserve to be treated with the greatest of respect. As I have heard many times, they deserve to be treated with financial dignity when they retire. They serve our country. They allow us to have a good night's sleep. They look after our families. They really are the best of Canada. As Rick Mercer once said, "If you're going to take the very best of Canada and send them to hell on earth, you might as well give them the gold card when they're there".

As parliamentarians, we have the ultimate responsibility for the needs of these men and women all the way up to and including the headstone. They do not deserve to have those pensions clawed back.

It is simply wrong and unfair. It is not illegal, but it is immoral and wrong and it needs to change.

God bless all those who have served our country in the military and the RCMP, and their families. Lest we forget.

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could circulate all his actuarial tables and numbers to all members of the House to help us understand where he is getting his numbers from. It would be most helpful.

This is a type of a bridge payment. My mother, who is a librarian, has received a bridge payment. She understands it is not a clawback when it ends, it was a special payment for a period of time. The member said before, in previous committee testimony when his former bill was up for debate, that it is not retroactive. Who would this impact? Would this impact members of the armed forces and RCMP who have previously served over 20 years and are retiring? Would it only impact people who are entering the RCMP and armed forces today, or is there some line in between? The retroactivity and a full explanation of how this legislation would impact that would be appreciated.

● (1120)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, those figures and papers were submitted to committees previously, but I will present them to the member again.

The retroactivity would only apply to members of the military and RCMP who have served over 20 years and are retired. It would only apply to them. They have to have served over 20 years in order to receive superannuation. For example, if someone serves 10 years or 18 years, the bill would not apply. Someone who is 74 years old and is subject to a clawback, that clawback would cease the minute this bill became law. For someone who will become 65 years old in a couple of years, there would be no clawback because it would stop right then and there. For someone who is disabled, the clawback would immediately stop right then and there.

It would only apply to roughly 96,000 people who are currently retired or disabled.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his long-standing commitment to ensuring that the veterans who do return home are treated with the respect they deserve and are able to live the lives they should be able to live.

I remember very well when the New Democratic Party brought the veterans first charter into the House in 2006. At that time, with the spotlight on the vote, every member on the government side supported the initiative. Yet I am seeing that when it comes time to follow through, they have been dragging their feet, particularly on this issue of the clawback.

We have received unanimous support from the legion. We have received unanimous support from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP. The Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada Association has supported it. The veterans are calling for action. The House has already voted on it. The Conservatives have been on the record as supporting ending the clawback.

Why does the member think the government is continuing to deny the RCMP and the veterans this basic right?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I may have your indulgence for a second to allow my hon. colleague for Timmins—James Bay to hear what the bureaucrats have said about this.

The projected accrued benefit actuarial cost method...was used to determine the current service cost and actuarial liability.

The actuarial liability with respect to participants corresponds to the value, discounted in accordance with the actuarial assumptions, of all future payable benefits accrued as at the valuation date in respect of all previous service at that date. For pensioners and survivors, the actuarial liability corresponds to the value, discounted in accordance with the actuarial assumptions, of future payable benefits.

Is there anyone in the House who understands the words that just came out of my mouth? No, but 96,000 members of the military know exactly what they mean. They see the clawback. They see the deduction. They make less money at age 65 than they did before. That is simply wrong.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise in the House today, as many others on the government side have done before me, to add my voice to the debate on Bill C-215.

We have no dispute with the statement by the member opposite that veterans have served this country with distinction, with courage, with selflessness and that not just this government but every government has a duty to look after them. However, the suggestion that we are taking benefits away, or that the current system somehow has been unfair or lacking in enhancement is simply wrong.

One of the core commitments of this government has been to modernize the Canadian Forces so that our country has the military it needs to deal with the 21st century security environment.

Three years ago we released the Canada first defence strategy. Members are very familiar with it. It is a 20-year framework to revitalize the armed forces based on a long-term predictable funding framework. We are investing in new and renovated infrastructure for men and women in uniform. We are purchasing new equipment for our navy, army and air force. We hear about these procurement exercises in this House every week, almost every day.

We are not just focusing on our efforts to support serving members of the Canadian Forces; we are also making sure that veterans receive the support they deserve because, as the member opposite said, we owe them a great debt. Their service has shaped modern Canada. It has given our country a respected and influential voice in world affairs. It has helped to make Canada one of the safest and most secure countries in the world. For this, we cannot ever fully repay them, but what we can and must do is make sure our veterans' particular needs and those of their families are fulfilled. The government understands this, which is why over the last few years we have undertaken a number of initiatives to stand up for veterans, to enhance support for veterans.

We have increased access to employment insurance for military families. We have funded new community war memorials across the country. Recognition is incredibly important to veterans. We have put into place a veterans bill of rights, the new veterans charter and a veterans ombudsman.

The bill of rights ensures that each and every one of our country's veterans is treated with respect and dignity. The charter provides

veterans and their families with special programs and services to improve their quality of life. We have been very clear before the House and in committee about the investments this entails, some \$189.4 million over the next five years, a \$2 billion investment over the life of the program. The ombudsman, who operates at arm's length from government, plays a key role in raising awareness of the needs and concerns of veterans.

The government has also tackled issues related to veterans health and reintegration into civilian life.

There is now a one-time tax-free ex gratia payment to individuals with an illness related to the use of agent orange at CFB Gagetown, another issue that went unaddressed for too long. We have instituted a program that awards special financial recognition to Canada's atomic veterans.

We have launched the joint personnel support unit, a collaborative venture between National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. Twenty-four joint personnel support units and nine satellite units have been set up across the country to serve veterans, whatever their needs, especially the nearly 40,000 of them who served in Afghanistan and who are reintegrating into civilian life in Canada. They provide help to current and former CF members who want to get back to normal, and they ensure the services offered by National Defence and Veterans Affairs are coordinated and integrated.

A generous pension plan is one more way we are taking care of veterans. The government's contributions to the CFSA constitute around 75% of the total pension a member will receive, while the members' contributions account for around 25% of their pensions.

Part of each contribution goes to the Canadian Forces superannuation plan, or CFSP, while part goes to the CPP. Confusion sometimes results from the fact that benefits from the two plans are combined so that they blend seamlessly in order to meet the particular needs of Canadian Forces veterans. Let me explain to members what this means.

Unlike other Canadians, the vast majority of Canadian Forces members retire by the age of 60, before they become eligible for CPP. The CFSP contains a special provision designed to cover the gap between retirement and eligibility for the CPP.

Private Members' Business

When a member retires, the member immediately begins to receive the pension benefits payable to him or her under the CFSP. These consist of a lifetime benefit and a bridge benefit. The lifetime benefit continues from retirement onward. The bridge benefit, as its name suggests, is a special allowance only provided to veterans during the period between release from the forces and eligibility for CPP at the age of 65.

Once the member's CPP payments kick in, the bridge benefit ends. It ends because it has done what it was meant to do, by bridging the period between retirement and eligibility for CPP. In the vast majority of cases, a veteran's overall pension remains stable as the bridge benefit is fully replaced by the CPP.

● (1125)

Why do veterans not continue to receive the bridge benefit even after becoming eligible for CPP? Continuing the bridge benefit past 65 would ignore the added benefit provided by CPP after that age. It would undermine the intended purpose of the bridge benefit, which is to provide for the period between release and eligibility for CPP. In addition, pension plan contributions are currently based on the assumption that the bridge allowance will end at age 65 when CPP typically begins. This is what we can afford. It is fair. It is what the circumstances of service in the Canadian Forces require for us to do right by veterans.

The amount contributed by a Canadian Forces member and the government would have to rise significantly during a member's career in order for his or her bridge benefit to continue past the age of 65. This is a point that has not been fully reflected in the member opposite's comments. In return, Canadian taxpayers support veterans pensions to ensure that they enjoy a fair, stable and predictable retirement income throughout their lives.

The government believes this support for veterans is just and fair, but we also have a duty to be fair to taxpayers. Those who wish to see the bridge benefit extended beyond age 65 should remember that the money must come from somewhere: either member contributions would rise significantly, or taxpayers would supplement what is already a very fair and equitable pension practice.

The government stands behind serving retired members of the military. We are committed to making these investments. We have established new programs to support veterans. We want veterans to have a stable, predictable and equitable pension, but we are also committed to responsible stewardship of public funds. Bill C-215 would put a greater financial strain on serving members. It would increase their contributions and would require taxpayers to fund further the already generous pension benefit package enjoyed by Canada's veterans.

Our actuarial calculation is that the financial implications of the member opposite's bill would be a further \$8.3 billion investment. This is not something that is provided for in our fiscal framework. It is not something to which the member opposite has spoken. It is not the right way forward.

Let me simply remind the House that this bill is not being proposed by the member opposite in a vacuum. It comes in the context of a mission in Libya that has just ended for Canada. It comes in the context of unprecedented investments in procurement, a

veterans charter, provisions for which have been reflected in our budgets, one of which is scheduled for passage at third reading today.

I have some questions for the member opposite. Why stand in the House and raise false hopes on the part of veterans on this issue, when there is a fair, equitable, enhanced practice in delivering reliable pensions for Canadian Forces members? Why does he not support the real-life investments in equipment, training and human resources that the Canadian Forces require today, that this government has brought forward and that are the lifeblood of a successful army, Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy?

Why is the member standing for the sixth time to bring this bill forward while continuing to oppose almost all aspects of the agenda relating to the Canadian Forces, its equipment, its people, its procurement, indeed its veterans, when this is an agenda that Canada and Canadians want? The agenda the member opposite has proposed is unaffordable and unfair.

● (1130)

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act.

When members of the RCMP and military along with federal civil servants receive a Canada disability pension, it is deducted dollar for dollar from the superannuation plan, which leaves many of our heroes, who served Canada, in financial hardship when they become disabled.

For all the people who work hard for us, with these clawbacks, there is an overall loss of income in the hundreds of dollars because the old age pension is far less than the maximum Canada pension.

I would like to give the House some facts I have received from the military and RCMP veterans associations. It states that the money is in the fund to help pay for these costs:

On January 1, 1966 the Canadian Forces employee's contribution was reduced from 9.3% to 7.5% of their gross rate of pay. Hence, a "So called" reduced Annuity contribution to our CFSA has accumulated a C.F. Military Annuity surplus funds of almost 20 billion dollars! It clearly indicates that contributions to the CFSA continue to be sufficient to pay for our benefits without a reduction clause.

The associations went on to say:

Today a Chief Warrant Officer with 38 years of service draws an Annuity smaller than that of a serving Private's income.

Veterans that retired in the year 1970-80 today receive an average annual Annuity of \$15,000. The annual average payment to annuitants was \$21,684 for the year ending March 2009.

Private Members' Business

The 2009 annual pension report indicated that there were 86,406 Military annuitants. 39,192 were over the age of 65. The total annual cost of the CF Vets annuity benefits for the year 2009 was \$2.391 billion. The CF pension plan assets recorded for 31 March 2009 was 6.94 billion. More than sufficient funds to terminate the CPP benefit reduction program.

The Government of Canada enacted the Canada Pension Plan in 1965 and the plan came into force on January 1, 1966. Its intention was to provide another source for an income security program supplementing the old age security pension plan. Military/RCMP Veterans maintain that in 1966 the Government of Canada deliberately or otherwise imposed on them a gross injustice and unfairness by merging rather than stacking their Annuity and CPP contributions and benefits, and by not providing them with any other options.

This worthwhile initiative continues to grow! Over 112,500 Veterans have pronounced their support. To date 121 former Generals and Colonels have signed our Veterans petition. It includes the signatures of 54 former Generals and RCMP Superintendents.

The Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, The Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada, and the Air Force Association of Canada have adopted resolutions at their Annual General meetings in 2006 in full support of our Annuity initiative. We have also received support regarding our mission from numerous other Military Associations.

The Yukon and the Nova Scotia Provincial standing Committee on Veterans Affairs unanimously passed motions in support of the military/RCMP Veterans Annuity issue in 2011.

What I recently read is a transcript from the military and veterans associations. The point is that the money is there so it should not be clawed back.

• (1135)

I have received some other correspondence over the last couple of days. I want to quote, for this House, a correspondence that was in *The Ottawa Citizen* blog yesterday. It is from Robin Brentnall from Gambo, Newfoundland. In his letter to the Prime Minister he states, in part:

Last year, your Party voted against Bill C-201, "An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity)".

Your government keeps repeating that they "Support Our Troops and Veterans", yet you vote against a Bill that will assist all Soldiers, Police, and Veterans with ceasing the deduction from annuity, a deduction that was never asked for nor voted on. The Military and RCMP don't have a Union [as a member stated previously in the House] nor the ability to vote on whether they want a deduction or not.

This letter goes on to state:

By following the same "slap in the face" that Soldiers, RCMP, and Veterans received last year from you and your Party, you will confirm to Canada that you DON'T Support Our Troops and Veterans, thereby affirming that you do not respect what they have done to protect this country from those who would use their Dictatorships to rule with an iron fist.

It then continues:

Mr. Prime Minister, you can fix this wrong. Do not use our "fragile" economy to refute this Bill. If our economy is so "fragile", why would your government continue on with it's spending on expensive jets, jails, and Corporate Tax Cuts? Why continue to send our troops into battle when we can't afford it? Why continue to buy hockey tickets for your RCMP guards with taxpayers' funds so that you can watch a hockey game, yet deny the same RCMP guards the deduction that they need that you voted against last year? Why allow your Ministers to order Air Force pilots at taxpayer expense to get to the airport on time but deny those same pilots the deduction that you voted against last year?

I will continue reading this letter but it states how hypocritical the government and the Prime Minister are. It goes on to say:

We served this country with pride, respect, and honour. The least your party can do is have the dignity to fix this deduction by voting "Yes" [on this bill] and truly supporting our troops, police, and veterans. To do anything less will confirm what is already thought: The Conservative Party of Canada does not Support Our Troops.

I have another letter here from Michael Gregory from Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. The letter is an email sent to the Minister of National Defence. I will read some parts of this correspondence that pertain to Bill C-215. He states, in part:

On Monday, 21 November at 11 a.m. Bill C-215 will be debated in the House of Commons. This bill will eliminate the shameful and unfair claw back of retired Canadian Forces and RCMP service pensions.

I recently spoke with a retired RCMP veteran who spent 40 years in the RCMP. He told me he received his first old age pension cheque in August and because of the claw back his pension cheque went up \$26. It is my understanding that the federal politicians pensions are not subject to the same humiliation [as was quoted earlier today].

I read your newsletter for November and it is very touching. The following is a quote from that newsletter.

At the end of this letter to the Minister of National Defence, he writes:

"On Remembrance Day, when Canadians from all corners of this great country join together in silence, may we fill those empty moments with the thoughts of gratitude and compassion for the men and women, and their families, who have given so very much for the causes of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Canadians are eternally grateful for the sacrifices of those who serve to protect us".

These quotes were from Michael Gregory and Robin Brentnall.

• (1140)

Cape Breton is one of the highest areas of recruitment for military and police services across this country. I am an honorary Cape Breton Highlander and I can appreciate the sacrifices of our men and women who maintain our peace. This is also true for police officers in our region.

When Bill C-215 comes up for a vote, I would ask all members of Parliament to vote in favour of it. They owe this to the brave men and women who serve our country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-215, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity).

This bill is very important to my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore. For over six years now, he has been working, with the support of hundreds of thousands of army and RCMP veterans from across the country, to ensure that the Government of Canada provides compensation for the reduction in pension benefits that applies to our veterans and members of the RCMP. My colleague told me that over the years he has met with veterans and former RCMP members who have spoken about a persistent problem: their pension is reduced at the age of 65 and the Canada pension disability is reduced.

Private Members' Business

To reiterate what my colleague already explained in more detail, it all started in 1965-66, when the Canada pension plan was created. The government proposed what it called a blended plan, because at the time, people had contributed to a retirement pension. When the Canada pension plan was created, the government said that its purpose was not to increase contributions for men and women in the armed forces or for members of the federal and provincial public service. The government therefore blended the program and determined how many people had to contribute to the Canada pension plan and a retirement pension. However, this was done without the consent of the men and women of our armed forces and the RCMP, and without their full understanding of the impact of these new measures.

In the past, the government has asked why we are giving priority solely to veterans of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP given that all sectors of the federal public service are affected by this clawback. It is important to recognize that the men and women of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP play a different role from all other members of the country's public service. They have an enormous responsibility. They are ready to risk their lives to defend Canadian ideals and to protect our country. They also ensure that our communities are safe. I have the utmost respect for the incredible work done by our men and women in uniform.

Every federal government worker is affected by this pension clawback, except senators, judges and members of Parliament. The pensions of the men and women of the armed forces and the RCMP are clawed back, but this does not happen to members. It is unacceptable that members, senators and judges are not affected by this rule, but that the men and women who protect us are.

If the government is concerned about how much this measure would cost, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has already broken it down. He has been looking into this issue for over six years. During that time, he has had the opportunity to discuss it with pension experts across the country. This bill presents a very interesting proposal, and we have a plan to minimize additional costs for taxpayers.

As the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has already explained, if veterans are allowed to keep both of their moneys at age 65 or on disability, they would receive less old age security and guaranteed income supplement. Including old age security and the guaranteed income supplement in the argument that they do not lose any money is simply incorrect. Those payments come from general revenues, not from defined benefit pension plans. There is nothing stopping the government from cancelling the employment insurance deduction, taking that amount and putting it in the veterans' superannuation. That would cover the cost of the bill.

A committee review of Bill C-215, as introduced by my colleague, would also be a logical follow-up to the report adopted by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs in June 2010. That committee report was on the living new veterans charter. Here is what the committee report had to say about the uncertainty surrounding veterans' standard of living at the age of 65:

Committee members expressed concern about the lack of information that would enable them to anticipate the situation of a seriously wounded veteran upon reaching the age of 65. The earnings loss benefit stops at the age of 65, and the permanent impairment allowance is only paid under exceptional circumstances. Consequently,

all that is left is the Canada pension plan or the Quebec pension plan and old age security. Since the earnings loss benefit does not grant entitlement to make contributions to pension plans, it is reasonable to expect a significant drop in income for injured veterans who are not receiving a substantial pension from the CF.

● (1145)

My colleagues and I are committed to working very hard on behalf of Canada's veterans, and we will fight not only to protect their pensions but also to invest in their well-being. I know that many members here in the House are willing to do a lot more to enhance the quality of life of those who fought for us.

That is why I would also like to take this opportunity to say that we also need to take care of our veterans' most recent health concerns. The intensity of the combat operations in Afghanistan took its toll on front-line soldiers both in the field and on their return home. The government needs to be proactive when it comes to the mental and physical health of Canadian soldiers and veterans. More support is needed for veterans making the transition to work outside the military, as well as support for caregivers and other family members. Better follow-up with our veterans is also needed after their service, since post-traumatic stress disorder and other operational stress injuries may manifest themselves many years after their period of active service. We are all very concerned about this issue and we will continue to work for Canada's soldiers to ensure that they get the services they need.

To understand veterans' issues, we have to take the time to speak with veterans and their families. I hope the Conservative MPs will at least go visit their local legion branch and meet with veterans. They should talk to them and ask them what they want. They should talk to them about Bill C-215. Then the Conservative MPs might realize that the vast majority of military personnel, RCMP officers and their families want to eliminate the clawback of their pension by the government.

A few years ago now, a number of veterans' groups, including the Royal Canadian Legion and the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, unanimously adopted resolutions in support of the initiative of the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. What is more, 110,000 people from across the country have signed a petition in support of this bill. Among the signatories we have Major-General Lewis MacKenzie and Senator Roméo Dallaire. Nevertheless, this government continues to deny that there is a problem.

On May 5, 2010, the vote on bill C-201—to which Bill C-215 is identical—was successful. Unfortunately, the Speaker of the House at that time subsequently declared that Bill C-201 could not proceed because the Prime Minister had refused to ask for a royal recommendation. However, the Prime Minister has said in the past that, when a bill is passed by a majority of members democratically elected to the House of Commons, this government must honour the request.

Private Members' Business

I would also like to remind this House that in November 2006 the NDP members proudly voted in favour of the “veterans first” motion, a five point motion that would have helped former RCMP officers and their families. Unfortunately, the Conservatives were fiercely opposed to the motion.

Thus, we are giving the government another opportunity to respect not only the democratic process, but in particular, to honour the sacrifices made by veterans of our armed forces and the RCMP. Finally, we should at least study the bill in committee, which would afford us the opportunity to call experts and to have an honest, open and thorough debate about this matter.

I am proud to defend this bill today because it provides an opportunity to address an injustice that has gone on for too long. No veteran or RCMP officer, nor their families, should live in poverty after serving their country. For that reason, we must put an end to this situation today.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the exceptional work of my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore and thank him for it. For years he has listened to veterans, visited them and tried to understand and summarize their proposals. That is what is truly important—to listen and to be grateful. Bill C-215 would be a great way, so soon after Veterans' Week, to permanently support and recognize what veterans do for us every day of our lives.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-215, which, earlier today, I had the honour of seconding.

The bill would end pension clawbacks from our military and RCMP veterans and from those with significant disabilities. The bill in its first incarnation was introduced by the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore in 2005 and he has re-introduced this bill in each of the Parliaments since then. I thank him for doing that. It has been part of the member's work that he has taken on this House as being a champion for veterans in all areas. I thank him and congratulate him for the work that he has done.

The members on the other side like to say that there has been some kind of vacuum on this bill. I just want to point out that its previous incarnation, which came forward for its first debate in March 2009 and then came back in May, was passed by the House of Commons by a vote of, I believe, 139 to 129. It then went off to committee where there was a toing and froing and machinations. It came back to the House without what is called a royal recommendation.

Stripping away all those technicalities, what it means is that the government did not support the bill. It argued that it was necessary to expend public funds and, therefore, the government would not let it proceed further.

I must say at this point that, when the Conservatives took over government from the Liberals, I thought there would be one thing that they would be better on than the Liberals have ever been and I thought that would be on the treatment of the military and veterans. On some fronts, yes, it is true that there have been some improvements, but this case is one, unfortunately, where the veterans

have not received the fair treatment that I thought a Conservative government would have given them.

I will not review the list of things that I see right now that are a crisis for veterans but I do need to mention what is taking place right now with cuts to Veterans Affairs. The government has proposed taking \$223 million away from the Department of Veterans Affairs and says that somehow this will not impact services for veterans. It is very hard to see how that could possibly happen.

On this side of the House, the NDP has called for exempting Veterans Affairs from the government's program review and to maintain the spending on those who served our country so well for so many years.

Now, rather than continue down this road talking about the deficiencies in treatment of veterans, I would like to treat this as an opportunity for all of us to do better by veterans, both military and RCMP. We need to remember that we are talking about those who have served more than 20 years for their country.

This brings us to one of those myths, the myth about the number of people affected by this bill. It is not hundreds of thousands as the other side likes to imply. It is not that total of more than 700,000 retired military and RCMP veterans. It applies only to the 96,000 who retired with over 20 years of service and, of course, to future retirees who will then have 25 years of service.

The bill is not proposed to be retroactive, which leads to the related myth about costs. At one point, even the government admitted that the real cost would be about \$100 million a year. The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has certainly shown us how this could be a revenue neutral process. Chief among those measures to ensure that would be true is to stop charging the premiums for unemployment insurance, which members of the military and the RCMP could never collect, and shift those premiums over to cover the cost of this fair treatment for veterans with such long service.

The second point would be to focus on the net cost to government. Certainly, by increasing pension payments, this would lead to lower costs for governments in many other areas. Both federal and province governments would save money by paying these extra pension benefits for which members of the armed services and the RCMP have already paid through deductions off their paycheques.

When the government says that it would be necessary to raise contributions to cover future costs, I am not convinced. The facts say otherwise. And, when I talk to veterans in my riding, they are not convinced.

Private Members' Business

I will now talk about some of the many veterans from whom I have heard. My friend, Doug Grant, is the manager of the Esquimalt Legion Dockyard Branch No. 172. Doug gave me permission to tell a little bit of his story. He started his story by asking me what I was doing in 1962 when he was serving in the Canadian navy in the Caribbean as part of the Cuban missile crisis that threatened armed confrontation and even nuclear war.

I stopped Mr. Grant to point out that I was in elementary school. However, since that time I have studied Canadian history and I have also been a participant in international human rights missions. I know from the field, both in East Timor and Afghanistan, the great dangers and sacrifices that the members of our military put forward on our behalf.

• (1155)

I know that many veterans in my riding, who continue to write to me and call for an end to this cutback, are not asking for something they do not deserve, they are not asking for something they have not earned and they are not even asking for something for which they have not paid.

I will read one last quote. I will not name this resident because I do not have his permission. He said, "As a resident of Colwood and a current serving member of the Royal Canadian Navy, I ask that you support Bill C-215. ... And now after contributing independently to both my superannuation and CPP for 34 years, I will have both reduced to the equivalent of my military pension upon turning 65. I know the country has huge financial demands but I wish the reigning government would respect their members of the military and RCMP and not use them like a piggy bank and not try to ignore the surplus in their pension funds".

I call on members of all parties in the House, because this is a private member's bill, to vote their conscience and vote in favour of those who have given so much service to our country, more than 20 years in the military and the RCMP, correct this injustice and immediately end this clawback to their pensions.

• (1200)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise on this important issue. I compliment my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, who has established a reputation in the House over many years of working tirelessly on behalf of veterans and RCMP members, the front-line service workers. It is one thing to put people in harm's way, it is one thing to be there when we are sending them off and have the media watching but then they come home and retire. We see all too often that a black hole appears.

I think of a widow in my riding whose husband never asked for his pension. He served his country, damaged his ears and legs serving overseas and came home. When she was too sick to live in her house, she finally asked for her pension and was told that her pension was \$1.30 a month. She could not buy a Tim Hortons coffee for that. Yet, her husband had served with distinction and put his life and health on the line. These are things that happen. It is not to blame one government over the other but to say that when we make a commitment we need to follow through.

The issue of the clawback is essential. In 2006, all members of the House stood to support the New Democratic Party on our first veterans motion that laid out the principles and steps needed to ensure that, whether people served their country in the military or in the RCMP, they would be protected and have the things they needed. This was our covenant to the men and women who put their lives at risk. Every member of the House stood and agreed to those principles in that covenant. However, five years later, we are still having to tell the government that it made a promise to those people, they heard it make that promise and they have not seen it deliver on that promise.

The issue of the clawback is one of the areas where the government has failed veterans. It told them one thing and did not deliver. When it supported the veterans first charter, it said that it would happen. Veterans, the Canadian Legion, the Air Force Association and CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, heard that message and were expecting action but they are not seeing it, which raises many questions.

This is not a huge ask. My colleagues in the Conservative Party act like it will bankrupt Canada if they actually need to live up to their obligations. It is the kind of rhetoric we get all the time from the same people who cannot wait to have their pictures taken with the troops for their press releases. However, when the troops come home and are looking for their pensions, they are told that if the government actually had to lived up to it, it would go bankrupt.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Why don't you vote for them, then?

Mr. Charlie Angus: The defence minister is sitting over there heckling. It shows the level of commitment—

Hon. Peter MacKay: Just once so far.

Mr. Charlie Angus: —that they are heckling over an issue like pensions.

Can the folks back home imagine that that member stood in the House of Commons and supported the veterans first charter and then comes in here and heckles over the fact that the New Democrats are trying to get a fair deal for the people who serve the country? One must ask oneself what it is that drives that man to have his picture taken with the troops. He is always with them. The only person who has had his picture taken more often than that member is George Bush. However, when it comes to standing up on the issues of pensions, clawbacks and ensuring that the widows get a fair deal on their husbands' pensions, we hear the ridicule and attacks. It needs to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business is now expired and the order is dropped to the order of precedence on the order paper. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay will have six minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1205)

*[English]***KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT**

Hon. Peter MacKay (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In order for the hon. parliamentary secretary to split her time, unanimous consent is required. Is there unanimous consent to allow her to split her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the House today at third reading of the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

Before continuing, I thank the House of Commons finance committee for its timely consideration and adoption of this important legislation. It represents an ambitious and positive response by our government to today's economic challenges, an approach that gives Canadians confidence that we are on the right track. Canadians know that our government is focused on what matters, and that is jobs and the economy.

[Translation]

Both the IMF and the OECD agree that Canada will have one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7 in 2011 and 2012. Approximately 600,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009, and over 90% of these new jobs are full-time. Canada has the highest rate of employment growth in all the G7 countries. While the government recognizes that there are still too many Canadians looking for work, Canadians are doing relatively well when the difficulties other countries are having are taken into account. We must continue to implement our low-tax plan to protect the economy and create jobs, and this legislation will help us to meet our objectives.

[English]

Our plan has given Canadians more flexibility to improve their quality of life, even when times are tough. It leaves more money where it belongs, which is in the pockets of taxpayers. That is why the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act would provide targeted tax relief where it would be needed most to help Canadians.

[Translation]

For example, volunteer firefighters play a critical role in our communities and often put themselves at great risk to keep their neighbours safe. Almost 85,000 volunteer firefighters provide their services to protect the lives and property of Canadians living in both urban and rural communities across Canada. This bill recognizes their courageous service by introducing a new 15% tax credit on an amount of \$3,000 for volunteer firefighters who perform at least

200 hours of service for their communities a year. Eligible volunteer firefighters who currently receive honoraria in respect of their duties will be able to choose between the new tax credit and the existing tax exemption of up to \$1,000.

[English]

As a member of the finance committee, I have had the opportunity to hear from a number of witnesses as we have studied the bill. Indeed, John deHooze, fire chief for the city of Ottawa, told the committee:

“Canada's Fire Chiefs have been advocating for tax relief for the Volunteer Fire Service since 2003. The proposal adopted by the Government of Canada in Budget 2011 was the proposal that the CAFC had presented to the federal government...In our view, tax relief for Canada's volunteer firefighters is a key part of the solution to addressing the recruitment and retention challenges facing Canada's Volunteer Fire Service.

We would like to recognize the government for its commitment to pass this initiative into law...This measure will help with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters across the country, which will in turn help protect Canadians and our communities”.

I want to take a moment to thank him for his service. I know he has put many decades into protecting the interests of Canadians.

This goes to show that our government is actively listening to the concerns of Canadians. While the Liberals and the NDP voted against this program, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs have told us that this is a crucial measure to ensure the retention of volunteer firefighters, which will keep Canadian communities safe.

That is not all we have done to support Canadian communities and the families that sustain them. The keeping jobs and economy growing act recognizes the often daunting expenses facing parents trying hard to provide their children with the best possible opportunities for growth and development.

The arts are an important part of a well-rounded education that all too often are out of reach for hard-working families. Recognizing this challenge, the legislation contains a children's art tax credit, which provides parents with up to \$500 per child in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and developmental activities that are not eligible for the existing children's fitness tax credit.

I am especially pleased to tell Canadians and members of the House that the age limit is extended to age 18 for children eligible for the disability tax credit and provides an additional \$500 to acknowledge the additional costs of these programs for children with special needs. This measure builds on our government's strong record of helping parents and their children.

Government Orders

The 2007 children's fitness tax credit, which provides tax relief for fees paid for children's physical fitness activities, has already become a very big hit. Close to 1.4 million children benefit from the children's fitness tax credit each year. I am pretty confident that the children's arts tax credit will have the same positive impact on Canadian families.

So far Canadian parents, who pay hundreds of dollars for music lessons each year across Canada, have expressed their support for this program, not to mention the local small businesses that provide the lessons. It is really helping to give an extra push to encourage the arts.

In the words of Sam Mills, an Edmonton dad, "I would do it anyway but maybe definitely we would do it for the whole year instead of just half the year".

Listen to Regina to what music teacher, Bob Mossing, whose School of Music will really be positively impacted by the credit, has to say, "This is could be the life saver of our program".

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan provides even more support for families. Overall, families have gained from the tax relief our government has provided to all Canadians since 2006. Those tax relief measures include the GST reduction to 5% from 7% and popular personal income tax relief measures like the tax-free savings account.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Through our strong record of tax relief, the average family saves over \$3,000 a year; however, our Conservative government recognizes that some Canadian families need more help.

That is why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes a number of key measures to help Canadian families, in particular, a 15% family caregiver tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

I am proud that caregivers support this measure. The Canadian Home Care Association said, "In introducing tax credits for family caregivers and improving the medical expense tax credit, the federal government is responding to the reality that Canadians want to remain independent at home for as long as possible."

In conclusion, the Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act helps to support Canada's economic recovery. Our government is focusing on the issues that are important to Canadians: job creation and economic growth.

[*English*]

I urge all members to support this vital legislation in order to ensure the success of our economic recovery for Canadians and their families. I look forward to questions from my colleagues across the way.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government implemented this through a ways and means motion a few months ago. What the member has said, although I respect her right to speak in the House on the bill, is simply not true. What we have seen over the past few weeks is

considerable economic hardship for an increasing number of Canadian families. In the month of October, as members well know, 72,000 Canadian families lost a full-time breadwinner. That is a catastrophic figure. The finance committee was told that by some of the economists who visited a few days ago. They said that the loss of jobs was at recession levels.

The government has created less than 200,000 jobs since May 2008. The unfortunate fact, as members are well aware, is the labour market actually grew by 450,000 job seekers. Therefore, the government is actually 250,000 jobs behind from just standing still.

Given all that, will the government change its orientation from what is an austerity budget, which would cut services from middle class and poor Canadians, and rethink its economic agenda, because it is clearly not working?

• (1215)

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately my colleague is absolutely wrong on all counts. He talks about catastrophes. If we look at what has happened since the recession, had the government not put in place all these measures that helped to produce jobs in our country, measures like the accelerate capital cost allowance that helps businesses create jobs, there would not have been 600,000 jobs created.

If it were up to the NDP, there would have been major catastrophes. It would have taxed corporations \$10 billion more, which would have cost hundreds of thousands of jobs. It would have increased the GST from its current 5% to 7%, or even more. That would have cost Canadians more money for everything, from groceries, to clothes, to all of their personal needs. If we had listened to the NDP, we would be looking at a doubling of the CPP. Even for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which is a big producer, representing small businesses that create jobs, its CPP costs would have increased by 60% to 70%. It would have been catastrophic to our country and we would never have survived the way we have.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the member's remarks. The fact is, and it states so in a November 17 article in the *National Post*, that federal spending has been up 22% since the Prime Minister took power. However, the spending watchdog says, "the large increase in expenditures over the past five years can be attributed to the economic downturn but also to a minority Parliament for most of that time", meaning the Conservatives are trying to buy an election. "You've had a lot of instability and historically, [governments] spend like a drunken sailor in minority", says the federal director of Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Given all that spending, what worries me is that the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, and it shows through in everything the government does.

Government Orders

The member went on at great length about the volunteer firefighters tax credit, but it is not a refundable tax credit. If a person does not have money, then the tax credit does not apply to him or her. Why not be fair? Is a firefighter who is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to thank my colleague for the question this time because it is about the third time the Liberals have asked this very same question. It just brings up the hypocrisy of that party. The hypocrisy exists because firefighters have been asking for years to have this very tax credit put forward. The 13 years that the Liberals were in power, they did absolutely nothing to address the concerns. In fact, the fire chief, who was in committee, said very clear this was exactly the tax credit for which they asked. Where the Liberals denied them year after year of any kind of tax benefit, not a single measure, we are doing it exactly the way they asked us to and we are going to be proud of it.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13 and sharing my time with the parliamentary secretary this morning.

It is a privilege to contribute to this debate and speak in support of Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, which is the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This bill will support Canada's economic recovery and promote job creation. It will support communities and invest in education and training. It will help Canadian families and respect their hard-earned tax dollars.

The bill is a low tax plan for jobs and economic growth. It is a continuation of the sensible fiscal policy that remains at the heart of our Conservative government's economic agenda. Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, creating jobs and promoting economic growth.

While we see so much financial instability in governments around the world, Canada has become a leader on the international economic stage. We have the strongest job creation record in the G8. Close to 600,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009. We have renewed our triple A credit rating, and according to the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, we will have the strongest economic growth in the G8 and G7 over the next two years. *Forbes* magazine has ranked Canada as the best country in the world to do business. I can assure the House, one of the most important things to the people of my riding is to be gainfully employed.

The Canadian economy is intimately connected with the economies of the world and we must remain aware of the fragile economic situation in Europe and the United States. We are not isolated from potential economic problems that remain outside our borders. That is why we must stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

Bill C-13 will promote Canadian job creation and economic growth. The hiring credit is precisely what small businesses have been calling for. The one time credit of up to \$1,000 will be the catalyst for additional hiring, not only in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming but for small businesses throughout Canada.

Not only are we creating new jobs, we are enhancing programs to help businesses keep the workers currently employed through

initiatives such as the work sharing program, the wage earner protection program, and the targeted initiative for older workers.

Small businesses are the engine of job creation in this country and our Conservative government is delivering results to them. Our Conservative government is also supporting the Canadian manufacturing sector. We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for two years, so that companies can write off investment in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment. This will allow them to grow their businesses and to procure top of the line equipment that will bring them to the forefront of international technological innovation. In an era of economic uncertainty, this tax measure gives manufacturers the confidence to invest in their future.

Bill C-13 is also doing more to support local communities. We are putting into law a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund in order to provide predictable long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. This is something municipalities have been asking for year after year. They want to know they have the source of funding to do the many projects that are necessary to provide the infrastructure for continued economic growth. Making this investment permanent and annual will benefit the many towns and communities in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming and in the ridings from coast to coast to coast.

Our Conservative government is also enhancing the wage earner protection program, so that workers are covered and protected from employer bankruptcy and receivership. This is a program that has been very well received and utilized.

● (1220)

Our Conservative government also recognizes the economic benefits that come with investing in education and training. We are supporting universities, colleges, skilled trades and apprenticeship programs.

This legislation forgives student loans for new doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote areas. A portion of the federal component of their Canada student loans, \$40,000 for doctors and \$20,000 for nurses, will be forgiven so that these doctors and nurses can practice and support the rural communities of our country that need them the most.

This will ensure that rural and remote communities, such as those in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming get the adequate medical services they deserve and require.

This is a plan that will support Canada's economic recovery and promote job creation. It is a plan that will support communities and invest in education and training. It is a plan that will help Canadian families and respect their hard-earned tax dollars.

This is a low tax plan for jobs and economic growth, and I support it.

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•(1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech.

As I have already said in this House, job creation is of great concern to me.

The government can trot out raw numbers and brag about them, but the fact remains that when we take a closer look at the numbers, there are some disparities. The raw numbers do not necessarily reflect the quality of those jobs. When I look at the job creation measure for small businesses in the government's bill, I see another measure that, unfortunately, is missing the mark. Instead of applying to every job created, this measure can apply to companies that fail to create any jobs and just tweak their employment insurance contributions.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why the government is not trying to integrate our job creation proposal into this bill, because it would apply to every job created, instead of allowing companies to get money illegitimately.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member cannot get picayune about this. We have to look at the broader economic picture and our record. The proof is in the pudding: 600,000 net new jobs have been created.

The IMF indicate that we are among the best in the world. *Forbes* recognizes that Canada is the best place to do business. The NDP plan would simply add \$10 billion in taxes to Canadians. If we were to follow that course, we would be in the shape of Greece, or possibly Italy or Spain.

Clearly, our plan is the right plan and our plan is working.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary who spoke previously took a lot of liberties when she was responding to questions. The Liberal Party has always stood for volunteer firefighters. I had private members' bills in the House many times on that issue.

I have to ask the member who just spoke, is this Conservative member suggesting, on the volunteer firefighters bill, that a volunteer firefighter who does not have the income, who does not meet the threshold, is less deserving of a refundable tax credit than someone with money?

If the service is done, a firefighter deserves the refund. Is the member saying that lower income volunteer firefighters should be disregarded, that their service is not as valuable as those with money? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, all volunteer firefighters deserve this tax credit. The hon. member said he had a bill. I guess his caucus did not support it.

As I mentioned, this is part of a full package to get our economy working. It is working. The first phase of this work generated all kinds of jobs. It generated accolades from all over the world. We cannot get picayune on this.

Our plan is working. It is the right plan for Canadians. We are proud of our plan and we are going to move on to the second phase of Canada's economic action plan.

•(1230)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by referencing the previous member's comments about the economic action plan.

No one on the Conservative side of the House should deny that the job loss figure that we saw in the month of October of 72,000 full-time jobs should not be a source of worry. That eviscerated the Canadian economy, yet Conservative members have been patting themselves on the back.

The reality is that the jobs that have been created over the last three years under the Conservative government's plan actually pay much less than the jobs that the Conservatives lost. Tragically, we are now seeing an acceleration in the number of jobs lost. Some 72,000 jobs were lost in a single month. That is more than 2,000 jobs a day and we are seeing a continuation of that in the month of November.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer talked about 100,000 jobs evaporating out of the Canadian economy in the coming months. The Governor of the Bank of Canada talked about a huge slowdown. The government must be looking through rose coloured glasses and pretending that everything is just fine. That is simply not true. Conservatives who doubt it should talk to small business people and to workers right across this country from coast to coast to coast.

Canadian families are worried. They are dealing with historic debt loads that we have not seen in our country's history. We are talking about the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the last few weeks. Nearly two million Canadians are looking for work across this country. One million Canadians have to rely on food banks to make ends meet. Maybe everything is fine and rosy in the Conservatives' Ottawa bubble, but the reality is that Canadians need action. Our role in the House is to put forward powerful solutions to deal with the economic malaise that we are experiencing.

I need to comment on the government's actions around Bill C-13. The budget bill is a 650-page document. It is not the same budget bill that was presented last spring, even though the government does have ways and means orientation on it. We are talking about a 650-page bill and the government's refusal to accept any amendments.

Beyond the government's refusal to accept any amendments, last week it invoked closure. The Conservatives will rise and say it was not closure but time allocation. It is the same thing. They should not try to play with Canadians in that respect. They invoked closure before one second of debate could happen in the House on amendments that had been brought forward.

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The Conservatives did allow some discussion on one amendment and then they used their sledgehammer and removed any possibility of even one second of debate on other amendments on a 650-page budget bill that most Conservative MPs have not read.

The government has refused to allow the kind of debate that has been a democratic tradition in this country since well before 1867, even prior to Confederation, but certainly in the House of Commons since 1867. We have not seen closure used to this extent. The government has used closure 7 times in 35 sitting days. It is a record that even the Liberals, at the height of their arrogance, were unable to match. It is appalling.

To tell Canadians that they have no right to hear debate on a 650-page budget bill and that they have no right to hear what amendments were brought forward on the budget bill is doing a disservice to Canadians and showing profound disrespect for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. That really is the setting of what the government has done around Bill C-13.

When the Conservatives campaigned last spring, they put on their sweater vests and talked about moderation and about listening to Canadians. They said that they would be a moderate government.

● (1235)

What has happened since May 2 is absolutely the contrary. The Conservatives use closure in a way that we have never seen in the long democratic tradition in this country. They shut down debate not only on a wide variety of bills that could have been better served with more debate and discussion in the House of Commons, but on budget bills as well.

It is a very disturbing development. Last spring the government promised moderation and respect for democratic tradition. However, now that we are getting into the crux of the matter with a vigorous debate on behalf of the 102 members of the NDP official opposition, the government resorts to closure every single time. Why is that?

The government is resorting to closure because it loses the debates. As we bring forward our ideas, we talk about the content of what is being brought forward by the government. The Conservatives realize that their arguments, the talking points from the Prime Minister's Office, simply do not hold weight. The government could extend sitting hours or use a number of alternatives to allow for a democratic debate to take place, but it chooses the sledgehammer of shutting down that debate.

I just came back from British Columbia and I certainly heard great and growing concern on the part of Canadians that our debate and our rights as democratically elected representatives in the House of Commons are systematically being shut down. It is something that is increasingly worrisome to Canadians.

Let us examine the context of the bill that the government refuses to debate and has invoked closure on. As well, any discussion at the amendment stage and debate at third reading will be shut down within a few hours.

Before the government brings the sledgehammer down at the end of this afternoon, the reality is that this is an austerity budget brought forward at a time when we are experiencing economic slowdown. There were 72,000 full-time jobs lost in the month of October

alone—this at a time when nearly two million Canadians are looking for work.

Over the last few years, we have seen a steady erosion in the quality of jobs available in the Canadian economy. We reference this point in the House continually. Conservatives can deny it, but Statistics Canada is very clear that the jobs the Conservatives lost paid more than the few jobs they managed to create.

The Conservative government created less than 200,000 jobs over the course of the last three and half years, since May 2008. This was at a time when the labour market grew because our population grew by 450,000. The government created barely 200,000 jobs, but lost 72,000 full-time jobs last month alone. The Conservatives were a quarter of a million jobs short even from just maintaining the level of employment that we had in the labour market back in May 2008. We have seen an erosion both in the quantity of jobs and in the quality of jobs. It is a doubleheader.

Also, the Conservatives like to make stuff up. They will throw out a figure from the back of a napkin and say that they have created hundreds of thousands of jobs. These arguments thrown out by the Prime Minister's Office, as happens so often, do not hold water. When we go to the actual Statistics Canada figures since May 2008, we see quite the contrary. Fewer than 200,000 jobs were created, but the labour market grew by 450,000. The employment percentage has gone down by 2% since May 2008. In terms of quality, the jobs created paid \$10,000 less than the jobs the Conservatives have thrown away through what I can only call economic mismanagement.

That is the context of the budget, the 650 pages that the Conservative government does not want Canadians to know about. The context of Bill C-13 is that it is a time of economic slowdown.

● (1240)

The Governor of the Bank of Canada, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and many economists agree that we are in a slowdown. The Conservatives can deny the Statistics Canada figures for the month of October, but they have been disastrous. There is no other way to put it. For Conservatives to rise in this House and say that everything is fine and rosy and not to worry about a thing simply belies the reality that is happening on the ground and across this country.

What did the Conservatives then bring forward? They brought forward an austerity budget that, aside from a few small tax credits, will continue massive, significant and ongoing corporate tax cuts. What it means is that for middle-class and poorer Canadian families from coast to coast to coast is that there would be significant cutbacks in the services that they enjoy.

On the one hand, we are talking about billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts for this year, and then, on January 1, even more corporate tax cuts going forward. The Conservatives' only economic strategy is shovelling money out to what are very profitable industrial sectors, but for middle-class and poorer Canadian families, it is cutbacks in services, getting less and having less support. We can talk about a whole range of things, but the reality is that it is an austerity budget.

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Was that appropriate last spring? I do not think so. The government promised that it would be listening to Canadians. It is profoundly inappropriate in the fall, as we go through a profound economic shutdown with the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, for the government to say, "That is quite all right; we're just going to continue and give more corporate tax-cut spending. We're going to spend another \$4 billion on January 1, but we're not going to address the fundamentals underlying the Canadian economy". Nothing in this budget does that.

What are the fundamentals? We have talked about the job loss. We have talked about the poor-quality jobs that the Conservative government has shepherded in to replace the better-quality jobs it lost. The government has lost family-sustaining jobs and replaced those with low-wage jobs, often part-time, often temporary, though we will never hear Conservatives rising and actually talking about the fact that most of the jobs they are creating are part-time or temporary. They try to put the temporary jobs in with permanent full-time jobs, and that way, on the back of a napkin, they try to mislead Canadians about what is actually happening. However, Canadians are aware of what is happening, because they see the economic slowdown occurring right across the country. They see the layoffs and they see the small businesses having to struggle now.

In British Columbia, one of the biggest problems that our small-business sector has had to contend with over the last few months was the HST imposed by the Conservative government on British Columbians. Thankfully, British Columbians rejected handily the HST in the summer referendum that we forced. We can be thankful for that, because the HST imposed by the Conservatives was just another nail in the coffin for the B.C. economy. As a long-time member of the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and as a proud member of the Burnaby Board of Trade, I can tell members that this single action led to significant job loss in British Columbia.

The Conservatives' imposition of the HST should never be repeated; however, it is in the same context. They refused to consult with British Columbians in the same way that, on this budget bill, the Conservatives are refusing either to consult the opposition or even to consult Canadians on an austerity budget that is profoundly inappropriate.

What is the other context of what we are going through as a Canadian economy? Far from the pretensions we have heard in the few minutes of debate we have had thus far today on finance and budgetary matters, the IMF has actually said that Canada is among the worst among all industrialized economies—doing worse than Spain and Italy, the economies that are in trouble—for the current account deficit on balance of payments. As members well know, that deficit means that we are importing finished goods, job-creating goods, and exporting raw materials. In their so-called economic management, Conservatives have made a hallmark of shipping raw resources out of this country like there is no tomorrow. They would just ship them out and import finished goods.

• (1245)

Now our current account deficit on balance of payments, which is a key indicator of the health of the Canadian economy, is going to be among the worst in the industrialized world. It is because the government does not understand that shipping raw resources out and

importing finished products, value-added products, means over time an erosion in the strength of the Canadian economy. It is worse than Spain and worse than Italy.

Not a single Conservative will address the issue, because they are scared about Canadians finding out the truth about their shipping out raw materials and what that has meant to the overall health of the Canadian economy. In this bill, nothing addresses that fundamental weakness. There is nothing that addresses the fundamental weakness of industrial sector after industrial sector.

I come from British Columbia, where the softwood lumber industry hemorrhaged tens of thousands of jobs after the government signed the softwood lumber agreement, which we have called the softwood lumber sellout. What that did was, again, give priority to the shipment of raw logs out of British Columbia and other regions right across the country. When we look at the forest industry generally, we see that raw log exports have increased substantially. That has happened because the government signed, yet again, an agreement that would facilitate the shipping out of our raw materials. What that means, again, is that our ongoing current account deficit is getting worse and worse.

When we look at the overall economic health of the Canadian economy on the eve of the government's invoking closure in just a few hours on Bill C-13, we see that we have hemorrhaged tens of thousands of jobs in the last few weeks, we have millions of Canadians looking for work and we have poorer quality of jobs. Every job the Conservatives lose, if they replace it, is replaced by one paying much less: almost \$1,000 less a month, almost \$10,000 less a year.

We have a crisis in exports. The Conservatives love to stand in this House and say that they signed a bunch of agreements and did some ribbon-cutting. That is not an export strategy. They have clearly failed. When we look at the current account deficit on balance of payments, we see that they have clearly failed, and failed worse than any other industrialized country.

Those are figures that tell the truth about what the government has done and what it has not done in dealing with the financial and economic challenges that the country faces.

What is in the bill, what we have, are austerity measures that are not in keeping with our current economic situation at all and that will hurt middle-class and poor Canadian families.

What we have includes the one big initiative that the government has not chosen to reference so far: the elimination of the democratic voting subsidy. As we all know, this per-vote subsidy was a tool in the hands of every single Canadian. They could choose the party that they voted for, and one dollar per vote would basically go to the party of their choice between elections. It is a very democratic, very pragmatic approach to democratizing our political system.

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There are also a huge range of tax credits and supports that exist, and the Senate is used as a home of patronage. The Conservatives are not cutting any of those elements. What they are doing in this bill is bringing an end to the one element of political subsidies that actually is democratically distributed. The cost is \$30 million, but the government is continuing with nearly \$400 million in subsidies that mainly go to the Conservative Party. For shame.

I imagine that is why the government is invoking closure. It is because the only significant budgetary measure that it has is the elimination of the per-vote subsidy. There are a few measures that we support, but the significant one, the elimination of the per-vote subsidy, is another nail in the coffin of democracy under the Conservative government. That is why we are speaking against and voting against Bill C-13.

• (1250)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was quite a list of accusations. I am impressed when I hear all these plans and solutions to the problems.

At the outset I want to say that we in the Conservative government never said that we were not immune to what is happening in the world. However, if we look at the figures, we have 600,000 net jobs of which 80% are full time. I challenge the hon. member to compare that to our closest trading partner, the United States.

The member also talked about the need to increase corporate taxes and the need to address those problems by taxing the corporations.

We sit on the same committee and have heard from a number of these organizations, small and medium businesses from the mining sector, the extraction sector, the banks and the insurance companies. Does the member know of anyone within those sectors who would support the NDP's job-killing plan of raising taxes? Does he have the support of those people who he claims he would be helping by doing these things?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, given that 72,000 full-time jobs were lost in the month of October, one can only say, when looking at Bill C-13 and at the Conservatives' strategy, that they are job-killing plans.

I like the hon. member, and know that he is not preparing the notes. It is the Prime Minister's Office that puts out a figure and then pretends that the government has created x number of jobs.

StatsCan states that from May 2008 the Conservative government has created less than 200,000 jobs and that the labour market grew by 450,000 job seekers. That is not a line from the Conservative Party or the NDP but from StatsCan, the judge that is right. Therefore, the number of job seekers, the unemployed, grew. The reality is that the government was a quarter of a million jobs short from just treading water, from just standing still.

Rather than more corporate tax cuts, we need an intelligent approach that does not cut services to the middle-class and poor Canadian families. That is what we stand for on this side of the House.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the corporate tax cuts for a second.

In the year 2000, the corporate tax rate was 38% and the Americans' was 36%. Under the Paul Martin government, it was lowered from 38% to 20%, which put us in the middle of the G20 and, in fact, in the middle of the G7 among tax rates.

The present government has dropped it from 20% to 15%. That is taking \$16 billion a year out of the fiscal capacity of the government to address the problems that we have today and the problems that I see every day relative to seniors.

We made the proposal to cancel the January 1, 2012, tax cut. We hear all this talk about tens of billions of dollars in costs. Companies are already paying that \$3 billion to \$4 billion right now. This is not a new tax. Let us talk about the present time. The present time says that we should cancel that because there are things that need to be done.

The government needs a manufacturing strategy going forward to address the infrastructure alone of \$130 billion.

I ask the member to comment on that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has been a strong advocate for seniors in the country. I commend him for all of the work that he has done on behalf of seniors.

What the Conservatives are saying is that the tens of thousands of seniors living in poverty in the country need to continue living in poverty because it wants to bring in more corporate tax cuts. It is saying to the one million Canadians who rely on food banks just to get through the month that they will need to keep going to food banks because it wants to bring in more corporate tax cuts. It is saying to the 72,000 Canadians who lost full-time jobs in the month of October, almost half of whom will not have access to employment insurance, that it needs to cut their benefits so that it can bring in this further corporate tax cut.

I could go on and talk about prisons and the F-35s.

Speaking as a financial administrator, which is what I was before I came to the House of Commons, I have never seen such appalling bad judgment on spending as we have with the Conservative government. It is more prisons, the F-35s that are untendered and the massive corporate tax cuts.

It is the middle-class and poor Canadian families who are paying the price for the government's irresponsible attitude when it comes to fiscal policy in the country.

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• (1255)

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want the House to know that the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is from the city and I am a member for British Columbia from the interior. I have the fifth largest lumber company in the world in my constituency. I constantly speak with the CEO of that company and he tells me about what our government has done to benefit his corporation to be competitive and also all that we have done to help it find new markets for its products. Where it used to send 70% of its product to the United States, now it is sending it to China, with \$170 million that our government put forward to help the lumber industry in British Columbia.

The lumber industry in British Columbia right now is at a peak. All the mills are up and running with more than one shift. How can the member say that our policies are not the right policies for British Columbia when that is happening?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am just flabbergasted. The member should know that we lost 50,000 jobs after the government signed the softwood lumber agreement. The exports to the American market have plummeted. For the member to stand and say that everything is rosy in the B.C. forestry industry, I am absolutely amazed that he is that out of touch with his own riding.

I will tell the House about my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, which he referenced. I am very proud to represent the riding. There were 2,000 jobs lost in Burnaby—New Westminster as a result of three mill closures that occurred right after the member's government sold us out and signed the softwood lumber sellout. There were 2,000 direct jobs which means thousands of additional indirect jobs lost when the Conservatives signed the agreement. We told them that would be the impact and just the same they threw away tens of thousands of jobs in the softwood lumber industry. That was probably one of the most irresponsible acts of what has been a very irresponsible government.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member earlier say something in relation to value added to jobs. I want to talk particularly about refining and upgrading capacity in our country. He mentioned that he had ideas and thought that we should add more jobs to Canadian industry. As he knows, refining and upgrading is one of the most unprofitable sectors of the oil and gas industry. In fact, most of the technology today found throughout North America is 50 years old or more.

I know the NDP always suggests that it stands up for environmental concerns, but if we are going to add more jobs to what is the number one industry in Canada right now, which is oil and gas, we need to do so by upgrading and refining. I wonder how we can do that being that it takes 8 to 10 years to build one of these facilities at a cost of \$8 billion to \$10 billion and they are simply not profitable. That is why in North America very little upgrading or refining capacity has been done in the last 50 years.

I wonder what rules the member would suggest we bend, where he would put these refining and upgrading capacities and how we would encourage companies to build them through tax credits or through ACCA. How would he suggest we do that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member asked me that question. What we have seen over the last seven years

is the increasing number of New Democrats on this side of the House because we have been talking about a green economy and the development of green jobs. We have put together very specific proposals.

What has happened is that more and more Canadians voted, first 19 seats, then 36 and now 103 ridings are represented by New Democrats, in part, because people have responded very positively to what we have said we will do, in building a green economy and putting those green jobs together that many other countries around the world are already prospering from.

However, what we would not do is put in place and try to fast-track in the way the government has the Keystone pipeline. That would lead to a net loss, as the member well knows as he did an economic evaluation of it, of 18,000 jobs that would be shipped over the border, and that is not even the environmental impact. When we look at that, people can see that we stand for green jobs and a green economy and the government stands for shipping jobs across the border.

• (1300)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-13, the second implementation bill for budget 2011.

I want to speak to some of the unfair elements of this bill. We think it is wrong that the Conservatives continue to exclude the lowest income Canadians from budget measures that are designed to help Canadians by introducing programs, like the tax credits for family caregivers, volunteer firefighters and children's arts activity, and then only making them available to some Canadians while completely leaving out those who are most in need: low-income Canadians who will not qualify for these measures because these tax credits are non-refundable. We think that is wrong and that it will weaken Canadian society by increasing the already growing gap between the rich and the poor in Canada. It will contribute to a reduction in the equality of opportunity that is so fundamental to Canadians and Canadian values.

I will speak today to some of the economic challenges facing Canadian society and how measures introduced by the Conservatives will actually serve to reduce economic opportunities for some Canadians who are already disadvantaged during these difficult global economic times. I then will provide some examples of how a Liberal government would do things differently.

There is a rising income gap under the Conservative government. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing in Canada. A recent study by the Conference Board of Canada shows that income inequality is rising even faster in Canada than in the U.S. The Conference Board's July 2011 study helps to provide some context by discussing why growing income gaps are a problem. It pointed out the following:

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—high inequality can diminish economic growth if it means that the country is not fully using the skills and capabilities of all its citizens or if it undermines social cohesion, leading to increased social tensions. Second, high inequality raises a moral question about fairness and social justice.

Again, that quote was from the Conference Board of Canada's July 2011 study.

Lower incomes can also lead to shorter life expectancies. A 2010 report from McMaster University found that the life expectancy of someone living in the wealthiest neighbourhood in Hamilton, Ontario, is 21 years longer than someone living in the poorest neighbourhoods of Hamilton, as an example. Rising income inequality, in terms of economic output, will increase costs in health care at a time when we already have a demographic bubble, or time bomb as some refer to it, in terms of the aging of our population and the commensurate increases in health care costs that will bring.

In 2008, in terms of economic output, a group of economists, including Don Drummond, estimated that poverty costs Canada between \$72 billion and \$86 billion per year in higher costs for health care, the criminal justice system and lost economic productivity.

One of the largest contributors to growing income gaps in Canada is the persistently high levels of unemployment and underemployment facing low-income Canadians. The reality is that we have almost 600,000 fewer full-time jobs than three years ago in August 2008. There is a significant gap geographically in Canada in terms of how individual economies are doing. If people happen to live in Saskatchewan or Alberta, resource rich provinces, provinces where people had the vision, foresight and wisdom to put oil and gas under the ground and, in some cases, smart enough to put potash under the ground as well, their economic situation is very different from that of places in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

We are seeing in this global economic restructuring the type of recovery in Canada that does not benefit all Canadians. In fact, a commodity led recovery, which is driving the Canadian dollar, for all intents and purposes, increasingly an oil and gas or commodity-based dollar, higher and, at the same time, as a result of that higher dollar, crowding out value-added jobs in other regions. While high commodity prices can disproportionately benefit some parts of Canada and some sectors in Canada, it is driving out a lot of manufacturing jobs, value-added jobs.

• (1305)

We just had an announcement of a permanent closure in my riding of the Fundy Gypsum Company. Part of the reason for that was the higher Canadian dollar in recent years that made its exports to the U.S. less competitive.

We have seen a lot of manufacturing jobs lost in my riding, food processing jobs, such as at Canard poultry and Larsen, close to my riding. We have seen a lot of losses in jobs in my riding. I latest information if have if that in Kings county, Hants county and Annapolis county, which is my riding and part of the riding next door, have 6,400 fewer jobs than in August 2008. The unemployment figures for Annapolis, Kings and Hants counties reached 7.8% in October 2011 compared to 5% in September 2008. That is almost a 3% increase in unemployment in my riding and half of the next riding, the riding of West Nova.

We are seeing it in our communities. We are seeing it in the small business community. The owner of a restaurant in Windsor, Nova Scotia told me recently that it had the worst year in 20 years. When people have lost their full-time jobs and have seen them replaced with part-time work, they cannot afford to take their families out for breakfast on a Saturday morning or for supper on a Friday night.

We have a responsibility in the House of Commons to evaluate how the economy and families are doing across Canada, not just look at the macro numbers, but look across the country and consider the plight of families in some of the regions. One of the realities is that during this technical recovery, this statistical recovery, many Canadians are still facing a deep human recession.

The other thing to realize is that before the markets tumbled back in August 2008, 17,366,000 Canadians had jobs. In October 2011, and these are the latest figures available from Stats Canada, that number stood at 17,402,300 jobs. However, that includes almost 600,000 net fewer full-time jobs lost in Canada over the last three years.

This issue has contributed as well to the growth of household debt. We are now at record levels of household debt in Canada, largely because Canadians are trying to replace their lost income from losing their full-time jobs with income from part-time jobs. They are having a lot of challenges making ends meet. They are seeing their costs going up on an ongoing basis and their pay going down as they are replacing full-time work with part-time jobs.

The reality is the household debt levels in Canada is \$1.51 for ever \$1 of annual income in Canada right now. That is actually higher than the family indebtedness in the U.S, record highs for Canadian households.

Canadians are worried about how they will pay the bills next month and they are petrified about what will happen at some point in the future when interest rates start to rise, which they inevitably will.

Within the context of rising inequality, the Conservatives have gone ahead and introduced a number of tax measures in budget 2011 that will actually worsen the situation by deliberately excluding low-income Canadians. We have repeatedly asked, both at finance committee and in the House of Commons, that the Conservatives make a family caregiver tax credit, the volunteer firefighter tax credit and the children's arts tax credits refundable so all Canadians can qualify, but the Conservatives have steadfastly refused.

• (1310)

I want to be clear. We support a family caregiver tax credit and a volunteer firefighters tax credit. In reality, it was the Liberal Party that proposed both of those before the Conservative Party. We proposed those tax measures because we felt a lot of families were struggling with aging and ailing loved ones, trying to keep them in their homes, and they needed the help.

Many communities, including my own communities in places like Summerville and Brooklyn, Hants county and Wolfville and Kentville, have a lot of volunteer firefighters. It is harder and harder to attract volunteer firefighters. Frankly, they are paying a financial cost. They are risking their lives and struggling to keep the fire departments viable.

We believe very strongly in a family caregiver tax credit and a volunteer firefighters tax credit. In our platform, we had both of those, but we had made them refundable. The reason they need to be, and ought to be, refundable is that by making them non-refundable, as the Conservatives have done, it perversely means that the lowest-income volunteer firefighters and family caregivers will not receive benefit. There is no way we can defend, economically or morally, that the lowest-income volunteer firefighters and family caregivers would not benefit from these measures. It is fundamentally wrong. I see families struggling to take care of loved ones now.

It is one of the issues I hear from constituents on an increasing basis, as we have an aging population, and the rural communities in the Maritimes are aging disproportionately. We have lost a lot of young people who have gone to other parts of the country for work. Therefore, in many cases, we have fewer young people to help out mom or dad, or granddad or grandmom stay in their homes. The burden on the people who are left behind, the family members and the caregivers, is immense. The VON does an extraordinary job helping a lot of people in my riding in Nova Scotia, but it can only do so much.

My mom and dad have a home care person who comes in a couple of times a week. She does remarkable work in helping my parents stay in their own home. My dad is 88 and my mom is 82 and she has Alzheimer's. I see how hard the home care workers are working and the difference they are making.

I see the sacrifice my sister makes. She is, for all intents and purposes, the family caregiver to my parents. There are three sons and then there is my sister. I can tell members that, disproportionately, the burden goes to the daughters in a family when it comes to these situations. That is unfair, but I see it. I know my sister would qualify, based on her income, for the family caregiver tax credit. However, it is not fair that some other person's sister or some other person's daughter, who takes time away from her work to take care of an elderly mother or father, would not benefit. That is fundamentally wrong.

I would like to see other family caregivers benefit from this measure, particularly, low-income caregivers. In my sister's case, she has taken time off work so she can help mom and dad in their home, so she is seeing a decrease in her income. That is happening to a lot of families across Nova Scotia and Canada. It is wrong that the caregivers in those lowest-income families would not benefit from this program designed to help caregivers and to help seniors and people who face long-term illness stay in their own homes longer.

Frankly, it would take a lot of burden off the provincial health care system if we could help people stay in their own homes. In most cases, the cost of putting people in nursing homes or long-term care families is a lot more than keeping them at home. Therefore, from the perspective of long-term fiscal policy, it is important for both

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federal and provincial governments to do everything they can to help people stay in their own homes.

•(1315)

I focused a lot on the disparity and unfairness of making these tax credits unavailable to low-income caregivers and volunteer firefighters. It is unfair, but it is also nonsensical from an economic perspective. It makes no sense socially, economically or morally.

Susan Eng, vice president of CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, has said:

We...encourage (the government) to put forward a refundable tax credit, particularly for the more narrow segments of caregivers who perform 24/7 care. Those are the people who have had to quit their jobs...to look after families. They are not going to be in a position to benefit from a non-refundable tax credit.

That is from one of the largest organizations representing senior citizens in Canada.

Nadine Henningsen, president of the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, told the finance committee:

—convert the non-refundable credits to refundable credits, so that all Canadians with caregiver-related costs, regardless of income, will benefit from these tax measures.

Again, there is broad-based support for making these credits refundable from the people who understand caregiving the most, the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, and from the biggest organization representing Canadian seniors, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons.

At some level the Conservatives must recognize that there is a moral imperative to make these tax credits refundable so they are available to all deserving Canadians.

In their last election platform the Conservatives promised to make the Canadian fitness tax credit refundable so that low income Canadians could also qualify. However, they have only promised to include low income Canadians once the budget is balanced.

We know from the minister's latest oops moment, kind of like Governor Perry, with his budget number that it is going to be 2015 or 2016 by the time the budget is balanced. That is based on their latest numbers, but the minister has missed every target he has set. In fact, he inherited a \$13 billion surplus and spent Canada into a deficit even before the downturn. He increased spending by 18%, three times the rate of inflation, and put Canada into a deficit even before the 2008 crash. He promised a balanced budget in the fall of 2008 and a few months later delivered a record high \$56 billion deficit.

Therefore, it is hard for us to count on the minister's projections, but for low-income Canadians who are being promised some tax relief once the budget has been balanced, it is very hard for them to count on or wait for that inevitable balancing.

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I also want to speak on the EI payroll tax increase of January. The minister confirmed that EI premiums would be increased by \$600 million in January. With stubbornly high unemployment in many parts of the country, it makes no sense for the government to be increasing payroll taxes at this time. That is why we called for a payroll tax freeze and EI premium freeze at this time. It does not make sense to increase what is effectively a job-killing payroll tax at a time of high unemployment.

We also believe that we have to take a serious look at the Conservatives' plan that they introduced to force the EI system to self-balance over a short period of time. What that means is that it perversely actually increases EI premiums at times of high unemployment. It makes no sense to increase job killing payroll taxes at exactly the time when we need to either freeze them or potentially even decrease them. We need to have a longer horizon for self-balancing.

I also spoke with Jack Mintz, who spoke to a group of us recently. Jack Mintz says that we need a focus on overall tax reform in Canada. We need to simplify and streamline the Canadian tax code. My leader, the hon. member for Toronto Centre, has called for the same. We need to have a long-term focus on building a fairer and more competitive Canadian tax system, streamlining and simplifying the tax system, not making it more complex with boutique tax credits that do not benefit the lowest income Canadians.

• (1320)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague was in the House when the infamous fiscal update was delivered at the beginning of the largest recession since the Depression. The Minister of Finance said that Canada was not in debt, but according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer we were already starting to slip into billions of dollars in debt. The Conservatives' solution to the threat of Canada joining a world depression was that they would sell off public buildings and have no stimulus. That, of course, precipitated the situation where the other parties expressed clear lack of confidence and the Conservatives were forced to turn around. Within a month, they came back and we were suddenly \$30 billion to \$50 billion to \$60 billion in debt. I do not think anybody in history has spent money as fast as they have done.

Why should we have any faith in the Minister of Finance who one month said Canada was not going to be in debt at all, that we were going to ride out the crisis, and within two months the Conservatives were spending what they said was \$10 billion but they wracked it up to \$50 billion in about six months? The Conservatives still have not explained how they are going to get us back to an economically fiscal plan. Their numbers seem to be in contradiction to everything we hear from the Parliamentary Budget Officer or anything we hear from the private sector.

Could my hon. colleague explain?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been very active on the G8 and G20 spending file, perhaps one of the greatest misappropriations of public tax dollars in the history of the country.

I remember that now infamous fall 2008 economic statement where the finance minister claimed there would be a \$100 million surplus. In a federal budget, \$100 million is almost a rounding error.

The only way he was able to reach that minuscule little baby surplus was to sell off \$10 billion of assets. I remember day after day we asked the minister to produce a list of the assets that the government was going to sell. He never presented that list of assets because there was no list of assets. The government had effectively created this notion that there was going to be an asset disposal. It never created a list.

As a minister of public works in the past, I know it takes about two years to go from having a list of assets to actually implementing a sale. The government made up those figures to try to pretend it had a surplus and in fact it did not.

The member is quite right. It is very hard to have faith in the government's budget numbers or projections.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my hon. colleague's remarks because we actually heard some facts. The member expanded on the tax credits. We have long supported the firefighters' tax credits and other tax credits. The government continues the message on them as if they are going to benefit all people, when really they do not apply to low-income people who provide the same service.

I wonder if my colleague could expand on that. Just what does the government have against assisting people with lower income, and are there other examples?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Malpeque also represents rural and small town communities like mine. He knows that a lot of the volunteer firefighters in rural and small town Canada are people who are not making a lot of money. They are people who are struggling barely to get by. They are people who, in a lot of cases, are raising families on less than \$20,000 a year and will not benefit from these non-refundable measures.

Again, anyone in this House, regardless of the politics of his or her party, has to understand that it is fundamentally wrong that low income Canadians would get less of a benefit than middle class or higher income Canadians. This applies to the volunteer firefighters and the caregivers. It also applies to children playing sports. Let us think about this. We all know that the cost of hockey, soccer, and any other sport has gone up. Kids need to have good activities to have healthy minds and bodies and to have a good and productive life. These tax credits are designed to help kids in sports, music and the arts, but they will not benefit children of low income families. That is particularly wrong. It increases the inequality of opportunity that is so menacing to a lot of Canadian families.

Government Orders

• (1325)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, regularly in this House we hear the Conservatives talk about the stable majority government. Some 60% of Canadians voted against the government. One of the reasons I think a fair number of them did was that in our election platform, and in the Liberal platform, there was mention of a \$700 million increase to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. In our case it would have applied to 300,000 seniors who take in less than \$15,200 a year. The response from the Conservatives was \$50 a month. That is about what the HST has taken out of people's pockets already.

I would like to hear a response from the member. Our suggestion was \$200 a month to at least get these folks up to the poverty line.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, there are two types of measures: those that are done by political parties for politics, and those that are done to really help people.

I have to hand it to the Conservatives because sometimes they will take what seems like a good idea, in some cases proposed by the NDP or the Liberals, to help low income seniors or to help volunteer firefighters, but instead of funding it in a way that can really help people, they malnourish the proposals. They get all the bang for the buck out of the announcement. They get all the politics in the short term when people think they are going to get help.

There is a lot of after-sale disappointment when people realize their lives have not changed a bit, and that they have been duped. They have been sold a bill of goods by the Conservatives during an election, who said that they were going to help volunteer firefighters, or low income seniors who need help with the GIS. The Conservatives are counting on Canadians to not really do the math. They are expecting to get away with it, and they do quite frequently.

The reality is that if they are serious about helping people, they have to make sure the programs and the tax measures that they commit to are delivered substantively. They have to ensure that the funding is there to actually make a difference in people's lives. Otherwise it is just politics and it is not about helping people.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Willowdale.

It is my pleasure on behalf of the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to speak in support of the legislation before us, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

The decision by the people of Canada to vote in favour of a strong, stable, majority government was our mandate to get on with the job of providing Canadians with good government.

My constituents recognize that providing sound financial leadership means making the right decisions to keep Canada on track as the best place to live in the world. If Canada is to maintain its standard of living in today's world, we need to anticipate tomorrow's economy and the jobs that will be required for that.

Energy to power our needs in the future is recognized by our government as where we need to be proactive. Our budget continues to provide significant financial investment in the Canadian nuclear industry.

Bill C-13 contains elements of restructuring efforts of AECL dating back to 1993. The process is recognized as ongoing, which is where I would like to focus my comments today.

The Chalk River laboratories of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited represent the retained assets of the crown corporation in our restructuring efforts to strengthen, diversify and support the thousands of jobs associated with this industry.

Our government has provided financial support to AECL that was necessary after many years of neglect by the old government.

Just like a car that needs service and proper maintenance to keep it running smoothly and safely, the same is true of Canada's nuclear assets. For example, even though corrosion on the containment vessel in the NRU, Canada's research reactor, had been observed, the former government decided to follow a policy that would have resulted in the loss of thousands of jobs and the hollowing out of an industry in which Canadians are recognized as world leaders. It viewed Chalk River laboratories as nothing more than an isotope factory, when in fact the science of nuclear medicine is but one of the lifesaving discoveries that have been made on site.

On November 16, 2011, Dr. Robert Walker, president and CEO of AECL nuclear laboratories, was pleased to report that we have a new five year licence at the Chalk River site. That is a demonstration of Canadian confidence in the nuclear labs at Chalk River.

The keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act means supporting science, research and development for the jobs of tomorrow.

The former government did not foresee the increased demand for clean, affordable, sustainable energy.

The possible use of nuclear energy for electric power production was discussed in the early years of the nuclear research program, but the first definitive key decision came early in 1953 when it was stated in this very chamber:

Here in Canada we believe that the time has come to undertake the development of atomic power in this country, and discussions are going on as to ways and means of bringing about that development. We feel that the production of power is the concern of those who distribute power, organizations like the Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario, or the major privately-owned power companies.

Half a century after Rutherford demonstrated for the first time the existence of the atomic nucleus, Canada launched into the 20th century of high technology.

The pursuit by W.B. Lewis, an outstanding scientist of world stature, and his colleagues at AECL Chalk River laboratories of the neutron economy resulted in low fuel costs for Candu, which stands for Canada deuterium uranium reactors, and this became a significant factor in their success. In 1987, the centennial of engineering in Canada, the Candu reactor was ranked as one of the country's top ten engineering achievements.

The former government did not recognize the achievements of Chalk River laboratories, such as in its role in radiation therapy.

Government Orders

•(1330)

In 1951, at the Chalk River plant in Ontario, a group of scientists isolated a source of radiation even stronger than X-rays. It was, and still is, widely used to treat cancer patients. The source of this radiation was the radioactive isotope cobalt-60. The production of this radioactive isotope and the required nuclear activity was carried out in Canada four years before it was repeated in any other country.

The Canada Student Loans Act is assisting young scientists who are studying neutron scattering. The former government forgot about the pioneering work conducted by Bertram Brockhouse, which laid the foundation for the field of inelastic neutron scattering, and for which he shared the 1994 Nobel prize in physics.

A beam of neutrons can be directed onto a specimen of material. By measuring how the beam is reflected, scientists can learn a great deal about the structure of a specimen at the atomic level.

Using the technique that Brockhouse pioneered, the NRC Canadian Neutron Beam Centre at NRU today enables scientists from across Canada and around the world to investigate new materials with neutrons. In fact, after the tragedy with the space shuttle Challenger, NASA commissioned the Canadian Neutron Beam Centre to determine whether or not it was a seal that caused the accident.

Dr. Dominic Ryan, president of the Canadian Institute for Neutron Scattering, outlined that the NRC-CNBC in Chalk River is Canada's scientific hub for research using neutron beams as probes of materials. Since everything is made of material, even our own bodies, materials research using neutron beams has a broad range of applications.

With regard to spin-offs from Chalk River, the Chalk River Laboratories act as a science and technology catalyst for innovation contributing to industry success both domestically and internationally. It has mastered the transfer of bench-top science through to practical applications, on to commercialization and manufacturing. That means jobs.

Another aspect of Chalk River is the security. In addition to maintaining and growing Canada's capability in the nuclear energy industry, improving reliability in the supply of medical radioisotopes and improving the understanding of the effect of radiation on human health, Chalk River Laboratories is ensuring the safety and security for Canada.

A key technology developed at AECL is used by United Nations inspectors to verify that countries are complying with the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and are not developing nuclear weapons.

Known as the Cerenkov viewing device, it allows the UN International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, safeguard inspectors to examine nuclear fuel to confirm it is not being diverted from civilian to military purposes.

AECL Nuclear Laboratories recently patented the state-of-the-art advancement of this technology which allows for total automation of this vital task for the very first time. With millions of shipping containers around the world and over 45,000 trucks crossing North American borders every day, one of the significant challenges for

port and border inspection agencies is the detection of illicit nuclear material in transportation containers.

Accurate and expedient results are not only vital to ensure the security of our borders but also ensure the efficient flow of goods and services between the two trading partner nations.

AECL Nuclear Laboratories, in collaboration with Defence Research and Development Canada, the Canadian Border Security Agency, Health Canada and several Canadian universities have recently patented a detection technology similar to CAT scan machines used in hospitals.

Instead of producing an internal image of a patient, it indicates the presence of nuclear material such as uranium and plutonium that may be hidden in shipping containers.

•(1335)

In parallel, AECL is currently working with a Canadian company developing low powered, inexpensive, pocket-size radiation detectors for infield use for practical radiation detection of nuclear materials. That, in addition to 3,300 AECL jobs, spells more jobs.

Chalk River Laboratories is also improving nuclear and related technology safety. It has developed technology to absorb the excess hydrogen and reduce the risk. It is called the passive autocatalytic recombiner. The technology uses no moving parts and is making our reactors safe here in Canada and around the world.

The domestic Canadian nuclear industry has specifically benefited from this technology and it is addressed as a requirement that the federal nuclear regulator placed on the industry to address the hydrogen hazards. AECL technology is also mitigating nuclear accidents.

I see that I am out of time, so I will answer any questions.

•(1340)

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, for sharing her time.

It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to third reading of Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. I am proud to stand to speak in support of our government's record.

Last May Canadians elected a strong Conservative government, a government that has earned the trust of Canadians. Our government worked hard in two minority governments to achieve this. For too many years before that, Canadians had a government that lacked accountability and transparency, a government that treated taxpayers' dollars recklessly. In May, Canadians spoke loud and clear, and chose a government that has earned their respect and confidence.

Government Orders

Our government has steadfastly provided good economic policies that have allowed this great country to weather the global slowdown better than many other industrial countries. It is our task to continue on and support the policies that have allowed Canada to remain strong.

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic growth. While Canadians are keenly aware of this, the G7 countries are also aware of our economic position. The International Monetary Fund has projected that Canada will be among the strongest in economic growth of the G7 for the next two years. This is a time to continue with the sound policies of our 2011 budget which does this.

It is our duty as a government to look beyond this moment and work to create positive successful policies that will provide for our future generations. Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, is about precisely that. With the support that is provided to communities by legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities and enhancing the wage earner protection program, we are looking to the future and working beyond today's economy. Canadians expect that and we are delivering it.

In my riding of Willowdale, a very urban riding, we recently announced a new partnership between Seneca College with small and medium-sized businesses, enterprises that will help conduct research and bring innovative ideas to market, bringing innovative ideas to commercialization.

Commercialization is the engine for job creation and employment for young entrepreneurs and students who are coming into the job market. This is due to investment from the Federal Economic Development Agency. Our government is working to make the most of our opportunities to innovate, adapt and grow, and secure a prosperous future. I was proud to share in this announcement. It is policies like these that have Canada moving in the right direction, a direction that has been envied by many countries in the world.

We are continuing to help families by introducing the new family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives. We know that families are the pillars of our communities. We want them to have the resources they require to have the best opportunities and sound futures. By removing the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers can now claim under the medical expense tax credit, we are assisting those who are financially dependent on relatives. We understand the pressures that Canadians face.

Furthermore, the child arts tax credit is one of that many parents in Willowdale will want to utilize. We understand the benefits of these programs to children and families, and we know that supporting these artistic, cultural and recreational activities will benefit our future citizens in many ways.

Our government has shown respect for taxpayers. The keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act phases out the direct subsidy of political parties. Political parties should not be directly subsidized by Canadian tax dollars.

The Toronto Board of Trade has said that the 2011 federal budget achieves a prudent balance of taxability and deficit reduction measures while pointing to long-term infrastructure investment opportunities. This is a good plan for both Toronto and Canada.

Our government believes in low taxes. We want to leave more hard-earned money in the pockets of Canadians. My colleagues across the floor continue to have a high tax agenda that would increase taxes on job creating businesses to pay for billions and billions of reckless spending and bloated government programs in Ottawa. Canadians spoke against such policies last spring.

● (1345)

We have cut taxes 120 times since 2006, reducing the overall debt burden to the lowest level in nearly 50 years.

I think we are one of the most competitive low tax jurisdictions in the world.

Under our government, Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth and created nearly 600,000 net new jobs since July 2009, of which over 80% are full-time positions.

Our government is enhancing our guaranteed income supplement. Eligible low income seniors will now receive an additional benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, helping more than 680,000 seniors across Canada. We understand the challenges that some seniors are facing in these tough economic times and the GIS will put more dollars in their pockets.

Recently, the Royal Bank of Canada released its economic survey suggesting that Canada's economy is set to pick up despite volatile global financial markets. The RBC has indicated that it is expected that the Canadian economy will rebound. I am confident that the sound fiscal and sometimes difficult choices of the government have paved the way for this.

On this side of the House we also understand that families want to lower their heating and electricity bills by making their homes more energy efficient. That is why we are extending the eco-energy retrofit homes program. This program has been a success. Until March 31, 2012, homeowners are eligible to receive grants of up to \$5,000 to make their homes more energy efficient. I know many of the residents of Willowdale will want to make energy-efficient improvements at home and this program will help them.

Our government understands the importance of this program to Canadians. It has the added benefit of creating a green economy, the precise economy that we are looking for to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to help the new economy on its path to conserve jobs and to build new jobs. There has been much discussion with respect to new technologies and the new green economy.

Our government understands that Canadians are worried about the quality of the air we breathe, along with pollutants and chemicals affecting our environment. Canadian families deserve the best air, water and cleanest environment possible.

Government Orders

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan maintains our Conservative government's strong record of supporting a cleaner and more sustainable environment. I will outline some of the measures that we have put in place to do this.

Indeed, for 2011-12, our Conservative government is investing more to protect the environment than in 2010-11. Investments include: \$400 million for the eco-energy retrofit homes program to support Canadians in making their homes more energy efficient, \$252 million to support regulatory activities to address climate change and air quality, nearly \$200 million to help address the health and environmental risks posed by dangerous chemicals through the chemicals management plan, \$97 million to develop and promote clean energy technologies, \$86 million to support clean energy regulatory actions, \$68 million to clean up federal contaminated sites, \$48 million to develop transportation sector regulations and next generation clean transportation initiatives, \$40 million to support new climate change and clean air projects under Sustainable Development Technology Canada, \$35 million to support climate and atmospheric sciences research, and the list goes on.

Our government is moving in the right direction on the environment. I am confident of the results of these initiatives for today and for future generations.

We are focused on what matters to Canadians, which is to create jobs and promote economic growth. We have taken strategic measures to help weather the global economic slowdown. However, we need to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

I urge my colleagues across the floor to support this legislation, which is a continuation of sound policy that has made Canada the envy of many countries.

We have worked hard as a government to assist our entrepreneurs and we are continuing this in budget 2011. The new hiring credit for small business will provide up \$1,000 against small business EI premiums for new hires.

The World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the strongest and safest in the world. The policies of our government have not gone unnoticed. *The Economist* magazine has named Canada the best place to invest and do business in the next five years.

• (1350)

Having indicated all of these policies are in place, I urge my colleagues across the way to support these measures, the continuation of sound economic ideas that have proven to be sound and comprehensive.

Our Prime Minister and finance minister are working hard to keep Canada on track. I am proud to work with them on these vital programs in budget 2011.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to my hon. colleague across the way comparing Canada, as the government often does, to other G7 countries.

The U.K. just announced that over one million young people in the United Kingdom cannot find a job. Thirty per cent of the young

people in Italy cannot find a job. It is a bit rich for the government to be comparing Canada with economies that are in dire need.

I know the member opposite is a businessman himself. He understands these issues. He comes from the GTA. How many of these mythical jobs that the Conservative government has created are jobs that come with pensions, jobs that come with benefits, jobs that we could see raising a family with, especially within the GTA?

Can the member opposite confirm that we can raise a family on a \$10-an-hour job, with no benefits, with no pension, with no job security? I would like him to answer that question.

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, I have been in small business for over 25 years. All I can say is that a low tax regime where the government does not take away from my cashflow would help me to hire new students and would help new entrepreneurs entering business. These people come with the vigour and the will to work hard in order to make our economy a success.

What I would like to know from the member opposite is what kind of business is he looking at? My business requires research, innovation and commercialization. These are the permanent jobs that we need to meet the economy of the 21st century and the need for green technology, and that would build our new economy for the future.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member actually think it is fair and just to have tax measures in the budget that would not benefit low-income Canadians?

Does he think it is tenable, in any way, that low-income volunteer firefighters, that low-income families with children, and that caregivers from low-income families would not benefit from these measures? If he believes it is unfair, will he work to change that and to ensure that these measures are made refundable and as such, would benefit low-income Canadian families who need them the most?

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, I know the member's riding quite well, as my wife is from the same riding. She lived in Kentville.

I must say that in that riding a lot of wineries are being established. Let me tell the member that if he were to speak with those people, all of them would tell him that the low tax jurisdiction is the best way to create jobs and hire people to work in those wineries.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition not only continues to filibuster priorities to grow our Canadian economy, when it comes to private members' bills and the opposition's priorities, the member for Windsor West introduced a bill about labelling for cat fur in products.

I know the government's priorities. I wonder if the member can comment on the difference between the priorities that we have of growing this economy through lower taxes and other initiatives and the priorities, like labelling products that contain cat fur, from the New Democrats. Would he speak to those priorities?

• (1355)

Mr. Chungsen Leung: Mr. Speaker, regarding those priorities, I think they are best left to businesspeople. I am sure that business would find the best strategy.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to the third reading of Bill C-13. This is not the first time I have encountered Bill C-13. In the Standing Committee on Finance we reviewed it reasonably thoroughly and I am critic for finance in the area of pensions, although I will speak in broader terms here today.

On this side of the House, we believe that Bill C-13 is a major missed opportunity. The obvious question that follows is: What would we do in the official opposition if we were making the same decisions that the government is facing at this point?

New Democrats have been proposing job creation types of proposals such as shelving the planned corporate tax cut for January 1, 2012. This would create \$3 billion to \$4 billion a year that could be used in job creation. We hear from the other side that somehow this would raise taxes. No, it would not. It would be a continuation of the tax that exists at the present time.

Next, we would have offered a new-hire tax credit for every new hire who stays in the job a full year. New Democrats would also help small businesses by providing a 2% tax cut for them, to encourage job creation. The previous speaker just talked about the environment needed for small business. Considering the dire warnings from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for at least the last five years regarding the huge deficit of infrastructure needs in this country, we would put aside moneys and set forth a plan to address the \$130 billion in infrastructure deficit.

It is very important to have long-range planning and that is what seems to be missing here today. New Democrats believe Canada should be in the lead in investing in green infrastructure and renewable energy, but we lag far behind the United States and other countries. The message from this side of the House is that it is time for the government to invest now.

Workers from the boomer generation are retiring. Canada has a zero birthrate. We must invest in skills training for current workers, for those workers who will replace the ones who retire and for the future needs of this country in leading-edge industries of tomorrow.

During our finance committee's recent pre-budget hearings for the 2012 budget, I stressed the following.

Canadians are too indebted to stimulate the economy. Business is holding on to some \$500 billion in cash because of the fear of another freezing of bank lending as happened in the last recession. This leaves only the governments to stimulate our economy. The government should seriously consider the options put forward by New Democrats.

Statements by Members

At our pre-budget hearings, Glen Hodgson, senior vice-president and chief economist of the Conference Board of Canada, at one of our public meetings, stated the following:

We believe we're severely under-invested as a country in infrastructure. We haven't done the numbers, but others have, including engineers and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and I think their number going back five years was of a deficit of about \$130 billion in terms of infrastructure investment.

He went on to say:

That tells me there is huge scope for realigning government spending priorities and making sure we're making adequate investments in roads, ports, and bridges to ensure that the Montreal economy, for example, works well. Could you imagine if the Champlain Bridge actually broke...? That would be a huge loss to Montreal's GDP and to Canada's GDP.

Sylvain Schetagne, senior economist, social and economic policy department, Canadian Labour Congress, said:

Corporations benefit from the kind of infrastructure they have around them. So a bridge that is falling apart is not good.

That is an understatement. He further said:

Having enough workers who have skills and education needed in order to provide productive work is also needed.

That is in line with the suggestion that came from the New Democrats. He said:

There are other things we can do. For instance, in social infrastructure we are facing an aging workforce, and we would like to see more Canadians working... more women and more aboriginals working. There are programs such as child care that we can put in place to allow more women to go back to work, to improve labour force participation, and to make sure that companies have workers when they need them.

Glen Hodgson said:

As part of our globalization, sadly inequality is growing in most countries around the world and in Canada. The rate of growth of inequality, as we measured it, was actually greater than in the United States, which is a bit of a surprising result.

He closed his statement by saying:

We are asking questions about whether we're doing enough as a country to ensure that all Canadians are benefiting from the economic growth—

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I regret to interrupt the hon. member at this time. He will have 15 minutes remaining in his speech when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SAINT BONIFACE OVERSEAS WORKERS

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour some exceptional constituents from my riding of Saint Boniface who will soon be embarking on overseas mission work.

Judy Holukoff, Dave Fidler and Scott Hildebrand have all chosen to leave the comforts of home to bring hope to people in need.

Statements by Members

Judy will be working in Southeast Asia from November 25 to December 9. She is travelling with a team of women from a denomination of churches called the Christian and Missionary Alliance. The team will work with exploited women rescued from prostitution to give them courage and skills for a better future.

Dave and Scott will travel this February to the earthquake-ravaged region of Haiti. They are part of a team of 10 from the Cornerstone Alliance Church. The team arranged their mission through an organization called Samaritan's Purse. They are excited to help rebuild an orphanage and hopefully have a chance to distribute toys to Haitian children.

I want to applaud these individuals, their families and everyone who has taken part in these initiatives. I thank them for doing their utmost to make this world a better place.

God bless them and bring them home safe and sound.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' irrational approach to crime is jeopardizing the good work done by community organizations throughout Quebec, and particularly in my riding of Jeanne-Le Ber. Quebec would rather focus on crime prevention than impose mandatory minimum sentences, especially for young people.

[English]

I would like to recognize the time-intensive work carried out by the many community groups in my riding. They are there for our youth to encourage and guide them toward better choices and away from organized crime and crime in general. The prevention approach is proven to have far better results than the blind punishment approach of the government.

[Translation]

Canadians want a system that prevents crimes before they happen by targeting the causes of these crimes instead of young people. We have a responsibility to ensure that our young people make the right choices.

[English]

We also have a responsibility to help them when they fall. This is what our community groups do 365 days a year, and for this they deserve not only our support, but our thanks.

* * *

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON PALLIATIVE AND COMPASSIONATE CARE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the work of the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care. MPs from all parties in the House participated in building a report on how vulnerable Canadians can be better served. Focusing on suicide prevention, palliative care and elder abuse, the committee's report, entitled *Not to be Forgotten*, was launched last week here on Parliament Hill.

The report lights our path ahead so that all levels of government can identify gaps and act accordingly within the means available, moving us methodically forward toward improved care of vulnerable Canadians.

Not to be Forgotten was built on the experiences shared by Canadians in hearings across the country and on the advice of those groups struggling to serve our most vulnerable citizens. With every small step, we can make a real difference.

I thank the hundreds of Canadians who came forward to share their stories, often through great pain. Those stories and that pain will not be forgotten.

* * *

RIDING OF CARDIGAN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand in the House today. It was on this day 23 years ago that I was first elected to this great chamber. Over the past 23 years, we have worked with different federal and provincial governments and we have made many achievements in eastern Prince Edward Island.

I want to thank all the people of the Cardigan riding who have stood with me, from the people who have served at the constituency level to all the people who have voted for me and provided me with this great opportunity. It is truly an honour to represent the people of Cardigan in the House, and I look forward to many more years of working together to create a better standard of living for the people of eastern Prince Edward Island.

I would also like to thank all of the colleagues I have worked with over the years on all sides of the House. It has been an honour to work with them in the past and the present, and I look forward to working with them in the future.

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● (1405)

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am doubly proud to congratulate two gentlemen from the riding of Prince Edward—Hastings who have recently been awarded prestigious honours for their service to Canadians.

On November 4, Dr. Robert McMurtry of Picton became a member of the Order of Canada.

Dr. McMurtry, an orthopedic surgeon, created Canada's first trauma unit at Sunnybrook Hospital and has been instrumental in strengthening health care delivery in Canada and making a positive difference in the lives of others.

As well, Mr. Martin Vermeer, a retired Canadian Forces veteran, recently received the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation. Throughout his lifetime Mr. Vermeer served the community of veterans with distinction and dedication.

On behalf of my constituents from Prince Edward—Hastings and all Canadians, I say congratulations to Dr. McMurtry and Mr. Vermeer.

ATTAWAPISKAT STATE OF EMERGENCY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been three weeks since the Attawapiskat First Nation declared a state of emergency, and in those three weeks, not a single federal or provincial official has even bothered to visit the community. Not a single aid agency has stepped forward with logistical support, but in Attawapiskat, conditions have gone from bad to worse.

Temperatures have dropped 20 degrees. They are likely to drop another 20 degrees in the coming weeks. Families in non-insulated tents and families in makeshift sheds without water or electricity are facing immediate risk. "Immediate risk" is the language being used by medical officials in the community, meaning immediate risk from infection, from disease and from fire.

There are children who are using a bucket for a toilet. This is unacceptable in Canada, and it is unacceptable that although their territory holds the richest diamond mine in the western world, those royalties go to Queen's Park and Ottawa, and nothing comes back to help this community get on its feet.

Where is the action plan to help the people of Attawapiskat?

* * *

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give tribute to an honoured Canadian, the Reverend Sandy Scott.

Reverend Scott will be awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by His Excellency the Governor General this coming January.

Sandy served with a team of six Canadian chaplains in Kandahar, Afghanistan, from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2010.

In October Captain Scott was promoted to major, following his appointment as the deputy area chaplain of Land Forces Western Areas. He also recently received an award of merit from the City of Prince Albert during its 43rd Armistice Day Ball.

Sandy continues to serve in Prince Albert as Reverend Scott of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, as padre for the Royal Canadian Legion and as the Prince Albert Police Service chaplain.

On behalf of all colleagues in the House of Commons, I thank Sandy for his service to Canada, his service to our soldiers and his continued service to our community.

* * *

BUCKAM SINGH

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a great Canadian and one of the true heroes of the Sikh community in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South.

Private Buckam Singh is one of only ten Sikh Canadian soldiers to have fought with a Canadian regiment during the First World War.

Private Singh's story had been forgotten over time, until his victory medal was discovered in a thrift shop by Sandeep Singh Brar of Brampton.

Statements by Members

Through hard work, Mr. Brar was able to help piece together Private Singh's story and trace it to his gravesite in Kitchener, where he is the only known Sikh Canadian soldier from either the First or Second World War to be buried on Canadian soil.

Private Singh has rightfully become part of our Canadian military history, and his story should be told as yet another example of the courageous women and men in our armed forces who stood up to defend the freedoms Canadians are so blessed to have.

I hope everyone in the House today will join with me in saluting Private Singh and his sacrifice and bravery.

Lest we forget.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

WHITE BIRCH PAPER

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulo, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, the 600 workers at White Birch Paper learned that the Quebec City mill, located in my riding, will be temporarily shut down two weeks before Christmas. This mill is running at full capacity with three shifts and a full order book.

Brant Industries, which owns White Birch Paper, is being sued in the United States by creditors of a paper mill for imposing astronomical management fees.

The receiver, Ernst & Young, has indicated that White Birch Papers has \$53 million in cash assets.

When will we stop tolerating the behaviour of the Gordon Gekkos of the world? Just like the famous character in the movie *Wall Street*, Peter Brant has no regard for the interests of thousands of workers, retirees and people who do business with White Birch Papers. This anti-social behaviour is unacceptable. We cannot put up with these thousands of human tragedies caused by the whims of a single man.

On May 2, Canadians were vocal about their distaste for the repeated abuses and the reprehensible complicity we have seen from government.

This must stop.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been my honour to be part of the legislative committee tasked with focusing on the marketing freedom for western farmers act.

When implemented, this legislation will allow western Canadian grain farmers, including those in the B.C. Peace River region, the opportunity to finally decide when, where and how they sell their product.

We are not killing the Canadian Wheat Board, but quite the opposite: we are allowing it to compete in an open market.

Statements by Members

I think David Wuthrich, president of the BC Grain Producers Association, said it best in a local news article:

We want choice, it's not that we want them to disappear. This is their opportunity to show they are the best option, and so far they haven't done that.

I personally agree with Mr. Wuthrich, but we do have a long way to go and a short time to get there. I am proud to say this freight train of freedom is coming soon to western Canadian wheat farmers near us.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find the continued existence of and the increase in poverty in Canada extremely worrisome.

According to the Hunger Count 2011 Report, released on November 16 by Banques alimentaires Québec, the use of food banks has increased by 22% in Quebec since 2008. What is more, 15.6% of people used a food bank for the first time. Nearly three times as many seniors are using food banks and nearly half of the households asking for help are families with children. This situation is very troubling.

In my riding, unemployment is high and the population is aging. These factors obviously affect the need for food aid. The Louiseville organization called Le Noël du pauvre has noticed an increase in requests for help.

I feel it is our duty, as elected members, to work to implement measures that will fight poverty in Canada. I am committed to doing just that, as are my NDP colleagues, and I urge the government to do the same.

* * *

[*English*]

TRADE

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposes creating jobs and attacks Canada abroad. The anti-trade NDP has a long history of attacking Canadian jobs, whether it is mining, the seal industry, forestry, automobile manufacturing, long haul trucking, GM food producers or the nuclear or oil and gas segments of the energy sector. All were opposed.

The NDP pretends to be mainstream, but it is clear that the NDP is just a political front for the narrow interests of public sector union bosses and radical activists.

The fact that the NDP is focused on special interest groups and anti-Canadian activists tells us everything we need to know. The NDP opposes creating jobs. Worse, in this time of global economic uncertainty, it is actively attacking Canada abroad. The NDP members should be ashamed of themselves. It is obvious that they are not fit to govern.

Our Conservative government is focused on job creation and economic growth. While the NDP tries to hurt Canada, our

Conservative government stands with Canadians for the best interests of Canada.

* * *

STEPHEN TURNER MEMORIAL FUND

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to recognize the Stephen Turner Memorial Fund. Stephen Turner was a UPEI and Holland College graduate, a community leader, a great Liberal and a friend to all whose life was taken far too soon in his youth.

Stephen gave so much of himself to his community that it seems only right that he continue to give even in his passing. Stephen's friends and family have made sure that his memory and character stay alive by encouraging the values of leadership, political participation and academic success of youth on Prince Edward Island.

The memorial fund in his name in the form of a scholarship will be awarded annually to a student who attends an Island post-secondary institution and who has shown interest within and commitment to the political process and community organizations on P.E.I.

On behalf of Islanders and this House, I thank Stephen's friends and family who so kindly created this memorial fund so that Stephen's legacy as a community leader could live on.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every man, woman and child has the right to respect, dignity and pride. Every year, innocent people are the victims of heinous crimes. These crimes have a serious impact on their lives, their loved ones and our entire society.

I would like to commend Senator Boisvenu for all the hard work he has done to inform Canadians about the real purpose and scope of Bill C-10. Like dozens of organizations, Senator Boisvenu truly cares about the safety of our young people and vulnerable populations. He wants to protect them from drug problems and prevent repeat sexual offences at all costs. We have the power and the duty to act, and we encourage all organizations to join our fight to prevent what cannot be undone.

* * *

[*English*]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when in opposition, the Conservatives were outraged by an arrogant government that hid from the opposition by invoking closure. Now they have done it nine times since the election.

The Minister of Public Safety once said:

For the government to bring in closure and time allocation is wrong. It sends out the wrong message to the people of Canada. It tells the people of Canada that the government is afraid....

The Minister of Canadian Heritage decried, "...the arrogance of the government in invoking closure again".

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration once called it, "...yet more unfortunate evidence of the government's growing arrogance...".

I have one more quote by the Prime Minister who said, "...the government is simply increasingly embarrassed by the state of the debate and it needs to move on".

Those out of touch Conservatives came here to change Ottawa. Instead, Ottawa changed them. In six short years they have become everything they used to oppose.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently there have been several troubling cases of dangerous individuals being released into our communities.

When it comes to keeping the most serious violent offenders off our streets, Canadians can count on this government. We introduced and passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act which strengthened provisions against repeat violent and sexual offenders.

With the introduction of the safe streets and communities bill, our government is taking further steps to ensure that the most serious violent offenders are kept off our streets. This important legislation would give the Parole Board of Canada new powers to keep Canada's most dangerous offenders behind bars where they belong.

The NDP, on the other hand, have tabled amendments that would mean lighter sentences for those who import hard drugs. It is time for the opposition to put an end to its delaying tactics and support our efforts.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy faces many challenges, and one of them is the infrastructure deficit.

New federal rules, like the waste water regulations, are being imposed on municipalities without any new investments. This is an opportunity right now to inject new money into the economy and fix some major infrastructure problems. Municipalities cannot do it on their own.

Why not stimulate the economy by helping municipalities to meet new water standards?

• (1420)

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, waste water regulations are being put forward and designed to ensure that Canadians have safe water when and where they need it. Those regulations are responsible in the way in which we are doing it.

Oral Questions

The Leader of the Opposition is right in the sense that these regulations need to be twinned with investment with regard to infrastructure for water. The problem is that the NDP has voted against every dime of new investment that we have made to ensure that water gets to Canadians safely.

It is true that we need to have effective regulations. We do have to have responsible regulations. It would be nice if the NDP offered solutions and supported both.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' strategy to implement measures and make others pay for them is not a sustainable strategy. For example, employment insurance eligibility criteria that are too stringent are forcing people to seek provincial social assistance. The waste water treatment regulations are forcing municipalities to buy equipment that they cannot afford. The Conservative crime strategy is to force the provinces to build prisons.

When will the government foot the bill for its own ambitions?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about a number of files but let us be clear: we are making sure we take a responsible approach with each province. The provinces are responsible for delivering the goods on the ground. That is why we are working with the provinces when it comes to crime, investment in waste water treatment and other things. We are working with the provinces, not against them. Our history, our heritage and our commitment in these matters clearly demonstrates that such is currently the case, and we will continue to work with the provinces.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may be working with the provinces but they are not listening to them.

Public infrastructure is the backbone of our economy. After years of underinvestment, the infrastructure deficit is blatantly obvious. It is upsetting our economy; our communities are suffering and will pay the price. Municipalities own 53% of Canada's infrastructure but collect only 8% of the taxes. The federal government must do its part to upgrade infrastructure. It would be good for employment and the economy. It would be good for public health and safety. It is a profitable investment.

Will the government make this commitment?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are engaged on all of these files. The infrastructure deficit that our government inherited from the previous Liberal government is being tackled aggressively and responsibly by this government.

Oral Questions

As a matter of fact, when we put in place our economic action plan we had the largest investment in Canada's infrastructure than any government since the second world war. That has resulted in projects across the country. By the way, on an equal basis across the country, moving forward, we are working with the provinces on all of these projects.

More than that, it was not just a one-time investment. We have made the gas tax transfer to municipalities permanent, which means that over \$2 billion are going directly to the municipalities so that municipal governments can decide for themselves what projects are their priorities rather than having—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 72,000 jobs were lost in October alone. The cost of living continues to rise and household debt has hit a record high. How do you expect families to save for their retirement when they have to pay off their credit cards and are having trouble finding work? This government has the gall to say that its plan will help millions of Canadians. What is this government doing? Nothing, except helping its friends in high places.

When will this government finally trim the fat from its friends and come up with a real recovery plan for the Canadian economy to create jobs here in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that we did come up with a real economic action plan but his party voted against that. We put forward a second economic action plan and those members voted against that, too.

I will refer exactly to what the member's question was about. We are putting forward a pooled registered pension plan that would actually be available, accessible and economical for over 60% of the workforce in this country that does not have a workplace pension plan right now. I certainly hope those members will not vote against that.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reviews are in on the Prime Minister's failed pension scheme. The Conservative plan will not fix the problem with Canada's retirement system. As the Toronto *Star* says, "It's hard to see how they can make that claim with a straight face". A simple, gradual, affordable increase to the stable guaranteed Canada pension plan would help every Canadian retire with dignity. Instead of paying for tax cuts to friends of the Conservatives, the CPP is what Canadians should invest in.

When will the out-of-touch government stop playing retirement roulette and strengthen the one pension plan families can rely on, which is the CPP? It promised to strengthen it. Why does it not do so? Why does it not strengthen the CPP?

●(1425)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we actually have been working with the provinces to develop a plan that works for both the provincially-regulated and federally-regulated. Let me read a quote from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It stated:

A new voluntary, low-cost and administratively simple retirement savings mechanism will allow more employers, employees, and the self-employed to participate in a pension plan....PRPPs have the potential to expand the retirement savings options for thousands of Canadian small businesses and their employees.

That is a quote worth listening to.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sovereign debt problem keeps rolling across Europe, from Greece to Italy and now Spain. In the polarized politics of the United States, they are headed into yet another damaging game of fiscal chicken. Global economic risks are rising and here in Canada our growth rate, job numbers and job quality are all getting worse.

Still, on January 1, the government will increase EI payroll taxes by another \$600 million. At this critical moment, will the government listen to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and stop this job-killing Conservative tax increase?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is our government's record is crystal clear. We are the government that has lowered taxes more than any other government across the country and we have done so in ways that have benefited the Canadian economy. In fact, Canada's tax regime is, indeed, the envy of the world because we have the most competitive tax rate. *Forbes* magazine has said that Canada is the best economy in the world in which to do business. We are moving forward. We are going in the right direction.

The member opposite mentioned things on the exterior that we cannot control and things within Canada that we can control. One thing we can control is the vote that will take place tonight with regard to the next phase of Canada's action plan. If he believes in lower taxes, he will stand with this government and lower taxes on Canadians.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be clear, Liberals reduced EI premiums every year for 12 consecutive years, for a total saving of \$4,000 for every employee, \$5,500 for every employer, a Liberal tax cut in total of \$60 billion. The Conservatives have done the opposite, raising job-killing payroll taxes just when jobs are most vulnerable.

Why will the government not hold the line on payroll taxes and help create jobs instead of spending billions upon billions for bigger jails and untended fighter jets?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Wascana is still trying to fight the last federal election. The public rendered its decision. It does not trust the Liberals with the economy and that is why they are sitting over there. That is why we were re-elected, with a majority government, to focus on the economy, and we are getting the job done.

Specifically with regard to the question of EI, we have put forward a project to ensure that 500,000 businesses that want to employ Canadians will have tax relief in this budget. The Liberals stand opposed to that. If they believe in it, they should stand and support our budget tonight, this week and moving forward to lower taxes on businesses.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives increase EI premiums by \$1.2 billion and then give back \$160 million. It is hardly a fair deal.

It is all about priorities. The Conservatives have ballooned the size of the federal government by more than one-third. Their annual program spending is up by \$65 billion, a whopping 37%, and more than half of that increase happened before, not because of any recession. Still family incomes are stagnant. Most Canadians do not have a decent pension. The gap is growing between the very wealthy and everybody else.

Why do bigger jails seem more important to the government—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk specifically about our proposals, what is at stake and what the Liberals are standing against. We are putting in place a family caregiver tax credit to help families with the cost of raising their families and taking care of their responsibilities, a children's arts tax credit, a volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters who stand up in public and ensure we have the services that we need in times of crisis. We want to give them a tax credit. The Liberals are standing against that. We want to have a tax credit for small business. We want to make the gas tax fund permanent to municipalities so municipal governments can take care of their responsibilities as well.

We are taking care of our responsibilities. We were elected to do it and we will deliver it in spite of—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

* * *

G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last number of months, the Conservatives have tried out a whole whack of excuses to explain the outrageous behaviour of the Muskoka minister. No line has been more bizarre than at least “every penny was well spent”. We know that \$3,000 was spent to put up a chandelier, \$1,500 to move a bed and a new fridge just for the flowers. No wonder the Muskoka maverick thought he got a good deal when he shelled out \$100,000 for a gazebo.

Will the minister explain why \$2 million of taxpayer money was spent on renovating his friend's hotel?

• (1430)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada hosted the world's leaders for an important summit. When hosting the leaders of the G8 countries and thousands of other guests, it is expected that some adjustments would be made to accommodations. Every invoice was reviewed by professional public servants, as is always the case, before money went out the door.

The summit is already paying dividends on important initiatives such as our maternal and child health initiative.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Mr. Nobody does not have the facts right. The civil servants were not allowed to review it. It was reviewed by the three amigos. There was the minister who got to play Daddy Warbucks, the hotel manger who got a \$2 million renovation right before the property was flipped for \$26 million and there was the mayor who walked away with two giant white elephants.

When will the member stand, be accountable and show us the documents that allowed this boondoggle to come forward?

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the important thing to point out is that every invoice was reviewed by professional public servants, as is always the case, before money went out the door. The summit is already paying dividends on important issues, such as maternal and child health initiatives, and that member should support those initiatives.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the NDP we now know that the G8 summit resulted in an incredible waste of public money, perhaps the worst since the sponsorship scandal. Canadians want to know why no one has been punished. In addition to the gazebos, Olympic-sized skating rinks, fake media centres—there is no end to the list—we have just learned that the Deerhurst resort received millions of dollars in public money to make cosmetic changes that cost us an arm and a leg. The government paid exorbitant amounts to move a bed or a chandelier and of course, once again, taxpayers footed the \$2 million bill.

Can the President of the Treasury Board explain to Canadians what was the cost value of the G8 fiasco that was held in his riding?

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a great honour for Canada to host the G8 summit. When hosting the leaders of the world's great economies, it is expected that some adjustments must be made for their accommodations. Every invoice was reviewed by professional public servants, as is always the case, before the money went out the door.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, history never repeats itself, but it sometimes follows a similar script.

It seems that the President of the Treasury Board was not the only one to profit from the G8 summit in his riding. The Deerhurst resort also won the G8 lottery by getting \$2 million in free renovations. Less than nine months later, this hotel was sold for \$26 million. We know why: because it did not have to pay for the renovations itself.

Is that the Conservatives' tax plan: take public money and distribute it to its friends in the private sector? Can the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka explain why public money was spent to line the pockets of an individual?

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member has never hosted international guests in his home. When one does that, accommodations are made for guests, especially when they are leaders of the great economies of the world. The important thing to remember is that every invoice was reviewed by professional public servants, as is always the case, before money went out the door.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the UN estimates that over 3,500 civilians have been killed in Syria during the government's crackdown. Today the Security Council is debating sanctions against Syria. For Canada, failure to win a seat on the Security Council is not an excuse for inaction.

Will the government reach out to Russia and China to join others in the international community working to end this regime's violence against its own people?

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the campaign of terror and violence against the Syrian people must stop. Canada again calls on President al-Assad to step down immediately.

Canada stands with the Syrian people in their efforts to secure freedom and democracy. Our government will continue to work with our allies to bring diplomatic pressure to the Syrian government, including bringing forth stronger economic sanctions.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need more than just promises and rhetoric.

The sanctions imposed against Syria in October were supposed to send a strong message to the Bashar al-Assad regime, but Suncor, which is working with the Syrian state oil company on a \$1.2 billion project, said that its operations were not affected.

Will the government ensure that the new sanctions against Syria will prevent its friends from doing business as usual when millions of civilians are being killed?

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has taken decisive action by imposing sanctions that directly target members of the current Syrian regime and those who provide it with support. We are currently working with our allies to bring diplomatic pressure to bear. We will be bringing forth further stronger economic sanctions.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken arrogance and secrecy to a new low. Without letting Canadians know, the Conservatives are throwing half a billion dollars into a new U.S. military satellite. We, in the House, had to find out about this program from the media.

On what grounds does the government feel free to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on military projects, without telling anyone? Would the minister please advise the House and Canadians today what this satellite will be used for?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our missions in Afghanistan and Libya have proven that advance secure communications is critical to the success of modern day military operations. The Canadian contribution to this international partnership would guarantee our Canadian Forces the capacity to communicate securely and officially during operations when lives are at stake.

Our investment fits with the Canadian Forces' existing budget and will result in supporting and creating skilled Canadian jobs across the country.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians and what we in the House need to know is what forces, and when, are we talking about communicating with?

Canadian families deserve a better explanation for a half billion dollar expenditure than that. They deserve to know, and we all deserve to know, why the Conservatives are pursuing another risky military project shrouded in mystery. How many more boondoggles before the government finally wises up?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, neither is it a secret nor is it a boondoggle. Negotiations on this memorandum of understanding continue. Obviously it is out in the open. The media knows about it. I am surprised the hon. member did not find out otherwise.

We expect the opposition to support giving our men and women in the Canadian Forces the capabilities they require to complete their missions successfully and safely.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of countries have already indicated they no longer want the F-35s, but this government seems determined to procure them.

Some U.S. senators have expressed concern over the cost of these planes, but this government does not even want to tell us how much they will cost. In fact, all we know is that the cost keeps going up as more and more countries withdraw from the program. We also know that these planes are not compatible with the nature of the Canadian landscape and they will not operate well in the Arctic.

The Associate Minister of National Defence said that he has a plan B for the F-35s. Since plan A has failed, can he tell us more about plan B?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know from what comic book our hon. friend is reading. All reasonable people agree that the Canadian Forces require a fighter that is able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Let me quote U.S. Secretary of Defence Panetta, last Friday, when he said, "Let me be clear, that the United States is committed to the development of the F-35".

I witnessed first-hand the aircraft coming off the production line with parts stamped "Made in Canada".

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to believe that in 2011 many of our harbours, including Charlottetown's, are still receiving raw sewage. New federal environmental rules force municipalities to treat raw sewage and we welcome that. However, these regulations mean additional costs to communities that are already strained with aging infrastructure.

The government has known for years that these new regulations would force municipalities to spend enormous dollars to fix their treatment plants, but it has yet to come to the table to assist.

Could the minister indicate when he plans to announce an infrastructure plan to clean up Canada's harbours?

• (1440)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague that our government has invested more than \$3 billion in waste water management and waste water infrastructure, and on top of that have increased and made permanent more than \$2 billion a year in terms of gas tax refunds aimed at infrastructure.

The Charlottetown share of the infrastructure money from the gas tax rebate will be \$3 million annually. Municipalities and the provinces have to do their part to make waste water management their priority.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable that, in 2011, raw sewage is still being dumped into Canadian waters. We are pleased to see proposed regulations for the waste water from our towns and villages, but the government has forgotten to provide those towns and villages with the necessary means to comply with those regulations.

Oral Questions

The mayor and council of the second largest municipality in Nova Scotia are risking imprisonment because they do not have the means to pay for new sewage treatment plants.

Why has the government not come up with a funding formula for water infrastructure in Canada? Why this shortfall?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just told my hon. friend's colleague, in fact the municipalities and provinces have to do their part to address waste water management issues.

As I just said, the province of Prince Edward Island will get \$15 million in gas tax rebate money this year and \$3 million is the fair share for Charlottetown. All of these costs could be easily managed if only municipalities made waste water management a priority.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence just dropped the better end of half a billion dollars on a U.S. military satellite system not listed in any procurement program.

The minister said it was to foil cyber attacks on commercial information, a claim which has since been denied by both military and intelligence experts.

For half a billion dollars, can the House assume that there will be substantial guaranteed industrial regional benefits, and can the House assume that contracts will not be subject to buy American and ITAR provisions?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, operations in Afghanistan and Libya have proven that advanced secure communications are critical to the success of modern day military operations.

We are doing everything we can to support our men and women in uniform, so that they can carry out their tasks in a safe environment. Communication is a critical aspect of our commitment to those men and women.

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ASBESTOS

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cracks are starting to appear in the Conservative caucus over the Prime Minister's support of deadly asbestos.

Conservative MPs are willing to risk the wrath of the Prime Minister and go behind his back to meet asbestos experts. Public health officials disagree with the Conservatives' dangerous approach. Scientists and doctors disagree. The Canadian Cancer Society disagrees. Canadians disagree.

When will the government take action to ban deadly asbestos?

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over 30 years, the Canadian government has supported the safe use of chrysotile. We are talking about risk management. Recent scientific studies have shown that chrysotile can be used safely when it is used in a regulated and controlled environment.

This government will continue to act in the best interests of Canadians, while promoting the sustainable and safe use of our natural resources.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister can feed us the same old lines, but that cannot hide the cracks showing in the Conservative ranks.

The Conservatives are wondering the same things as all Canadians. How can the government continue to export asbestos even though the risks are known? Why is the government abandoning workers in regions that produce asbestos?

Will the government present a plan to help these regions make the economic transition?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about safe use, which means risk management. Recent scientific studies have shown that chrysotile can be used safely in a controlled environment that is properly regulated, either at the national or international level.

* * *

● (1445)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week in Bali there is a major conference to discuss protecting the ozone layer. Chances are that Canada will not be able to keep its commitments. Even though scientists have found a huge hole above Canada, cuts are being made to the ozone monitoring program and the minister is refusing to make his intentions clear.

When will the minister present a plan to protect the ozone layer and Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, my colleague asks the hypothetical question with a hypothetical worst outcome. In fact, Environment Canada will continue to monitor ozone. The World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre in Montreal will continue to provide world-class service.

Once again, I make no apologies at all for our government attempting to find the most cost-effective ways to protect the environment.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when will the government realize that science is real and it cannot actually be spun like a talking point? There is a hole in the ozone over the Arctic, twice the size of Ontario, and action on the ozone is fundamentally necessary right now.

Instead, we learn that senior government officials are signing memos verifying the importance of ozone protection programs in Canada one minute and then justifying Conservative cuts as streamlining and optimization.

When will the government get its act together and realize that streamlining the Department of the Environment hurts all of us?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is quoting a media story which took a particular quote out of context.

As I said, Environment Canada will continue to monitor ozone. Canada has played a leadership role in helping to create and to manage the Montreal protocol which has been very successful over the decades in phasing out nearly all ozone depleting substances. Canada will continue to play a leadership role.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, New York State is threatening to shut down the St. Lawrence Seaway with job-killing shipping rules impossible for industry to meet or agencies to enforce. The U.S. and Canada jointly enforce the rules to ensure that ships do not bring in invasive species, I mean species.

In his new role, advising the Minister of Transport on ballast water, could the parliamentary secretary please update us on his meetings on Friday in New York? And I meant invasive species.

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, I congratulate the hon. member for his excellent work and shame on the Speaker for invading the House in that way.

Last week, we forged an alliance with New York longshoremen workers, industry leaders and state legislators, led by Democratic Senator Diane Savino. We now have a consensus among labour and business against these job-killing rules. New York Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis said that this policy would result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and would have a disastrous effect on the Great Lakes region, surrounding states and Canada as well.

There are 55,000 Canadian jobs at stake, and we will fight for every single one of them.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has received a gag order from the Minister of Public Safety. Now all RCMP public comments must be vetted first by the minister's office. This will interfere with the independence of the RCMP and their ability to comment on anything the minister thinks is controversial. The government's answer to future RCMP scandal is to muzzle their ability to talk to Canadians.

Oral Questions

Why the gag order? Does the minister have something to hide?

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a government it is our responsibility to communicate with Canadians. Co-operation between departments and agencies is standard procedure and practice. This is another sad attempt by the NDP to have a drive-by smear of the RCMP and it is a shame. It shows the NDP is not fit to govern.

[Translation]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the comments by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety are shocking. The last thing the RCMP needs is political interference. The RCMP must be allowed to do its job. Canadians expect the RCMP to provide accurate information, not engage in public relations. Once again, by trying to muzzle the RCMP, the government has gone too far. It is clearly intervening in the work of an independent body.

Will the minister respect the RCMP's independence and put an end to this new protocol?

• (1450)

[English]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians respect and appreciate the work that is done by the RCMP. It would be good if the NDP would do the same thing. This kind of co-operation between departments and agencies is standard procedure. It is normal protocol.

Let us stand behind our law enforcement and not do these kinds of shameful drive-by slurs.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to thumb his nose at the provinces with his sledgehammer approach to justice. Quebec has had to plead with the justice minister just to get a meeting before the government forces its prisons agenda through committee this week.

Paying lip service is not enough. Will the government actually listen to the provinces that want to bring changes about in Bill C-10? Will it be a partner with the provinces or will it continue to turn its back on them?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will point out what one justice minister said just in the last week or so. He said:

The point I would make to everybody is these are things that were asked for by most provinces when we went through federal-provincial-territorial ministers meetings earlier. When we had the discussions, you know, nobody came and said, well, don't do it unless you agree to pay for it. Everybody said these are things that we need to make our communities safe—

This was by Don Morgan, minister of justice and attorney general for Saskatchewan. It is a part of Canada as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec justice minister is returning to Ottawa tomorrow to ask the

government, for the umpteenth time, for a positive response to the amendments to Bill C-10 that Quebec is seeking. Quebec refuses to pay the costs associated with this Conservative ideology, which is mocking Quebec's 40 years of experience when it comes to long-term protection of the public. For months now we have been telling this government repeatedly that its crime agenda is misguided, particularly when it comes to young offenders. Will the minister finally listen to the provinces, the experts and the official opposition, thereby practising real open federalism?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time we have welcomed Minister Fournier to discuss the important steps we are taking to protect the public. The provinces, including Quebec, made many recommendations that we took into consideration when drafting this bill to protect the public.

Our approach is balanced. It strikes a balance between prevention and enforcement, and it emphasizes rehabilitation. Nothing in this bill undermines Quebec's ability to enforce the law as it sees fit. The goal is to protect the public. As we know, that phrase is not in the NDP's vocabulary.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an access to information request has uncovered a government briefing note titled "Ozone monitoring cuts". The brief says that there is no duplication in the ozone measurement network.

Why then did the assistant deputy minister tell the public the networks will be consolidated and streamlined? Why has the government said that there are no cuts to ozone monitoring when its briefing note reveals the truth?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would once again encourage my colleague to use better sources in the research of her questions in the House. The quotation in question was taken out of context. It was taken completely out of context.

Environment Canada will continue to monitor the ozone. As I have said many times before, the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Data Centre will continue to deliver world-class services.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had prepared a question for the Minister of the Environment about this troubling memo and the contradictions in his responses. These political non-answers lead me to ask a basic question on the minister's knowledge of this important issue.

[English]

Could the minister explain to the House what ozone is and what is the difference between its impact at low altitude and high altitude? I just need to know that he understands the issues.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there are any shortcomings in this House, it is in the quality of the questions from the Liberal opposition.

Oral Questions

This government would gladly compare our record on the environment, in all its dimensions, to—

● (1455)

Mr. Justin Trudeau: You don't know what ozone is.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of the Environment has the floor. We will have a little bit of order.

The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, to complete my answer, again, the opposition is using a questionable media source quotation of one of my staff that has been taken out of context.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has finally admitted what the rest of us already know, that the fishery is broken.

The five years of Conservative mismanagement after a decade of Liberal negligence cannot be reversed. Tearing up the Fisheries Act, firing scientists, laying off fisheries staff and turning out the lights will not put fish back in the sea or food on fishermen's tables.

The fishery is broken. Will the Conservative government finally support our fishing communities and put forward a concrete plan to fix it?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the average age of our fishers is increasing. It is the same for our plant workers, and a declining number of new entrants are going into the fishery.

It is a serious situation, one that we can change through modernization and efficiencies in the Department of Fisheries and in the fishery itself. If we are to make any difference in the future of the fishery, we need to make changes today.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche and Minister for ACOA is basically calling seasonal workers in the Atlantic provinces lazy by saying that they work only the minimum number of hours required to receive employment insurance benefits. As well, despite all the job losses, the government has no concrete plan to help workers.

Rather than insulting workers, will the minister withdraw his statement and force the Conservative government to adopt concrete measures to create employment? What the minister said was shameful.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue.

During the global recession and as a result of that recession, the workers and skills required by the industry were still in short supply. That is why, in our economic action plan, we introduced training for workers who have lost their jobs. Through this training, we have

helped over 1,000 workers to acquire the skills they need today and in the future. The NDP voted against these initiatives. We also extended the initiative for older workers to help them to return to the labour market. The NDP voted against this as well. Why is the NDP voting against workers?

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has placed unprecedented focus on the health of mothers, newborns and children.

A major partner of the government in improving the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people has been the World Health Organization.

At the request of the WHO, our Prime Minister agreed to co-chair the UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women and Children's Health, which recently released a series of recommendations.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation please update the House on progress being made?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues its leadership on maternal, newborn and child health under the Prime Minister's leadership and the head of the WHO, who we are pleased to host here in Canada today, along with the top health experts in the field of maternal and child health.

We are about accountability. We are about getting results. We are about better health for children and saving more lives.

Canadians can be proud of our continued leadership to ensure that every MNCH dollar counts.

* * *

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the critical shortage of prescription drugs worldwide has now become a real problem.

In the U.S., the FDA set up a special committee to deal with the problem. Congress has held hearings. President Obama ordered an investigation into the pharmaceutical industry.

The Liberals have been trying to get the health committee to hold similar hearings, but the government blocks it, preferring to let the pharmaceutical industry warn us as shortages arise.

This information will do nothing to get drugs to patients. Already certain cancer patients cannot get the drugs they need.

Why is the government so complacent—

● (1500)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Health.

Oral Questions

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking a leadership role when it comes to dealing with drug shortages.

This summer, I told the drug companies that if they did not take action, our government would look at regulations to require action. I am pleased to report to the House that these companies have responded positively to my request.

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SPORTS

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that we will all get to watch Canada's Sidney Crosby get back on the ice tonight. It took Crosby 320 days to recover from a concussion he suffered during a hockey game.

While the NHL, NFL, CFL and other leagues are getting serious about concussions, experts say that the government could do a lot more to protect our children playing sports.

When will the government finally agree to work with the New Democrats on a national strategy to reduce serious injuries in amateur sports?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly join with my colleague in the good news that Sidney Crosby will return to the ice tonight. He was a great star for Canada at the Olympics and is a role model for Canadians on how to behave in sport.

I agree with my colleague and his persistent efforts on this subject. Our government has taken action. The Minister of State for Sport and the Prime Minister have been involved on this file to ensure that we work with amateur sport organizations, not against them, to ensure we can move forward and have strategies that make sense for individual sports. Lacrosse has a different universe of head injuries, so do football and hockey. They all have their own science and we need to ensure that the sports are safe for our kids to play.

* * *

IRAN

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, members of the International Atomic Energy Agency, including Canada, spoke with one voice on Iran's nuclear program. Even traditional allies of Iran voted for a resolution that holds the Iranian regime to account for again failing to live up to its international obligations.

Could the government House leader please update us on this situation?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the International Atomic Energy Agency resolution but, frankly, we wish it had gone further. That is why Canada is working together with like-minded countries and is today expanding sanctions against Iran.

[*Translation*]

Canada is working together with like-minded countries and is today expanding sanctions against Iran.

[*English*]

The sanctions cover the known leadership of the Iranian revolutionary guard and block virtually all transactions with Iran, including those with the central bank.

The regime in Iran poses a significant threat to regional and global peace. We will do what it takes to isolate the regime and to minimize the risk that it poses to global peace.

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CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Universal Children's Day, but Canadians have little reason to celebrate, with one of the worst child poverty rates in the G20.

While the government claims to be supporting families, one in ten Canadian children lives in poverty. The government's callous response is "just get a job".

The Conservatives just do not get it. Many have jobs, low-paying, part-time jobs.

Why is the government refusing to help fight child poverty? Why has there been no action on creating the jobs that these families need?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is why the NDP has voted against every initiative we have to help families get back to work and look after their children.

Those members voted against the universal child care benefit. They voted against an increase in the national child benefit. They also voted against the WITB, the working income tax benefit, that is there to help families get over the welfare wall and encourage them to get back to work.

Why is it that the NDP will not help workers work?

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, unhappy that Quebec is opposed to their justice bill, the Conservatives are turning to blind partisanship. Senator Boisvenu, an unelected representative, is doing the dirty work.

For a week now, he has been attacking the credibility of the Barreau du Québec, questioning the competence of minister Jean-Marc Fournier and ridiculing unanimous decisions by Quebec's National Assembly.

My question is simple, and I hope to receive a very clear answer. Does the Minister of Justice approve of the inappropriate attacks being made by the unelected senator or does he condemn the derogatory comments?

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very consistent. The bill that is before Parliament has been here in some cases for four years. It specifically targets those individuals in the business of trafficking in drugs and those individuals who would sexually exploit children.

Canadians from coast to coast gave us a mandate and we are following through on that mandate. I am very proud of our stand in that area.

* * *

● (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of a delegation that is heading the 18th Canada-Mexico Interparliamentary Conference led by His Excellency José González Morfi, President of the Senate of the United Mexican States, and His Excellency Porfirio Muñoz Ledo from the Chamber of Deputies of the United Mexican States.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADIAN AUTISM DAY ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-351, An Act respecting a Canadian Autism Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill respecting a national autism day. I am proud to introduce legislation that would recognize the work and struggles of those with autism. It also would recognize the challenges faced by friends and families of people with this condition, in particular, parents who raise an autistic child and all of the special people who work with and advocate for them. It is right and overdue to mark and appreciate these challenges.

So much about autism remains to be discovered and I know many in the House have called for additional funding for research, support and coverage under the Canada Health Act. I repeat these calls today. The creation of a national autism day would bring light and attention to those who fall in the autism spectrum and to those who tirelessly support a family member or friend with autism. This is a positive step we can take today. National attention and focus are important first steps to ensuring that all affected by autism have the support they need.

I ask that all members of the House support the bill.

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

NATIONAL OFFICE FOR FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-352, An Act to amend the Statistics Act (National Office for Fire and Emergency Response Statistics).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill that would create a national office for fire and emergency response statistics. This office would build a database to compile fire and emergency response statistics from across Canada. These statistics would be a valuable and much needed source of information that would help our firefighters and policy-makers analyze data to keep our communities safer.

Recently I met with representatives of the firefighting and emergency response community. They told me that Canada did not track fire statistics and that it was missing an important tool to help them do their jobs, keeping Canadians and firefighters safe.

Our first responders are asking us to keep comprehensive information on fire damage, fire deaths and emergency response times so they can better serve our communities.

There are many other things that the government could be doing to support our firefighters. We should implement a public safety officer compensation benefit for the families of fallen police and firefighters. We should include firefighter safety considerations in the national building code and we should expand our fire database to eventually include comprehensive information on all aspects of firefighting that could be shared across the country.

The bill is one important component of what firefighters have been asking for. I urge all members of the House to join with me in supporting our firefighters and give firefighters access to the information they need to keep us all safe.

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

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● (1510)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-353, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Income Tax Act (extra-energy-efficient products).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a bill inspired by a young person in my riding, Hansel Fung. He, like many young people, is concerned about our excessive use of energy. This bill proposes a system of tax incentives to encourage Canadian families to lower their energy consumption.

Specifically, the bill would provide financial incentives for individual families to lower their carbon footprint by reducing their energy consumption and use. It would create an HST exemption to lower the price of household appliances deemed by regulation to be extra energy efficient.

The existing Energy Star program helps consumers make informed choices by highlighting energy efficient products, but this bill would go one step further by exempting such products from the HST. Families would be rewarded for making green choices when they purchase low-energy household appliances and products such as compact fluorescent light bulbs. This bill would also create a tax credit to be claimed at the end of the year that would allow families to deduct 10% of the cost of the purchase of low-energy appliances.

I hope all of my colleagues will join with me in supporting this bill, which will encourage a greener future for Canada and a better world.

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

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PETITIONS

POVERTY ELIMINATION ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first petition is about Bill C-233, An Act to eliminate poverty in Canada.

In this petition, the undersigned indicate that poverty affects over 10% of Canadians and disproportionately affects aboriginal peoples, recent immigrants, people with disabilities, youth, women and children. Poverty leads to poor health such that individuals suffering from poverty suffer more health problems and have lower life expectancies.

There are a number of other items that they outline in the petition. They indicate that a majority of provincial and territorial governments have adopted poverty reduction strategies, but that they are limited in that they are unable to reduce poverty in their jurisdictions without support from the federal government.

They are calling on the House to ensure swift passage of Bill C-233, An Act to eliminate poverty in Canada.

FOOD AND DRUG ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have has to do with An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods). The undersigned are saying that Canadians have a right to make informed choices about the food they eat by having adequate information provided on food labels. They therefore call on the House of Commons to support An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods).

ASBESTOS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final petition has to do with banning asbestos. In this petition the petitioners indicate that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos. Canada spends millions subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use. They are calling on the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities that they live in; to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad; and to stop

Routine Proceedings

blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

TIBET

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since March, ten Tibetans have set themselves ablaze in a symbolic yet horrific act of defiance against the Chinese government. These incidents reflect not only the dire situation facing Tibetans but also the lengths to which they will go in order to sound the international alarm, which we ignore both at their peril and our own.

Petitioners note that seven of these self-immolations have been linked to the Kirti monastery in Ngaba, where Chinese security forces are present. These unprecedented and desperate acts are an attempt by the Tibetan people to raise awareness of the systemic repression and persecution they face while seeking international intervention.

Therefore, petitioners call on the government to intervene to save the lives of Tibetan people by urging China to withdraw its security forces from the Kirti monastery, to stop the ongoing torture and mistreatment of monks in Tibet and to uphold the fundamental values of freedom of religion.

Mr. Speaker, I join my voice and those of the members of this House to those of the petitioners in calling upon China to immediately cease the persecution of Tibetans, and in particular of Tibetan monks.

● (1515)

TRANSPORTATION IN LABRADOR

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a petition on behalf of many residents in Labrador, primarily from Red Bay, but also from Mary's Harbour and Charlottetown.

They are calling for more work to be done on the vital transportation lifeline for Labrador communities, providing access and economic activity and allowing residents to obtain health care and all other vital services. They cannot afford to wait any more years, or decades, for phases two and three of the Trans-Labrador Highway and the Labrador Straits portion of the Trans-Labrador Highway, which form part of the national highway system.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 164 and 174.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 164—**Hon. John McKay:**

With regard to Canada's fleet of fighter jets: (a) how many CF-18s are scheduled to be in service in (i) 2017, (ii) 2018, (iii) 2019, (iv) 2020, (v) beyond 2021; (b) on average, by how many additional flight hours can the life of the CF-18s be extended beyond the extension achieved through the Incremental Modernization Project; (c) in what year will Canada's full fleet of F-35s achieve (i) initial operating capability, (ii) full operational capability; and (d) what contingency plans, if any, does the government have to ensure that there is no operational gap between the retiring CF-18s and the acquisition and deployment of F-35s should their production schedule be delayed?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), retirement of the CF-18 fleet will be coordinated with the acceptance schedule of F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces forecast that the number of CF-18s in service will reduce gradually in the early years of the acquisition of the F-35, and then reduce more quickly as the F-35 fleet comes online. The Canadian Forces undertook an in-depth planning process to ensure that there would be no operational gap for our fighter aircraft fleet. The current delivery plan is based on a cost-effective point in the F-35 production schedule, balanced against the Royal Canadian Air Force's ability to absorb the F-35 and the anticipated life expectancy of the CF-18.

With regard to (b), to be clear, the CF-18 incremental modernization project, IMP, did not extend the structural life of the aircraft. This project was limited to addressing the obsolescence of avionics and armament systems that were no longer operationally relevant and were increasingly expensive to maintain.

There has been a separate multi-year project to increase the fatigue life of the aircraft by developing repair schemes for cracks and by strengthening the structure in key areas. The amount of repair work to be completed under this project will be assessed and managed as necessary to ensure that there are sufficient CF-18s available during the transition to the F-35.

With regard to (c)(i), initial operating capability is currently forecast to be 2020.

With regard to (c)(ii), full operational capability is currently forecast to be 2025.

The definition of initial operational capability, IOC, is associated with attaining a certain specific operational capability. In the case of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the declaration of initial operating capability is based on the RCAF receiving a certain minimum number of aircraft to employ operationally, as well as adequately trained operators and maintainers. In general, full operational capability will be reached once the project has delivered and put into place the full fleet of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, trained personnel, infrastructure, equipment and support elements to meet the Canadian Forces' mandated capabilities.

With regard to (d), the CF-18 incremental modernization project and the CF-18 structural life extension process have provided a measure of robustness and flexibility to react to short-term delays in the achievement of F-35 initial operational capability. As stated above, retirement of the CF-18 fleet will be coordinated with the acceptance schedule of F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft.

Question No. 174—**Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to Transport Canada, and more specifically the disposal or sale of vessels formerly operated by Marine Atlantic, the MV *Caribou* and the MV *Joseph & Clara Smallwood*: (a) who bought or acquired each of the vessels; (b) how much, in Canadian dollars, did the purchaser pay for each of the vessels; (c) who was the ship broker that handled each of the transactions and where was the broker from; (d) were any Canadian broker firms considered or asked to handle the transactions, and, (i) if so, who were they and why did they not participate in the process, (ii) if no Canadian broker firm was considered, why; and (e) how much, in Canadian dollars, were the brokers compensated for each of the transactions?

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), the MV *Caribou* was sold to Comrie Ltd. of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for \$3,875,000 in Canadian dollars.

The MV *Joseph and Clara Smallwood* was sold to Merrion Navigation S.A. of the Marshall Islands for \$3,800,000 in Canadian dollars.

With regard to (c), the ship broker was ICAP Shipping based out of London, England.

With regard to (d), Marine Atlantic disposed of the vessels in accordance with all appropriate and accepted procurement practices applicable to Canadian crown corporations. The corporation issued a request for proposals, RFP, to ensure an open bidding process to select a broker. The RFP was posted on MERX, a leading electronic tendering service used by the Government of Canada. While no Canadian brokerage firms were directly contacted by Marine Atlantic, the tendering process allowed for any Canadian brokerage firm to submit a bid through MERX. No Canadian firms submitted a bid.

While it was publicly known for several months that Marine Atlantic was attempting to sell the vessels, no Canadian brokerage firm approached the corporation before the issuance of the RFP or in response to the RFP. One Canadian broker did contact Marine Atlantic after the selected brokerage firm had been awarded the contract.

With regard to (e), ICAP received 1% of the gross sale price: \$38,750 in Canadian dollars for the MV *Caribou* and \$38,000 in Canadian dollars for the MV *Joseph and Clara Smallwood*.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 166, 168 and 169 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Questions Nos. 166, 168 and 169 be made orders for returns and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Speaker's Ruling

[Text]

Question No. 166—**Hon. John McKay:**

With regard to the hiring of consultants and contractors by the Department of National Defence in fiscal year 2010-2011, how many individuals who were hired under contract also received payments for (i) a Canadian Forces pension, (ii) a federal Public Service pension?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 168—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to the engines (propulsion system) for the 65 F-35 fighter jets purchased by Canada for future use by the Canadian Forces: (a) does the estimated \$9 billion acquisition cost for the 65 F-35 fighter jets include the engines for all 65 F-35 fighter jets; (b) if the government's response to part (a) is yes, for each of the 65 F-35 fighter jets, (i) which engine, including the manufacturer's name, was used in the calculation of the estimated acquisition price for the 65 F-35 fighter jets, (ii) what is the estimated cost for each engine used for the calculation of the estimated acquisition price, (iii) has the estimated cost for each engine used for the calculation of the estimated acquisition price increased or decreased since the original calculation and, if so, by how much, (iv) what is the estimated cost for sustainment over a 20-year period for each engine used in the calculation of the estimated acquisition price, (v) how many engine choices or options were made available to the Department of National Defence (DND) for calculating the estimated acquisition price, (vi) what are the names of the engine manufacturers with regard to the government's answer in part (b)(v), (vii) with regard to the government's answer in part (b)(v), when were the engine choices or options made available to DND for calculating the estimated acquisition price; (c) if the government's response to part (a) is no, for each of the 65 F-35 fighter jets, (i) what is the estimated purchase cost, above the \$9 billion acquisition price, for each engine, (ii) what is the estimated cost for sustainment over a 20-year period for each engine; (iii) which engine and manufacturer was used with regard to the government's answer in parts (c)(i) and (c)(ii); (d) have any engines options or choices been presented to DND or the government for final approval; (e) if the government's response to part (d) is yes, (i) how many options have been presented, (ii) when were the options presented, (iii) what are the engine options, (iv) what are the names of the companies who have proposed the engines, (v) where are their Canadian head office locations; and (f) if the government's response to part (d) is no, (i) has DND requested any options or choices with regard to the engines for the 65 F-35 fighter jets purchased by Canada, (ii) when will the engine choices or options be presented, (iii) which manufacturers are allowed or are capable of presenting engine choices or options to DND, (iv) what is the deadline for presenting the engine choices or options to DND, (v) what is the deadline for the government to submit its engine choice to the Joint Strike Fighter Program Office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 169—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to grants and contributions under \$25,000 granted by the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade since January 1, 2006, what are: (a) the names of the recipients; (b) the amounts of the grants or contributions per recipient; (c) the dates of the grants or contributions were issued; (d) the dates of length of funding; and (e) the descriptions of the purpose of each grant or contribution?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh on November 14

regarding proceedings in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, with respect to its study of access to information at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the CBC.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for having raised this matter and for having provided me with helpful background material. I would like as well to thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, and the members for Winnipeg North and Saanich-Gulf Islands for their interventions.

[English]

The matter raised by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh revolves around a motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics ordering the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to provide the committee with certain documents which are currently the subject of court proceedings involving the CBC and the Information Commissioner.

While acknowledging the long-standing principle that committees are masters of their own proceedings, the hon. member argued that the freedom committees enjoy is neither total nor absolute. More importantly, he argued that since the documents in question are already the subject of ongoing litigation before the Federal Court of Appeal, the committee was effectively trying to substitute its decision for that of the courts and, in doing so, had offended the *sub judice* convention and the constitutional principle of the separation of powers between the legislature and the judiciary. In other words, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is claiming that the committee has gone beyond the scope of its mandate.

In seeking the Chair's intervention in this matter, the hon. member presented this situation as just the kind of exceptional instance where my predecessors sanctioned the intervention of the Speaker, and so he seeks specific remedies from the Chair: he asks either that I direct the committee to cease the study it has initiated or that I at least direct the committee to suspend its study until litigation has run its course.

[Translation]

For his part, the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons agreed that committees are masters of their own proceedings and acknowledged that there might be circumstances where the involvement of the Speaker in a committee matter might be justified. However, he stated that he had heard no compelling argument to warrant the Speaker's intervention in this particular case, notably in the absence of a report on the matter from the committee.

Government Orders

[English]

With regard to the substantive arguments advanced, let me state at the outset that I acknowledge the seriousness and sincerity with which members have approached this matter. It is evident to the Chair that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh and other members are deeply concerned with the turn of events thus far in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. At the same time, the Chair recognizes the persuasiveness of the arguments put forward by the government House leader in relation to the weight of precedent when it comes to intervening in the affairs of a committee without the benefit of a report relative to the activities that are being questioned.

● (1520)

[Translation]

In a ruling on May 10, 2007, regarding the alleged intimidation of witnesses in a committee, Speaker Milliken agreed that successive Speakers have been reluctant to intervene in committee proceedings. At that time, he stated at page 9288 of *Debates*:

...it would be highly inappropriate for the Speaker to break with our past practice and pre-empt any decision the committee may choose to make. The committee is seized of the issue and if a report is presented I will of course deal with any procedural questions which may be raised as a result. Until such a report is presented however, I must leave the matter in the hands of the committee.

[English]

In a similar ruling delivered on March 14, 2008, at page 4182 of *Debates*, in reference to the mandate of the same standing committee as the one at issue today, Speaker Milliken said:

For the present, I cannot find sufficient grounds to usurp the role of committee members in regulating the affairs of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. However, if and when the committee presents a report, should members continue to have concerns about the work of the committee, they will have an opportunity to raise them in the House and I will revisit the question at that time.

[Translation]

The Chair does not wish to minimize the importance of the issues raised but rather to respect and preserve the primacy of committees in their proceedings, and to ensure that the role of the Speaker in such matters does not stray beyond what has been established over time.

[English]

On this point, the Chair wishes to remind the House that in the oft-cited Speaker Fraser ruling with regard to “extreme situations” in which the Chair might choose to intervene, Speaker Fraser was confronted with the likelihood that it might be months before the committee then in question could convene to resolve the matter. Obviously, the case before us today presents completely and significantly different circumstances.

In terms of the situation at hand, I am aware that the chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has stated in a memorandum to members of the committee that she believes that the committee “...should wait until the Speaker has ruled on this matter before proceeding with meetings on the study of access to information at the CBC”.

For his part, the government House leader has implied that an intervention by the Speaker at this juncture “...is premature because

the Chair could have more relevant timing down the road to entertain these issues if and when this matter evolves through a report from the ethics committee”.

It should also be noted that the committee has received certain documents from the CBC, some of which are, as I understand it, still in a sealed envelope awaiting further decisions by the committee.

This indicates to me that there remains room in further deliberations by the committee for a thorough airing of the serious issues that have been raised and, potentially, for a satisfactory resolution of the current situation. In the interests of giving the committee time to address the issues with which it is confronted, I am reluctant to insert myself into the substance of this matter at this early stage until events in committee play themselves out.

Accordingly, given the circumstances I have just described, the Chair believes that it should not at this time presume to prejudice the direction and outcome of the committee's deliberations. Therefore, the matter must rest with the committee for the time being.

[Translation]

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has 15 minutes left to complete his remarks.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will remind you that I am sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I will continue with what Mr. Hodgson of the Conference Board of Canada said with regard to our situation. He said:

As part of globalization, sadly, inequality is growing in most countries around the world. In Canada the rate of growth of inequality as we measured it was actually greater than in the United States, which is a bit of a surprising result.

He closed his statement before the pre-budget hearings by saying:

We were asking whether we're doing enough as a country to ensure that all Canadians are benefiting from economic growth. Whether we're talking about the lack of job security or about people retiring with insufficient incomes, ongoing poverty is kind of a festering sore within an economy, and I think it does drag down your ongoing growth potential.

I reiterated that part because that is a very significant point. The poverty that has been created in the country over the last five to ten years is a horrendous burden.

Government Orders

I will now return to my theme of Bill C-13 being a missed opportunity. I will speak for a moment about the government's recently announced pooled retirement pension plan, PRPP. This plan shows how the government does not seem to understand, very clearly at least, the real problems facing working Canadians today.

The government in its opening remarks for the PRPP said that 60% of working Canadians have zero savings and no pension. That is one point on which we do agree. The PRPP does not begin to address this problem though. It is simply similar to an RRSP and is open to market fluctuations. In addition, the PRPP potential fee structure favours the institutions and would draw down on workers' savings in what we believe is blatantly an unfair manner.

On behalf of the New Democrats I have put forward a plan for a seven year phase-in of increases to the CPP which would double benefits in about 35 years.

We should keep in mind that the Canada pension plan lost 1% during the market downturn of the last few weeks, while the remainder of the market lost 11% during the same period. That clearly shows that the CPP is the best vehicle to secure seniors' retirement.

I will speak for a moment about the increases that we are proposing to the Canada pension plan. I want to make it very clear that they would be phased in and they would be minimal. We hear all kinds of numbers from the government side. For a worker earning \$47,200 or more a year, the initial cost of gradually doubling the CPP works out to 9¢ an hour, or \$3.57 a week. Hopefully, the government side is listening. For a worker earning \$30,000 per year, the initial cost would be 6¢ an hour, or \$2.27 a week.

It would be minimal and would allow Canadians to put money into their retirement. It would not be a huge cost to them. The reality is that otherwise they would have nothing.

I see that I am down to my last minute of debate, so I will condense my comments.

In the administrative fees for the CPP and mutual funds, there is a difference of 0.5% and 2.5% respectively. One is five times more than the other.

We need to consider carefully the need for a Canada pension plan increase to benefit those workers who today have nothing.

•(1525)

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, pensions for Canadians is a concern of our government. That is why we introduced the pooled pension plan.

Could the member make some suggestions as to how that plan could work well for small and medium enterprises? To make the change to the Canada pension plan that he refers there has to be an agreement with the provinces. How would it work for provinces that did not agree to work through the Canada pension plan? Has he sought their opinion?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, on the first part of the question regarding the PRPP, we are not saying it is a complete failure. We are very concerned about the fee structure and how that might draw down the savings of Canadians.

With regard to the Canada pension plan, going into Kananaskis six provincial finance ministers wrote a letter to the federal finance minister endorsing an increase to the Canada pension plan. It is my understanding that Alberta was opposed to it and that Quebec was raising concerns. Clearly, a majority of Canadians supported it. We were on the right path. Instead of moving forward, the government decided to stop at that point and move to the PRPP. Essentially, that was a poor choice. It should still put together a committee with the provinces to go forward on the Canada pension plan. Hopefully it will do that in the near future.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke about poverty earlier. When it comes to corporate bankruptcy, the workers' pension plan is at the bottom of the list of creditors.

How does my colleague feel this could hurt the financial security of seniors?

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, on that very topic I have introduced Bill C-331 which would move the assets of a pension plan ahead of unsecured debt in bankruptcy, insolvency and CCAA. We had the situation of Nortel and a number of pulp and paper mills across the country that closed. In some instances, the assets of the pension plan were used like a separate pool to pay down debt when in fact they belonged to workers. In addressing that, we have to change the priority in bankruptcy. In fairness, I have spoken to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance about this very issue, and what I understand from the government side is that it is going to take a fair look at this.

•(1530)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask about the environment.

Recent research has shown that it is a very good thing the Montreal protocol was agreed to and implemented. Without elimination of CFCs, most of the ozone layer would be destroyed by 2065. The UV increases would be extreme with the average July noon UV index reaching about 30. A value of 11 is considered to be very high. DNA-damaging UV would be increased by 550% leading to a large increase in skin cancer.

Does the hon. member think that the government should reverse its cuts to ozone monitoring?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, very clearly the proposed cuts are beyond the point of ridiculous. The first thing people are told when they visit Australia is to stay off the beach at certain times because Australia's incidence of skin cancer is quadruple that of the rest of the world. I agree with the member that the ozone needs to be tested. We would vote against any cuts to the monitoring of our environment.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the floor. I would like to thank the hon. member for sharing his time with me.

Before I begin to speak about Bill C-13 specifically, I would like to take this opportunity to express my disgust at the current gag orders and reduced debate in the House of Commons. I sometimes get the impression that, for the Conservatives, democracy comes down to 35 days of debate once every four years and that Parliament can be shut down in the interim because there is no real need for it.

In the time I have left, I would like to say that what I find unbelievably disappointing in the Conservative government's policies and decisions is the lack of certain ideas, certain concepts. Earlier an hon. member spoke about science being real. Yet the Conservatives, in their economic decisions, generally ignore other things that are also real, and those things are inequality and poverty. The Minister of Finance accomplished the amazing feat of tabling a budget where the word "poverty", unfortunately, appears only once. But that does not mean that it is not real.

In 2009, 3.2 million people were living in poverty in Canada. As my colleague and neighbour to my left reminded us, these people are not always unemployed. Sometimes these are people who work. As we know, earning minimum wage amounts to living in poverty. Of the 3.2 million people living in poverty, 634,000 were children.

I find it unacceptable that, in a G8 country, so many people are being abandoned and we cannot take care of one another.

The Conference Board reminded us a few weeks ago that inequality is growing faster in Canada than it is in the United States. Thus, we are moving in the wrong direction. The Americans have a much more unequal society than we do, but at this rate, and with this government's neo-liberal conservative policies, we will catch up with the Americans in no time.

Equity or equality per se is not simply a good and moral objective that we are striving for; it is also more effective.

Last summer, the IMF—which is by no means a socialist organization—released a study on inequality that should be required reading for the Minister of Finance and the entire government. The IMF concluded that more equitable distribution of income translates into longer and more stable economic growth. This is good not only for people trying to get out of poverty, but also for our country as a whole, for the entire country will experience longer periods of growth with fewer upheavals. This is therefore something we should try to achieve.

An inequitable society has more social problems, more crime and more illness. Indeed, poverty has an impact on health, education, productivity, creativity and civic engagement. It is estimated that 20% of health care spending is due to socio-economic factors such as the income gap, for example.

Unfortunately, this government has chosen to give gifts to the banks and the oil companies and cut taxes for the Canadian corporations, which, generally speaking, do not need it. In the first quarters of this year, the six big Canadian banks earned \$22 billion in profits. They are not the ones who need help. People who use food

banks every month because they are having a hard time paying their bills and making ends meet are the ones who need help. There are solutions and, as New Democrats, we are proposing solutions to truly help workers and their families and truly help people living in poverty.

I want to talk about this government's choices to help those who deserve our respect, those who built the society we live in and to whom we owe everything: seniors.

The previous speaker talked about this. Certain things need to be done with regard to pension plans. I will come back to that. The NDP proposed lifting all seniors in Canada out of poverty by injecting money into the guaranteed income supplement. The answer we got from the Conservative government is woefully inadequate. Its solution was to come up with a parallel system. Indeed, it plans to give an extra \$600 a year, or \$50 a month to every senior living in poverty, but we must realize that it has created new criteria and new scales: a person is entitled to \$50 a month if their income does not exceed \$2,000 a year. Once a person has reached that threshold, they do not receive the full \$50. They end up with peanuts, maybe an extra \$4 or \$5. I am not sure who this is going to help. That is not what it means to take concrete measures to help people.

There are so many things to do and so many problems to solve. There are so many people living in difficult situations that have an impact on everything from health to access to post-secondary education.

● (1535)

This government has decided to saw off the very branch on which it is sitting, or to dig the deficit hole. It tells us that it is a real problem that has to be solved. It should stop lowering taxes for banks and oil companies. It has created the problem itself. It is creating a situation where, in Canada, we now have a structural deficit, not a cyclical deficit. Why would they willingly give up revenue? It seems that the Conservatives are governing a state that they basically detest. All their efforts are focused on shrinking government programs, except for those involving the military and corrections, of course.

What could be done with this money that the Conservatives have voluntarily given up, and made us all give up? We could restore investment in social housing. The government's present contribution to affordable social housing is just about nil, and has been for many years. This has created extremely difficult and unacceptable situations for people. In the riding that I have the honour to represent, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, 2,000 people are on a waiting list for social housing and 5,500 households spend more than 50% of their income on shelter.

This is not the way to build a just, strong and equitable society. These people have problems every day. They are unable to pay their bills. This creates a great deal of tension for couples, families and individuals who cannot make ends meet.

Government Orders

What does the Conservative government do? It gives them tax credits that are worthless if they pay no tax. It is just great to say that they provide tax credits for youth, sports associations, access to this and that, but people have to pay tax to be entitled to them. Once again, it will help some people, but not those who need help the most. We must remember this.

Also, why is it that 1.4 million people are officially looking for a job in Canada and do not have one? This number is growing. We saw that another 72,000 jobs were lost last month. Half of the people who pay into the employment insurance fund do not have access to it when they lose their jobs because they did not work a sufficient number of hours. So, they are paying a tax or insurance premium but they are not entitled to receive benefits when they find themselves in a situation when they might claim them. The NDP is arguing in favour of re-establishing greater access to employment insurance benefits. By so doing, the government would truly provide tangible help to Canadians in their everyday lives.

Investment in infrastructure is insufficient. Clearly, the government has not stopped harping about Canada's economic action plan, but it is also important to remember that, without the threat of a coalition government, the government would never have introduced this plan. The ideas came from this side of the House. We then put an end to the plan to form a coalition, but the entire deficit has not been overcome. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates that Canada is currently facing a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit. As a result, overpasses are collapsing and there are problems with the Champlain Bridge and others. That means that our critical infrastructure has been left to crumble: our bridges, our highways and our water systems. This creates problems and then the price must be paid. We must reinvest in infrastructure.

We must also reinvest in research and development because it is the future and Canada has a terrible record among the OECD countries in this area. By making this investment, we will be able to stimulate the economy and create good jobs.

I can give another example. What else could we do to help people? What direction could we take? Think about the cost of medications. Last year, it was estimated that three million Canadians did not take the medications they needed because they could not afford them. That is unacceptable. That is why people continue to be sick and get sicker. Then, they become a burden on the health care system because they did not have the means to take care of themselves. In Quebec we have a drug insurance plan. The NDP thinks this is a good example. With asymmetrical federalism, Quebec could maintain its public drug insurance plan, and we could still create a Canada-wide one at the federal level.

There are many other things, such as household debt, for example. The government is not doing anything to lower credit card interest rates or ATM fees. Two-thirds of Canadian workers do not have a retirement pension plan through their employers. We must improve public pension plans. We must double them. We agree with this because it is the most effective way of doing things. That is what will help the most people once they retire, when they stop working and leave the workforce. We could also talk about Internet connections in the regions or renewable energy. There are tons of things that the federal government should invest in, such as green transportation, high-speed trains or electric monorails.

There are so many things to do and, unfortunately, the only thing this government does is lower taxes. That does not work. That is not how we will help each other and create a fair and just society.

• (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, tax cuts were important to the 85,000 seniors who were taken off the tax rolls since we became government.

Then there is the working income tax benefit. We provided tax relief introduced in 2007 by \$580 million for 2009 and subsequent years, effectively doubling total tax relief through the working income tax benefit.

I wonder if the member realizes there are programs specifically targeting those lower income people who were paying taxes? Our infrastructure, which the member talked about, we did have a vision in our building Canada fund. We took the historic step of investing \$33 billion in a long-term plan. I just want to know if the member is up to speed on some of those investments that we have made?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Of course, Mr. Speaker. But when it is not enough, something needs to be said. When it is not working, something needs to be said. Promises were made, but they turned out to be nothing but smoke and mirrors—the increase in the guaranteed income supplement for seniors will help hardly anyone.

That is not how we will get our seniors out of poverty. Seniors will not rise above poverty if they have their promised assistance cut when they bring in more than \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year. It will not help people if we ignore the issue of public sector pension plans.

The Canada pension plan works. It is effective and is doing very well. More money needs to be put into it. That is how we will really help people, not by giving useless tax credits to families who do not pay taxes.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada participated in the eighth meeting of the Ozone Research Managers of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in May 2011. There were no indications in Canada's presentation that the Minister of the Environment was planning to effectively wipe out Environment Canada's ozone group and severely curtail ozone monitoring activities.

Also notable in the presentation is the slide entitled, "An Arctic Ozone Hole". This means that Environment Canada was aware of severe ozone depletion in the Arctic well before the government began to announce its cuts to ozone monitoring and science in June. This is a shocking revelation.

Does the hon. member think that the government should reverse its cuts to ozone monitoring?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question. We should be talking about the environment, climate change and problems with the ozone layer. Unfortunately, the Conservative government is not dealing seriously with these issues that will affect more than one parliament, the work we will do here during our four-year mandate. We are talking about the future, about our children. The Conservative government has a short-term vision. It is making decisions that will harm the people living on this planet in 10, 20 or 30 years. Cuts to Environment Canada for monitoring the ozone are troubling and worrying. Once again, the Conservatives are going in the wrong direction.

• (1545)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the hon. member's last, very fast minute, he touched on the issue of credit cards. In the election campaign, the NDP suggested putting a cap on credit card interest rates. Could he tell us how this could help families that have huge debts?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Hochelaga for her question. Her riding is next to mine on the island of Montreal. I was beginning to address the topic of household and family debt, which is extremely worrisome. We in the NDP are not the only ones who are worried. A study conducted by Moody's said it does not make sense that Canadian families have a debt-to-income ratio of nearly 150%. That is huge. It seems to us that the Conservative government finds the debt problem staggering. However, our debt to GDP ratio is 32%, which is half the debt in OECD countries. We are doing relatively well here.

The government should worry a little less about the debt and make fewer cuts to public services, and instead help families that have huge, real debts that could bankrupt our economy if those people can no longer support consumer spending because of their debt. That is a very bad thing, in both the short and long term. Action must be taken and the NDP has made some suggestions, particularly the one my colleague just talked about.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to argue in favour of Bill C-13, which is the government's plan to keep Canada's economy growing and the job creation machine going.

It is very important that we take a step back and look at the government's overall economic action plan. We have been talking about specific elements in this plan, tax credits and other specific measures, but sometimes it is useful to take a step back and look at our overall plan, because every individual initiative in this plan is part of a much bigger plan to steer Canada's economy through what has been an unprecedented economic crisis that the world has been facing over the last 36 months.

Before I go on, I will mention that I am sharing my time with my colleague, who sits with me on the official languages committee, the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Just over three years ago, which I remember well because we were in the middle of a federal election campaign, we witnessed some pretty unprecedented events that I have never been through in my lifetime, the kind of events that our grandparents talked about when

they lived through the depression of the 1930s and the stock market crash that took place in the late 1920s. I felt like I was reliving the experiences of a generation that had gone before us. I do not think we have fully realized the results of this crisis and I think it will continue to unfold, not just in the coming weeks and months but in coming years. By the time this decade is out, I think we will be facing a very different global economic order.

The government has done a fantastic job of steering the Canadian economy through the last three years. When the recession and global financial crisis hit some 38 or 39 months ago, few could foretell the way things would unfold in the following months and years. Yet the government very quickly showed that it could be not only pragmatic but flexible. In the following six months, it worked with the provinces and our other partners in the federation to come forward with what is, arguably, the biggest investment plan since the end of the second world war. That plan, as we all know, was the first phase of Canada's economic action plan.

We delivered in some 24 months an unprecedented \$60 billion in stimulus spending across this country, which played a critical role in ensuring that Canada did not slip into the kind of severe recession that we have seen in other countries, like the United States and Europe. Through the stimulus plan, we also delivered long-lasting benefits and record investments in universities and colleges across the country. As an MP from Ontario, I can say that the investments we made in Ontario's community colleges were the biggest made in that system since William G. Davis was minister of education in the 1960s and created the community college system. In the subsequent 50 years, we have never seen such a huge wave of investments into that community college system. That was delivered through the government stimulus plan, specifically through the knowledge infrastructure program.

We also ensured that the banks had credit facilities to swap out their mortgage portfolios with credit that the government would provide to ensure that the banks continued to lend throughout that time. We delivered fiscal stimulus through other measures, like enhancing the employment insurance program and introducing work sharing, which ensured that employers would not have to lay off workers in industries that had experienced severe slowdowns. We also extended a major loan and equity investment in General Motors and Chrysler, which ensured that the manufacturing industry in the heartland of Ontario would still be able to rely on the auto industry as a key component of that sector.

Those are some of the measures we made fiscally. We worked closely with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney. We gave the bank new legislative powers to expand its mandate so that it had all the tools available to respond to any monetary threats the country would face.

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• (1550)

Over the last 36 months or so, the results are evident. We have created over 600,000 net new jobs in the country. Our unemployment rate in our country is significantly lower than in many of the other major advanced economies in the world. Our budget deficits are significantly lower than in many of the other major developed economies, both in North America and in Europe. These are some of the successes to which we can point.

Sometimes it is useful to look to outsiders outside of Canada to get a perspective on how well we have done in the last 36 months. Sometimes we can be pretty provincial in our country. We tend to not have the perspective that others who live outside of Canada might have, others who have seen what has gone on not just here but elsewhere.

I will quote what Standard and Poor's said recently when it reaffirmed Canada's triple-A credit rating. It said that our credit rating was due to our, "superior political and economic profile and strong flexibility and performance profile". Other rating firms, such as Fitch and Moody's, have also reiterated our credit standing in the world.

The World Economic Forum, the very well-respected organization, has ranked Canada's banking system, for four years running, as the soundest in the world. As we all know, the banking system is the foundation for our economy. We just have to look at the banking crises that have taken place south of the border, in the United Kingdom and currently in continental Europe to realize how important it is that we maintain and regulate our banks properly.

However, we are not out of the woods. The fact is the crisis from outside our shores, both in the United States, which is failing to resolve its deficit and debt conundrum, where Congress has recently failed to come to an agreement through its congressional committee, which will trigger a default plan, and the events that are currently taking place in Europe, where the contagion in Greek sovereign debt markets is now starting to spread to Italy and possibly beyond to countries like Spain and France.

All these events show that we are not out of the woods yet and there remains significant risks to the downside. That is why it is incredibly important that we stay the course and that we implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. That is precisely what Bill C-13 would do. It would continue with the government's prudent, flexible and pragmatic approach to steering Canada's economy through this global crisis.

We have put specific measures in this budget. For example, we have implemented the hiring credit for small businesses, a commitment we made during the last election. We have put in place in this bill the regime to help simplify the collection of customs tariffs in order to facilitate and enhance cross-border trade. We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance deductions for the manufacturing sector, which has been especially hit because of the global recession. We have also put in place measures to eliminate the mandatory retirement age for workers who work in federally regulated sectors.

These are some of the things that we have put in the bill that will allow us to build on the successes that Canada's first economic action plan have put in place.

We have also made permanent, in this legislation, the gas tax transfer to Canadian municipalities, some \$2 billion a year to help them with their aging infrastructure and to ensure that they can continue to maintain the infrastructure that they have built over the last number of decades. We have enhanced the wage earner protection program to help workers affected by bankruptcies or receiverships.

These are some of the additional measures that we are putting in place because we remain focused on creating jobs and economic growth.

I want to finish by making this point. In the last election, our party, our candidates, our Prime Minister campaigned on one issue and one issue over every other issue. That was that we needed to stay the course economically, that we needed to keep implementing Canada's economic action plan, building on the successes of the first plan by putting in place the second phase of the plan so we could create jobs and economic growth for Canadian families.

This bill does exactly that, and I ask all hon. members of this House to support it.

• (1555)

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government did run on that platform and that is why most Canadians voted against it.

I want to read a small quote from one of the member's colleagues about closure. He referred to closure when he said, "It tells the people of Canada that the government is afraid of debate, afraid of discussion and afraid of publicly justifying the steps it has taken". That was a quote by the Minister of Public Safety around closure.

Why is the government so afraid of debating this bill? I would argue that in part it is because we have the largest deficit in Canadian history. Perhaps the government does not want to focus Canada's attention on that glaring fact.

On another glaring fact, youth unemployment in our country is double the national average. Young people right across Canada are protesting that very fact. Yet we never hear the Conservative side of aisle talk about young people and employment. We hear about jobs, jobs, jobs, but the government never says whether the jobs are sustainable, whether one could raise a family—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would encourage all members when they are asking questions to look to the Chair for guidance in terms of what an appropriate length is for a question.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if it is relevant to talk about time allocation. We are on the debate on Bill C-13, which is the budget act. Therefore, I will focus on the latter two comments that my colleague posed regarding youth issues.

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The government has been focused on addressing the challenges that Canada's youth face. In fact, it is the reason why we have invested record amounts of money into Canada's post-secondary education system. As I mentioned earlier, and I know the member is a proud Torontonian, a proud Ontarian, the amount of money that we have invested in community colleges to help those students who want to enter skilled trades and other sectors of the workforce has been an unprecedented investment not seen since the Hon. William G. Davis created the community college system in the 1960s.

As for the deficit, I would clarify a point. It is not a record deficit in terms of the real deficit. If we measure the deficit in terms of a percentage of GDP, the deficits that we have experienced in the last three years are substantially lower than they were in the early 1990s. Measured in simple absolute dollar amounts, yes, they are at the highest number, but that is not a fair measure. On that measure, the average worker today is making about a thousand times more money than the average worker did some decades ago. We need to compare apples to apples. On the real measure of deficit to GDP, this is not a record deficit. In fact, it shows the government's prudence in this regard.

• (1600)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with health.

I strongly believe stem cell therapies represent a tremendous opportunity to improve and/or alleviate human suffering, reduce the economic burden of health care costs for Canadians and create new long-term jobs in the delivery of regenerative medicine. It is key to ensure that Canadians are the first to benefit from this Canadian discovery and have access to these new therapies in a safe, fair and timely manner.

Does the hon. member think that the federal government should increase financial support for stem cell research from basic science to early phase clinical trials to globally competitive levels?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we are investing record amounts into higher education in our country. In fact, if we look at the OECD measures on this file, the higher education research and development measure, which the OECD tracks for all member OECD countries, Canada ranks second only to Sweden in terms of the amount of money that we invest in Canada's universities and into research and development at those universities.

In answer to the member's question, any allocation of money through SSIRC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Council, NSERC and all the other bodies out there should be done on a peer reviewed basis. I do not think elected officials should be getting into the business of deciding which specific research projects should go ahead. That should be done by the scientists and researchers involved and done on a peer reviewed basis. That is the best way for the government to proceed.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank my distinguished and hon. friend from Wellington—Halton Hills for sharing his time.

During the 41st general election, we all recognized that the economy continued to be a major issue for Canadians. In fact, this was the crucial reason for our success. The economy needs to be among our country's key priorities.

[*Translation*]

Despite this period of global economic uncertainty, Canada has one of the strongest fiscal positions of the major advanced economies of the world. While many countries' economies are slipping, Canada can say that it is creating employment. Here in the nation's capital, many jobs have been created in the past 12 months.

[*English*]

In October 2010, 505,400 Ottawa residents had work and the unemployment rate was at 6.9%. Helped by vibrant businesses in our solid and credible economic action plan, Ottawa is now turning the corner.

According to the latest figures from Statistics Canada, more than 13,000 jobs were created in Ottawa over the past year, resulting in a 1.3% drop in the unemployment rate.

[*Translation*]

Right now, our region is reaping the benefits of the current government's initiatives and efforts.

[*English*]

Ever since Canadians entrusted us with managing the nation's affairs 2,129 days ago, we have reduced the tax burden over 120 times. We have cut income taxes to 15% of the lowest income earners. We have taken more than one million Canadians completely off the tax rolls.

[*Translation*]

We have increased the amount that Canadians can earn without paying taxes and the average family in Ottawa—Orléans is saving over \$3,000 through the current government's tax reduction plan.

[*English*]

Last Thursday I attended the People's Choice Business Award gala sponsored by the Orléans Chamber of Commerce to recognize outstanding businesses as chosen by their customers. Several award winners eloquently pointed out that Orléans was a vibrant and positive environment for small, medium and large businesses.

The actions taken by the Government of Canada have certainly played a key role in the economic vitality of our beautiful corner of this country.

[*Translation*]

However, the work is far from over. The strength of the global economy is threatened by unwise choices made beyond our borders. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is designed to ensure our economic recovery for the good of all Canadians, both today and in the years to come, through a number of targeted measures.

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•(1605)

[English]

Seniors are among my biggest concerns and on countless occasions I have visited these Canadians with invaluable experience at Club 60, le Rendez-vous des aînés, the Roy G. Hobbs Seniors Centre, the Gloucester Senior Adults' Centre and many other places. They will certainly be pleased to see what their government will be doing for them.

[Translation]

The government will implement a new tax credit of up to \$2,000 for caregivers.

[English]

The GIS will be enhanced. Eligible low-income seniors will receive an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples.

[Translation]

Finally, we want to remove the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers can claim for their financially dependent relatives under the medical expense tax credit.

[English]

Seniors living in Ottawa—Orléans are very involved in their community and they volunteer their time. The district that I have the honour to represent here includes more than 300 community organizations and they will greatly benefit from our super volunteers.

As a servant of the people of Ottawa—Orléans in this place, I am pleased to note that the government wishes to invest an additional \$10 million to promote volunteerism, mentorship and social participation of seniors. This amount will also help expand awareness of elder abuse, of which they sometimes fall victim.

[Translation]

Our young people will not be outdone: Ottawa—Orléans is an excellent place to raise a family, with young people aged 19 and under making up almost 27% of the population of Orléans.

[English]

Many of our brilliant young people attend well-established institutions, such as the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, Algonquin College and La Cité collégiale, which recently added a new campus in Orléans, just to name a few.

[Translation]

Two important organizations—the College Student Alliance and the Council of Ontario Universities—welcomed the 2011 budget.

[English]

On March 22, 2011, the Council of Ontario Universities wrote in a news release that it:

—applauds the federal government's 2011 budget, and its commitment of continued support and new investments which will help to sustain a robust pipeline of research. We are pleased in these tough economic times that the government continues to invest in university research as a critical driver of Canada's future prosperity and economic recovery—

[Translation]

The Council of Ontario Universities adds that this budget makes it clear that the Government of Canada believes strongly in the important role that research plays in driving positive economic and social outcomes for Canadians.

[English]

As well, I am sure that the Ottawa Police Service will be delighted with our \$20 million investment to promote programs that help young people from joining street gangs or that help them quit. Ottawa, like many other major Canadian municipalities, is not immune to this terrible reality.

[Translation]

The young people of Ottawa—Orléans and I are deeply attached to the arts. Families will be pleased to see that their government is providing a 15% non-refundable tax credit on the first \$500 of eligible fees for arts, cultural, recreational and child development activities.

[English]

As for our cities, I am sure that Ottawa City Council will be pleased that this government is putting into effect the annual investment in municipalities with the gas tax. Ottawa receives roughly \$50 million per year from this annual investment of \$2 billion.

[Translation]

Thanks to this money, the City of Ottawa can continue to improve services provided by OC Transpo. This should help reduce traffic on Highway 174, and the environment will ultimately come out the big winner of this investment.

[English]

In closing, I wish to point out that the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, tabled by our friend the hon. Minister of Finance, is a credible and sustainable plan that will provide an added boost to the families of Ottawa—Orléans.

In this period of global economic uncertainty, I am convinced that the people of Orléans, like all Canadians, will have the tools to prosper.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Although we are faced with major challenges, the residents of Orléans, and the people of Canada, have shown that they are able to step up to the plate and keep moving forward. My maternal grandfather, the late Omer Lacasse, participated in the community work project that built the St. Joseph's church in Orléans 90 years ago.

[English]

The St. Isidore de Prescott arena was built in 1957 by volunteers from that police village over which my uncle, the late Raymond Galipeau, presided. Do members know how much that arena cost? It cost \$3,001. That is less than 1% of the cost of arenas in those days.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was right when he said that “Forced labour is less opposed to liberty than are taxes”.

There is an old saying, “Good workers have good tools”. With this plan, Canadians will have the right tools to build a strong, united and prosperous Canada.

[English]

I thank the House for its kind attention. I assure the House that I will hear my colleagues' questions with the same respect.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last speaker referred to a number of elements in Bill C-13. I will mention a few, such as support for volunteer firefighters. Now that is a smokescreen. It is a measure that makes no tangible contribution, except to a Conservative speech about how they are popular, are doing the right things and are helping volunteer firefighters. There are 85,000 volunteer firefighters in Canada. Only 55,000 will have access to this tax credit, which totals \$15 million. Divided by 55,000, this amounts to less than \$300.

Is that help? Is that support? Will that provide them with trucks, equipment or training? Will they be part of a national public safety plan? No.

This is also the case of family caregivers. They are being thrown crumbs. Will there be a policy for maintaining people in their own homes? No.

How can the member say that this is a good budget when all it provides is smokescreens?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I find it regrettable that the members opposite are engaging in demagoguery. That is probably why 70% of Canadians voted against them on May 2.

When the Government of Canada invests in programs, the money comes from taxpayers' pockets, not the government's. We must make prudent investments and that is exactly what Canadians are seeing. That is why, on May 2, they endorsed the budget we presented in March.

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2008 Massachusetts signed legislation that would set aside \$1 billion toward biotechnology over 10 years to turn the state into the second largest with regard to stem cell research in the United States.

Governments are investing because regenerative medicine represents an enormous economic opportunity, a conservative \$2 billion to \$3 billion range over the next three years. Canada's stem cell researchers need more money. For example, diabetes costs Canada \$12 billion annually. As President Obama stated, “Medical miracles do not happen simply by accident”. They require investment in people, research, equipment and facilities.

We need to invest in our world-class stem cell researchers and their work. Does the hon. member support more money for stem cell research?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I have been paying attention to the questions by the hon. member this afternoon. It seems that she is not aware that we are discussing Bill C-13. She thinks we are discussing stem cell research. Therefore, her questions, which are coming out of left field, are probably a testimonial to the fact that 82% of Canadians voted against her and her party. That is why she is stuck in the corner there today.

● (1615)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not resort to the math here, but there is a reason why substantially more Canadians voted for our government in the last election than any other party.

The economic action plan has many moving parts. Is there a single element or characteristic of our approach that he can attribute that would explain the fact that Canadians voted overwhelmingly in support of that plan?

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very safe and prudent incrementalists. They listened to our budget last March and they liked many of the elements in that budget.

However, when I was knocking on doors, I found out specifically that they liked what we were doing for families. They liked that we were introducing a family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers of all types of infirmed dependent relatives. They liked that we were removing the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers could claim under the medical expense tax credit in respect of financially dependent relatives. They liked that we were introducing a new children's arts tax credit for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

[Translation]

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 Saint-Jean, Personal Debt; the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, Health; the hon. member for Etobicoke North, The Environment.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will share my time with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

Government Orders

[English]

I am glad to speak today and address some of the problems with the budget implementation act. My initial concern with a bill like this is its omnibus nature, a theme we have seen from past Conservative budgets. There is so much packed into the budget that it becomes the single most important piece of legislation we will have to debate in a year. I must remind the House that there are close to 650 pages in this budget and what we have to debate is an overly complex document peppered with supportable items, but one that also goes about preparing the ground for much of the dirty work the government intends to do.

The end result is forcing parliamentarians to vote to do the least harm, which means to vote against the more imposing items and sacrifice the lesser and often imminent supportable items in the process. This leads to a predictable parade of Conservative members saying, "We didn't support this item or that item without ever acknowledging the context". I guess it makes for great TV, but I cannot imagine many Canadians would be impressed if they were given the complete story. However, we will not hold our breath waiting for that kind of development. It is the most partisan and disrespectful group Canada has ever elected.

It is safe to assume that everyday Canadians expect Parliament to buckle down and get to work examining the bill since it is so wide ranging and important. They would rightly expect a parliamentarian to ensure the budget is sound and that the measures will do what Conservatives have said they will do. In short, Canadians expect us to do our jobs, but the government does not see the value in that. Instead, it put time allocation on a bill yet again.

Parliament is barely getting going and we have seen the government use this heavy-handed measure on every major piece of legislation, six times so far. It has gone so far as to use time allocation on a bill before an opposition member has even spoken on it. How is that for democracy? It is not very good, if one asks me.

In fact, when it comes to democracy, the only concern from the government bench is making certain it uses every tool at its disposal to ensure there is not much of it. It has used its majority to cut off debate on nearly every significant piece of legislation and to ensure committees are not doing much of anything.

We have to ask ourselves, what is the rush? Why is the government moving every significant piece of legislation at breakneck speed? Is it afraid of the criticism for items it knows to be overly partisan? Is it trying to get everything out of the way so it can prorogue Parliament again?

I can imagine that the idea of avoiding Parliament altogether is very appealing to the government, no question period and less probing from the press gallery. It must look pretty good to a government that acts more like a king's court than a parliamentary democracy. We will see. Right now there are only questions.

There are a number of themes repeated in this debate. Of greatest concern to me is the way this budget does so little to address inequality in Canada. It is among the greatest of our pressing needs, yet there is not even the smallest of attempts to address the winding gap in incomes here in Canada. This is not just by observation, either. This is a fact.

We only have to look at the occupy movement. It recognizes the inequality in Canada. The Conference Board of Canada released a report recently that placed Canada 12th out of 17 comparable countries when it comes to income disparity. It is a trend that is growing. That is no way to run a consumer-based economy, which is what we have in Canada to a large extent.

The most disturbing trend in the Conference Board's numbers was that the average income of the lowest earning Canadians is shrinking. For those at the bottom, there is no growth, only negative trends. Here are some numbers to consider. For the years 1980 to 2005, earnings increased by 16.4% for the top income group, the middle-income group saw no change, and the earnings fell by 20.6% for the bottom income group.

• (1620)

What do we get from government after government? We get tax cuts for corporations with the misguided belief that this will improve employment numbers and not be siphoned off as executive bonuses. It is trickle-down economics and it has not been working for 30 years or so.

New Democrats proposed a better option in the last election. We are the ones developing budgets. There would be performance-based tax incentives for corporations. We would reward those good companies that invest in Canada whether it is for the nuts and bolts of their operations or creating jobs. Those are the tax breaks we would happily make room for.

Ultimately, New Democrats want to lower the tax rate for small businesses. They are the real job creators. We want that rate to be lowered so we can create jobs in our communities. Small businesses in northern Ontario would welcome that development. That is not partisan. That is smart.

The Conservatives stand in this place and try to tell Canadians that we are the ones who would raise their taxes.

[Translation]

In reality, the Conservatives are the ones increasing taxes on Canadian families, such as the recent increase in employment insurance premiums for employers and employees, or the HST, which is cutting into household budgets in the north.

[English]

We would put an end to the kind of corporate welfare that sees companies like John Deere stick around just long enough to line their pockets with tax breaks and then move to a jurisdiction where the labour conditions and environmental laws are substandard. I have yet to hear a single Conservative say a critical word about that.

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We see it when companies go bankrupt. If a country were really looking out for its citizens first and foremost, it would ensure that pensions were the first thing taken care of with what money remained. Does the government believe that? Hardly. Does the budget do anything to address the problem, given the high profile cases we have seen lately, like the pensioners who were robbed as Nortel foundered and was ultimately carved up and sold off? No, it does not.

More and more Canadian seniors are living in poverty and are being forced into making terrible decisions on whether to pay for food or heat. When the government refuses to protect pensions, pensions that only exist in the first place because of deferred wages from a company's employees, it is showing full and well what it thinks of Canadian workers and retirees. They are an afterthought, at the back of the line. They get something only if everything else works out first. These are terrible priorities. These are priorities that lead to policies that entrench poverty.

The budget has a number of tax incentives in it, things which New Democrats have called for, such as an extension of the eco-energy retrofit program and credits for home caregivers and for families that enrol their children in cultural activities like dance or music lessons. These are supportable items that need some tweaking, but they are generally good ideas.

I heard from a number of constituents about the eco-energy retrofit program when it was reintroduced. They are happy to go ahead and do this work which has spinoff benefits for our local economy as well as helping Canada conserve energy and reduce our environmental footprint. There are some problems, though. In Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking there are fewer contractors, few inspectors and also less time in the year to do some of the big jobs that are eligible for the credits. Without enough inspectors, people have to wait to get the green light. Then they have to find a contractor who can do the work needed in the short timeframe available. In northern Ontario, that gives people eight or nine months tops for big jobs like replacing windows that really cannot be done in the heart of winter.

If I were to have one suggestion, it would be to make the eco-energy retrofit program multi-year at a minimum to address the inequality of opportunity in areas that have limitations like the ones I have described.

• (1625)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week two members of the NDP went to the U.S. and proceeded to try to destroy part of the Canadian economy. Was that an NDP-sanctioned trip, or was that just two rogue NDP members?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, we were there doing the job that the Conservatives should have been doing there, but were not.

On that note, it shows again that the Conservatives are clearly out of touch with the needs of Canadian families.

I would add that when I spoke about the tax credits a while ago, for tax credits like those available for cultural activities and for caregivers, the fact that they are not fully refundable means that only Canadians who pay enough taxes can take advantage of them. In that respect, they are incomplete incentives, and that is a shame.

My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue spoke about this last week. Her background gives her a unique view into the situation. She told us that when individuals become caregivers, they often have no choice but to cut down on their hours of work. As a result, they do not earn enough money to benefit from this tax credit. She also told us that the majority of family caregivers cannot take advantage of these tax credits, because they do not pay enough tax because of lost income.

These are real problems that could be fixed if the government cared to listen.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did not get an opportunity during her 10 minute speech to put on record the impact the cuts to the public service are going to have going forward. It is obvious that one of the major fronts on which the Conservatives are going to fight the deficit is on the backs of public servants.

I sit on the human resources committee with the member. The member has a pretty good appreciation for the impacts. Six hundred employees were sent home from EI processing centres across this country. We already see backlogs of five to seven weeks. People are waiting for their employment insurance cheques.

Perhaps my hon. colleague would like to comment on the government's choice of jets and jails over people delivering services to Canadians who need them.

• (1630)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, it is true. We are hearing over and over again in our communities that people are having a hard time accessing their EI benefits. MPs' offices are becoming Service Canada offices.

Instead of helping people who are most in need, the government has decided to add another tax for employers and employees. This is really shameful given the fact there was a lot of money in the employment insurance pot way back when. Unfortunately, as my Liberal Party colleague knows full well, the government took that money and put it somewhere else. It should not have happened, because it was actually the workers' money.

If the Conservatives want to serve Canadians instead of dictating to them, they could start by breaking up these omnibus bills, allowing Parliament and committees to do their work, and stop thinking the worst of everyone who has a different opinion or idea on how to achieve the same goals. That would be to the betterment of Canada and all Canadians.

We need to fix EI, but we also need to fix Parliament. If the government is absolutely serious, it will continue to work. It will not prorogue Parliament, and it will continue to work on committees and give these bills a chance to go through the process.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in an earlier speech, I spoke in detail about everything that does not belong in omnibus Bill C-13, for example, the inappropriate use of non-refundable tax credits. People who do not have to pay taxes will never be able to benefit from these tax credits. This means that people who stop working to take care of a sick child or an aging parent will not have access to the tax credit for family caregivers. This also means that the 85,000 volunteer firefighters in Canada will have to share \$15 million, which is a bit of a stretch.

In their bill, the Conservatives have decided to exclude all volunteer firefighters who already work for a municipality, including blue-collar and white-collar workers as well as first responders. They decided to exclude all those who do not work at least 200 hours. This means that 55,000 of the 85,000 will share the \$15 million, which comes out to \$300 each. They call that a policy to support volunteer firefighters? It does not give them the equipment to fight fires. It does not give them the training they need to stay safe. It certainly does not give them the support of a national civil security policy.

We could also talk about culture. The government is offering a \$500 tax credit to give children access to culture. Unfortunately, once again, this is a non-refundable tax credit. Children from poor families who are receiving social assistance or employment insurance benefits and those from families who do not have enough money to pay taxes will not have access to this tax credit and will therefore not have access to culture. This is the Conservative Party's remarkable achievement: it is rewarding the wealthy but failing to support those who need it, those who need this culture so that they can then contribute to Canada.

This omnibus bill also contains elements that should never have been included, such as a reform of the Canada Elections Act related to party financing, and the creation of a securities commission. These two components of Bill C-13 should have been carefully examined not quietly buried in a budget bill that is more partisan than economic in nature.

In this speech, I especially want to point out what is not found in this bill. Despite a huge number of calls from every corner of Canada and every element of society, such as BMO, the Certified Management Accountants and the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies-Canada, the government continues to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the deterioration of the economy. And these stakeholders cannot be accused of being champions of socialism. No. They are neutral observers who see that the economy is severely deteriorating and that the government is failing to take action. They are asking the government to urgently intervene but the government is not doing so.

First, it is completely outrageous that people who are entitled to receive the guaranteed income supplement are unable to access it unless they submit an application. That does not make any sense at all. This is a measure that the government could easily implement: group people by age, use their income tax returns to identify those who do not have sufficient income and give them this income supplement. But no. They have to apply for the it. Unfortunately, almost 150,000 of the most elderly and isolated Canadians are

unable to receive financial support because they did not submit an application.

The government's laziness is responsible for the unnecessary hardships and suffering of what we call the generation of builders, those who made this country prosper.

Second, since the beginning of the recession in 2008, Canada has created only 250,000 jobs in three years. We have learned that, in the month of October alone, we lost 72,000 jobs. That is huge, especially because, since 2008, our country has lost 350,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, a sector that creates wealth and value added.

● (1635)

These jobs have not been recovered. They have been replaced by jobs in other sectors, by lower paying, precarious and often part-time jobs.

This employment weakness is the reason why more than 1.7 million people in Canada are either unemployed or underemployed. In light of this crisis, there is nothing in Bill C-13 capable of kick-starting the job market in Canada.

In short, we are allowing our manufacturing sector to disappear and the government is doing nothing. Bill C-13 does not have a recovery plan to kickstart job creation. Once again, it contains only smokescreens in the form a series of minor measures that will not have a significant impact on the Canadian economy. The Conservatives are doing nothing. They are only making speeches. The budget has a grand title, but it is nothing more than paper.

I must point out that Statistics Canada data clearly shows that Canadians' debt makes increased spending impossible. There can be no national growth without growth in spending. However, more than \$500 billion in capital is being stored up by businesses and they are not investing this money. It is said that Canada is the best place to do business, but obviously it is not the best place to invest, because investments are not being made. The Governor of the Bank of Canada and all stakeholders have confirmed this. With the productivity rate at an all-time low, the balance of payments deficit hitting peak levels and the manufacturing sector disappearing, this money could be of more help to those looking for work if it were invested.

In this situation, what is this government doing? Nothing. There are no incentives in Bill C-13 to make businesses use their \$500 billion to create jobs. Absolutely none. The Conservatives still believe in divine intervention. Perhaps it is the theory of seven lean years and seven fat years. Does that amount to structured economic reasoning? At any event, that is our government's economic vision.

Statistics Canada has already indicated that this \$500 billion was in the financial sector, and the Bank of Canada continues to indicate—in all its economic reports—that this money is not being invested.

Last night, Peter Mansbridge said on CBC television that currently, with fears of recession all around us, the worry is that the private sector may keep billions sitting on the sidelines, money that could create new jobs. That is what was said on the CBC.

Government Orders

The more uncertainty there is, the less investment there is; and the less investment there is, the more the government needs to encourage businesses to invest that money. The government is still doing nothing. It is waiting.

It is clear that, choosing between the actions of this government and the proposals of the official opposition, the best party for Canadian families who are worried about their jobs and the economy is truly the NDP. The Conservative Party is doing absolutely nothing.

This same government is so obsessed with the zero deficit that it has completely forgotten to consider the infrastructure deficit. We want to invest in infrastructure projects to deal with the deficit there, to make us more economically competitive and improve life for Canadians. What is more, the interest rate is so low that now is the best time for investing.

This government is set on freer trade, but all the new projects in the north and in British Columbia require infrastructure immediately. The government is not investing in it. How can we export coal if there are no ports?

The government seems to want to destroy the public service, but we need public servants to assess projects and monitor and guarantee the quality of the products we consume.

The list of things missing from Bill C-13 could fill a library. Unfortunately, neo-liberalism has become an intolerant religion. Such is the Conservative government.

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ozone layer is one of those things that is truly important. Life on earth would not exist in its present form without the ozone layer. Monitoring the health of the ozone layer in the name of self-preservation is a sensible and responsible thing to do.

Canada is already receiving intense international criticism on its stance leading into the climate negotiations in Durban, South Africa. We must not fail the world at the ozone meetings in Bali as well.

Does the hon. member think that Canada should reverse its cuts to ozone monitoring?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, that is a typical example of inappropriate cuts. Our public service is being cut. They want to make it disappear. They want to take away essential expertise that Canada needs both now and in the future. This expertise cannot be replaced by private business, nor can it just simply not be replaced.

The fact that the government is hiding its head in the sand and hoping that the hole in the ozone takes care of itself is more proof of its wilful ignorance. It is refusing to look at the country's real issues and deal with them.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my friend for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

When the previous speaker, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, was speaking, she reminded me of when I was on my tour listening to seniors. When I was in Elliott lake, which is a retirement community, I had a woman come up to me who was living on \$1,140 a month. She had old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. She showed me her hydro bill and, as I recall, it was about \$2,100 a year. She was wondering when she was going to get the HST of \$160-some a month.

Here we have a situation where the Conservatives have given \$50 a month to help seniors on the guaranteed income supplement, which they tout regularly in this place, but the reality is that the poverty line is \$22,000 and these people are making about \$15,400. What impact does the member think that has in his region in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère: And yet, Mr. Speaker, the solutions are within our reach. This government has an obligation to produce results. We cannot be satisfied with measures that make only 10% to 15% of the population happy. We need to provide all Canadians with a generous, reliable pension plan. The money provided by this pension plan must be enough to keep them living above the poverty line. Nothing could be easier. We have the Canada pension plan; it already exists. It just needs to be increased and doubled. It is not hard to understand. But instead of doing that, they are inventing new financial structures that do not guarantee that people will have enough pension money not to live in poverty once they retire.

• (1645)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government insists on trying to pay down the deficit as quickly as possible by cutting 5% to 10% from all departments, for example. Does my colleague think that, given the uncertain economic times, this could have the opposite effect and harm the economy instead of helping it?

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, this is a perfect example of what we call the Greek syndrome. To meet the financial demands of certain banks, Greece made massive cuts to its government spending. One of the immediate effects of these massive cuts was that Greece was pitched headlong into a recession and sunk deeper into deficit. That is a major problem. When government spending is cut in an unreasonable manner during a period of economic uncertainty, it only encourages more economic uncertainty.

[English]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill C-13, the budget implementation bill.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Oxford.

I appreciate this opportunity to once again rise in the House and talk about our government's track record on economic issues, on which, despite the worldwide economic recession, we have been leading the world.

I want to remind the House of a few things that we accomplished prior to my being elected here in May. I do believe one of the reasons I was elected to this place in May was because of the strong economic and fiscal leadership that was provided by the previous Conservative government.

Government Orders

The government has cut taxes for Canadians 120 times since getting elected. We cut the personal income tax rate paid by the lowest income people in this country to 15%. We removed one million Canadians from the tax rolls. That is unprecedented. We increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. The major initiative that we did was to keep our promise to cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We brought forward the universal child care benefit, which is widely popular in my riding because it gives families a choice as to the type of child care that is most appropriate for their family.

A lot of young families live in the riding of Mississauga—Streetsville. When I went door to door, I listened to their challenges and I listened to the issues that were of concern to them. They told me to keep on with the good work that our government was doing and to keep focusing on the important issues.

This government, through the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, has done a lot, but we cannot rest on our laurels. We must keep going.

I heard some opposition members refer to the fact that we are still debating a budget bill on November 21. We need to remind Canadians why we are debating a budget bill on November 21.

This budget was first introduced in the House on March 22 but the opposition parties decided it was more important to have a \$350 million election campaign than it was to pass a budget bill back in March or April. That was their choice. I benefited because I am here now, so it was an election that I was happy to have happen.

However, here is the fact. Parliament very rarely is still debating a budget bill in the 11th month of the year in which the budget bill is supposed to be implemented. That is unprecedented around here. One of the reasons that we need to get on with the job and one of the reasons that we are at third reading today is because we still need to send the bill to the Senate and it still has to take time to get it done.

It is ridiculous to suggest that this budget bill is getting rammed through the House. There has been a tonne of debate on this legislation. There was a huge debate on May 2. It was called an election campaign. I talked a lot about what was in the March 22 budget in my election material and most, if not all, of those actions are contained in the bill today. I can stand here and very clearly tell the House that I have a mandate from the people of Mississauga—Streetsville to see this budget implemented, and that is why I am speaking to it today.

Let us talk about some of the highlights of this good bill. Our government is bringing forward a hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring.

During the summer, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism toured my riding. The Streetsville Improvement Association, right in the heart of the old village of Streetsville, is a very vibrant business improvement association. There are close to 300 businesses and merchants up and down Queen Street, the main street in Streetsville. I had a chance to visit people in their businesses with the minister. I did not just call a round table and hope for people to show up. I went with the minister and we did some mainstreeting. We went into those businesses and asked them what their priorities were. They asked us to keep on with the job, keep lowering our tax

rates and help us out with tax credits that encourage us to hire and invest. That is exactly what this budget would do.

• (1650)

Some of us do go back to our business constituents and residential constituents, and ask them again and again what we could be doing, how we could be making things better, how they could grow their businesses and what the federal government could do.

The other credit that we are enhancing is the accelerated capital cost allowance for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to visit one or two businesses in the riding. I like to spend an equal amount of time visiting businesses as well as conducting residential town hall meetings and going to community events. I especially like to hear what emerging businesses are saying. What they are saying is that if they could have greater incentives, they would invest in new technology and new machinery.

I am finding that while some of the large-scale manufacturing plants are having challenges, smaller businesses in niche manufacturing are actually doing fairly well. They have innovative products, innovative technology that they can sell, not just domestically but also around the world. However, they need a bit of help. We are there to support those emerging businesses. Measures in this budget help predominantly small- and medium-size businesses do even better.

We are also investing in families and communities. I am delighted that this budget would make the gas tax revenue to the municipalities permanent. The mayor of Mississauga, Mayor McCallion, and I have spoken about this. She was pleased to see this gas tax transferred to municipalities made permanent. Why? Because now the municipalities would not have to wait every budget year to find out whether the money was coming. They could budget for it each and every year, to support transit and transportation infrastructure.

We would give the municipalities some flexibility to use that money. We would not dictate from on high. We would say to municipalities, "Here is our federal contribution from the gas tax to you. You know what is best for your communities. You know what is best for your cities. Here is some money, paid for by people who are pumping gas into their cars in your community. We are giving some of it back to you so that you can have the flexibility to invest in the priorities of your communities."

That would be a tremendous step forward and a great new relationship, a permanent relationship, between the federal government and our very vital municipalities.

Government Orders

We are enhancing the wage earner protection program, which would cover more workers affected by employer bankruptcy or receivership. We know there are companies out there that have challenges, that are doing their best. Nobody wants to declare bankruptcy. Nobody wants to have difficult times. Everybody is working hard. However, we do know that some businesses fail. We have a responsibility to try to support, and we have been supporting, those workers who have, through no fault of their own, lost a job.

We are investing in families.

I just want to end on these two notes, because they are particularly important in my riding.

I am delighted, as a former board member of the Mississauga Arts Council, to see the children's arts tax credit in this budget. This is a phenomenal initiative. I was at the visual arts centre in Mississauga with the Minister of National Revenue this summer, where we made the announcement of the tax credit. We saw many children participating in wonderful arts programs and the program directors said they have capacity for more children. If this arts tax credit would get more children to experience different arts programs in the city of Mississauga, it would be great news for us. As a father of 12- and 8-year old daughters, I am particularly pleased. This is exactly the kind of thing we need to encourage our children to be more active in the arts.

I am delighted with all the provisions in this budget. I have highlighted just a couple of them for the benefit of the House. This is a budget that would move us forward. It is modest and responsible in difficult times, when we are trying to continue to move the economy forward. These are very important tax credit initiatives. I am pleased to be part of a government that is putting people first.

•(1655)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the children's arts tax credit. Yes, it is an interesting prospect for those who can afford it.

I have worked in the arts for over 30 years. I worked a lot with young people, using arts as a means of helping them connect with themselves and find ways through some of their issues.

A lot of the people I worked with cannot afford the kind of programs that this tax credit targets. I developed two programs for people who cannot afford the arts but should have access to them.

Could the hon. member speak to how this tax credit in particular helps those people?

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, my experience, as someone who has been involved in the arts and recreation community in Mississauga for quite some time, is that most of these programs are delivered at the municipal level. The municipal governments decide what the registration fees will be. Non-profit groups run these programs and there is often a subsidy at the local level that helps keep the cost down.

At the federal level, we can do what we are doing, which is providing the additional incentive to parents who are obviously making modest incomes. We can provide an additional tax credit to them to greater encourage them to enrol their children in artistic programs.

It is a good initiative by our government. It is not designed to help every single child, but it is designed to help millions of children who can take advantage of it across the country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to Bill C-13, and quickly because I noted it is the 11th month, but it is not the 11th month of this budget year, because we operate the Government of Canada on a fiscal year from March to March.

I note also that the House took quick action in June to make sure the Government of Canada had the money it needed to operate, so we are debating substantive measures in Bill C-13, and many of them. It is a long bill.

Being a long bill, there are things in here with which I would agree. For instance, I agree with part 7 to provide help for students and student loans for people who are going into the medical field, but I am concerned with clause 181. I am sad that when we put forward amendments to clause 181 there was a closure on debate, so I was not able to speak to my amendment.

My question for the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville is, how will getting rid of the most efficient, fair and democratic part of taxpayer support for political parties create any jobs in our economy?

•(1700)

Mr. Brad Butt: Mr. Speaker, we are of the view that political parties should raise their own money. Taxpayers should not pay for it. I just ran an election campaign. I had to work real hard, not just getting votes, but raising money, and that is part of the political process.

I do not think taxpayers want to subsidize political parties through their tax money any longer, so we have included it in the bill. We were very clear. In fact, we ran an election campaign on phasing out the subsidies. We did not snap this on the House the minute the House came back in June. We were very clear with Canadians.

I think there is actually some moderate support among opposition members. They may not say it publicly, but a fair number of opposition members probably support phasing out taxpayer subsidies to political parties.

We were very clear. We campaigned on it. We won a majority government. We are implementing. We are getting on with the job.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have been in the House to listen to my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville. If members here listened to him, they would be happy to go to the vote and pass this budget right now. His speech was superb and I congratulate him. That is the bonus of having had that last election. Like he said, he is now here and it is better for all of us.

Government Orders

Our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic growth. Canada has the strongest job record in the G7 with nearly 600,000 net new jobs created since July 2009 and the International Monetary Fund projects it will have among the strongest economic growth in the G7 over the next two years. Yet we are not immune from global economic turbulence. That is why we need to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

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

We on this side of the House understand the need for many involved in the agriculture sector to possess legitimate firearms. Bill C-13 would provide funding of \$20 million to continue to waive firearms licence renewal fees for all classes of firearms. Upon the passing of the budget, until May 2012 not a single firearms owner will pay a fee of up to \$80 to renew a licence. It is with sincere hope that the cost-consuming, ineffective long gun registry will soon be a thing of the past, in turn further reducing the financial burdens of those in the rural agriculture sector.

Over 600,000 new jobs have been created in Canada. We did not want to stop there. We have included a new hiring credit for small business to support local job growth. The new hiring credit would provide a one-time credit of up to \$1,000 to encourage additional hiring. The Canadian economy has weathered the storm of the global economic recession, but it is still very fragile. We understand that struggling businesses may need extra assistance.

The wage earner protection program has been allotted \$4.5 million annually to expand the program to cover Canadian employees who lose their jobs when their employers' attempts at restructuring take longer than six months, are subsequently unsuccessful and end in bankruptcy or receivership. In light of this, we are renewing programs to help unemployed workers, meaning their best 14 weeks and participation in the EI working while on claim pilot project will be considered.

To further assist Canada's manufacturing sector, which is prevalent in my riding, we are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment. Our government's long-term goal remains to provide the right conditions for a sustainable and viable North American auto sector in which Canada maintains its share of auto production and jobs.

A shining example of this was demonstrated in the recent funding announcement made at the Toyota manufacturing plant in my riding of Oxford to support the manufacturing of the electric Rav 4. The electric Rav 4 will be the first electric vehicle to be assembled in Canada and the first electric vehicle to be assembled by Toyota in North America. Toyota's investment in project green light is \$506 million. The federal contribution of 14% of this amount is up to

\$70.84 million, with an equal contribution from the provincial government.

Numerous constituents have voiced their concerns to me regarding the red tape surrounding access to information and federal government services concerning small businesses. That is why Canada's government is continuing its efforts to reduce the red tape by upgrading the BizPal service and further online consulting is being made available to Canadians to continue to be a part of the process by providing their input.

I would also like to highlight the great success of the Sand Plains community development fund in my riding and across southwestern Ontario. The Sand Plains community development fund was created by Canada's current government in August 2008 with a commitment of \$15 million to the region. Since its formation, there have been 202 full-time jobs created, 54 part-time jobs created, 119 seasonal jobs created and 256 jobs sustained in the southwestern Ontario area.

● (1705)

More specific, I would like to talk about the biomass project by Canadian Biofuel in my riding of Oxford that was partially funded through the Sands Plains development fund. The project, formerly a Cargill grain elevator and feed mill facility, will now produce roughly 1,500 tonnes of biomass per month. Low in greenhouse emissions, it can also be used to heat homes and even supplement coal in generating electricity. Initially waste wood was used to make the biomass fuel, however, the company plans to establish a local supply chain of raw materials by encouraging local farmers to grow miscanthus grass and other renewable crops that can be turned into biomass fuel. In addition, this project will create 35 new jobs.

I am very pleased to announce that Canada's government will be phasing out the unnecessary per vote subsidies for political parties. Governments have a sworn duty to use the hard-earned dollars of taxpayers wisely and only in the public interest, especially in a time of required fiscal restraint when families are struggling to make ends meet.

Specifically, Canada's government will introduce legislation to gradually reduce the \$2.04 per year per vote subsidy in 51¢ increments, starting April 1, 2012, until it is completely eliminated by 2015-16. This will generate savings ramping up to \$30 million by 2015-16. Our government has always opposed direct taxpayer subsidies to political parties and believes that the political parties should rely primarily on their supporters for their financing.

Government Orders

Since 2006, Canada's economic action plan has provided, and will continue to provide, tax relief to hard-working Canadians. Taxpayers in Ontario alone can expect to see approximately \$970 million in tax relief in 2011 and the following fiscal years.

I and the residents of Oxford look forward to a speedy passage of Bill C-13. I strongly encourage all parliamentarians to seize this opportunity of unity in Parliament to give Canadians what they deserve, what they have been waiting for and in many cases, what Canadians desperately need.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very interesting speech. However, in a report published on September 29, 2011, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy stated that the cost of climate change would be close to \$20 billion a year by 2050.

What environmental policies does the budget contain? I have already shown that only four or five of the 600 pages of the budget focus on the environment. This is laughable, given that all Canadians think the environment is a priority.

How can the Conservatives prove to us that the environment is a priority for them, too?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I know there are a lot of costs involved in this economy. One of the costs is jobs, if we do not get the bill passed. A lot of jobs are waiting for it to be passed. A lot of jobs should be sustained.

I look at my own riding, if he is only interested in that aspect. We have Toyota manufacturing. This government put \$70 million into what Toyota is doing on a RAV4 electric vehicle. It will be sensitive to the economy. Those are the kinds of things that have to happen.

I certainly wish that my colleagues across the floor would see the importance of getting this budget passed and do it quickly.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to what is not in the budget and what the government might think about going forward.

One in five Canadian children lives below the poverty line, which may lead to poor nutritional status and poor child health outcomes. Fortunately, school nutrition programs are highly effective in providing children with nutritious diets, better cognitive abilities and health. Unfortunately, Canada is one of the few developed countries without a national nutrition program. If we had a national school meals program implemented in Canada's high schools at a cost of \$1.25 per meal, with the goal of increasing graduation rates by just 3%, the annual payback would be \$500 million.

Does the hon. member think that we should have a pan-Canadian nutrition program?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, this is very important. The best way to help Canadians out of a cycle of poverty is to provide jobs. That is what this budget is about, providing jobs for Canadians. It is high time the opposition got with the program and realized the importance of passing a budget that is good for all Canadians by providing jobs.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend from Oxford gave a very informative speech. He is an eloquent speaker and has an incredibly strong history of protecting Canadians. He represents a region where there is a lot of industries. Those industries were struggling and they were troubled about how they would keep going. Something that has not been talked about a lot is the work-sharing program that we extended and then we continued it again in our fall economic update.

Could the member give us some insight into how that has helped industries in his riding of Oxford?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, that is the finest Minister of State for Finance we have had in the House. He has done a tremendous job for us.

Regarding the work-sharing program in my riding, he is absolutely right. We have a tremendous amount of manufacturing. We have Toyota motor manufacturing, a GM plant and a Hino truck plant in my riding. We also have a lot of agriculture in my riding. The work-sharing program has been beneficial to all those sectors. It has been able to keep experienced, well-trained employees available for those people. As we have helped the industry come back, they have been able to help the industry by providing that expertise when they got back up to full strength in the economy. It has been a tremendous asset.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to Bill C-13. I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

The title of the bill is the Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act. So much for growth, since the budget grants tax cuts to large corporations without setting any conditions. What a mistake. Not only are these tax cuts not contingent on the creation of new jobs, but they also do not put Canada on the right track for the future, that is, the green track, the environmental track.

I will explain why this legislation is but a drop in the bucket in terms of the challenges we will face in the coming years. And they will be significant challenges.

First of all, as I mentioned, this bill will not create any new jobs. We must continue to create jobs because there are still too many people left behind in our beautiful society. There are too many in Canada and too many in my riding of Drummond.

Government Orders

The huge gap between the rich and the rest of the population continues to grow. The vast movement of global occupation and protest illustrates the fact that Canadian families, and families in Drummond as well, are feeling a tremendous amount of pressure. Relief agencies and poverty assistance groups in my riding are being used by more people, which worries me a great deal. This is happening all over Canada, but I am most concerned about what is happening in my riding. I have an article here from a local paper, entitled "Homelessness: organizations lament the lack of support from the federal government". Clearly, these organizations are speaking out because there is not enough funding.

I would like to take a moment to commend the excellent work of some of the organizations in my riding, such as the Carrefour d'entraide, the Comptoir alimentaire Drummond, Ensoleilvent, Refuge la Piaule, the Maison Habit-Action, the Tablee populaire and the Maison de la famille.

The problem is that in order to properly support our population, adequate funding is needed. In that regard, the article is very clear. The problem is very serious. Here is an excerpt from the article:

Assistance provided and requests for assistance at both the Comptoir alimentaire and the Carrefour d'entraide have jumped by more than 20% over the past two years. Although the situation is getting worse, funding from the federal government's homelessness partnering strategy has not changed in 10 years.

They have seen an increase of 20% over the past two years, but funding has not changed. We can see that this is not working and that there is a problem.

However, I can already hear the Conservatives apologizing for abandoning people in need in the riding of Drummond, saying that the best way to fight poverty is through job creation. But the Conservative government is not providing enough support for people living in poverty—seniors, children and families. Every week I get a lot of messages saying that I absolutely must prioritize assistance for seniors because they are having a hard time making ends meet. It is crazy that I am getting these messages. There is a problem. There are problems with funding, but the Conservatives are also not doing anything to really help create jobs in Drummond.

On the contrary, the Conservatives' actions are so detrimental to our economy that I have received around 100 letters, which I have here. All of these letters are from SMEs in my riding. They tell me that there is a problem, that the Conservative government is not doing its job and that they are not able to support their jobs because of increased employment insurance premiums for employers and employees. The SMEs do not support this bill.

Canadians are looking for serious, tangible measures to create jobs. For example, the government could bring in a job creation tax credit of up to \$4,500, as the NDP suggested. This initiative would help create 200,000 jobs that would help support families every year.

• (1715)

We proposed extending tax credits for investments that support employment such as the accelerated capital cost allowance for eligible equipment and machinery. The government absolutely has to accept that when it comes to jobs, its plan does not work. The government has to stop thinking that simple gifts to major corporations, the banks and the oil and gas industry are measures that help create jobs. That is not true. That will not create jobs in

Drummond. We need real measures to create jobs and to help the environment.

Speaking of oil companies and the gas industry, does the Conservative government really believe they are the industries of the future? Are these really the energies of the future? Does it truly believe that oil from the oil sands is ethical oil? Give me a break.

In my riding, people are increasingly joining forces to defend our environment. Recently, people in my region went to the gas production sites that are using hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania. They were completely devastated by what they saw. They came back and said it was worse than they thought. This industry is so harmful to our environment. They fear for our air quality, our drinking water, our farmland and the value of our properties and our land.

Nothing in this legislation will ensure a better environment for our children. The environment is important, as I was saying earlier. It is a priority for every constituent in my riding. But the Conservative government's current provisions risk mortgaging our beautiful planet and the quality of life of our children and our children's children even more.

Instead we could be establishing a serious plan of major investments in research and development for a green economy focused on renewable energies. I want to bring hon. members back to the NDP platform again. It has many good solutions to offer to the Conservatives. We could implement a carbon pricing mechanism using a quota exchange system, which would set ambitious emission limits for major polluters in the country, in order to ensure that companies pay their environmental bills, and provide an incentive to reduce emissions.

The NDP has another interesting proposal—to make Canada a world leader in renewable energy. Earlier, an hon. member spoke about electric cars. Fine, but they are still in the early stages; there is much more to be done. The electric car needs a lot of improvements. The money from selling emissions permits could be equally redistributed. These funds would be invested in sustainable technologies, commercial and residential energy conservation, public transit, renewable energy development and transitioning workers to a sustainable economy.

Government Orders

Last week I was at the Quebec energy forum in Shawinigan. The point was made that improving public transit is one of the most important factors in preventing climate change. Public transit is currently being driven by the plans of businesses and contractors. Urban planning needs to be improved in order to have effective public transit. If urban planning is done with the automobile in mind, everyone will use their cars. But if urban planning were done with public transit in mind, it would make sense and be profitable to use public transit. I could list many measures. I want to repeat that the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy reported that climate change will cost Canada \$21 billion by 2050. We need to make the necessary transition, and if the Conservative government does not do it, others will have to.

We are ready to take those steps. The environment and job creation are our priorities. A responsible government must invest to encourage job creation, to fight climate change and to move toward a green economy and green energy instead of giving tax cuts to big business and big oil. We have to change how we do things.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like to ask about things that are not in the budget, so the government can think about these things going forward. I have asked repeatedly about stem cells because they save lives, they save money and they have a critical role to play in the future of Canada.

In December 1999, the editors of *Science* called stem cell research “the breakthrough of the year”. Since then, there have been numerous announcements about developments in stem cell research and hints of promising treatments for diseases, such as ALS, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, cardiac damage, Parkinson's disease and type 1 diabetes.

Does the hon. member think that the federal government should increase financial support for stem cell research?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

I am not an expert on health, but it is clear that investing in research and development is vital for the future. I spoke about this especially in connection with the environment, a subject with which I am somewhat more conversant. We should not believe that the auto industry will be the one to make revolutionary environmental changes. Its research and development must be supported by a responsible government that has a long-term plan. That is also the case for public transit or health. If we want to ensure that we have better health, we must support research and innovation in this sector.

[*English*]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we hear from the other side that it is about jobs, like it is a magic bullet. Yes, jobs are important, but I think we need to look at the situation in a three dimensional way. Jobs are part of the issue but if those jobs that are being put forward damage the environment, then what is left for our children after that?

I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber for his question.

At present, the Conservatives are boasting that they have created 600,000 jobs. They have actually miscalculated because, in reality, according to the figures I have here, and based on the peak in July 2008, we have a deficit of 250,000 jobs. That is the number required to maintain the same number of jobs proportionally, because there has been an increase in population since 2008.

Not only is there a deficit of jobs but, in addition, existing jobs are often precarious and part-time. Unfortunately, there is no future in the type of jobs being promoted by the Conservatives. It is not true that oil or the oil sands are the future. Renewable energy, such as biomass, wind and solar energy, is the future. That is where we have to invest and what we should be focusing on. That is why I am inviting my colleagues opposite to think about job creation that will take into consideration our society, the environment and the future of our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have time for a brief question and a brief answer. The hon. member for Hochelaga.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does my hon. colleague think that a national public transit strategy could not only be good for the environment, but also create jobs?

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. That is exactly what I think and that is what we must do. We absolutely must create a national public transit strategy. That should be made a priority immediately, and not in five or ten years. We must take care of this right away and stop planning our cities and our society around cars. As long as urban planning focuses on cars, we will continue to travel in cars. We need to rethink it with a focus on walking, cycling, public transit and electric trains. Those are the means of the future. That is what could define us and distinguish us from other societies. We have all the means to do this, so let us do it.

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to stand up in this House and represent the region of Timmins—James Bay and the people there who I have such great faith in their common sense.

I am debating a bill on the economy, which is crucial at this time when we see that 700,000 jobs have been lost. The outlook for growth that we are seeing for Canada is not nearly as rosy a picture as the Minister of Finance is presenting.

Government Orders

What we are seeing here from a government is a Minister of Finance who, under his tenure, has been like the cartoon character, Mr. Magoo, who continually steps outside the window and, as he is falling, manages to get onto another plank. He thinks that his rosy forecast will somehow get us through.

What I am hearing in my riding contradicts the spin that comes from the government. For example, when I was at the Tim Hortons, I met a 68-year-old man who told me that he had to go back to working underground at the mine because his Canada pension was not sufficient.

We are in a national pension crisis. The New Democrats have been raising the alarm bells about that. The government stalls, studies, stalls some more and now it has this pooled resource pension pool plan that will do nothing to help the fact that we need to overhaul the CPP. The CPP is much more efficient, and it knows that, but it would rather that the money go to its friends in the banking sector. It will not go to help people back home.

We are hearing about the need for serious investment in doctors in northern and rural areas. Most Canadians are already realizing what the government does not know, which is that we rank 26 out of 30 in industrial countries in terms of doctor per capita and that we are looking toward a 60,000-person shortfall in terms of registered nurses by 2022 if nothing is done.

The government has no desire to invest. That is one of the commitments. Its idea is to give a tax break by moving people around. It will simply move some doctors from urban areas or small communities into rural areas and that will somehow alleviate the problem. People know that will not alleviate the problem.

What we are seeing are a series of smoke and mirror incentives. The government promised incentives that it actually never delivers on. For example, the compassionate care benefits program has a budget of \$190 million annually and yet it only spends 5%. There are people back home who need compassionate care, and it is not as if they are not applying. What the government does is it promises but it does not quite deliver.

In order to keep us not focused on the economy, it throws out the red meat to its base. All day long, I have heard about how it is a principled party that does not believe in subsidizing partisan schemes with electoral dollars, taxpayer dollars, that it is the party that opposes subsidizing the electoral machine.

However, among the first two senators picked was Mr. Gerstein, the Tory bagman, and Doug Finley, who ran the Conservative campaign. The Conservatives put their people in there, people who worked for them. They get paid by the taxpayers until they are 75 years old.

I will quote Mr. Gerstein's opening speech in the Senate just so people know what a great politician he is. He said that he was proud to be a bagman, that he proclaimed it. He went on to say, "Oh, by the way, I love politics, I just never had the time to become a candidate". He said that on November 27, 2010. He just never bothered to become a candidate. He never bothered to go out and actually participate in the democratic process. Senator Gerstein is a bagman. What he does is he collects money for the party.

I do not have a problem with him being proud of it but it is funny that he gets paid by the taxpayer until he is 75. What are Mr. Gerstein and Mr. Finley's great contributions to Canadian political life? They were two out of the four who were charged and had to plea bargain in the biggest case of electoral fraud in Canadian history.

Let us look at what they were involved in in terms of ripping off the taxpayer. They would take these dead dog ridings the Conservatives had out in the middle of nowhere where they could not get any votes and they would funnel money from the central party through those ridings. Then they would get those ridings to go and demand the rebate, so that the taxpayer was paying for this scheme.

That is not to say that all Conservatives are corrupt because a number of Conservative riding associations said that they did not want to participate in money laundering, that it was not something they were going to do. However, a number of them did.

● (1735)

They had to plea bargain when they finally ran out of road. Both Mr. Finley, who again we pay for until he is 75, as well as his staff and his benefits to work for the Conservative Party, and Senator Gerstein, who we will also pay until he is 75, as well as all his staff, had to plea bargain. The Conservatives have never answered the question about when they will pay back all the money they received from the in and out scheme before they were busted. That was money that went directly from taxpayers.

When we see this party get up and talk about how its members will be clean on this, when they had to plea bargain in the biggest electoral fraud scheme in Canadian history, it is a little rich. It is a little too rich for the Canadian taxpayer who is having to support and subsidize this party in its continual undermining of the parliamentary system.

We have talked about the Conservatives' lack of plan for pensions, health care and jobs. Of course they have no vision with respect to real investments, so they are making massive across the board tax cuts. In a time of recession we are seeing very large corporations sitting on their cashflow. They are not moving it.

The New Democratic plan was to actually target our investments, so that corporations would get tax incentives if they actually create jobs. If they reinvest in the economy, they would get an investment from us in support. However, if they just want to sit on that cash, then they would not get any.

The Conservatives' idea of job creation was to build a pipeline and ship raw resources to a refinery in Texas. This was such a crackpot idea the Americans did not want anything to do with it. Our colleagues over there had no clue that the Americans were not interested. They wanted to ship raw bitumen to a refinery in Texas and tell Canadians that this was somehow to their benefit.

Government Orders

We saw the government's lack of plan for resource development. I saw it in my own region in Sudbury and Timmins. We saw it in Thompson, Manitoba, when the now Muskoka minister allowed the takeover of Falconbridge and Inco. The first thing that they did was to start shutting down the refining capacity, just like they shut down the refining capacity in Montreal, because they didn't want the competition.

Now in Ontario we do not have any copper refining capacity left. It was shut down. The government thought that was a good idea. It thought that allowing one of the greatest mining companies in the world, Falconbridge, that had an international reputation, to be taken over by a corporate bandit like Xstrata was all right. It allowed Inco, the greatest mining giant Canada ever produced, to be taken over by Vale and have the resources stripped and high-graded.

Now what we are seeing is this lack of plan for investments. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the government would think that the best idea for job creation is to build a pipeline to ship raw bitumen to Texas where it will be refined to the benefit of Americans, and that will somehow build an economy.

We believe that we have an immense ability, with our resources, to create jobs and if we are to create those jobs, we need to develop and refine the resources here. We are not like the Conservative Party who believes that the idea of being open for business is, "Come and take us for a ride". That is the Conservatives' notion toward all resources. That is why they rolled over on the softwood lumber deal when Canada had won trade after trade disputes at the WTO. We found ourselves completely handcuffed by the fact that they undermined our position. That was back at the international trade level.

This is a government that believes resources should be given away for free. In a country as rich as Canada is in resources that is not a long-term strategy.

We need to reinvest. We need to do it in job training. We need to support businesses that actually want to reinvest in our economy. We need to make the most out of our resources. We need to ensure that our northern and rural areas have access to doctors. We need to ensure that every Canadian has a proper pension plan; not some kind of makeshift plan that the Conservatives have come up with but something that will ensure that CPP is there for the next generation just like it was for the last generation.

I am more than proud to take any questions.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the comments from my colleague on the opposite benches, I obviously disagree with them 100%. When the member tells his constituents he will vote a certain way on the gun registry and then votes the opposite way once elected, is he misleading his constituents before or after he was elected? Which is it? I am not sure what he considers ethical in his position.

• (1740)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Wow, Mr. Speaker, I have just been floored by one of the greatest performances I have ever seen in democratic history, or how about not. I was actually expecting Annie Oakley to ask me the question.

A member from Manitoba actually came to my riding and had maybe 15 people show up.

If the member knew anything—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Burlington is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, would you remind the member what name calling an individual member can do to other members. That member used inappropriate parliamentary language when he called a member on this side of the House—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, order. In order to evaluate the point of order that the member for Burlington is trying to raise, I do need to hear what he is saying. There is too much noise in the chamber.

I wonder if the hon. member for Burlington could finish his point of order and then we will see where we go from there.

Mr. Mike Wallace: I am finished, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the report on what defines parliamentary language in reference to somebody else on the other bench.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the member for Burlington for his point of order.

If members are referring to other hon. members in the House, or in the Senate for that matter, it is good to use names that are appropriate to the case, in this case a member of the chamber, either by his or her riding name or, as the case may be, by title if he or she is a parliamentary secretary or minister.

I am sure that the member for Timmins—James Bay will confine himself to that description.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My hon. colleague has one important point. I might have said as a metaphor that she was Annie Oakley and not like Annie Oakley. I referred to someone earlier as Mr. Magoo. Referring to people as historic characters is irrelevant to the issue.

What is relevant is the fact that during the last election I talked to my constituents about the government's lack of plan for pensions. I talked about the government's complete disregard for the lack of rural doctors. The Conservatives came into my riding and the only thing they talked about was guns.

The people of Timmins—James Bay overwhelmingly voted for the New Democratic Party because they knew we were right and they supported us. The Conservative government has nothing to offer, otherwise it would have a Conservative member in northern Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe some members in the chamber will not know this, and some people who may be watching at home as well, but my friend is a very accomplished Juno nominated songwriter and has written some fabulous songs. *Crossin' the Causeway* is one of my favourites. It is a great song.

Government Orders

The member would agree with me that one important aspect of songwriting is ensuring that when titling a song, the title should reflect something that is through the actual body of the song.

The title of this particular piece of legislation is “Keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act”. Because 40,000 fewer Canadians are working this month than last month, would my colleague agree that the government might have missed the target a bit with the title of this particular piece of legislation?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad I received such great respect from my hon. colleague.

He knows the song *Crossin' the Causeway* is about Cape Bretoners who had to leave to find work in Ontario. Unfortunately, the Conservatives responded by saying that if they did not like it, they could go to Fort McMurray. I have nothing against going to Fort McMurray, but I would like to see some investments in our region in terms of job training so people could stay.

I was actually surprised at what the government has called this bill. It is one of the most bizarre names it could ever come up with. I would have thought it should have been something like “Busted flat in Ottawa” or “Smoke on the water”, but it would probably be better to say “Smoke in the mirrors”. In terms of a credible name for a budget, it certainly does not pass that test. We can work on a song so maybe we can correct that.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak on our budget implementation act. I am pleased to offer my own insight into what I really believe to be a budget for the times. The strength of our economy is referenced again and again by national and international bodies such as the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. They all confirm that what we have been doing as a government is the right thing at the right time.

Clearly and indisputably, this budget is what is needed to take us on the road to recovery. However, our government does believe that one must be prudent and realistic, and recognize that challenging times are still ahead. The state of the world economy may still impact us in a negative fashion from forces beyond our control whether they be the Middle East, U.S.A. or Europe. Being a responsible government, we must do what we can and what we will do here is to manage the efficient and effective use of taxpayers' dollars. We must support families and individuals in a caring and compassionate manner.

In this budgetary process we propose and we will promote job creation and economic growth, certainly our number one priority, in a number of ways: by providing a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring; by expanding tax support for clean energy generation to encourage green investments; by extending the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through shares investors by one year in order to support fully Canada's mining sector; by simplifying custom tariffs in order to facilitate trade and lower the administrative burden for business; by accelerating the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment for two years in order to support the manufacturing and processing sector; and by eliminating the mandatory retirement age for federally

regulated employees in order to give older workers the option to remain in the workforce.

We will support communities by legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. We will enhance the wage earner protection program to cover more workers affected by employer bankruptcy or receivership and we will introduce a volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters.

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with the member for Prince Albert.

By increasing the ability of Canadians to give more to legitimate charities, we will introduce a package of integrity measures designed to help combat fraud and other forms of abuse. We will help families by introducing the new family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives. We will remove the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers can claim under the medical expense tax credit in respect of financially dependent relatives. We will introduce a very popular new children's arts tax credit for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

We will certainly invest in education and training by forgiving loans for new doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote areas. We will help apprentices in the skilled trades and workers in regulated professions by making occupational trade and professional examination fees eligible for the tuition tax credit. We will improve federal financial assistance for students by making it easier to allocate registered education savings plan assets among siblings without incurring tax penalties or forfeiting Canada education saving grants.

We will respect taxpayers by phasing out the direct subsidy of political parties by closing tax loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

Yes, by doing all of those things and many more, we are doing an absolutely tremendous service to a significant group across this country. We are supporting families. We are supporting seniors. We are supporting volunteer firefighters. We are supporting small business. We are keeping taxes low. We are keeping Canada on track for balanced budgets. We are supporting our farmers, our forest industry, and our manufacturers. We are investing in our environment. We are supporting students. We are protecting consumers. We are supporting Canada's charities and yes, as I mentioned earlier, we are phasing out per vote political subsidies for political parties which will support all taxpayers and which I note will negatively affect our governing party the most.

● (1745)

The budget implementation bill in process is a comprehensive piece of legislation covering a broad scope of Canadian society. I would like to offer some personal insight on one particular component of the budget and that is the measures for small business.

Government Orders

I was a small business owner for over 35 years, prior to my election in 2004 as a member of Parliament. I have extensive experience in retail, wholesale, hospitality, sports, tourism and trade. As such, I am pleased that we will implement a number of key measures to assist small businesses, which are the cornerstone of our economy. We will do it in a number of ways.

One is by a new-hire credit for small business. This is a temporary one-time credit of up to \$1,000 toward a small firm's increase in its 2011 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2010. This new credit will help up to 525,000 employers defray the cost of additional hiring. That is over half a million businesses, a significant impact for Canada, particularly in the rural areas.

We are reducing the red tape by upgrading the BizPaL service and further consulting Canadians through the Red Tape Reduction Commission. I commend the hon. Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism for the work he is doing.

For our youth entrepreneurs there is \$20 million to support the Canadian Youth Business Foundation activities. This foundation works with young entrepreneurs to help them become the business leaders of tomorrow through mentorship, learning resources and start-up financing.

We are extending the work-sharing arrangements to help business keep workers. We are providing \$10 million in additional support to assist those employers that continue to face challenges by making available an extension of up to 16 weeks for active or recently terminated work-sharing agreements.

We are extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers and processors make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment.

This builds on our government's significant action to reduce taxation for small business where we increased the small business limit to \$0.5 million. This refers to the amount of income earned by small business eligible for the reduced federal tax rate where we reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%.

We are lowering the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% by 2012, as passed in Parliament.

These reductions will help create jobs and economic growth for Canadian families and communities.

We have increased the lifetime capital gains exemption. We are helping companies invest in themselves through a temporary 100% capital cost allowance rate for computers. We eliminated the corporate surtax for all corporations in 2008. While the elimination of the surtax benefits all corporations, it is of particular benefit to small business corporations since the surtax represents a larger proportion of their overall tax payable.

In addition, the creation of the Red Tape Reduction Commission has helped reduce unnecessary and ineffective regulations so small business can focus on growing and creating jobs.

Our government recently released a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry in Canada to protect small businesses.

For much of my life I was very active in the sporting world. I observed that in the game of hockey there are two types of players. There are those who simply heckle and have no focused commitment and there are those who act decisively and get positive results. Our Conservative Party believes that our team must have a solid game plan in order to get that puck down the ice and in the net.

The budget implementation bill would do just that. It certainly deserves the unanimous support of the House. I am pleased to see the overwhelming encouragement and support from my colleagues across the House in support of our initiative.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last speaker was very proud to repeat that the Conservatives have a policy to support volunteer firefighters. However, upon closer examination of the clause in question—something that I have done but that the members opposite obviously have not—we see some absurd things. Not all 85,000 volunteer firefighters are entitled to this credit. Those who work fewer than 200 hours are not eligible and neither are those who work for the municipality as blue collar workers, white collar workers or first responders.

The remaining 55,000 volunteers have to share the massive amount of \$15 million, which means that they get \$300 each. And the Conservatives have the nerve to tell us that this is a good policy to support volunteer firefighters. This will not buy volunteers trucks, equipment or training and it will not allow them to participate in a national public safety structure. All the Conservatives have done is talk about supporting volunteer firefighters. Nothing more. And so, I would like the Conservatives to talk a bit more about this measure and what it will really do for volunteer firefighters.

● (1755)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

[*English*]

I remind hon. members that it is a good idea to check with the chair from time to time as one is responding or questioning to see the signal so we can keep on time.

The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague seems to be suggesting that there is no need for a tax credit, and that we should just give everybody in Canada a refund. Where does he think those kinds of dollars would come from? That would upset the apple cart so much that there would hardly be any dollars left for anything in life.

Governments have to make a decision and that decision is based on what they think will get the best results. We responded directly to the firefighters, to their organization. This is what they asked for. There are 85,000 volunteer firefighters in this country. I have talked to a number of firefighters. We attended the various sessions on the Hill and we attended their organizations. The vast majority of firefighters is very pleased with the government's approach.

Government Orders

There is always the hope that every bill, every option and every motion will cover every person in Canada, but that is not the case. The people I have talked to say this initiative has been very widely accepted by the vast majority of volunteer firefighters.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the remarks of my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings.

He talked about the Conservatives having a road map and a vision. I disagree with that, of course, because the problem with their road map and vision is that they leave too many people out.

My question relates to firefighters as well. One of the shortcomings of the government's proposals in several areas is that the tax credits should be refundable. The lower income scale does not qualify for a tax credit. The tax credits need to be refundable.

My question is a simple one. Does my hon. friend really think that a low income earner who is working for a fire department is any less deserving in terms of that assistance from the Government of Canada than a higher income earner who is doing the same work and taking the same risks?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I will just flip that around. If there was a tax credit that the hon. member might be able to use on his farm but his income suggested it was not there, should every dollar that would be used as a tax credit automatically be sent to him as a refund?

That is not doable in today's economy, let alone in a booming economy. I would suggest to the hon. member, with all consideration, that he give his head a shake and try to be real in situations like this.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but contrast the remarks of the member for Prince Edward—Hastings and the remarks of the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Our colleague from Timmins—James Bay talked about his broken promise on the long gun registry and that his constituents were wondering about the plan, what were we doing about doctors and what were we doing about jobs and growth. I think the member for Prince Edward—Hastings answered it very articulately.

I would appreciate it if he would talk about the rural doctor issue.

• (1800)

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I certainly know the background of the hon. member and her years of dedication to the health field.

As a person living in a rural area, I can say that it has always been a challenge to have a family physician. We have addressed that in a number of different ways, through relocation fees, subsidy and support. The most important thing is that we are doing what we said we would do. In the March budget, we laid out the elements that we would do. To the shock and horror of the opposition we are doing what we said we would do. We are doing what the Canadian population elected us to do. Is it not refreshing to have some honesty on the scene for once?

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking people on the finance committee, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State (Finance). A lot of work went into the background and creation of this great document

that Canadians outright approved of on May 2 when they elected a majority Conservative government.

When we look at the budget, there are many items in it. I will mention a few. There is the volunteer firefighter tax credit, the gas tax fund rebate for infrastructure for municipalities, forgivable loans for doctors, arts tax credits, phasing out political subsidies and closing tax loopholes. That is the tip of the iceberg of a great bill and a great piece of legislation. When we all look at all that, we wonder why anybody would even debate it. All clauses of this bill should have passed at one time, in one sitting, and we could have moved on to other important parliamentary business.

Our government is definitely focused on the economy and jobs. That is our role and that is what we understand Canadians want us to do. That is what we ran on in the last election and that is what this budget is doing.

To start off, I will talk about the forgivable loans for doctors and nurses in rural Canada. When I talk to constituents in my riding, that is the number one issue. They ask where they have to go to see a doctor, why they have to drive to a major centre to see a doctor and why they cannot see a doctor in their small town or even in a little town close by.

When I grew up in Canwood, there was a guy by the name of Dr. Ed. Dr. Ed was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Everybody remembers Dr. Ed. If it was midnight, we could call Dr. Ed, and he would make sure we were taken care of. That was back in the 1970s and 1980s, and those days are gone. Dr. Ed has moved on, God bless his soul, and now people are looking for a doctor to replace him. Unfortunately, I understand doctors do not want to work 24 hours a day. They want companionship. They want to see their patients in a timely manner and do it in such a fashion that they can enjoy life with their families.

This forgivable loan would do a lot to attract doctors and nurses to rural Saskatchewan. Once doctors are taken out of the city and brought to Nipawin, Carrot River, Melfort or Tisdale, it is amazing how quickly they adapt. Their kids end up playing hockey and sports and their families get involved in the community. This forgivable loan allows us to attract doctors and nurses to rural areas and makes it a lot easier for communities. I have been told on many occasions that the communities that search for doctors feel this is a very valuable tool to help them do that.

Government Orders

That is not the only thing in this budget. There are also gas tax funds for municipalities. Every year I try to visit all the cities, municipalities and regional municipalities. I talk to them about their needs and see where we can work together on projects. They all thank us immensely for the economic action plan and for the stimulus that we started in 2008. They talk about how they added a water treatment plant, a sewage lift station, some culverts or a road. It seems as though every town had a need that it could not get, but under Canada's economic action plan, which the NDP and the Liberals voted against, it was done.

What they are asking now is for the gas tax to be continued. With the implementation of this bill, it will be continued. The thanks we get because of that are amazing. When I talked to the mayor of Prince Albert, that was the first question on his mind. He asked about what was happening with the gas tax dollars. He said those dollars were needed and there were still more projects to do. We are in hard times and we are being very careful and prudent, but we will not balance our budget on their backs, and they can count on the gas tax dollars to flow to them. The funds are bankable and are going to be delivered once this bill passes. That mayor and other municipalities know they have a stream of revenue coming from the federal government that they can bank on and use in their planning when they need infrastructure.

The volunteer firefighter tax credit is something that firefighters have been asking for year after year. All firefighters, volunteer or not, said this was a good program. This is what they asked for and this is what we gave them.

In my riding of Prince Albert, there is a volunteer fire department in the regional municipality of Buckland. Jim Miller runs that volunteer fire department. I took some pizzas out to the guys to say thanks. Actually, a \$3,000 credit is a token when we look at the hours these guys put in and what they sacrifice, not only the firefighters but their families as well, whether in fundraising or in trying to raise capital to buy another fire engine. On an emergency call when it is 25 degrees below zero at a nasty car accident that could involve a neighbour, these guys are on the scene. They appreciate the fact that we would acknowledge them and appreciate them. They appreciate the fact that we would thank them for their hard work and service and that we are recognizing this hard work. It is another measure that every party should stand behind. There is no reason to criticize it.

• (1805)

Another thing that was talked about was the arts tax credit. Again, we focused on sports. I am a sports fan; that is who I am. I love hockey and I played every sport when I was in high school. However, for the kids who want to take music lessons, dance, art work or drawing, that arts tax credit is there. It puts them on the same footing as the kid who wants to play hockey. I think that is a fair, balanced and reasonable approach. Obviously taxpayers approve of it, because they showed up on May 2 and voted for it.

We want to be fair to people and make sure that everybody pays their fair share of taxes by closing tax loopholes. Getting rid of unnecessary loopholes would ensure that everybody pays their fair share of taxes, and I think Canadians are proud to take on the responsibility of paying taxes.

I come from a province that used to be a have-not province. We had an NDP that wanted to do everything it could to be a have-not province to get money out of Ottawa. In Saskatchewan we were not proud of that and we told the government that we would rather pay our taxes.

We would rather make some money, pay taxes and contribute to the Canadian economy. We would rather contribute to our local economy by paying some taxes. We appreciate the services that the taxes pay for. We appreciate our doctors and the municipal services, such as roads and water, that we get through our taxes, so we expect people to pay their fair share, nothing more and nothing less. Of course, that is something this government is doing, and we are moving forward on it in this implementation plan.

The last thing I will talk about is respecting taxpayers' money. That is something we have to do as parliamentarians. We have to recognize the fact that this is not our money, but taxpayers' money. We have to respect the fact that they work hard for that money. Whenever we can give them a benefit or a tax break, they appreciate it. It shows we are doing our job here in Ottawa. They do not want to see a whole pile of new programs; they do want to see a whole pile of schemes and mechanisms to try to tax them even more. They understand the importance of tax reduction and they understand the importance of how the economy can grow when taxes are lowered. They can see the economic activity.

In Saskatchewan alone in the last four years, through a combination of good economic planning and tax reduction, that economy has gone from an unemployment rate of around 9% to, as they said last week, 3.3%. That is good stewardship, good tax planning and good governance at both the federal and provincial levels. That is what the taxpayers want out of us and that is what we are providing.

When I look at the phasing out of the political subsidies in the budget and all the things in it that could benefit the average Canadian family from day to day, I wonder why the opposition parties are so concerned over this bill. What is the issue?

It cannot be the volunteer firefighters tax credit, even though they try to discredit it because they know it is a popular part of the budget.

It cannot be the bankable gas tax funds. They cannot be against giving municipalities their gas tax funds. They could not vote against that, but maybe they could.

They cannot be against the forgivable loans for doctors and nurses for rural Canada. That would be crazy.

Government Orders

Are they against the arts tax credit? Is that why they are voting against the budget? Do they not want to see kids take part in arts programs? Do they not want to support Canadian arts and culture? I cannot see that. Is that it?

One thing I could see are the subsidies for political parties. That would make a lot of sense to me. It is their own survival. Instead of going out and raising funds from their contributors and the people who support their causes and their policy, telling people what their policy is, listening to them and getting input into their policy, it is pretty nice for them to get so much per vote. Could that be the reason they are voting against the budget? Do they want to keep their political subsidies?

I looked at the budget fairly closely. It is closing tax loopholes. Are the NDP not against tax loopholes?

Therefore, it comes down to one thing: self-preservation. Can they do the job? Can they go out and actually convince Canadians to support their parties? Is that why they are voting against this budget? Again, it cannot be any of the other issues.

In closing, on May 2, as well as during and before the campaign, I talked to a lot of constituents in the riding of Prince Albert. I listened very closely to what they wanted me to do. One thing was very clear: they wanted respect for their tax dollars. They wanted proper representation in Ottawa. They wanted to see the bickering end. They wanted to see politicians work together when things made sense, and this budget makes a lot of sense. They expect us to work together.

Let us pass this budget and get it done.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's speech.

I must confess, we agree on one thing. Like him, I do not like to see taxpayers' money wasted. Unfortunately, on everything else we part company.

I remember when this government introduced the public transit tax measure a few years ago. I was angry to see that it was passed because, with this measure—and I have not had a car for almost three years—I was unable to buy a new bus or hire a single new driver to improve the public transit system in Quebec City.

I think that this measure, like the measures for sport and culture, is funny money to pacify people while billions of dollars in tax breaks are given to large corporations that have created an artificial deficit.

How can the hon. member justify, without laughing, the fact that he is giving only crumbs, very small amounts each month to help families?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I thank the colleague for his question. He is a new member, so I understand that he is still learning about the process that goes into making the budget and the budget document and the consultation that goes on through the process and how we talk to Canadians.

We go and talk to different members of the industry right across Canada, not just here in Ottawa. We do not stay here in Ottawa when we do finance budget preparations; we go right across Canada, right from Newfoundland to Victoria and up into the Northwest Territories and Yukon. We talk to Canadians about what they want to see, and that is what they see in the budget.

I suppose what scares the opposition parties is that we are doing what we promised. Heaven forbid, the Liberals never did that. Now they are faced with a Conservative government that is going to do what it promised; since they do not know how to handle it, they will vote against it, and that is what they are doing.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments of my colleague with respect to the gas tax. He went on at some length about how the gas tax is now a guaranteed amount. In actual fact, this budget has capped the gas tax transfer to municipalities.

What I found interesting was how he put it into a conversation. The conversation was, "Oh, we're not going to balance the budget on the backs of municipalities". I just wonder about the conversation he had with veterans, considering that \$226 million is being cut out of the Veterans Affairs budget and hundreds of jobs are being lost. If that was the conversation with municipalities, let us hear about the conversation with veterans.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I find it pretty shameful that the member would be playing partisan politics on the backs of veterans. He knows it is not a cut. He knows that that is just a change in how the process works.

Let me continue with the conversation I had with the mayor at that point in time. He was very nervous when we talked about deficit reduction, because he had experienced what the Liberals did. He experienced having to make those tough decisions on transportation. He experienced how he had to go forward and cut his staff and cut his services. He experienced that.

Under the Liberal government, the provincial governments also experienced it when they cut the number of doctors and hospital beds. My family experienced it also. When my mother was sick with cancer, she experienced those cuts and did that two-hour drive to Saskatoon.

We just said we are not going to do that. That is why he should get behind it.

● (1815)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. friend, the member of Parliament for Prince Albert, to explain something to me. I have asked this question before of government members and I have to admit, with all due respect, that I have not had a satisfactory answer.

Government Orders

The Conservatives have said to us in the opposition benches that somehow we do not go out there and ask our supporters for support and that we do not go out there and put forward what our policies are. Speaking on behalf of the Green Party, we do, and we raise money from our supporters, but that money is easier to raise because there are very generous tax rebates, and they have benefited primarily the Conservative Party. I do not see the Conservative Party showing any interest in removing the very generous tax rebates that come from the people of Canada for the donations they receive.

I would like a response to why Bill C-13 goes after the smallest of the amounts of taxpayer subsidies to political parties and leaves aside the elephants in the room, the rebates on political party spending and donations.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, the rebate is something that has been a part of it. In the American system, a congressman or a senator can raise millions of dollars from whomever they want, with no accountability back to the taxpayer. I would rather take our system, which limits what we can donate. We get a tax receipt for contributing, for participating in the political process. I think it is a far fairer and safer system.

It is fair for every party. It is not just the Conservative Party that benefits from the system in place here. If the member raises funds and gets people to donate, her people will still get that tax receipt. That is the reality we are facing right now.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, November 16, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1840)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 62)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)

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NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Footé	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Sandhu
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Sellah	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

● (1845)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I ask hon. members who are not staying for the adjournment debate to continue their conversations outside the House.

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

PERSONAL DEBT

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 9, I asked the government to introduce concrete measures to protect families and consumers. I pointed out that, since 2004, personal debt in Canada has increased by 40% and is at an all-time high. In Quebec alone, between 15% and 20% of credit card holders cannot make even the minimum payment. Families are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. The government must help them.

What was the finance minister's response at the time? He lauded the code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry. The finance minister replied that this infamous code of conduct, and I quote, "is working". I would like to know how this code of conduct is working and how that success was measured. I am very curious to hear the parliamentary secretary's response.

The government is proposing to improve Canadians' basic knowledge, but by doing so, it becomes clear that the government is laying the blame on Canadian families and suggesting that they are not capable of managing their credit cards when, in reality, the credit card companies are making outrageous profits.

● (1850)

[English]

Just this morning there was a statement in the *Globe and Mail* which summed this up very well:

Looking to financial literacy to fill the void is like asking ordinary Canadians to be their own brain surgeon and airline pilots.

[Translation]

It is not me or the NDP saying that. It was the *Globe and Mail*.

[English]

Education is something that would be helpful if we did not have a system that held Canadians hostage. It is a step that puts the blame on Canadian families and does not look to the obstacle, ignorance in the system, an obstacle which families on their own cannot solve. This is where the government is expected to stand up for Canadian families, but it is not doing anything concrete.

[Translation]

This government program is not a program. It is just a set of good intentions. There is no way to assess the impacts and benefits.

Adjournment Proceedings

What concrete suggestions has the NDP made? First, the NDP suggested capping credit card interest rates at prime plus 5%. The prime rate is currently 3%, so the interest rate on credit cards would be 8%. Second, we suggested banning excessive charges on credit cards, payday loans, store cards and all other forms of consumer credit. Third, we want to require lenders to disclose the real cost of credit cards and other types of loans so it is easier for consumers to understand. Lastly, we suggested putting an end to unfair transaction charges for consumers and small businesses.

What Canadians want to hear is a practical list of things the government will do to protect them from the unlimited greed of credit granters.

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, our Conservative government does not believe in punishing Canadian families who are trying to get ahead with higher taxes and reckless deficit spending that would hurt our economy and cost jobs.

The NDP has shown its pro-tax agenda by opposing our GST reductions, demanding \$10 billion a year in higher business taxes that would lead to job losses, and even asking for new taxes, like a tax on everyday financial transactions.

While the NDP is promoting its high tax agenda, our Conservative government is helping families with our low tax agenda that is saving the average Canadian family over \$3,000 a year.

We are also helping Canadian consumers, especially those who use financial services. Canadians use financial services products every day, whether it is by using their credit card, cashing a cheque, going to the bank, or signing a mortgage. Canadians deserve to be treated fairly when they use these products and to be provided with clear information before agreeing to use them.

[*Translation*]

For that reason, since 2006, our Conservative government has introduced key measures to address the concerns of consumers and to make financial services products more advantageous for consumers.

For example, our government has protected consumers with new credit card rules that require consent for credit limit increases, a minimum grace period of 21 days for new purchases, disclosure to the consumer and limits on commercial practices that are detrimental to the consumer; established a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry to help small businesses fight unfair practices—the code promotes fairness, encourages choice and competition and will protect businesses against cost hikes; banned negative option billing for financial products; reduced the hold periods for cheques; made mortgage insurance more transparent, more understandable and more affordable through better disclosure and other measures; and established an independent working group responsible for making recommendations on financial literacy to help consumers make informed choices.

In the 2011 budget, our Conservative government is building on our achievements by implementing other measures to help consumers such as banning unsolicited credit card cheques, protecting consumers of prepaid cards, and moving forward with

the implementation of the recommendations of the task force on financial literacy, starting with the appointment of an official responsible for financial literacy in the government.

• (1855)

[*English*]

The question for the NDP is why it is opposing all of these pro-consumer initiatives and instead promoting a high tax agenda, even increasing the GST?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, as usual, the question was not answered. She answered the question for the government with a question for the NDP. What does the exorbitant interest rates on credit cards have to do with insidiously repeating that the NDP wants to increase taxes? The NDP does not want to increase taxes. I am talking specifically about the interest rate. It is a specific, targeted proposal: prime plus 5%. That is a concrete measure.

Why is the government answering concrete questions by accusing the NDP of wanting to increase taxes? That is a way of not answering the question. Again, I would like a specific answer to a specific question.

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's suggestions are just irresponsible.

If we are here to talk about keeping money in the pockets of families, whether it is by providing consumer protection or by keeping their taxes low, it is the same thing. At the end of the day, there is more money in the pockets of Canadian families. Sadly, the NDP do not understand that. It wants to keep taxing our families.

The Conservative government has ensured that families have, on average, \$3,000 more in their pockets. It is that simple.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I mentioned earlier, our Conservative government has taken leadership with many pro-consumer initiatives, including sensible measures to help Canadians entering the housing market. We constantly monitor the housing market, ready to take prudent steps to ensure its continued stability. That is why we recently took prudent and sensible action to strengthen Canada's housing market by reducing the maximum mortgage period to 30 years, significantly reducing interest payments for Canadian families, lowering the maximum amount lenders can provide when refinancing mortgages to 85% and withdrawing taxpayer backing on home equity lines of credit provided by lenders. These were prudent moves that even the NDP member for Outremont, the then finance critic, called good ideas.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last June, I asked the Minister of Health to explain why, in the last session of Parliament, she asked the Senate to review the 2004 accord when the Senate is an undemocratic institution that is not accountable to anyone. She could have asked the Standing Committee on Health, which is made up of elected members of Parliament who are accountable to Canadians, to conduct the review. The committee is an far more democratic institution and is committed to analyzing the investment of public funds.

Canadians have a right to know where their money is going, what is being done with it, if it is being used wisely and whether their investments are being monitored. The federal government has a duty to enforce the Canada Health Act, which includes the following five principles: accessibility, universality, portability, public administration and comprehensiveness.

The provinces had to meet targets and achieve results in order to respect the agreement between them and the federal government, so that the federal government would continue to invest 6%, as agreed to by the Minister of Health.

The targets were, for example, to reduce wait times in the emergency rooms, to increase the number of professional staff, doctors and nurses, and to improve home care. There was also the issue of providing more care in the north and improving public health management.

Such were the targets and there were 67 to 70 measurable indicators. Some eight years later, there is still no news on what has happened since 2004. As we prepare the new 2014 accord, we might want to know what improvements there have been, if any, and in what areas of health we have to increase our efforts.

Why did the Minister of Health not show more leadership? It was her decision to choose who would review this accord. Why did she choose the Senate? What does the government have to hide?

This totally lacks transparency, since we have no idea or indication what is being discussed. We have no access to the witnesses and experts who could provide us with information, as this belongs to the Senate.

Again, why was there no leadership on this issue and why was the mandate not given to a democratic institution, to the members of Parliament elected by the public?

• (1900)

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, health care is extremely important to Canadians and our health care system is something in which Canadians take pride. This government is committed to the Canada Health Act and the principles of universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration it embodies. These principles represent a common vision for Canada's publicly funded health care system that ensures every Canadian has access to the hospital and medical services that he or she needs.

While health care is a shared responsibility in the country, the government recognizes provincial jurisdiction and the primary responsibility provinces and territories have for the administration and delivery of health care services. Provinces and territories are directly responsible for setting priorities, administering health care budgets and managing resources.

Since coming to office, this government has worked collaboratively with the provinces and territories to advance the objectives of the 2004 health accord. We have introduced new measures to reduce wait times, improve access to physicians and nurses and accelerate the implementation of electronic health records.

This government has also introduced further measures to support physicians and nurses in rural and remote communities, home and community care, cancer, mental health and the prevention of childhood obesity. We have done so in order to address the changing health needs of Canadians and to contribute to the real improvements in the health care system.

Parliament has a key role to play in taking stock of what has been accomplished through the health accord. Federal legislation mandated two parliamentary reviews of the accord, one in 2008 and the second in 2011.

In 2008 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health carried out a parliamentary review focused on the federal commitments in the 2004 accord. The member is able to read that if she would look that up.

Last March, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology initiated the second review to examine the report on the progress in implementing the accord. If the member remembers in the last Parliament, the opposition actually had the majority, and in the House of Commons committee it was decided not to study this. The minister was mandated for the study and that is why it went to the Senate.

As that review was interrupted by the election, the committee resumed its work this fall. Like all members, I look forward to receiving the committee's report when the review has been completed.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the meantime, the Government of Canada's funding for health care is at an all time high. For example, this reflects the importance that Canadians place on the effective, efficient and responsive health care system. This also demonstrates the government's commitment to the health and well-being of Canadians.

As set out in the June 2011 budget, federal cash transfers to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer will amount to \$27 billion in 2011-2012. These investments provide growing and predictable financial support to enable provinces and territories to deliver high quality health care to Canadians.

Federal funding for health care through the Canada health transfer is legislated to grow 6% annually until 2013-14 and we are committed to extending this arrangement to 2015-16. There are still two more years before the end of the current health accord, which gives us time to give proper consideration to the changing health care needs of Canadians and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our health care system.

Strengthening Canada's capacity to protect and improve the health of Canadians is of the utmost importance to our government. We look forward to continuing this work with the provinces and territories on ways to help Canadians live healthier lives.

• (1905)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for answering my question and trying to shed some light on this. However, this is a new Parliament this year. The Minister of Health could still have decided to give the Standing Committee on Health the opportunity to review the targets and see whether they had been met, or she could have even created a new committee. It is important for people to know where to invest and where their money is going. This also would have allowed us to hear from witnesses to get an update on the current situation.

Of course, it is interesting to read a report, but the quality of the information is not the same as when expert witnesses come and give us the information and we can discuss the situation with them and ask them more specific questions. Certainly, it is important to get an update.

I will repeat my question. Could the minister not have given the authority to a democratic institution?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate for my colleague that the Speaker of the House has ruled many times that committees are responsible for determining their own proceedings. It is not the Department of Health that tells a committee what to do.

The Government of Canada recognizes that Canadians expect their health care system to be there when they and their families need it most. Canadians want to see their governments working together to ensure that their publicly funded health care system will deliver the high quality services that Canadians expect.

In order to meet the expectations of Canadians, this government is committed to implementing the 2004 accord by providing \$41.3 billion over 10 years in additional funding through the Canada health transfer. This funding will support provincial and territorial health

care delivery in the priority areas identified in the accord, and our commitment to the health accord comes with the commitment to the review process.

The Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology is currently conducting a review of the 2004 health accord. It has been diligently examining progress across the priority areas. I, like all members, look forward to the committee's report when it has completed its review.

As I said earlier, the Speaker has ruled that committees are responsible for determining their own proceedings.

We look forward to any work that is being done and to inform Canadians about these important—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. We will move forward to the next question. The hon. member for Etobicoke North

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ozone layer protects us from harmful ultraviolet or UV radiation from the sun. This radiation causes skin cancer, cataracts, sunburns, and local and whole body immunosuppression. Without the ozone layer, life as we know it would not exist on earth.

It was therefore disturbing that an Antarctic ozone hole was discovered in 1985. Ozone destroying CFC refrigerants were identified as the cause. Remarkably, only two years after the discovery, these chemicals were banned under the Montreal protocol, for which Canada took a leadership role.

The protocol was ratified by 196 countries. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "Perhaps the single most successful international agreement to date has been the Montreal protocol". A global agreement is possible when countries enter negotiations in good faith and carefully consider what we have learned from science.

Following the signing of the Montreal protocol, CFC levels in the atmosphere have decreased and global deterioration of the ozone layer has generally slowed. In fact, it is expected that the ozone layer should recover some time between 2020 and 2050.

Having said that, surprises are possible, as demonstrated this spring when a 2,000,000 km² ozone hole was discovered over the Arctic. Because surprises are possible and because new chemicals and climate change might affect the ozone layer, we must be vigilant in monitoring our life-giving atmosphere.

Studies show that without elimination of CFCs, most of the ozone layer would have been destroyed by 2065. DNA-damaging UVs would have increased by 550%, leading to large increases of skin cancer.

Canada recently participated in the eighth meeting of the ozone research managers of the parties to the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer in May 2011. There were no indications in Canada's presentation that the Minister of the Environment was planning to effectively wipe out Environment Canada's ozone group and severely curtail ozone monitoring activities.

What is also notable is that the presentation has a slide titled "An Arctic ozone hole", meaning that Environment Canada was aware of severe ozone depletion in the Arctic well before the government began to announce its cuts to ozone monitoring and science in June. This is a shocking revelation. The document also said:

Balloonsonde networks provide critical high-resolution vertical profiles of ozone, water vapour, and temperature, and need to be maintained and expanded, since such data are critical to understanding the interactions between atmospheric composition and a changing climate.

The operative words "Agreed to by Canada", indicate that ozones are critical. How is it possible that we are now considering optimizing and streamlining the ozonesonde network, which everyone understands is code for cuts?

A government brief titled "Ozone monitoring cuts" has now surfaced. Will the government clearly say what is being cut from the ozone program, or preferably rescind workplace adjustment letters to Environment Canada scientists, so they can continue research that protects the health and safety of Canadians?

• (1910)

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have assured my colleague numerous times in recent weeks, Environment Canada will continue to monitor the ozone. The World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre will continue to deliver world-

Adjournment Proceedings

class services. Canada's excellent track record of providing ozone monitoring data will continue, as will our ongoing work to take concrete action to protect Canada's environment.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this is not good enough.

A government brief titled "Ozone monitoring cuts" has now surfaced. We have heard time and again that the World Ozone and Ultraviolet Radiation Data Centre is not being cut, nor apparently are ozone services. These claims fly in the face of the facts that the data centre's manager's position is in jeopardy, as are the positions of Environment Canada scientists who discovered the Arctic ozone hole.

A government brief entitled "Ozone monitoring cuts" has been uncovered. Canadians expect transparency from their government. The government has an obligation to say what actually is being cut or, better yet, declare that there will be no cuts to ozone monitoring or science.

• (1915)

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier and in numerous other responses to this question, Environment Canada will continue to monitor the ozone. We will continue to be wise stewards of taxpayer funds and take concrete action to protect Canada's environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 7:15 p.m.)

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