



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, October 29, 2013**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual report on the Privacy Act of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada for the year 2012-13.

[*Translation*]

This document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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[*English*]

### FIRST NATIONS ELECTIONS ACT

**Hon. John Duncan (for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-9, An Act respecting the election and term of office of chiefs and councillors of certain First Nations and the composition of council of those First Nations.

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made previously, I would like to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill S-6 was in the previous session at the time of prorogation.

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

**The Speaker:** The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill S-6 when it was before the House at the time of prorogation of the 1st session of the 41st Parliament.

Accordingly, pursuant to the order made on Monday, October 21, 2013, the bill is deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House

that the House immediately adopt the provisions of private member's Motion No. 461, listed on today's Order Paper, that deals specifically with the creation of a special committee of this House on security and intelligence oversight, to be appointed to study and make recommendations with respect to the appropriate method of parliamentary oversight of Canadian government policies, regulations and activities in the areas of intelligence, including all of those departments, agencies and review bodies, civilian and military, involved in the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence for the purpose of Canada's national security.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for St. John's East have the unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** No.

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### PETITIONS

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have several hundred petitioners among my constituents in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They call upon the House of Commons to ensure that the Holodomor and Canada's first national internment operations are permanently and prominently displayed at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in its galleries.

#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I also have petitions from across Canada calling on Parliament to ensure that the Criminal Code be amended to decriminalize the selling of sexual services, to criminalize the purchasing of sexual services and to provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution.

[*Translation*]

#### VIA RAIL

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by 4,288 people who want to put an end to the cuts that VIA Rail is making to its services across the country, particularly in eastern Quebec. The petition also calls upon the federal government to reverse the cuts that have been made, as well as those that are set out in the 2012-13 estimates.

As a result of these cuts, VIA Rail has announced a significant reduction in services in eastern Quebec, particularly for the stations in La Pocatière, Rivière-du-Loup, Mont-Joli, Bonaventure, Port-Daniel, Grande Rivière and Barachois. The Rimouski, Chandler and New Richmond stations are going to lose their staff.

### Government Orders

I collected the signatures on the petition from people in Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques and my colleagues from Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine collected the signatures from people in their ridings. The petition calls for VIA Rail to reverse its decision, leave the stations open and keep the staff in place. It also calls upon the federal government to reverse the cuts that have been made. I am therefore pleased to table this petition bearing 4,288 names in the House.

[English]

#### PENSIONS

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition from Albertans calling on the government to take action on the changes to old age security. Petitioners oppose the changes to extend eligibility to the age of 67 as it will take money out of the pockets of future generations when they retire. They call upon the Government of Canada to maintain the retirement age for old age security at 65 years and to make the required investments in the guaranteed income supplement to lift every Canadian senior out of poverty.

#### PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first contains a local petition to bring proportional representation to Canada. The petitioners object to our winner-take-all voting system and would like to have a fair system where all votes count.

• (1010)

#### ELECTRONIC PETITIONS

**Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second of the two petitions is to support my motion on electronic petitioning, which constituents think would be a good addition to our parliamentary process.

#### NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from some 200 residents of the Northwest Territories asking for the attention of the House of Commons to the following. There are a number of rivers within the Northwest Territories and the Yukon that have been excluded from the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The petitioners would like to see these rivers included in that act. This can be done through a simple order in council. The rivers include the Liard River, the Thelon River, the Soper River and the South Nahanni River. These are rivers of significance to northerners and to the rest of the country.

#### KITSILANO COAST GUARD STATION

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today. In the first, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to rescind the decision to shut the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. They ask that the government reinstate full funding to maintain this Coast Guard station, which plays a pivotal role in one of the busiest ports in Canada.

#### SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners call upon the

Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fin to Canada.

#### NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD DAY

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the final petition, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to designate March 18 as National Sustainable Seafood Day.

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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, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2

The House resumed from October 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate this particular bill, another omnibus bill coming from the Conservative Party, which contains a number of very significant issues.

One of those issues deals with an act that is really only directed toward the constituency I represent, the Northwest Territories. It is called the amendments to the Mackenzie Gas Project Impacts Act, and the bill changes the conditions of a particular fund that was set up through the work of the previous Liberal government and then through the work of the Conservative government in 2006 to deal with potential impacts from the Mackenzie gas project, a project that was put forward by Imperial Oil and, throughout the last decade, went through environment assessment.

Support of most first nations groups along the Mackenzie Valley was achieved for this 1,200-kilometre-long pipeline with a collector field in the Mackenzie Delta. The Inuvialuit of that region also supported the project. We did go through a process by which this project achieved support.

Part of that support came because of the decision by the federal government, both Liberals and Conservatives at the time, to provide socio-economic impact fund to the communities. This fund, which was established as a trust fund of \$500 million, was to be divided among the communities, the regions, the aboriginal organizations that represented the regions down the Mackenzie Valley and in the Mackenzie Delta. The Dehcho region was to receive \$150 million; the Gwich'in region, \$82 million; the Tulita-Deline region, \$61 million; the Inuvialuit \$150 million; and the Kasho Gotine-Colville region, \$57 million.

These sums were to be distributed over 10 years once the project had been approved and we had seen work going forward with the project, once the companies had initiated efforts to start the project. This money was clearly identified for socio-economic impacts over 10 years, so that the sums of money were to be used for projects designed and developed by the communities.

These communities up and down the Mackenzie Valley, in the Mackenzie Delta, went through an extensive process to identify what they saw were their concerns in developing this pipeline: how it would affect their communities, how their communities could alleviate some of the impacts of such a major project, a \$16 billion project, being conducted in an area where there were mostly traditional communities in very much pristine wilderness.

We had a situation where these communities had gone into a two-year planning process and came up with detailed plans of how these dollars were to be spent. The government at the time, through an act of Parliament, set up an independent corporation that would manage these funds and ensure that the corporation would only provide contributions to regional organizations in respect of a project if the project mitigated the existing or anticipated socio-economic impacts on the communities in the Northwest Territories arising from the Mackenzie gas project. Quite clearly, this was designed solely for that purpose.

•(1015)

There was an independent body set up by the Conservative government through an act of Parliament to manage this money and ensure that it was managed in a correct and careful fashion, following the procedures that had been set up and the planning that had taken place in these communities over a period of two years, from 2006 to 2008. All of this work was accomplished and it was put in place.

That is the basic history of what has happened with it. Now, the Conservatives are talking about changing this project and the act to one where a minister, who is not designated in the act, will have the sole responsibility for issuing the funds for this rather large amount of money. We have a situation where the minister is not known. One of the significant differences in the bill is that in the previous bill, a corporation may only deal with this particular aspect when it is dealing with money, but now the new minister may designate the funds.

There is a subtle change in the way the legislation is put out, which I have some concerns about, because I represent the people who went through the two-year planning process to come up with the ideas that would be initiated. Those ideas were ones that spoke to culture, language, young people, the significant and important social

### *Government Orders*

impacts that the communities recognized would exist after taking on a major industrial project. It would forever change the landscape in their regions. It would forever change the economics and would put enormous social pressure on these communities.

What we have now is a move to a system that would have a Conservative minister handing out cheques for particular projects as he or she deems appropriate. This is a concern that I have. When we had the corporation in place, the corporation would have followed the directions that the communities had struck. It would have been an impartial body. We would have taken it away from the potential political interference that goes on with funds that are not clearly and carefully delegated to the right areas.

Did the government not learn anything from the Muskoka minister's gazebo scandal? Did it not learn anything about the importance of dealing with funds in a non-partial, careful fashion so that the precise purpose of what these funds are developed for is implemented?

We went through the process in the Northwest Territories. We established what these funds were to be used for in agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government. These plans are in place. Where is the protection now for the work that people have done?

It is changing. Why is the government changing this? Where was the consultation with anyone in the Northwest Territories about this process? When did the government actually talk to people and say it wanted to take it out of the hands of an impartial corporation, which is very carefully configured to ensure that the dollars are spent in the way that the communities want, and put it into the hands of a minister who may or may decide to support projects, based on political considerations? Where was that consultation? How did that work? Where is the success of that?

What we have is a \$500-million fund that has now been cut loose by the Government of Canada, by the Conservative Government of Canada, into the hands of a minister. It may or may not work in the way that it was designed to work.

This is a pattern that we can follow with the Conservative government. It started off with good intentions. It felt accountability was important when it started off. It recognized that it did not want to follow the Liberal pattern. Now it is back. What pattern is it following? It is back to the way the Liberals used to govern. It is back there now. This is just another indication. I really am sorry that this has happened.

I see that I only have five seconds left so I will take it up. Thank you.

•(1020)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what really bothers me about the process for Bill C-4 is that, once again, the Conservative government is introducing an omnibus bill and then moving a damn time allocation motion. I am very concerned about this because of the impact it has on Canadian democracy, and I am wondering how we are supposed to properly debate this bill.

*Government Orders*

People across the country are telling us what they think about the environment, the country's finances and employment insurance. In all seriousness, our job in Ottawa is to share these concerns in the House of Commons in order to work together—like a big family—to find a compromise. I will admit that our family is dysfunctional.

However, we have to find solutions to help Canada move forward rather than engaging in a dialogue of the deaf in the House of Commons. I know that we will not solve this problem today on the basis of my comments alone. I would therefore like to ask a question of my NDP colleague, who represents northern Canada.

Is Bill C-4 really designed to properly represent Canadians living in the north or is our government somewhat out of touch with the realities in Quebec and northern Canada and, unfortunately, serving only the interests of party friends?

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, over the past two years, my constituents have rejected omnibus bills. They understand now what they mean, and this bill is no different.

When we do something like this with the Mackenzie Gas Project Impacts Act, following this debate in the House of Commons, a committee should be empowered to bring forward all the participants in the Mackenzie gas impact fund. The people who spent two years designing what their communities were going to do with this money should be brought in front of a committee so that this could be properly aired.

The government did not do its work by going to these communities prior to this and talking to them about what was going on with the act, how the changes would take place, and ensuring them that the minister's prerogative over projects would not end up with these communities having to deal politically on every single issue.

We need to bring these communities in front of the committee now. We need to bring in representatives of the communities so that they can understand better what the government's plans are. Perhaps we could assure them that the government understands. If there are problems with it, there could be assurances given that these funds would be dealt with in a proper fashion. Those are things that government should do. However, what we see from the other side is a lack of interest in dealing with Canadians in an honest and forthright manner.

• (1025)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat difficult to stand up and provide comment on this when we know that many Canadians are watching what is happening in the Prime Minister's Office with the allegations of scandal, untruths and so forth. However, we will try to focus on what the PMO is actually doing here inside the House.

There has been a change in attitude in terms of how to present budget implementation bills by the Prime Minister. This is a Prime Minister who has seen fit to change a wide variety of legislation, which should come into the House as independent pieces of legislation. He has chosen to use the back door in bringing in a lot more legislation than should be brought in. I am talking about unprecedented amounts. Within provincial and national legislators,

no prime minister has brought in so much material using the back door of budget legislation.

I wonder if the member might want to provide comment on how individual members are denied the opportunity to provide due diligence because of the current Conservative-Reform Prime Minister's attitude in terms of bringing in this type of legislation.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, to my hon. colleague, perhaps he would go to my website. We did two very detailed analyses on Bill C-45 and Bill C-38, which are available on my website. They deal with how this government is changing the nature of doing business here, and talk to the long-term strategy that the Conservative government has to change the nature of Canada.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to add my support for the swift passage of this important and necessary legislation. We on this side of the House have been very clear. We are focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity and the legislation shows how committed we are to this focus.

As the Minister of Finance stated when he tabled Bill C-4, "In the face of continued global economic uncertainty, it is essential that we remain squarely focused on keeping Canada's economy strong".

Rest assured the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, is actively advancing this agenda. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, I know the agency is playing a leading role in implementing important initiatives from economic action plan 2013. These initiatives are helping to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. We need look no further than our determination to fix an issue that matters to all Canadian taxpayers: ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of the taxes they owe. We are doing so by closing tax loopholes in order to keep taxes as low for individuals and families as possible.

Since 2006 our government has cut taxes 150 times. As a result, the average family of four now enjoys over \$3,200 in extra tax savings. The federal tax burden for all Canadians is the lowest it has been in 50 years. I listened to the opposition criticism of the bill. Those members can say just about anything they want in the House because they are protected by parliamentary privilege, but they cannot say that we do not have the lowest taxes in the past 50 years. It is a fact and it is time that the opposition applaud that fact.

However, like any responsible government there is always room to do more. That is why economic action plan 2013 announced measures to close tax loopholes and improve the fairness and integrity of the tax system. We owe it to hard-working Canadians who fulfill their tax commitments and understand that their contributions help to fund important government programs and services for their families. It is also critical to honest businesses that find it hard to compete with businesses that cheat on their taxes. When people cheat on their taxes, everyone loses.

*Government Orders*

Among the important changes we intend to address aggressive tax planning, clarify tax rules and fight international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. These efforts will close tax loopholes that were used by a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Broadening and protecting the tax base supports our government's effort to return to balanced budgets and responds to provincial governments' concerns about protecting provincial revenues on our shared tax base. Equally important is the fact that our budget would give Canadians confidence that the tax system is fair, providing incentives to work, save and invest in Canada.

Another area with a direct impact on Canadian taxpayers is our work to root out electronic suppression of sales software. In plain language it is often referred to as zapper software. What it boils down to is making it more and more difficult for people to cheat on their taxes and operate in the underground economy. While they, the tax cheats, pocket the money, honest taxpayers end up having to shoulder a greater tax burden because of this illegal activity.

All taxpayers, particularly businesses, are required to maintain adequate books and records for tax purposes. This includes maintaining accurate electronic data files. Unfortunately, some businesses use this zapper software to hide their sales figures so they can avoid paying the GST/HST and income taxes they owe on this revenue. This software selectively deletes or modifies sales from electronic cash registers and other point-of-sale and accounting systems. This undermines the competitiveness of businesses and offers an unfair advantage to those who fail to comply with Canada's tax laws.

Economic action plan 2013 sent a strong signal that we will no longer tolerate such activity. Bill C-4 includes new monetary penalties and criminal offences to discourage the possession, use or development of electronic suppression of sales software.

● (1030)

Anyone who attempts to avoid paying taxes by using electronic suppression of sales tax avoidance, which leaves an unfair burden on Canadian consumers and businesses that contribute their fair share, will now pay a steep price. Businesses caught using, owning, or buying electronic suppression of sales software will face a \$5,000 penalty on their first infraction. This penalty rises to \$50,000 for any subsequent infraction.

Anyone who develops, manufactures, offers for sale, or sells such software will face a \$10,000 penalty on the first infraction and \$100,000 for any subsequent infraction.

There is no question that our overarching goal is to put more money back in the hands of Canadians through reduced taxes. Our country's tax base is essential for providing necessary benefits, programs, and services that all Canadians depend on.

When everyone pays the taxes they owe, we can invest those tax dollars to help Canadian families and communities and our country's economy. For instance, economic action plan 2013 includes tax credits for small businesses that would enable them to create jobs for unemployed Canadians. This would generate increased wealth in their communities.

Bill C-4 introduces measures that would support Canada's job creators. It would extend and expand the hiring credit for small business for an additional year. More businesses than ever would be able to take advantage of this job creation tool.

It is especially noteworthy that the hiring credit would leave eligible business owners with up to \$1,000 they could put back into their businesses. Eligible employers would receive the credit when they hired new employees or increased wages. New businesses created in 2012 might also be eligible. If business owners were eligible, they could get the credit automatically when they filed their T4 information returns.

This investment yields huge dividends. Based on the success of the existing initiative, we anticipate that 560,000 small businesses would benefit from this measure. If even 50% of those businesses used the hiring credit, this would allow them to reinvest \$225 million back into the Canadian economy. Especially good news for businesses is that there would be no extra paperwork to fill out. That is because of another one of our priorities reflected in Bill C-4, our commitment to reduce red tape at every opportunity.

Business owners and their associations have told us loud and clear that they are frustrated by the amount of paperwork they have to deal with from all levels of government. We have been listening to them.

Our government recognizes that too much red tape restricts innovation, productivity, and competitiveness. We understand that when Canadian businesses succeed, all Canadians benefit. That is why we have taken repeated steps to free up Canadian business owners from paperwork so that they can focus on growing their businesses and creating jobs. I am proud to say that there are now fewer regulations, and the cost of red tape has been reduced by \$20 million annually.

We continue to make progress. Now certain essential forms that simply cannot be avoided are easier to process. For instance, the CRA recently launched its new online mail service for Canadian businesses, available through My Business Account, which streamlines their interactions with the agency. Canadian small businesses can now choose to receive notices of assessment and reassessment, as well as some letters for their corporate and GST/HST accounts, electronically.

CRA uses the same high level of security that financial institutions use to protect banking information, so businesses can use the new online service with peace of mind.

Our government's record speaks for itself. We are keeping taxes low, cutting red tape, and going after tax cheats like never before. No wonder Canada leads the G7 with more than one million net new jobs created since the depth of the global recession. With the adoption of Bill C-4, we will be able to carry on this proud tradition of progress.

*Government Orders*

•(1035)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a serious problem here. They think they have tabled a budget, but all we see is proof that they have an aptitude—I would even call it a talent—for transforming gold into lead.

You were supposed to create jobs, you were supposed to give us something to make our lives easier, and all we see is a budget that does not even aim to lower the number of unemployed workers, that does not even aim to build affordable housing and that does not even aim to reduce household debt. There is nothing.

I have a simple question about taxes. You talk about taxes—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the member that he must always direct his questions to the Chair.

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, that was a wide-ranging question on a number of issues.

It is fairly obvious that the hon. member was not listening intently to my speech. I talked very openly about reducing red tape, reducing the cost for small business, and getting more people hired in the Canadian economy, never mind the one million net new jobs we have created since the great depression.

Certainly people would be hired through the Canadian tax credit. That tax credit would benefit 560,000 businesses. If only 50% of those businesses took advantage of the tax credit, that would put \$225 million into the Canadian economy. Putting \$225 million into the Canadian economy is a lot of money that would stimulate a lot of jobs. That shows that the government is paying attention to what small business is saying. It shows that we are creating jobs that benefit ordinary Canadians.

The hon. member went on to talk about affordable housing. Maybe he needs to take a look at the record of this government in assisting with affordable housing across this nation.

•(1040)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will quickly say that the municipal budget for the City of Kingston is going to be decreasing because of the expiry of mortgage support from the federal government for affordable housing.

My question is about a particular point my hon. colleague made, which is about penalties for software companies that write software to help people avoid paying taxes. It is very hard to enforce penalties when it is so easy for these companies to be offshore. An analogy is legislation to combat spam, which was, in fact, passed before I was elected. Not very much has come of it.

Can we really accomplish something by passing a law that punishes software companies for helping people evade taxes, when the companies are offshore, or is this just feel-good legislation?

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes a fair, if incorrect, point.

The reality is that we have to cut down on the software suppression material that many businesses are using to avoid paying their fair share of tax. Obviously, if we are going to penalize businesses, that is one part of the equation. We set that up because some businesses, quite frankly, have this software in place and are not even aware of it. It really would be improper to punish people for using something they are not aware they are using.

However, we are serving notice. We are saying that they should recognize that this software is out there and that they should make sure that they are not culpable for using this software. The first fine is \$1,000, and the second fine is \$50,000.

Furthermore, it is difficult, I agree, to go after these companies if they are offshore. However, there must be a penalty for companies that create and promote this software, because ultimately, they are the problem. Yes, I recognize the difficulty of targeting offshore companies, but at the same time, there has to be a control put in place that at least allows us to go after them.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4 is a sad new piece of legislative art from the Conservatives. What a masterpiece.

Much like the three omnibus bills before it—Bill C-38, Bill C-45 and Bill C-60—this fourth bill includes some 70 legislative measures—why not—most of which have very little to do with the budget. The bill even creates two brand-new laws: the Mackenzie Gas Project Impacts Act and the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act.

With this bill, the Conservatives are trying once again to force major changes through Parliament, without letting us do our job.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already pointed out numerous times that members of Parliament do not have access to the information they need to fulfill their critical role and improve our laws. He had to threaten to take the government to court for the Conservatives to finally bother to reveal their budget cut plan. However, here we are again with another omnibus bill.

The Minister of Finance tabled budget 2013 in Parliament on March 21. The budget cuts thousands of public service jobs and makes cuts to program spending. The budget proposes a host of unwarranted economic austerity measures that do not help Canadians.

Bill C-4 to implement certain provisions of the budget undermines the health and safety protections in place for workers. It is a direct attack on public servants and labour unions. It causes irreparable damage to our research system and puts employment insurance firmly under the minister's control.

I am particularly concerned for the Canadian public and especially for the constituents in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval.



*Government Orders*

This bill removes from our health and safety officers the authority granted to them under the Canada Labour Code. It significantly weakens the ability of employees to refuse to work in dangerous conditions. It grants virtually all health and safety powers to the minister. This concentration of power in the hands of a minister is very dangerous, especially when we are dealing with a Conservative minister.

When the Conservatives attack the Canada Labour Code, they are attacking something that Canadians worked hard to build over the years to make their working conditions healthier and safer. This is the opposite of progress. This is a step backwards, just like everything else the Conservatives do. They should instead be seeking ways to protect Canadians from having to work in situations that expose them to unacceptable risks. They should protect workers.

I had the opportunity to study occupational health and safety in my university program. I took a course that required students to conduct workplace risk assessments. Therefore, I can say that centralizing everything is exactly the opposite of what companies do to identify risks in order to provide appropriate solutions concerning occupational health and safety.

For all these reasons, the NDP will certainly oppose this proposal, which affects the fundamental rights of workers in terms of occupational health and safety.

Bill C-4 would also make changes that would allow the minister to determine which services are essential in the public service, in such a way that he could well undermine collective bargaining rights.

We know that the Conservatives do not like unions. This is another attack. This is a direct violation of the social dialogue in the public service. By destabilizing the relationship between the negotiating parties, the government is giving itself the means to gag workers in the public service. It is restricting their right to challenge the deterioration of working conditions due to the unjustified cuts imposed by the Conservatives themselves. By slashing jobs, they are creating the conditions for conflict. They now want to ignore the consequences by preventing workers from expressing their frustration and their complaints.

However, some services seem to be less essential than others, particularly when objective scientific results contradict the Conservatives' vision and plans. They fired hundreds of scientists without considering the medium- or long-term consequences of their decision.

Now, Bill C-4 is taking aim at National Research Council Canada and dealing a final blow to our public research system. Well done.

As a final step in their attempt to systematically bleed the labour market dry on the pretense of flexibility, the Conservatives are using Bill C-4 to eliminate the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board and give the Minister of Finance the power to manipulate rates.

Do the Conservatives want to turn their backs on federal responsibility in this area by dumping it onto the provinces or directly onto the public?

● (1045)

Bill C-4 also extends the \$1,000 hiring tax credit for small business. I acknowledge that that is a step in the right direction, but it is nowhere near enough. The NDP is looking further ahead and proposing a \$2,000 hiring tax credit that would not come out of the employment insurance fund and would help businesses hire and train young workers.

I want to keep talking about small businesses. The Conservatives are going ahead with their \$350 million tax hike on labour-sponsored venture capital funds. However, it is well known that venture capital is essential for creating and developing businesses. Just listen to our entrepreneurs. Alain-Jacques Simard, CEO of TeraXion, a Quebec company that specializes in fibre optics, said that the Fonds de solidarité FTQ acted as a catalyst and that since its January 2010 investment, his company's sales have doubled. That is important to remember.

The Conservatives like to remind everybody that they were elected to lower taxes, but not for unions, apparently. That is very strange. Attacking a financing system does not make sense unless it is part of an agenda to do whatever it takes to undermine the economic influence of Canadian workers and unions.

Still on the subject of small businesses, Bill C-4 increases the lifetime capital gains exemption and indexes it. The NDP supports increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption because that will help small business owners. The NDP knows that small businesses create a lot of jobs. However, they create those jobs only in a climate of better economic and regulatory conditions. That is why the NDP would like to see tax incentives to help these businesses hire Canadians.

We can only have a productive debate on these proposals if the Conservatives allow it. The omnibus bill will not make that possible and suggests that the Conservatives are, sadly, not willing to debate. The Conservatives are showing their true colours by attacking workers, public servants, employment insurance and unions. They are not working for Canadian families.

Household debt has reached record levels and is now at 166% of household income. This means that people are spending five months' income every three months, putting them two more months in the hole every five months. The Conservatives have no plan to address the alarming youth unemployment rate.

Bill C-4 is out of touch with what is important to Canadian families. It is a dangerous step backward. This policy is designed to destroy gains made by the middle class. It will force workers and families to pay for services that they have already paid for through their taxes.

This bill, like all of its omnibus predecessors, is a policy instrument designed to systematically destroy the social relationships that Canadians have worked hard to build over the past few decades. It is an intolerable attack on the rights of Canadian workers and Canadian families. The NDP will not stand for it.

*Government Orders*

The NDP will not support the Conservatives' latest attempt to circumvent parliamentary democracy. We should have the opportunity to debate the many subjects covered in Bill C-4 separately and refer them for study by the relevant committee. The NDP is also opposed to budget 2013 and its implementation bills, including Bill C-4, because they disregard the true priorities of Canadian families: creating good, well-paid jobs, ensuring retirement security, creating job opportunities for youth and creating more affordable living conditions for families.

• (1050)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with great interest and noted that she said she studied occupational health and safety in school.

In looking at the changes to the Canada Labour Code, it is important to note that in 80% of the appeals in the last 10 years, it has been found that there was no danger. Therefore, if we are looking at changes to the Canadian Labour Code and we note that in 80% of the cases that have been brought forward there was no danger, would she not agree that we need to have a system that would allow our health and safety officers to focus on that 20% where there is true danger?

I think it is an absolutely phenomenal number and it speaks to the fact that the system, as it currently exists, is not working, so I would like to ask the member why she would not look positively at a change that would focus on the true and imminent dangers to workers' health.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

As I was explaining, since the government wants to centralize everything, there will be fewer people on the ground to assess all the risks. Furthermore, the bill significantly weakens employees' ability to refuse to work in dangerous conditions. This means that people working in dangerous conditions cannot refuse to work. That is the problem I have with this bill.

I would like to say this to my hon. colleague: when an omnibus bill containing hundreds of pages is introduced—one that we are forced to debate under a time allocation motion and one that will not even be examined by the appropriate committees—this definitely does not encourage any dialogue.

This bill may have some good things in it, and I mentioned some of them in my speech. I recognize that. I would like to vote in favour of some of the measure in the budget. However, when they are all lumped together in an omnibus bill so that we cannot examine them at the appropriate committee, I am sorry, but I cannot accept that and I cannot vote in favour of such a bill.

• (1055)

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on the theme discussed by the Parliamentary Secretary and by my colleague.

Quebec has the CSST, and matters of occupational health and safety and the right to opt out are legislated. Employees of companies under provincial jurisdiction come under the CSST in Quebec.

I would like to know if, in Quebec, everything had to be centralized in the hands of the minister in order to create a system that works. Can we have a good system that works without putting everything in the hands of the minister?

**Ms. Isabelle Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, for her question and the good work she does in her riding.

She asked me whether we had to leave everything in the hands of the minister. That is what I have seen the Conservatives do since I arrived in Parliament: they have tried to grab more and more power. That was the case for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development.

The Conservatives want to have all the power and control what is happening on the ground. That is not what the government should be doing. Instead, it should be creating laws and letting people apply them. I find this to be very dangerous.

As my colleague mentioned, Quebec has a system that works quite well. It is not the minister who decides how to manage everything and I believe that things should stay that way. We have a good system that is working, and I think it is deplorable for the Conservatives to once again try to grab more power.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this morning to speak to the budget implementation issue.

I would like to highlight some items that are extremely important to all Canadians. Sometimes when we look at all the issues we forget the umbrella over which the budget was built.

Two and a half years ago, Canadians gave our government a mandate to create jobs, keep taxes low, and help make our streets and communities safer. In an uncertain and unstable world, our Conservative government has led us through tough economic times.

The results are clear. With one million net new jobs added since the recession, we lead the G7 on job creation and on the strength of our balance sheet. Canada now leads the G7 in job creation, in income growth, and in keeping debt levels low. We are the leader.

Canada is now among only a few countries in the world with an AAA credit rating. However, we know we need to do more. Canadians have a rare opportunity to build on our stable democracy, our sound finances, our expanding trade relationships, our strong communities, and our skilled workforce. This is Canada's moment, and it is our government's job to seize the moment for the benefit of all Canadians.

That is why the recent throne speech laid out three priorities for our government moving forward. Number one is to create jobs and opportunities for Canadians; number two is to support and protect Canadian families; number three is to put Canada first.

*Government Orders*

Our priorities are about making sure that Canada is leading the world so that Canadians who work hard, pay their taxes, and play by the rules can get ahead. Our work will be guided by our values: the belief in low taxes, small government, a thriving private sector that creates jobs for Canadians, protecting our communities from criminals and drug pushers, and believing that Canada is the best country on earth to live in.

In our throne speech, our government committed to pursuing free trade agreements, such as the Canada-EU free trade agreement. I am proud that our government has already delivered on this promise. One in five Canadian jobs depends on exports. Our prosperity hinges on opening new markets for Canadian goods, services, and investments. I congratulate our government for signing an agreement in principle of a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union, an agreement that has the potential to create 80,000 new Canadian jobs. This is an historic win for Canada and means thousands of new jobs for Canadians and half a billion new customers for Canadian businesses.

Manitoba has much to gain from this 21st century. I am from Manitoba, and I am very proud because I know 40¢ on the dollar has been put forward from the federal government to keep Manitoba going. Now Manitoba, my province, has much to gain from this 21st century, gold-standard trade agreement. The elimination of 98% of all EU tariffs on the first day that the agreement comes into force will translate into increased profits and opportunities for Canadian businesses of all sizes in every part of the country. This historic agreement with the EU is a big win for workers, businesses, and families in Kildonan—St. Paul, Manitoba, and all through Canada. Throughout the province, hard-working people of Manitoba will benefit, especially in key sectors of the local economy, such as advanced manufacturing, construction services, and agriculture.

In addition to tariff elimination, CETA provides improved access to EU markets for Canadian goods and services; greater certainty, transparency, and protection for investments; and new opportunities in EU procurement markets.

An earlier joint study concluded that CETA could bring a 20% boost in bilateral trade and a \$12 billion annual increase to Canada's economy. That is the equivalent of adding \$1,000 to the average Canadian household income or 80,000 new jobs to the Canadian economy. That is amazing.

CETA is by far Canada's most ambitious trade initiative, broader and deeper in scope than the historic North American Free Trade Agreement known as NAFTA.

• (1100)

Economic action plan 2013 is something else that would strengthen this record with action in all areas that drive economic prosperity.

Today I would like to highlight some of the excellent measures that would benefit the hardworking families and individuals in Kildonan—St. Paul and in the province of Manitoba.

The act would implement key measures from economic action plan 2013 as well as certain previously announced tax measures to help create jobs, stimulate growth, and secure Canada's long-term prosperity.

Measures in economic action plan 2013 act no. 2 are aimed at spurring job creation and economic growth. These kinds of things include providing record transfer support for social and health services in Manitoba and a significant number of dollars to ensure that necessary programs are well funded, such as in schools and hospitals. In fact, in 2013-2014, the federal transfer support to Manitoba would be \$643 million higher than it was under the former Liberal government.

We all remember that the former Liberal government slashed transfers for health care and education. I remember it well. Our Conservative government rejects that shameful practice and is protecting and growing transfers to help support the services Manitoba families depend on.

For Manitoba, total major transfers would total \$3.4 billion in 2013. These would include almost \$1.8 billion through equalization, an increase of \$191 million, or almost 12%, since 2005-2006 under the former Liberal government; \$1.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$336 million, or almost 43%, since 2005-2006 under the former Liberal government; \$443 million through the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$109 million, or almost 33%, since 2005-2006 under the former Liberal government; and almost \$7 million in total transfer protection. I remember this well, because I was an MLA at the time.

This is good news for Manitoba and a key assurance that our government is committed to the long-term prosperity of our province of Manitoba.

One area of the budget I would like to highlight is programs designed to help create jobs. These are very important programs. Our Conservative government would extend and expand the hiring credit for small business, which would benefit an estimated 560,000 employers.

Canada's small businesses are engines for job creation that boost economic growth. They represent 48% of the total labour force in the private sector and contribute approximately 30% to Canada's GDP. The federal government recognizes the important contribution made by small businesses all across the country and the challenges they face. This temporary credit would provide up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2013 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2012 to employers with total EI premiums of \$15,000 or less in 2012. This is very good news for Canadian businesses.

*Government Orders*

Other job creator initiatives would include increasing and indexing the lifetime capital gains exemption to make investing in small business more rewarding; expanding the accelerated capital cost allowance to further encourage investments in clean energy generation; and freezing employment insurance premium rates for three years, leaving \$660 million in the pockets of job creators and workers in 2014 alone.

Another area of the budget implementation act I would like to highlight today is our Conservative government's efforts to control direct program spending with common sense proposals for making government more efficient and productive. This would include setting public service pay and benefits levels that are reasonable, responsible, and in the public interest.

There are so many other things, such as closing tax loopholes and the building Canada fund. The building Canada fund would provide \$14 billion over ten years to support major economic infrastructure projects in Manitoba and all across Canada.

In this time of economic constraint, it is very important that people are working and that Canadians are able to live well and grow their families in prosperity, happiness, and safety. This is why Canada is a remarkable country under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and our government.

• (1105)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would draw to the attention of the member that it is not permitted to use the name of a sitting member of the House.

The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about an aspect of Bill C-4 that bothers me.

Earlier, during the debate on Bill C-4, a number of Conservatives boasted that their government has cut taxes, which benefits Canadians. However, they forgot to mention that the Conservative government sometimes increases taxes. This bill contains a tax increase of \$350 million. Who will pay the price? Labour-sponsored venture capital funds, also known as workers' funds.

Quebec is known for its good labour-sponsored funds. For some years, these venture capital funds have been invested in communities. These funds are used to help start up and grow businesses.

The Conservative government is appalling. I also want to talk about this government's hypocrisy, because it boasts about lowering taxes when it is to their benefit, but increases them in other sectors.

Could my Conservative colleague, whom I respect very much, tell us if the Conservatives will reverse its decision and remove this harmful \$350 million tax that will kill jobs.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, who does such an excellent job on the health committee. I very much respect his question. However, I want to put the focus on the umbrella part I talked about at the beginning.

In terms of helping businesses succeed and relieving tax breaks, our government has put forward a myriad of tax breaks to grow

business and prosperity. There is the new manufacturing machinery and equipment tax break for businesses. There is the expansion of the hiring credit for small business, which I talked about in my speech a little earlier. As we know, small business in Quebec, or anyplace else, is the engine of the economy in any province.

There is the increasing and indexing of the lifetime capital gains exemption, which is extremely important. This is very positive for business, because it increases the rewards for investing in small business by making it easier for the owners to transfer their family businesses. As we know, in Quebec, an awful lot of family businesses have grown, prospered, and become very famous for their goods.

There is also support for farmers. This is the bread basket of the world, and Quebec is the same. The current deduction limit for the restricted farm loss income tax would go from \$8,750 to \$17,500. That would help farmers right on the ground.

There are so many tax relief measures our government has given that far offset anything else that might have to be put in place to keep our economy balanced.

• (1110)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about the umbrella when she talked about the things the government has been doing. I wonder if she could explain to us whether this umbrella includes the amendments to or repeals of 70 pieces of legislation in over 300 pages in this omnibus budget bill.

The bill would strip health and safety officers of their powers and put nearly all of these powers in the hands of the minister, significantly weakening the ability of employees to refuse work in unsafe conditions. It would move to eliminate binding arbitration as a method to resolve disputes in the public service. It would gut Canada's most scientific research institute, the NRC. It would reduce the number of members on the veterans review board. It would make changes to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Are these the things the umbrella is including? They are right now in this budget bill. We on this side of the House cannot figure out why they would be in a budget bill. Maybe she could explain that. Are they under the umbrella?

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Mr. Speaker, Parliament is always interesting, because the job of the opposition is to be in opposition. However, I have to say that in research and innovation, our government has done so much. We have invested \$20 million to help small and medium-size enterprises in my province, Manitoba, and all across the country. We have strengthened research partnerships, investing \$37 million in Manitoba and across Canada, and have promoted clean projects.

There is so much that has been done to help business. Yes, it is the umbrella. That is why today our country has a sound, stable economic standing, and we have an AAA credit rating. I think the management of the finances of our country has been exemplary.

**Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-4, introduced by Minister Flaherty on October 22, 2013.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not know what it is about this morning. The use of a sitting member's name is not permitted in the House. Refer to the minister as the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the bill and how it will benefit Canada, and specifically my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming, I would like to take a moment to give this House the context in which we consider this bill.

In early 2008, Canada was faced with the worst global economic downturn since the 1930s. However, thanks to the firm and responsible regulations that were put in place, Canada did not sink as low. This alone was not enough to keep Canada from following our neighbours. Our government saw investments dwindling, an unstable, unconfident marketplace, and millions of Canadians with their jobs at risk. Our government acted with resolve and initiative to introduce the economic action plan, which provided our economy with a \$60-billion stimulus, including \$12 billion in stimulus and \$20 billion in tax relief.

Action plan after action plan, the government has continued to responsibly steer Canada through the global recession while simultaneously pushing taxes lower and removing barriers to trade and investment in Canada.

The ultimate result is that all Canadians can take pride that through our government's responsible and disciplined leadership, Canada has the best fiscal record in the G8. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is the absolute lowest. We are on the path to surplus. We hold a AAA credit rating. We have added over a million net new jobs to the economy, which has reduced unemployment lower than before the recession. Our markets remain responsibly regulated, stable, and dynamic.

However, our recovery is fragile and vulnerable to the actions of others. That is why Bill C-4 would have impact. Bill C-4 would project the government's low-tax, consumer, family-focused agenda into the future to ensure continued growth and long-term prosperity.

While Bill C-4 touches on all aspects of Canada's economy, I would like to highlight three areas of importance to my region and how Bill C-4 would help Nipissing—Timiskaming grow.

First, as we know, businesses are absolutely key to healthy communities. If the cost of business is too high, jobs will disappear. This is the plain truth, and it baffles me that the NDP and Liberals

cannot comprehend it. Fundamentally, they believe that we can tax and spend ourselves out of every problem.

Nipissing—Timiskaming is home to many manufacturing companies. Aerospace and mining are major sectors for us. The accelerated capital cost allowance program introduced in Bill C-4, which would be extended for two years, would allow companies in my region to invest in new machinery and equipment, expand their operations, and stimulate growth and job creation.

Economic action plan 2013 would proactively address continued job growth and skills shortages through the Canada job grant. It is an initiative that would help workers get \$15,000 toward valuable skills training. Our government understands that it is not enough to create new jobs; we have to make sure that there are skilled Canadians to fill them.

This kind of long-term, experienced thinking is exactly why, under this government, Canada has prospered while other countries continue to flounder.

I know that in my region, students and graduates of Canadore College would particularly benefit from the Canada job grant. These very same students, many of whom go into the skilled trades, would also benefit from the changes we are making to how apprenticeship accreditation works. Four million dollars over three years would be allocated to harmonize requirements among the provinces and to examine assessments.

Aerospace, in particular, would benefit. Over \$1 billion would be invested in the aerospace and space sectors. Nipissing—Timiskaming has a long and proud history in airways, and I am confident that it will play a key role in our government's plan to consolidate and improve our fifth-place standing in the world. Aerospace companies and services in my community employ hundreds of people and provide them with secure, good-paying jobs. This will only grow under our government.

Second, I would like to specifically talk about small businesses. Small businesses are the lifeblood of the towns and communities in Nipissing—Timiskaming. They, in particular, would benefit from Bill C-4. Besides being able to take advantage of the Canada job grant, they would benefit from the hiring credit, which would freeze EI premiums, saving small businesses \$1,000.

*Government Orders*

Small businesses, and in particular part-time farmers, would benefit from the increase to the lifetime capital gains exemption, which would increase by \$50,000 to \$800,000. Farmers would also benefit from the doubling of the restricted farm loss deduction, from \$8,750 to \$17,500.

• (1115)

Overall, thanks to the low-tax plan of our government, Bill C-4 and previous Conservative budgets, small businesses are paying \$28,600 less in taxes. Canadians get it and Canadians got it in May 2011 when they sent the Conservative government to Ottawa with a majority. However, I will make it clear for my colleagues who remain a little confused that we have been cutting taxes and jobs have been created, one million net new jobs. Bills like Bill C-4 have cut taxes. Unemployment now is lower than before the recession. Our responsible long-term plan is working for Canada and Canadian families. I hope, after seven years, my colleagues will begin to understand that.

I want to touch on infrastructure. A major part of the original economic action plan, investment in infrastructure, underpins this budget and Canada's success. How would this be any different given our national history? In the infant stage of nationhood, it was the building of the transcontinental railroad that united Canada and set it on the path toward economic prosperity. The building Canada plan, the single largest infrastructure investment in our nation's history, will provide an additional \$53 billion over several years to make sure our infrastructure is modern, safe and capable of helping us unlock more economic potential in our communities and from our resources. We cannot expect to grow without a firm base on which to stand. Infrastructure is that base.

Nipissing—Timiskaming has greatly benefited from infrastructure projects, particularly through FedNor. In particular, the airport, roads and community assets have been invested in. The expansion of the airport and upgrading of its services continue to make our region a more attractive place for continued investment in aerospace. Coupled with our government's aerospace prerogative, there is potential for real synergy. Investment in our roads and community infrastructure continues to open up the north and adds to our quality of life.

It is unfortunate that many of our neighbours suffered greatly, and continue to suffer, because of the global economic downturn. I as a Canadian am very grateful that our recession was not as impactful. Canadians recognize that our success is no accident. Canadians recognize that our continued economic leadership of the G8 is no accident. Canadians recognize that the government is not the answer, only a part of the solution. Our country has grown weary of the tax and spend promises of the Liberals and NDP, mostly because the money is never spent on the people, although it is they who are taxed.

Last, I want to draw to the attention of the House the fact that this government does not draft policy or budgets in a vacuum, but in a long-term, responsible and critical fashion. The effects of economic action plan 2013, Bill C-4 and future budgets, will greatly benefit from the recently announced Canada-European Union free trade agreement. The synergy is perfect. Bills like Bill C-4 help create a low-tax, investor-friendly market, while CETA removes barriers to trade and investment.

In conclusion, thanks to Bill C-4 and parallel government efforts, Canadians can continue to expect net job growth, world leadership in fiscal accountability and political stability, with an explicit focus on Canadian jobs, families and their pocketbooks. The government fully intends to seize Canada's moment for the benefit of all Canadians and I would urge my colleagues on the opposite side to support it. I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that my riding shares a common border with that of my colleague from Nipissing—Timiskaming. When I travel by car to my riding, I regularly pass through his riding. It appears that we disagree on the Conservative budget.

When I talk to young people in his riding, they tell me that they are worried. More and more young people are unemployed. Salaries are not going up. Increasingly, they are holding down part-time jobs and the price of houses is very high. It is very hard for them to start a family. There is nothing in this budget for young people.

I would like to know if the hon. member has taken the time as well to talk to the young people in his riding and to listen closely to their concerns, or if he is only talking to the members of the business community.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague indeed frequents our riding and is always welcome there.

Yes, I talk to young people a number of times throughout the week and throughout the month. Basically, they are telling me that they want opportunities for training, and there are plenty in this budget as I mentioned.

One in particular is the Canada jobs grant. When the Canada jobs grant is fully formulated, it will provide \$15,000 for young Canadians in my riding to get fully trained and obtain the skills they need to obtain and carry jobs in the future.

Another opportunity is the tremendous amount of money that the government has afforded for aerospace. We have an aerospace forum coming to the riding on November 8 and we hope to grow aerospace in our region as it is growing in Canada. We want to maintain our fifth-place standing and, in fact, want to enhance our standing.

It is my hope that we can attract investment to the North Bay region and help grow jobs in the economy, jobs for our younger people.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at one point in an earlier debate, the Minister of Finance very eloquently said that the purpose of the budget implementation act was to implement the budget. When the budget speech was given last spring, there was a lengthy speech and there was a thick, glossy volume of some hundreds of pages, with a blue and white cover and an economic action plan title.

I wonder if the hon. member might be able to point us to the reference in the budget speech or documents to the proposed changes to the Supreme Court Act.

• (1125)

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I cannot specifically point to that reference and am not familiar with it.

**Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of State (Science and Technology, and Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member in particular for the important work he is doing, not just in Nipissing—Timiskaming but across northern Ontario. He has been a great ambassador. Indeed, he is right about aerospace and he can also talk about and celebrate the fact that North Bay is a world-class city for the mining supply and service sector.

I have been travelling across the North and this world-class theme has been ringing loud and clear. Sudbury is doing astrophysics and leading the world in natural and water sciences. These are not our traditional strengths. Thunder Bay has cyclotron early cancer detection and the world was gathered there. Kenora is becoming a world-class tourist destination.

Mayors and first nations community leaders are talking positively and enthusiastically. There is a palpable enthusiasm for northern Ontario, but I am concerned about the bad news bears across the floor.

Could the member tell us why this budget implementation act would take northern Ontario one step forward to the greatness it can and will achieve?

**Mr. Jay Aspin:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. This budget would provide our region, which is a rural region, with a great deal of unemployment, the opportunity to move forward and seize the moment for the 21st century.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-4. Unfortunately, this is another grab bag omnibus bill that has had its time for debate cut off, so some important issues in it will not be adequately aired. I will touch on several aspects of the bill and how they reflect some of the challenges and failures of the government.

I am going to start by pointing out that this budget implementation bill would do very little to address the key challenges being faced by middle-class Canadians as a result of rising costs and stagnant incomes. Bill C-4 would do little to create jobs.

The bill would increase taxes with respect to mining exploration. That is not very helpful. If taxes are increased on mining exploration, then much of the good work to encourage mining exploration and mining development would be undermined.

Vancouver is at the centre of the mining industry globally. Many people who live in the province of British Columbia and many people in my riding of Vancouver Quadra work in the mining industry. The British Columbia government has spent the last 10 or 12 years rebuilding that industry in our province.

In 2001, when the B.C. Liberal government was first elected, investment in mining exploration was down to about \$25 million from the hundreds of millions of dollars of annual investment in the 1990s. Slowly and surely the provincial government built up the confidence of the mining industry until over \$250 million a year was invested in British Columbia's mining exploration.

Our province spent so much effort in rebuilding this industry by respecting the industry and not adding to its tax burden. Did the Prime Minister consult with the British Columbia premier or the minister of energy and mines when he slapped a tax on this industry?

This is a failure by management, and it shows that the federal government does not understand that for jobs to be created and business opportunities to be provided, the business community needs to have certainty and transparency.

We have seen this kind of management failure in spades in the Conservative government in the area of military procurement. All of us would agree that the Canadian navy, air force and army need to replace billions of dollars worth of aging trucks, helicopters, ships, et cetera so our armed forces personnel have safe and effective equipment. Barely a week has past without yet another story of the Conservative government's incompetence with respect to military procurement.

I want to remind the House that the acquisition of F-35 joint strike fighters was restarted after reports by the Auditor General and the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the government knowingly misled Canadians on the program's cost. It was, in fact, keeping two sets of books. In 2010 the Prime Minister claimed the cost would be \$9 billion for 65 fighters, but by 2012 the full cost was pegged at more than \$46 billion.

That is just one example and there are many others, such as helicopters to replace the aging Sea Kings. In some cases, these Sea Kings are 30 years older than the very pilots who are flying them, so this is a safety issue. There have only been delays and uncertainty with respect to that project.

The acquisition of new army trucks has been ongoing since 2004. That has been restarted numerous times, but nothing is expected there.

The purchase of a new fleet of search and rescue aircraft has taken more than nine years. The government is still not ready to even accept bids.

*Government Orders*

●(1130)

There is also the issue around the Arctic offshore patrol ships. An independent reviewer said the cost was extraordinarily high for the design phase alone, but the government just plowed ahead, ignoring that point. There were plans to replace the outdated 50-year-old Lee-Enfield .303 rifles used by our Canadian Rangers in the Arctic; that procurement project has been cancelled with no reason given. It is a very flawed procurement process, unfortunately, potentially impacting the safety of our Canadian Armed Forces, and that is a management failure on the government's part.

I want to touch on another area in the bill, the employment insurance premiums. We support this aspect of the bill and we appreciate that after years of Liberal requests, the government has stopped increasing the tax on jobs, which is increasing the EI premiums, as they have been increased over the years, costing billions of dollars to businesses. We support that aspect, but the very fact that the government has been adding taxes to businesses and small businesses is a level of fiscal incompetence, because it shows the Conservatives are not understanding the impact of these taxes on jobs.

Under the current government, that kind of incompetence has been happening in the military budget as well. Under the Canada First defence strategy, a promised cornerstone was stable increases in funding. However, almost immediately, successive budgets were quietly reduced by billions of dollars, allowing up to \$8 billion in funds to lapse or stay unspent. There has been essentially no new investment in national defence under the Conservative government, with two small exceptions, and since 2011, successive major budget cuts have been sending departments scrambling to protect the essential capacity and morale required for effective national defence. This is another case of saying one thing and doing another.

Canadians and Liberals are proud of the Canadian Forces, who serve Canada on her behalf without reservation. However, to do their jobs they need to be able to depend on what they are being told, and in fact the government has decreased armed forces personnel in the navy by 11% from its strength in 2004, yet it increased the number of civilian naval employees by 30% over that period. This is managerial incompetence.

The army has fared no better under the current government. Between 2011 and 2013 its budget has been slashed by 22%, yet its headquarters received an extra half a billion dollars in budget increases. We hear one thing, but we see another happening.

Most unfortunately, in this bill we have the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, a backlogged board that will see its number of members slashed so that there will be a further backlog. That ties in to the undermining of the armed forces that we have seen under the government whereby military members and their families are falling through the cracks of government bureaucracy.

As these national defence budgets that supposedly were to be increased have been slashed, the very programs that support military personnel affected by mental illness and injury have been cut. Thousands of Canadian Forces members are affected by mental health issues. They need help through the joint personnel support unit and through mental health professionals to help them get strong

again and find alternatives within the armed forces where they can be successful, yet those very supports are not there.

The government must do so much better for our men and women in uniform, just as it must do much better for Canadians.

●(1135)

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Vancouver Quadra trying to direct her comments to an area related to her new role as critic in defence and defence procurement. However, I have to take serious issue with her speech. I am incredulous that she accuses this government of undermining the Canadian Forces at a time where the Canadian Forces have grown and been properly equipped by this government, as opposed to what happened with the previous government, which balanced its budget on the backs of defence and of our provinces.

I would ask the member if she is aware of the veterans transition network, a new mental health facility or program that has been championed by the University of British Columbia in her own province. It was previously funded by the Royal Canadian Legion, and it is this government that actually helped take it to a national level so that more of our veterans with mental health issues could be addressed.

I would like her to speak to the veterans transition network program specifically.

**Ms. Joyce Murray:** Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with that program. The program struggled for years without government support. I appreciate that the government has now picked up the program and is expanding it. For many years it was supported by the Legions, which had to go out talking about their successes in speech after speech, including one at a breakfast policy event where the leaders of that program spoke to constituents in Vancouver Quadra.

However, I want to touch upon the parliamentary secretary's comments about reductions in support for the military. In the decade in which cuts were applied, a number of those years were under Conservative governments, and the cuts occurred because of the deficits that Conservatives had gotten Canadians and Canada into. It was under the Paul Martin government that funding began to be restored for the Canadian Armed Forces.

We are now closing on a decade of deceit by the current Conservative government, which does photo opportunities about supposed increases in funding with troops and equipment in the backdrop, yet has done virtually nothing and is now scrambling to figure out where to put all the hidden cuts that are in its budgets.

●(1140)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a few steps away from here, 600 people are gathering for the first national conference on ending homelessness.



*Government Orders*

As we know, there are 200,000 homeless people in Canada every year. There is a slow-motion crisis going on, and it is definitely a national disaster, yet in the debates, in the throne speech, and in the action plan, there is hardly any investment for building affordable housing. Also, the end of the housing agreement in 2014 will mean that hundreds of thousands of people who now have affordable housing will lose that affordable housing.

Given the homelessness crisis that is facing Canada, what should Canada's response be and what should be in this budget document?

**Ms. Joyce Murray:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Trinity—Spadina pointing out what a core challenge the issues of affordable housing and homelessness are for Canadians,

In 2005, under the minister responsible for housing in the Liberal government, there was a comprehensive plan that had been the product of consultation across the country to invest in solutions to that issue, but the current Conservative government has consistently cut supports for affordable housing.

It is at the core of Canadians' well-being, not just for lower-income people but also for the middle class; for young families in Vancouver who cannot afford to buy a house or rent suitable housing; for the mentally ill, whose situations are worsened when they do not have safe adequate housing; and for seniors, especially women. I thank the member for pointing out that very important issue.

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity to add my comments to this important debate that we are having on Bill C-4 today.

Our Conservative government, as we have said many times, is squarely focused on what matters most to Canadians, and that is economic growth and prosperity. We intend to do that by creating jobs across this country.

By implementing Canada's economic action plan, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries, both during the tough recession that we have had over the last few years and throughout the recovery that is taking place.

This morning we are discussing Bill C-4, the economic action plan 2013. I want to take a few minutes to outline why the opposition should support this legislation.

Our economic action plan 2013 builds on the strong foundation that was laid last year in conjunction with the portfolio of initiatives that we have had since 2006, with affordable measures that would create jobs, promote growth across this country, and contribute to long-term prosperity. It would further unleash the potential of Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive and innovate in the modern economy so that they can begin to create prosperity and economic growth as well.

To me, that is what matters most in this country, while the opposition continues to talk about issues that Canadians do not seem to be concerned about. Our government will put forward legislation that matters from coast to coast to coast.

Here are a few of the facts that I think are important.

Canada has created over one million net new jobs, 90% of which are full-time, with nearly 80% in the private sector. I think that is something we should be extremely proud of. Our private sector is thriving to the point that it has created nearly 800,000 jobs since the depth of the global recession in July 2009.

Over this period, Canada has had the strongest job creation record in the entire G7. This is in tandem with the fact that our unemployment rate is at its lowest level in four years and is significantly lower than that of the United States. This is a phenomenon that we have not seen in nearly three decades.

For the fifth straight year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world, and all the major credit rating agencies—Moody's, Fitch, Standard and Poor's—have once again affirmed our solid AAA credit rating.

The global economy remains fragile, with growth in major economies slower than expected and our major trading partners not in the enviable position that we find ourselves in. Of course, we are not immune to a global slowdown, and Bill C-4 is one way that our government continues to ensure growth in these fragile times.

Let us take a closer look at how Canada's economic action plan makes significant improvements that would benefit all Canadians, but before I go to that, I would like to note another sign of leadership: the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union.

While we are working in terms of a budget and economic action plan 2013, this government is not sitting still. We have gone around the world inking trade deals; the latest one is, of course, the agreement that we are going to be making with the European Union. This agreement alone, as members have heard, has the potential to add more than 80,000 new Canadian jobs. We expect that those jobs will be in all sectors.

I come from an agricultural area, and certainly the agriculture folks are very excited and happy about this. There will be opportunities to thrive in all sectors. There will be opportunities for them to move into new markets. We expect, as they have done so many times over the decades, that the agriculture folks will step up and take advantage of those opportunities and once again show the world-class leadership that they have shown in the past.

On this agreement, here is a little bit of what other people have to say about it.

John Manley, the president and CEO of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, has said that "...the [comprehensive economic and trade agreement] will create jobs, spur investment and promote economic growth", which is exactly what this government is trying to do.

Unlike the opposition, we understand the importance of free trade and that the pursuit of it is beneficial for Canada and for Canadians.

*Government Orders*

Our government's trade agenda has already made us one of the most open and globally engaged economies in the world. Since 2006, we have reached trade agreements with nine countries, and we are negotiating with many more. We have concluded foreign investment, promotion, and protection agreements with another 16 countries and are in active negotiations with others as well.

We are not done yet. We have also joined the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations. We are actively pursuing new trade and investment opportunities in large, dynamic, and growing economies, such as China, India, and Japan. Those initiatives reflect our belief that freer and more open trade is a key stimulus for global economy recovery, and I might add, for the development of human rights in some of the other countries as well.

• (1145)

Unlike the opposition, we know that by growing international trade and creating additional export opportunities for Canadian businesses, we will improve the standard of living for all Canadians. Free and open trade has long been a powerful engine for Canada's economy. Canadian businesses need access to key export markets in order to take advantage of new opportunities. Economic action plan 2013 builds on those measures through targeted actions that will help our manufacturers and businesses continue to succeed on the world stage.

We also believe in promoting job creation and keeping more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. When disaster struck the world economy, our economic action plan navigated Canada through the worst recession in a generation while maintaining the lowest debt to GDP level in the G7. During the downturn, our economic action plan took the steps necessary to safeguard our economy and protected Canadian jobs. It made the largest and the longest federal investment in job creating infrastructure in Canadian history, and it controlled spending while maintaining growing transfers that support health care, education and retirement in those transfers to the provinces.

Unlike the previous Liberal government, we have not cut major transfers to Canadian families or other levels of government, particularly the health and social transfers, in order to balance the budget. We are also not going to engage in risky spending schemes or force a \$21-billion carbon tax on Canadians or hike taxes on Canadian businesses, as the NDP has insisted is its economic strategy for this country. Instead, our government has set clear targets to bring our deficit down and to return to a balanced budget by 2015. Our government has been very clear that we are not going to raise taxes on Canadians to balance that budget and the new Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed our economic action plan will see Canada return to surplus before the next election.

The Minister of Finance also recently reiterated our commitment to balancing the budget in 2015. Our plan is working. In the past two years we have already cut the deficit by more than half. Economic action plan 2013 will build on these efforts to reduce government spending by announcing an additional \$1.7 billion in ongoing savings, including examining departmental spending to ensure that government operations are managed efficiently, making government operations more efficient by putting forward plans to control overall

employee compensation expenses and enhancing the integrity of the tax system by closing tax loopholes.

I want to talk about public service pay and benefits. Our budget has stated that the Government of Canada's intent is to set public service pay and benefit levels that are reasonable, responsible and in the public interest. The Public Service Labour Relations Act will be amended to ensure that the public service is affordable and that it is modern and high performing, as taxpayers have expected. The proposed amendments will bring savings, will streamline practices and will bring them in line with other jurisdictions. We are glad to be able to sit at a bargaining table on behalf of the taxpayers where the rules are fair and balanced.

Overall, measures taken by our government since budget 2010 will result in total ongoing savings of roughly \$14 billion.

I would like to talk about how this will impact my province of Saskatchewan. There are a number of things in this budget that are good for us. As everyone knows, we have a very strong economy in western Canada right now, particularly in Saskatchewan. It is the fastest growing province in the country. We have been able to work with the province in moving forward this economic vision for Canadians.

It is interesting that we finally shed ourselves of the NDP heritage we had in Saskatchewan, which held us back for so long. It is interesting that even as the world was going into recession, Saskatchewan has finally really begun to bloom. We have worked to keep taxes low from our perspective. We have worked to return to a balanced budget and the government in Saskatchewan has done a good job of managing its resources as well.

Things such as the community improvement fund where we have been able to contribute to infrastructure, the building Canada fund, where we have been able to work with the provinces has actually worked very well.

I see my time is almost up, so I want to say Canada is leading the world in job creation with more than one million net new jobs as I pointed out. At the same time we have created an environment that encourages new investment, growth and job creation, and one that ensures that Canada has the strongest fiscal position and the lowest business tax costs in the G7. We continue to work. In economic action plan 2013 we are committed to helping businesses grow and succeed further. We are committed to helping Canadians get the rewards from that. We will deliver high-quality jobs to them, economic growth and prosperity for the future.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government appears to have a strategy: neglect infrastructure in order to avoid tax increases.

*Government Orders*

If everything is going so well, can my colleague explain to me then why there are still some old DOT-111 rail cars in service transporting oil on questionable tracks and why there are old locomotives from the 1960s catching fire and crashing into towns like Lac-Mégantic and ones in Alberta on two different occasions? Would it not have been better for the Conservatives to have given the matter some thought last spring when my colleague raised a question about rail transportation?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way is mixing a number of issues together.

We have had an infrastructure plan in place over the last few years. The community improvement fund has been funded through the gas tax fund, which we have made permanent, and the GST rebate. That helps municipalities across Canada with stable funding to build economic infrastructure.

I do not want to lessen what happened this summer in terms of rail safety at all, but the government is not in the business of managing or owning rail lines. We have committed to infrastructure. The infrastructure we have committed to in my riding has primarily been roads and water treatment systems. Those communities that have received help with that have been happy to have that kind of help. Those are things that one can easily say our government should be putting money into. We need a good road and infrastructure system. We certainly need water treatment plants. As we are raising the standards of water requirements across this country, it is reasonable that the government would also participate in those types of infrastructure projects.

• (1155)

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary talked about how helpful the economic policies of the government are to his province. I can say that is not the case across the country. I come from Prince Edward Island and when the federal government decided to downsize the civil service, it did so by 4.8% across the country, except in my province where it was double that rate.

He talked about transfer payments. The decision by the government to go with per capita transfers on the health transfer has disproportionately affected my province. My province depends on a seasonal economy. The changes to EI have devastated our economy. Does the parliamentary secretary not feel that the policies of the government should provide opportunity for all and not just for those who had the good sense to bury resources in the ground?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are the specialists in downloading costs onto others because they spent their entire existence downloading costs onto the provinces and virtually destroyed the economy of provinces across this country.

We have been very generous in terms of our transfer payments. We have continued the transfer payments for health and social services at 6% and others at 3%. We have been generous and continued those commitments.

There are some other measures the member should be thanking us for, such as creating opportunities for apprentices. We are trying to get the focus back onto the trades and the importance of trades to this

country because we have many people who are unemployed, many of whom do not have a trade. We are trying to encourage people to go into the trades because we need tradespeople across the country.

We have the extension and expansion of the hiring credit for small business people to encourage small businesses to expand their business. We know that small and medium-size businesses are the heartbeat of this country. The member seems to think that the government is. It is the NDP's position that the government has to do everything for Canadians in this country. We know that small and medium-size businesses are the job creators. As I mentioned before, nearly 80% of the jobs that have been created across this country have been created by private business. Maybe the member should turn his thinking a bit more to encouraging those folks who are running businesses to find ways to expand their business.

There are a number of other initiatives I can talk about as well, but I see that the Speaker would like me to sit down.

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak on Bill C-4 today. We have heard a lot of good conversations and the benefits of what Bill C-4 would do for our country.

What is the importance of the bill, some may ask. Over time and particularly over this summer, I was able to visit many of the businesses, farms and constituents in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Just so that the viewers and you, Mr. Speaker, may have a handle on what Lambton—Kent—Middlesex is in terms of a constituency, it is a riding that is a little bigger than the province of Prince Edward Island. It is a very rural riding, made up of small communities. My largest urban area is made up of 14,000 people. The next largest urban area is somewhere around 12,500. It is made up of agriculture and small businesses within our towns and communities.

I travelled across the riding and met with businesses, individuals and people in agriculture with the main purpose of finding out what they thought about our budget and what we were doing for business. One of the things that they told us is that they trust our Conservative government to maintain a stable economy. That is actually the main purpose of budget 2013, and consequently, of the implementation bills that followed to support and grow our Canadian economy.

We can see how we are on track, for example, to balance the budget. It has been talked about a number of times. The annual financial report of the Government of Canada for fiscal year 2012-13 shows the continued downward track of Canada's annual deficit. In 2013, the deficit fell by \$18.9 billion. The deficit was \$26.3 billion in 2011-12. The new number now, quite honestly, is more than one-quarter less than previously determined, \$7.14 billion, and down by nearly two-thirds from the \$55.6 billion deficit recorded in 2009 and 2010.

These are big numbers, but I can tell the House that, big numbers or not, we remain committed to continuing this downward trend in our deficit.

*Government Orders*

We can also see the economic growth in the creation of jobs. We are leading the G7 with more than one million net new jobs having been created. These jobs were not created by the government. The government prefers an environment in which businesses create these jobs. Approximately 90% of those jobs are full-time and over 80% are in the private sector.

What does that actually mean to the businesses in my riding and ridings across this great country of Canada? It means that we are creating sustainable growth. We are not just pumping money into a system that may get lost again if the global economy turns. We are creating jobs for the long term. We are creating a stable economy. We want to stay focused. As the Minister of Finance put it:

...we are not immune from the challenges beyond our borders. We cannot afford to become complacent.

We will not do so.

We heard the measures in economic action plan 2013 no. 2 that are aimed at providing support for job creators being talked about before. They include the extension and expansion of the hiring credit for small businesses, which will benefit an estimated 560,000 employers. That is 560,000 employers. If only 50% of them tap into that hiring credit, it means a benefit to our small businesses of \$225 million, should they use it.

The measures also include indexing the lifetime capital gains exemption to make investing in small businesses more rewarding. This is so important. It is moving from \$500,000 to \$750,000, but it is now indexed. That means that it is now indexed to keep up with the traffic that is in the economy.

• (1200)

The measures also include expanding the accelerated capital cost allowance to further encourage investments in small businesses, whether they are clean energy businesses or others.

A proposal in budget 2013, which many of the businesses in my riding are looking forward to seeing implemented, is the changes to the Employment Insurance Act. Freezing employment insurance premium rates for three years will leave approximately \$660 million in the pockets of job-creators and workers in 2014 alone.

Sometimes we sort of wonder what these numbers mean. I remember the day we were talking about moving the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. Quite honestly, we are the only government that said we were going to do it and have actually done it. I used to get comments about how if someone buys jeans, it is only going to mean a few cents here and a dollar or so there.

In my riding, every 1% left \$18 million in the pockets of people in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. That 2% left \$36 million in my rural riding of small towns and small businesses. We never want to underestimate. Sometimes when we say we are going to take these small steps, they seem small; however, they mean a great benefit to the people in our ridings.

Going back to employment insurance, we know this will put money back into the pockets of small businesses that are the cornerstone of many of our communities in rural areas. In turn, that means more money they can invest back in their business. It almost means job creation and economic prosperity for them, and then that

rolls out. If it is good for them, it is good for the community; and it is obviously good for governments when they collect taxes.

These are only a few examples of what we are doing to ensure Canadians have available jobs for themselves and their children, and that benefits the Canadian economy.

We can also see our support for economic prosperity in the reduction of taxes. It is twofold, in closing the tax loopholes and combatting tax evasion. We are going to introduce new administrative monetary penalties and criminal offences to deter the use, possession, sale and development of electronic suppression of sales software designed to falsify records for the purpose of tax evasion.

Other members have had that discussion today. We know there are some difficulties. It is easier to say it than to actually implement it. However, we know that if we do not implement, then we will never move down the road. That is an important part of being able to deal with that suppression part.

We will be closing tax loopholes to make sure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. On the other hand, the period during which Canada Revenue Agency can reassess a taxpayer who fails to report income from foreign property will be longer, to ensure that when the examinations happen they are exact, accurate and are carried out in a responsible manner.

Second, we always want to respect taxpayers' dollars, but we also want to give the benefit to some of our young people; so we will be modernizing the Canada student loan program and the temporary foreign worker program by expanding electronic service delivery.

In the short time I have left I want to talk about CETA and the importance that agreement has, not only in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex because of the small businesses and agriculture but for the economy. We know it is going to create about \$12 billion annually and a 20% increase in bilateral trade. Out of that \$12 billion, agriculture is going to gain the benefit of \$1.3 billion. I am glad to take questions and move on that.

Canada is a leader around the world in terms of economic growth. On this side, we plan to keep it this way.

• (1205)

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I did not want to interrupt the member's speech, but no less than twice in the short time he spoke, cellphones were ringing from across the opposition benches. I know it was constituents urging those members to support this budget implementation act to create jobs and strengthen Canada's economy, but I do not want to hear good speeches like that interrupted by phone calls and I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to just remind the members of the importance of putting their cellphones—

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The Minister of State does raise a valid point, and I know from time to time members forget to turn off the ringers on their phones when they bring them into this place.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sudbury.

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his participation in the debate today. He always brings forward a very good presentation. I may not always agree with everything he is saying, but he does bring forward a good presentation.

The member was talking a lot about economic growth and jobs, and I know we hear that from that side of the House all the time, and one of the interesting points was that the economy is still fragile. With all of that being said about the economy, about jobs and about a fragile economy, it makes me scratch my head and wonder why, in a budget bill, we are talking about reducing the number of members on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. Why, in a budget bill, are we talking about changes to the Supreme Court Act? Why are we seeing 70 pieces of legislation changing, in over 300 pages, in a budget bill? Maybe the hon. member can answer that for me, because on this side of the House we do not understand how all those issues correlate.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague and friend from Sudbury. I think it is snowing up there, and where I come from it is actually nice and warm.

In all seriousness, in terms of what some of those items are doing in our budget, as I mentioned, 95% to 98% of the businesses across Canada are small businesses. When those business owners look at how they are going to operate their businesses to be sustainable in the long term, they look at what they can do within their management system to become effective and efficient and, yes, become and stay profitable.

When we look at a number of initiatives or issues in terms of reducing, for example, the number of members on the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, I believe we have to always look at how we are going to provide a service that we need to provide but also how we do it more effectively and efficiently.

I rely on those members in the veterans affairs committee. I do not know if the member was on it at one time, but I was, and it was one of the greatest benefits I had, being able to be on that committee to—

• (1210)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. I just remind all hon. members that, if they are asking or answering a question, they should pay attention to the Chair. They will get a signal when their time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague should be ashamed of his answer.

I am flabbergasted to hear the member opposite justify the reduction in the number of permanent members on the Veterans

Review and Appeal Board. The very purpose of that body is to review files and hear appeals from veterans who have a problem with Veterans Affairs Canada.

Some of them come to see me at my office because they have fallen between the cracks. They have a problem with the department. The Veterans Review and Appeal Board is there to help them. According to the Conservative member opposite, if salaries are cut, then Canadian businesses will be happy. What a disgrace. I am shocked that our veterans are paying the price for the Conservatives' incompetence. Canada's finances are being totally mismanaged. The Conservatives should slash the programs that they cannot manage properly, instead of penalizing veterans. My colleague should be ashamed of his answer. I do not even have a question for him.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, in terms of service, we need to ensure we look at what our government has done for Veterans Affairs and for our veterans across this country. Veterans are the ones we need to make sure we stand behind, and that is why we not only have implemented the charter but have made a number of changes within that charter to make sure our veterans are looked after.

We have created service centres to which they now have more access, to make sure those in need of treatment and information have access to those facilities. We want to make sure we are there for veterans in terms of their compensation. When people come back with injuries, we have extraordinary amounts that we want to help them with, so they are protected in the long term for their life ahead of them.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to talk about Bill C-4 and explain the opposition's interest both in its form and in its substance.

I should say that with respect to form, we have another omnibus bill that is a collection of dissimilar and disconnected measures. It is really another cat's cradle designed to thwart democracy. We go from legislation relating to Canada's coal reserves, to legislation about the right to opt out when it comes to the health and safety of federal employees.

We are really moving from department to department, whereas this is actually a budget bill. As a result, we might expect measures directly concerning the Minister of Finance. That is not necessarily the way this government seems to want to operate, however.

With respect to the budget bill, the Minister of Finance is dictating to the other ministers what action they should take. There is a flagrant disrespect for ministerial responsibilities. It leaves us puzzled, and shows to what extent the Conservative government is a centralizing one that intrudes in all areas in an inconsistent manner.

If I had just been appointed to cabinet, as some people were during the summer, I would like to be able myself to present the measures of concern to my department. It appears, however, that it does not bother the new ministers on the other side to have the Minister of Finance dictating measures that are under their jurisdiction.

*Government Orders*

Canadians might well wonder how many nails this bill seeks to hammer into the coffin of democracy. After the prorogation, the gift packages from the Conservative government look once again like Pandora's box.

Is it really the purpose of a budget bill to add new legislation respecting labour relations? I think not. I would not like to be the Minister of Labour and have someone tell me how to do my job.

I would now like to address the substance of the bill. The Minister of Finance should rather focus on the financial priorities of Canadians. For example, in 1980, the ratio of household debt to personal disposable income was 66%. According to the figures for 2011, it has now risen to over 150%. This means that every household owes \$1.50 for every dollar earned. People owe more than they are earning. It makes no sense. As a result, household debt is becoming an increasingly significant factor in the finances of many Canadian families, and the government is not taking concrete action in this area.

The data on employment are also revealing. In September, job numbers increased in Quebec. We have 15,000 more jobs, but they are part-time. The number of full-time jobs is decreasing. The Conservatives say they are creating jobs, and it is true. However, they are creating jobs that are part-time and offer no security, instead of preserving good, secure full-time jobs. I believe that should be a priority for this government.

The only thing that interests the Conservatives is job creation. They do not consider job security or the fact that these are part-time jobs as opposed to full-time jobs. Anyone at home knows that a part-time job is not equivalent to a full-time job. Anyway, I know it, and I think even the five-year-old girl next door knows it.

The Conservative member for Northumberland—Quinte West referred indirectly to this increased vulnerability in the job market in the example he gave last Friday. The measures he read from his notes show that the government is not taking the necessary measures to deal appropriately with the lack of social housing in Canada. His short-term view is based on volunteer work in construction and reliance on charities, like Habitat for Humanity, to provide housing for Canadians. It is shameful that we cannot have social housing built by our own tradespeople who are looking for work.

My colleague from Chambly—Borduas pointed out that the youth employment rate is double the rate for other groups. This indicates the ineffectiveness of the action taken to date by the government to enable young people to take their rightful place in the Canadian economy.

In order to develop the Canadian economy, we expect better than replacing a strong economy and proper training with services provided through charitable organizations set up by former U.S. presidents.

• (1215)

The median after-tax income of a family of two or more persons was \$68,000 in 2011, virtually the same as in 2010. That was the fourth consecutive year in which there was no significant change in after-tax income. Factoring in inflation, this means that Canadian families got poorer.

However, as the Canadian Press noted and *Le Devoir* reported on September 12, "These statistics are taken from the controversial National Household Survey..., which replaced the long form census abolished by the Conservative government in 2010. As a result, comparisons with past figures are very hard to make, since the form has been changed and is no longer mandatory."

I therefore wonder whether the Conservatives' lack of scientific rigour might not throw off their economic compass when they come up with random measures that have no sound basis. Reliable data are required in order to put economic measures in place that provide real assistance to our youth. The long form questionnaire gave us those reliable figures before it was cancelled.

As regards the soundness of our economy, more than 4.5 million union members worked across Canada in 2012. That amounts to 32% of the total labour force. In addition, their weekly payroll of \$4.59 billion represented 35.6% of the total national payroll.

That is why I want to emphasize the importance of unions in Canada. The Canadian Labour Congress included comments in a study it published to illustrate the real importance of the union advantage in 30 Canadian communities and in this country as a whole. That study showed that unionized workers earn \$4.97 more an hour, on average, than non-unionized workers. That means that the union advantage adds \$785.8 million a week to incomes across the country. That money is spent mainly in our local communities and therefore contributes to the Canadian economy.

The Conservatives' attacks on our unions are unfortunately ongoing, and the possibility that they may strip unionized Canadians of their bargaining powers only further undermines the equal justice measures that are being used to combat the growing inequalities in our society. This is another deceitful attempt by the Conservative government to shirk its responsibilities.

It is important to note that we would not have safe workplaces if it were not for the unions. The Conservatives will disrupt the fragile health and safety balance by stripping officers of their powers. This is dangerous. Need I recall the consequences of the self-regulation of the Canadian railway industry or the deregulation of food safety at the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food?

I also think we must reconsider a question that was raised by the member for Gatineau. She asked what a clause on judicial appointments was doing in a budget. I have no idea, and I would add my voice to the general consternation at seeing that the budget implementation bill is once again interfering in other departments' matters and amending acts that have nothing to do with finance.

The Minister of Justice has been here for several years, and he would have been able to manage that on his own. Instead, that task has been assigned to the Minister of Finance. I do not understand. This makes no sense. Unless I am mistaken, I was not even an adult when the current Minister of Justice first entered the House of Commons. He is therefore capable of managing his own files, but he is not doing so.

We have to ask ourselves some questions. What items have no place in a budget bill? There are hundreds of examples. As we can see, parliamentary oversight has no place in the process, and the department is being given free rein to centralize everything once more. The history of Conservative omnibus bills is repeating itself yet again.

• (1220)

Instead of reoffending, the Conservatives should learn from their mistakes. That is unfortunately not what they are doing.

[English]

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all morning we have been hearing Conservative members lauding the Canada jobs grant, which amounts to a \$15,000 contribution to training, \$5,000 from the federal government, \$5,000 from the provincial government and \$5,000 from independent industry. Do members know where the government got the \$300 million that it will put into this program? The government took it from the provinces and now it wants the provinces to invest money. The money was taken away from the provinces, money they were deploying in their provinces in a way they thought was appropriate and in a way that was working. Not only that, but all the provinces have said that they will not participate.

To exacerbate the problem, the government has been advertising the program as if it already exists, at a cost of \$90,000 a shot on TV. The program does not exist, but it is needed to fill our jobs training gap.

Could the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue speak about this issue?

• (1225)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, something does not add up. The government is advertising a program that it still has not negotiated with the provinces. When we talk about education or training, unless I am mistaken—and I certainly do not think I am—we are talking about a provincial jurisdiction. There is some nice advertising announcing programs and money, when in fact there are no programs and no money. The government took money away from the provinces, although they managed those programs quite well and that was not what they wanted. They were given no leeway. They were told they had no choice and if they did not like it, that was not the government's problem.

This is not a responsible approach. When it comes to funding, it is important to sit down with the provinces and discuss the issues in order to put in place measures that will meet their needs. Here, the Conservatives are doing precisely the opposite. As usual, the Conservative government could not care less about the provinces, especially Quebec.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the training program was established in 1997. I remember clearly that it was first introduced in New Brunswick. It involved the transfer of EI Part II benefits for training in the provinces, and that was a provincial responsibility. The government agreed that this was under provincial jurisdiction and at the same time, it was an opportunity to provide training for jobs in small and medium-sized businesses. The

### Government Orders

problem with the new federal government program is that small and medium-sized businesses do not get that money.

Does my colleague agree that what the federal government has actually done is to transfer training funds to the large companies that already have money and are responsible for the training of their workforce? This does not help economic development in rural areas, as the old program did.

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. My riding is predominantly made up of small and medium-sized businesses. If the money is used in that way, it will be funnelled out of rural areas. It is important for those areas to be able to keep young people there. We are fighting to put measures in place to keep young people at home, in rural areas, and the Conservatives are tearing down those efforts.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue is a member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. I am wondering if she is as surprised as I am to see that this budget bill includes a division on the Dominion Coal Blocks and procedures to allow the government sell off coal reserves.

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, that measure makes no sense, and I spoke to that.

Should the Minister of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance be talking about the Dominion Coal Blocks? That makes no sense, yet there it is in division 7 of Bill C-4. That should be managed by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. This proves that the Conservative government is putting anything and everything in this budget, which does not allow us to have meaningful discussions on issues that are of concern to us.

As the official opposition's new deputy critic for energy and natural resources, I find it sad that I cannot express my views on division 7 regarding the Dominion Coal Blocks because the bill will be sent to the Standing Committee on Finance. This is a tangible example of how this is a catch-all bill.

[English]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand today to speak to BIA 2 and, more specific, to the government amendments to part II of the Canada Labour Code.

I want to be clear. The focus of our government and the purpose of these amendments is to improve the health and safety of Canadian workers. We have said it before and I will say it again, Canadians have been very clear that what they want are jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We have listened to Canadians and delivered. Over one million net new jobs have been created since the beginning of the recession and we have the lowest debt to GDP ratio among the G7 countries.

We are all very proud of the very recent and historical trade agreement that was announced with the European Union, which will create an additional 80,000 jobs for Canadians.

In short, there is a lot of which we can be proud.

*Government Orders*

However, in order to improve upon this record and maximize Canada's economic potential, it is vital that we continue to work together to create safe, fair and productive workplaces.

The proposed BIA amendments to the Canada Labour Code are good examples of how we are streamlining operations to achieve better outcomes for workers, businesses and all Canadians. The result would be safer workplaces, which is something we all should be supporting.

A number of media sources and opposition members have misrepresented on these amendments. For the record, I want to ensure all Canadians no rights will be restricted or limited as a result of these proposed amendments. The right for a worker to refuse dangerous work remains absolute.

Workers and employers will continue to have access to recourse mechanisms if they disagree with a decision. Employers remain accountable for providing workplaces that are safe and healthy, whether the danger is imminent, serious or a future risk. There is no reduction or elimination of health and safety officers.

I want to underline again that our government is dedicated to creating safe, healthy, fair and productive working environments. A safe and healthy workplace is not only good for a business' competitiveness and productivity, it is good for workers, good for families and good for Canada.

The proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code are designed to improve the prevention of accidents and injuries to workers in the course of employment. They are based upon the principle that employers and employees are best placed to prevent injuries, identify health and safety issues and resolve them in an effective and timely manner. This is called the "internal responsibility system". This means employers and employees are jointly responsible for the health and safety of all workers. However, since employers have the most control over working conditions, they have the greatest responsibility.

Employees are also responsible for ensuring their own health and safety. They are responsible for following procedures when handling equipment, hazardous substances and other materials, wearing protective clothing provided by the employer, complying with the employer's instructions concerning health and safety and reporting any possible hazards to their employer.

Employees have three fundamental rights: the right to know about hazards in the workplace; the right to participate in identifying work-related health and safety concerns; and the right to refuse dangerous work. All these rights will remain enshrined in the Canada Labour Code.

Our government's role is to support employees and employers in meeting their obligation and to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. We are doing this by responding to complaints and incidents, conducting inspections and providing tools, information and assistance to employers to help them fulfill their responsibilities.

The numbers actually speak for themselves. Disabling injuries in federally-regulated industries have declined by 22%, from 2007 to 2011. In 2000, there were 2.51 disabling injuries per 100 workers,

compared with 1.73 in 2011. However, there is always room to improve.

In Canada, occupational injuries and illness cost the economy about \$19 billion a year and an average of 1,000 Canadian workers lose their lives every year. Health and safety is a priority for our government. That is why, again, we are introducing amendments that allow us to focus on critical issues affecting health and safety of workers in the workplace, respond to imminent or serious situations of danger in a more timely manner and reinforce the internal responsibility system.

● (1230)

There has been a lot of discussion about one important amendment, the definition of "danger". We are clarifying the definition because more than 80% of refusals to work in the last 10 years have been determined to be situations of no danger, and that is even after appeals. That is really important and I want to repeat it because it is so important. Eighty per cent of refusals to work in the last 10 years have been determined to be situations of no danger after appeals.

These proposed amendments emphasize that requests should be dealt with in the workplace bringing together employers and employees who are best positioned to work co-operatively to identify health and safety hazards. It would ensure that health and safety officers use their time more effectively to enforce the regulations and to focus more on preventing workplace accidents through increased awareness, education and proactive interventions. These proposed changes would not lead to fewer health and safety officers but would ensure that their time is used more effectively to improve the enforcement of the regulations.

I want to go back in my history. As many people might know, I worked in a rural emergency room for a number of years and there are images that will remain seared in my mind forever. It was a fall day like this when, in the early morning, a gentleman went off to work. His wife got their three children up and fed them breakfast. The children went off to school and she was baking bread when we had to go over to tell her that her husband had been killed in a tragic workplace accident. I remember that day that Debbie's life changed forever. To be honest, this was a preventable accident.

I would like to contrast that situation where there could have perhaps been more intervention. It was a provincial example, but it speaks well to the issue at hand. There was also a well-reported issue in the media about a year ago regarding name tags. Certainly, it was a legitimate issue for employers and employees to maybe have a discussion about, but where do Canadians want their resources focused as taxpayers? Do they want to make sure Debbie and her children have their husband and father forever, or do they want us to intervene in what should be a simple, reasoned discussion between employers and employees? This, again, illustrates very effectively how we need to spend our time and resources.



*Government Orders*

I want to reassure my colleagues in the House and all Canadians that health and safety officers will be there to help when employers and employees cannot come to an agreement on a workplace hazard or how to resolve it. They will be there 24-7 to respond to urgent situations that require intervention. Again, I want to emphasize that these new amendments will not affect the investigative capacity of the labour program and will not lead to fewer health and safety officers, as it has been erroneously reported in the media. Health and safety officers have been, are, and will remain the key to enforcing the Canada Labour Code.

As the hon. Minister of Labour has stated, the right of employees to refuse dangerous work remains absolute. The definition still provides protection from all hazards, imminent, serious or long term. Employees will continue to have the right to refuse all forms of dangerous work. Employers will still be responsible for ensuring their workplaces are safe and are required to take action if they are not. Employees and employers continue to have access to recourse mechanisms if they disagree with a decision. These proposed changes will not lead to fewer health and safety officers, but will ensure their time is used more effectively to improve the enforcement of occupational health and safety regulations.

Our government remains focused on the economy, jobs and long-term prosperity. A healthy and safe workplace goes absolutely hand in hand with those goals and we are continuing to move forward.

• (1235)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her presentation and appreciate having members in the House of Commons with her important background of nursing.

I am a little troubled at the hon. member's comments on this budget. One aspect of this budget, which is most troubling for my colleagues, is the fact that the government is taking on the discretion to determine what work is dangerous. It is taking it from fully trained health and safety officers and giving total discretion to the minister. I would expect that the hon. member would be doubly concerned because her government has been convicted of three counts of failing to protect federal workers, three violations of basic health and safety protections. I am a little troubled that she would think that the government is going in the right direction in this area.

• (1240)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that delegation of responsibility is very common in statute after statute. I go back to my previous world where I had delegation as a licensing officer for community care facilities. Delegation allows for consistency across the country. It allows for the minister to mobilize important resources as she needs them.

This will greatly improve both the ability to respond and the consistency of response, and will provide a framework for national improvement.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague on the other side of the House say that her government wants to protect workers. At the same time, that same government is fighting very hard through the backbench members of Parliament putting bills in the House and the Senate to almost get rid of unions.

I worked underground. Within 18 months, six of my colleagues were killed underground. I remember Westray Mine when 26 guys were killed underground. The law has to be very strong when it comes to the workplace and the workers. The only ones that could save the workers and the workplace, I really believe, is the unions. If people do not have unions, they do not have the right to speak. They know they will lose their jobs.

I went through all of that. I know what I am talking about and I am sure the hon. member knows what I am talking about. I am wondering why the government would not send it to the right committee, to labour, and bring the right people in to speak to that bill, instead of sending it to the finance committee, which has nothing to do with it.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, we obviously all have the same goal, and that is that workers are safe, workers are protected.

Truly, I do not know how the member could stand up and say that when he looks at the statistics, which say that 80% of those who went forward on appeal were found to be not dangerous situations.

Does he not agree that we need to focus our resources on those miners who are in dangerous situations, on those forestry workers, and on those pipeline providers? Then we have mechanisms that deal with the 80% of issues that are important issues, absolutely, but not life-threatening, not imminent, and we allow our officers the opportunity to really do the job they are trained, hired and very effective at doing.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. member whether or not she is as disappointed as I am that the current budget does not seem to touch on the whole question of adequate benefits and pensions for seniors. When I talk to my constituents, this comes up constantly. We know that there is an active debate going on in this country, including with the premiers, about the need to enhance the CPP. One of my constituents whose name is Nancy actually talked to me about creating a national portable pension plan through the CPP and the need to increase the amount of the CPP and OAS. Another of my constituents said exactly the same thing.

I am wondering if she is as disappointed as I am that the only mention, it seems, in the budget bill with respect to this kind of question is the addition of three foreigners to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely senior citizens are critical to this country and they have contributed so much over the years.

*Government Orders*

That is why I have constituents in my riding who have said to me that splitting their pension plan has made all the difference in the world to them. There have been many measures we have taken, the biggest raise to the guaranteed income supplement in years, the decrease in the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, the working income tax benefit, that have made the lives of seniors much easier in terms of them being able to afford their senior years.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about Bill C-4, which clearly is nothing more than a new assault on the Canadian economy. This bill does not provide anything new, but it takes away a great deal. It still benefits the same individuals and still penalizes the same people, namely Canadians.

The bill will allow the President of the Treasury Board, the minister responsible for building gazebos, to designate any public service as an essential service. Will building gazebos become an essential service for the federal government? One may wonder. Judging from what we know about the minister, the answer is yes.

The minister has again decided, for the 50th time, to impose a gag order on debate on this 300-page omnibus bill. The bill covers a wide range of topics, including the appointment of Supreme Court judges. However, it does not say anything about cutting the Senate's budget. The Senate budget is not being restricted and I have to wonder why. The Conservatives want to do away with some senators, but they do not want to cut the institution's budget.

Not one member opposite is able to tell me what is in these 300 pages. I will sum up the bill for them. It covers just about everything and anything. It is not an economic piece of legislation, but rather a Conservative and partisan bill. It attempts to hide the fact that the Conservatives are incapable of managing the economy properly. That is why they prefer to talk about gazebos and the appointment of judges. They are not focusing on real problems such as unemployment, household debt, tax evasion, large-scale off-shoring, industry shutdowns, cuts to public services and especially the elimination of regulations aimed at protecting the public. It was not exactly a brilliant idea to have only one engineer working on a train instead of two. If members were to visit what is left of a small Quebec town, the residents could tell them more about that than I can.

There are 1.4 million people out of work today. At the height of the recession in 2008-09, there were 1.5 million unemployed Canadians. In five years, unemployment figures have dropped by only 100,000. The Conservatives say that they have created hundreds of thousands of jobs, which is a good thing, but they always forget to take into account the number of jobs that have been lost. Personally, I think that when you replace a job that pays \$25 an hour with one that pays \$15 an hour, that does not benefit the economy and it certainly does not benefit Canadian workers who see a smaller take-home pay. Household debt now stands at 163% of a family's annual income. According to the OECD, Canada ranks first in terms of household debt. How encouraging and how very good for the economy. The Conservatives are proud of what they have done, but few of them are talking about this record.

I said that jobs paying \$25 an hour were being replaced by jobs paying \$15 an hour. The wages of only 20% of Canadians have risen

over the past 35 years. Apart from the 1%, that is to say the friends of the Conservatives, the majority have had a slight increase. In fact, the real incomes of 80%, the vast majority of the population of Canada, have declined or been frozen. Is that what the Conservatives call economic progress? I call it Conservative economic policy. The corporate welfare bums are entitled to everything, and, in the meantime, we are entitled to the deficit, the bills and wage cuts.

Their employment insurance reform was also a botched job. They decided that the system was not working and that the minister alone would have authority over it. There is no longer any organization to oversee the tax rate. They have also put an end to tax credits for labour-sponsored funds, which were useful to us, and have replaced them with a \$350 million tax.

● (1245)

For people who say and claim that they want what is good for taxpayers, we have seen better.

However, what is terrible is tax evasion. The Conservatives talk about this issue a lot but do nothing to address it. Here is a very simple example. They say we will discuss these issues. Certain individuals have told them to wake up because some people are in favour of and facilitate tax evasion. That is called white-collar crime, criminals in ties. Tax evasion is organized by bankers and firms of accountants and tax experts.

What penalties are imposed on those organizations? They do not talk about that. They say nothing. They talk, but at the same time they make sure not to bite the hand that feeds them. They always favour the people who finance their election campaigns, their friends—friends of the Conservatives—who are now the enemies of Canadians.

This bill also contains an item that is a bit odd. The Conservatives do not guarantee that we will control our main economic levers. They are no longer protecting our strategic industries. This is what they call being Canadian. They are so Canadian they say the fund that manages the Canada pension plan may now employ foreigners. I imagine they will recruit them from the American Tea Party. It will be ideologically quite similar.

The Conservatives like to tell us that they are here to protect us. I would rather be protected by a bogeyman than a Conservative. When it comes to food safety, the most serious meat recalls have happened since they have been in power. Allowing tainted meat through the system is not really protecting consumers.

The government has closed customs offices and cut the Canada Border Services Agency budget. In some places, people just have to stop their car, pick up the phone and declare that they are crossing the border, swearing that they do not have any illegal immigrants or cocaine in the car. People are being taken at their word. That sure sounds like secure border control.

Let us talk about cuts to transportation security offices. It is really wonderful. Do they realize that their deregulation led to the death of 50 people? That is just the beginning. The government doomed to repeat Walkerton over and over is the Conservative government.

*Government Orders*

About the cuts to the RCMP, again, really wonderful. For a government that claims to be tough on crime, I am sure that people in some luxurious mafia homes are on their knees begging God to keep the Conservatives in power for a long time to come. The mafia's best friend is the Conservative Party because it is making sure that the police do not have the means to punish these people.

They are the worst managers we have ever seen. Not only are they bad at it, but they use public advertising budgets to claim that they are good at it. The truth is that the only thing this government is good at is turning gold into lead and making sure that the benefits trickle down into their friends' pockets and that taxpayers foot the bill. Canadians are the only ones on the hook for the loss.

• (1250)

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his impassioned speech, in which he mentioned many important things.

What concerns me the most is the fact that we are in a fragile economic situation. This is a budget that curbs growth. Indeed, the budget will further slow Canada's sluggish economy, and this means that it will be increasingly difficult to perform as a society.

Given that consumption is an economic driver and that Canadians are heavily indebted, I would like my hon. colleague to comment on this situation and tell us how far he thinks we can continue in this direction.

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this government believes that growth should be stimulated only by consumption. Instead, it should be stimulated by investment, especially given that businesses are richer than they have ever been, thanks to this government's tax cuts.

Let me give an example. It seems that when many ministers began their career, Ontario was paying equalization transfers. Now, because of their mediocrity, Ontario receives equalization payments. People like the President of the Treasury Board can be proud of putting their province in the red.

That is what this government is about.

• (1255)

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his speech. It was excellent, as always, and full of rather serious observations.

I wanted to ask him if the Conservatives' approach since they were elected—that is, introducing budget implementation bills up to 400 pages long—could result in the kinds of mistakes we saw in the last budget implementation bill. We noted a mistake in the taxation of caisses populaires and credit unions.

Can he comment on the problems that can be caused by such long bills, when we have so little time to examine them? In the end, we realize that they can contain some rather glaring errors.

**Mr. Alain Giguère:** Mr. Speaker, that is the problem with omnibus bills, especially when they are accompanied by a gag order. We do not have time to look at what we are voting on. This is terrible, because it allows major errors to slip through, such as the one my colleague mentioned about co-operatives. It also carries more consequences than we could even imagine. We do not know

what kind of impact the cuts and decreased services will have on the public affected. That is a tragedy, because we are doomed to repeat Walkerton over and over. This government will no longer be the Conservative government. It will be a government doomed to repeat Walkerton over and over. This is destroying our economy and it is destroying lives, but this government does not care. We will not forget that.

Fortunately, the people of Ontario got fed up with mediocrity and told the fools that enough was enough. They waved the government's record on water pollution in their faces and showed them the door. That is exactly what will happen. They were kicked out of Ontario and will be kicked out of the federal government. If they are mediocre at the provincial level, they will not become intelligent at the federal level. Mediocrity has clearly made its way here, and it will come to an end.

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill C-4. This bill is very important for creating the necessary balance between the interests of the public, which the Government of Canada wants to protect, and the interests of public service unions.

[*English*]

I will talk a little bit about the sections relating to my portfolio. Certainly there are some changes to the Public Service Labour Relations Act, as my colleagues across the way and the union heads have cottoned on to. I think it is important to explain the context and why we believe that they are fair and reasonable.

If citizens were not informed and are now informed, these things are, in fact, not in the legislation now. Citizens I have talked to are quite surprised that these bits of the legislation we are changing are not, in fact, the law as we see it today. That is one of the things I think is the common sense of the people when it comes to these matters.

A lot has been made of changes to the designation of essential services. Let me just say this. Again, most citizens, if one had told them that the designation of essential services was a matter to be bargained with the bargaining agent, with the union, so that the government, as the employer and the protector of the public interest, had to bargain for the designation of essential public servants, would have been shocked. They would have been totally surprised by that. However, that is, in fact, the law as it now sits. There has to be a bargaining process the Government of Canada has to undergo to designate various individuals as essential.

Our position is very clear. It is not for negotiation to defend the public interest when it comes to health and safety and security issues. That is not in the public interest. This bill represents a very common-sense change that most Canadians would agree with.

How does it work? This has come up, and some have suggested that the details are not in the bill. The details are in the bill. It is very clear, under both the bill and the practice that is considered good faith bargaining, that the designation of public servants as essential has to occur before negotiations with the public sector union on a collective agreement have started.

*Government Orders*

Let me be clear. I cannot wake up one day after a bad bargaining session with the bargaining agent and say, “That is it; they are all going to be essential”. We cannot do that. It would be absurd. The designation has to occur before the bargaining takes place. Indeed, good practice is to sit down with the union heads and say that here is what we are proposing as essential employees, and what do they think? We would get their feedback and then proceed, in the public interest, with those designations.

Let me repeat the point that safety and security are not negotiable. The Conservative government, through this bill, intends to protect the safety and security of the public.

Let us talk about two-tier arbitration. This is another facet of the changes we are making to the Public Service Labour Relations Act, except in the case of essential services, where there is mandatory arbitration.

That is another point, by the way. To hear it from the unions, this designation of essential services means the end of bargaining as we know it and that they have been stripped of all of their bargaining rights. No. Part of bargaining, in some cases, is arbitration. Indeed, this is preserved under the legislation. I wanted to make that point clear and put it on the record, as well.

Two-tier arbitration is to make sure that the bargaining agent and the employer both have a say as to whether arbitration is going to be used, except in the case of essential services, when it would be used. That is an important change as well.

Let us look at arbitration factors. This is, again, common sense that most Canadians would agree with. The arbitrators have to look at recruitment and retention issues.

• (1300)

We cannot have an arbitrator who is not aware that in a particular bargaining unit there are 20 applications for every position, or maybe there are no applications because it is that tough a job. I think that is relevant information for the arbitrator and goes to the impact on the treasury of the demands of a particular union.

The arbitrator should also have regard to the economy. What is the state of the economy? This is critically important, because the amount of revenue that can be raised affects the bottom line of the government. The arbitrator should have regard to the economic policies of the government, because those are relevant. If we are in a period of tightening, that should be a relevant piece of information for the arbitrator.

Again, it is common sense. If most Canadians were asked and given these choices, they would say they were surprised that this was not the case right now.

Cost sharing on grievances is again common sense. If there is going to be a grievance process, those costs should be shared by both the union and the employer. The employer should not pay 100% of the cost. Quite apart from everything else, that arrangement only encourages those with spurious claims to grieve. Therefore, let us have some responsibility and some common sense by sharing the cost of the grievance procedure.

There was as well a compensation research bureau under the Public Service Labour Relations Board. Quite frankly, it was not very effective. My point of view, and the point of the view of the government, is that if there is research to be done on pay scales or positions on the impact of a bargaining agent's position or the government's position in a particular collective bargaining session, that should be borne by either the government or by the union, whichever of the two is making the point. It should not be borne by separate research that may or may not be accepted by the bargaining agents or by the government in any case. That is again common sense.

We are also proposing to eliminate double jeopardy for grievances. Currently we have a situation in which the grievor can forum shop: if she or he does not like one forum, the grievor can go to the next forum, and so on. Our commonsensical position is to pick a forum, have the adjudication at that forum—they do not lose any rights, because there is an adjudicative process—and at the end of the day, that decision has to be accepted by the government and by the union at the same time. I think that eliminates years and years of forum shopping whereby people who do not like a decision go to the next place. It does not help the employee and does not help the system generally.

Finally, I want to draw members' attention to another provision. This one would allow the bargainer, in this case the Government of Canada, to start the process of negotiation with the bargaining agent 12 months before the expiration of a contract.

Again, this is common sense. We have a lot of cases right now in which there is a lot of back pay that has to be added on, and the employees have a lot of uncertainty for a number of years because they are waiting for the process of bargaining to begin. Let us start the bargaining earlier. Let us get the collective agreements done earlier. That means less back pay, but it also means, on a go-forward basis, more certainty for the employee as to what her or his collective agreement is.

These are commonsensical changes to the Public Service Labour Relations Act. It follows on some of the other positions we have taken over the last few months. I know this is somewhat of a controversial concept, but how about explaining to employees what their job is, how their success is going to be measured, and then following up with that employee to see whether she or he is meeting those goals.

Again, it is common sense, which is not performed systematically across the whole public service. We are going to do it.

We are also going to look at absenteeism to make sure that we have the right policies in that area.

I will leave it at that. Bill C-4 is a well-intentioned bill that will do the job for Canadians.

• (1305)

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening with interest to the President of the Treasury Board as he glossed over some of the measures that the government will be taking in the next few months, measures that are in fact an attack against the rights of collective bargaining in the public service as well as the right to strike.

*Government Orders*

The assumption in what the President of the Treasury Board is saying is that the way essential services were negotiated in the past was somehow a problem, as if some essential services were not deemed essential because there was a process in place to consult and negotiate with the employees. In fact, I think employees would be pretty well placed to define what might be essential and non-essential, knowing their place of work.

This is clearly an attempt to centralize this designation in order to use it as a tool ahead of the bargaining process in order to win every single conflict.

I would like the President of the Treasury Board to tell me where the problem is.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that a system in which the employer, in this case the Government of Canada, has to bargain on which employee is essential and which employee is not essential is not the right way to approach the issue. These issues should not be bargained. They should ultimately be the responsibility of the employer to designate.

That said, as I said in my remarks in this chamber, there should be a process of dialogue with the labour unions to get their input, their feedback, on what the government's intentions are.

Ultimately it is the responsibility and the duty of government to protect the public. That is the government's job. If it does not have the ability to appropriately designate the individuals who carry on essential services or if that designation is subject to bargaining and negotiating, that is not in the public interest, and that is what we object to.

• (1310)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions for the hon. minister.

Bill C-4, in the guise of a budget omnibus bill, takes aim at a lot of federal civil servants. I am particularly concerned about the Canada Labour Code changes that affect the right to refuse unsafe work.

It did not come as much in the minister's statements, but I do not understand why, with only 150 refusals in any given year by federal workers under the Canada Labour Code who find that they need to refuse dangerous work, the definition of danger has been changed in this act. It specifically removes the language that deals with refusing work that could lead to a chronic illness or threats to reproductive health.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, this topic was just discussed by the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo in her address on this issue about 40 minutes ago.

The member put an interesting fact before this House: the present situation, 80% of the cases that the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is talking about that were appealed because of dangerous circumstances, even including the appeals, were found not to be the case.

Clearly this provision, if I can say it euphemistically, has been overused. I think it does deserve tightening. It the Minister of Labour's responsibility, and she is an excellent person to ask about this issue. I certainly support the Minister of Labour and her changes to the Canada Labour Code.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question will be very brief.

The President of the Treasury Board is here in the House to talk about aspects of Bill C-4 that affect his department. That is fine.

However, why did he not fulfill his duty as President of the Treasury Board and introduce a bill from his department rather than including these items in an omnibus bill introduced by the Minister of Finance and accompanied by a gag order? That complicates things a bit.

I would have appreciated it if he had come here to explain his own bill rather than the Minister of Finance's bill.

Another rather important aspect of this bill pertains to the designation of essential work during a strike. When there is no strike, are these essential workers safe from job cuts?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I can explain why this is included in Bill C-4. It is simple. Budget 2013 indicates the importance of fiscal balance and relations with a more modern public service. We made mention of this in budget 2013 and in the Speech from the Throne two weeks ago.

[*English*]

This is government policy. It is absolutely connected to the fiscal probity and the fiscal future of the federal government on behalf of the taxpayers of Canada, so it is no surprise that it should be part of this bill.

In answer to the hon. member's second question, I would only say it is important to designate which services are essential before the negotiations take place. This is what Canadians expect of a government that is managing the public service and the fiscal finances of the country.

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before we recessed for the summer, the Auditor General pointed out that there was \$3.1 billion unaccounted for by the Treasury Board. I listened to the speech by the President of the Treasury Board very carefully, but my constituents have been asking me over the summer whether the \$3.1 billion had been found or whether the President of the Treasury Board had had an opportunity to locate it. I hope he will inform this House in the next day or two, or weeks, whether or not that \$3.1 billion has been located.

I rise today on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North to talk about Bill C-4, the budget implementation act. Bill C-4 is yet another omnibus bill proposed by the Conservatives. It comprises 300-odd pages and addresses over 70 different laws.

This is déjà vu all over again. It is like *Groundhog Day*. One would think that the Conservatives, after proroguing after the summer break, could come up with a new mandate, new ideas, to address the needs of Canadians and the families and individuals in my community, yet I do not see anything in the bill that addresses the real needs of Canadians: jobs, job security and well-paying jobs. That is not in the bill.

*Government Orders*

It looks as if the Conservatives never got out of the Ottawa bubble. If they had, they would see the long and growing lineups at the food banks. They would be looking at creating jobs for our young people. As members can see, the unemployment rate for young people is the highest among any age group. There is nothing in the bill that addresses the needs of our young people.

There is another crisis brewing in the Lower Mainland. Port Metro Vancouver is a major port that helps to facilitate trade. It helps move goods from the Prairies right across to the port. In the last week, I have seen the trucking industry having major issues at the port. It takes them a long time to either pick up or drop off the goods they need to transport. A crisis is looming. I urge the Conservative government to address this issue before our economy in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver area is damaged.

As members know, truckers provide a vital role in the movement of goods throughout this country. However, they are having difficulty in picking up and dropping off their goods from the port, and the wait times are very long. The government needs to address that in a way that will help with the movement of our goods.

As I said, there are many issues in Bill C-4, which addresses over 70 different bills. I want to pick up on two issues that are important to my constituents of Surrey North.

One issue is that this is a missed opportunity for the Conservative government. As I read through Bill C-4, the irony certainly strikes me that we are approaching Remembrance Day as we discuss the bill. The next couple of weeks should be dedicated to thanking Canadians in service and our veterans for their dedication to our country, including those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. At this time of the year we repeat the mantra, "Lest we forget". However, the truth of the matter is that Bill C-4 demonstrates that the Conservatives have forgotten Canadian veterans. Here the Conservative government had an opportunity to make real changes, but Bill C-4 does not do that.

The 300-odd pages of the bill address a wide range of things, but they do not address what is needed for veterans. In Bill C-4, there is one change to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, an institution that New Democrats have repeatedly demonstrated as biased, subjective and inefficient. The Conservatives can only think of one change to make, which is to reduce the number of permanent members on the board from 28 to 25.

● (1315)

It is no secret that veterans do not find support or reassurance in the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. In March I spoke in the House about one of my constituents, retired sergeant Fergus, who was having difficulty navigating the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. Since March, the Conservatives have had many opportunities to make changes to the VRAB, but they continue to forget about veterans.

Mr. Fergus is not alone in his plight. Many constituents have approached my office to seek help to navigate the board for disability claims. Members of the board are appointed primarily because of their political connections. They have little military or medical knowledge. These members have the responsibility of deciding the future of our veterans, but without contextual knowl-

edge of their challenges, they often make decisions that are not based on evidence. Like the immigration system, the decision-making process of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board is lengthy. Long waits can leave veterans out in the cold.

I mean "out in the cold" literally. A veteran approached my office this summer who was at risk of being homeless after serving Canada bravely for years. It is clear that the Canadian government did not intend to serve my constituent, retired sergeant Lorenz. Although my office helped him navigate the application process, Mr. Lorenz is now at a standstill while he waits to see a psychologist to assess his mental health. He has to wait six months. He already knows that he has post-traumatic stress disorder, but he must wait six months before his application can continue. After he sacrificed so much for peace and freedom, it is shameful that Mr. Lorenz must wait this long to be awarded the benefits and support to which he is entitled.

I thank Mr. Fergus and Mr. Lorenz, and all the men and women who have bravely stood up for our country, for their service. I commit, along with my NDP colleagues, to continue to stand up for their rights around Remembrance Day and throughout the whole year.

The other area I want to talk about that is contained in the bill is the changes to the immigration act.

My constituency is very diverse. Many immigrants live in my community. It is clear to my constituents that Canada's immigration system is broken, especially with regard to family reunification. Family reunification is not a priority for the Conservative government. Recently, Canadians were appalled to hear a Conservative minister referring to family reunification as a burden to Canada. I am a product of that family reunification. The Conservatives have repeatedly undermined the importance and value of family, by making such claims. It is not only disrespectful but outright inhumane for a minister to assert this. Canada has always welcomed immigrants, fostered family bonds and provided opportunities for families to reconstruct their lives.

Every day my office receives many visits from victims who have fallen through the immigration system. I cannot provide specific cases here because it would take a long time and there are too many to list all of them. They are families who cannot be reunited at joyous occasions like weddings and birthdays, or daughters and sons who are not able to say goodbye to their dying parents in time because their temporary resident visas were refused for some obscure reason. Husbands and wives are separated for years before they can begin their lives together. Babies are born to first-time mothers who need the support of their far-away partner, and new fathers must wait months to meet their newborns.

This legislation basically would not address the needs of Canadians.

*Government Orders*

• (1320)

I am tired of seeing these omnibus bills come through the House. I am tired of seeing the Conservatives attempt to hide these changes that are made within the 300 pages.

This truly demonstrates that the Conservative government is out of touch with the needs of Canadians.

• (1325)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the same issue over and over again in my constituency office, families who have been seeking reunification, patiently waiting. I am horrified by the change in policy and the moving of the goalposts for so many families that have been doing all the right things, filing all the right papers; they find they have to start all over again.

My question is on the member's last point, on finding omnibus budget bills. In the last number of years the Conservatives have done two omnibus bills per budget. In 2012-2013 we had a spring omnibus budget bill, C-38, and then a fall omnibus budget bill, C-45, then Bill C-60 and now Bill C-4. Each of these monstrous bills has included many aspects that had nothing at all to do with the budget, but were mere expedients for pushing things through the House that much faster.

I wonder if the hon. member knows what the official opposition would do? Could we have House rules to restrict when omnibus bills are legitimate? How would the official opposition deal with this problem?

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, not only is the bill humongous—it is 300 pages with changes being made to 70 laws—but on top of that, the government is trying to ram it through. It is not giving opportunity to every member in the House to speak about it.

One of the phrases I learned from the Conservatives is “time allocation”. I want to explain that to Canadians. Basically, it is shutting down the debate. It is not giving the opportunity for every member in the House to speak to the bill. Not only that, but this bill will only go to one committee. That committee may not have the expertise for all of the 70-odd bills that are addressed in this omnibus bill.

If the government is going to bring forward legislation, it needs to make sure it addresses areas that are important, not a hodgepodge of different areas in one bill that it tries to ram through. Canadians expect more.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up along the same line. What we have seen is a Conservative majority government that has provided a different form of government. It is somewhat unprecedented in the way it abuses the rules by bringing in numerous pieces of legislation through the back door of a budget implementation bill, thereby denying members of Parliament the ability to represent their constituents by providing due diligence on what should be a wide variety of bills.

This is one bill that could very easily have been split into a number of different bills. However, there is this new PMO-instructed directive on how to pass legislation, which is not healthy and is highly undemocratic. To top it off, the government puts in time allocation to ensure that even fewer members of Parliament would be able to contribute in pointing out the misgivings of this irresponsible

budget bill. Would the member like to provide further comment in regard to that?

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu:** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that this is a PMO-directed initiative, that it brings in a bunch of different bills and laws and puts it into one omnibus bill. We have seen what happens to PMO-driven agendas. We see it in the other House.

I can assure the member that Canadians are paying attention to what is happening in this House when Conservatives are trying to ram through omnibus bills. In 2015 they will provide the answer to the Conservative government and elect an NDP government.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on our government's actions vis-à-vis the budget. I will focus my comments on my home province of Manitoba as it is obviously a very broad topic. I would like Manitobans to know what is involved in the budget as far as their concerns.

First, Manitobans have to realize that we receive a significant amount of support from the federal government. In fact, transfers have increased to \$3.4 billion in 2013-14. That is a huge sum of money and there has been an increase of about \$62 billion in this last year, almost a 50% increase in transfers since the last Liberal government, across Canada. We are talking about major investments.

When it comes to Manitoba, of the \$3.4 billion, \$1.8 billion is through equalization, which is an increase of \$191 million or almost 12% since 2005-06, \$1.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$336 million, or a 43% increase since the last Liberal government, and \$443 million through the Canada social transfer. That is an increase of \$109 million or almost 33% since the last Liberal government. Manitoba benefits greatly in general from the federal government.

Now I will talk about some other specific great initiatives in the budget that will help Manitobans.

• (1330)

The Canada jobs grant will be a way of transforming skills training by providing up to \$15,000 per person in Manitoba with the combined support of the federal and provincial governments and the employer. It will bring the student, the employer, the funding and the job together. Therefore, up to 130,000 Canadians will benefit and many will benefit in Manitoba.

We are also be creating opportunities for apprenticeships, supporting the use of apprentices in federal construction and maintenance contracts in Manitoba, such as investments in affordable housing and under the building Canada plan, which I will speak about in a few minutes.

*Government Orders*

We will encourage students to study in high-demand fields, including the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The fact is that we will also invest \$70 million to support an additional 5,000 paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates in Manitoba and across Canada.

We will extend support for Pathways to Education Canada to assist students from low-income communities in Manitoba and across Canada from dropping out of high school.

First nation youth is a priority for our government and is a great resource in the province of Manitoba. We will be providing \$241 million to help first nation youth in Manitoba and across Canada to access skills and training they need to participate in large economic projects like those in the resource sector near their communities.

We also provide \$10 million to grants, scholarships and bursaries to inspire and help first nation and Inuit students in Manitoba and across Canada.

This budget brings forward a landmark in infrastructure investments.

The new building Canada plan will invest \$70 billion over 10 years. I was quite happy to be involved in the development of this plan with the former minister of transport before the last cabinet shuffle. We were able to consult stakeholders, meet with individuals, meet with municipalities, provinces, territories and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and we listened. They asked for stable, reliable funding for infrastructure. That is what they received.

We have created a new building Canada fund, which is, as I mentioned, \$70 billion over 10 years. It is comprised of three main parts.

First, will be the community improvement fund of \$32.2 billion over 10 years, which will include the federal gas tax fund, which is indexed, as well as the incremental GST rebate, to help municipalities in Manitoba and across Canada so they have stable, predictable funding to support community infrastructure projects.

Then we have the building Canada fund, which announces \$14 billion over 10 years to support major new economic infrastructure projects in Manitoba and across Canada that have national or regional significance.

• (1335)

Finally, we have announced the renewal of the P3 Canada fund, which will continue to find innovative ways to build infrastructure projects faster through private-public partnerships in Manitoba and across Canada. It will enable us to have a vehicle to leverage private sector monies for the public good.

I wish I had more time because there are so many great initiatives in this budget.

We will be supporting the commercialization of research by small and medium-size enterprises. This will be an investment of \$20 million in Manitoba and across Canada to access research and business development services. There are \$37 million for post-secondary education in Manitoba and across Canada and \$325

million for clean energy projects. We are supporting aerospace and defence projects, investing almost a billion dollars in the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. In my riding those beneficiaries could include Bristol Aerospace, Magellan, StandardAero and Boeing. We have the third largest aerospace industry in the country.

I wish I had more time because this is a good budget and I cannot name all of the great initiatives. However, it is good for Canada and good for Manitoba.

God keep our land glorious and free.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the government's love of the P3 project for private-public partnerships. The city of Edmonton was a victim of this. It applied for funding to expand its LRT and was promised a certain amount of money. Then it was told to withdraw its application and apply under the P3. It was then only given a portion of those dollars, which means the LRT that is badly needed in Edmonton is delayed for probably a decade.

Does the member think municipalities should be forced to choose the mechanism to build infrastructure or should they have the choice as to how to proceed with infrastructure in our cities?

• (1340)

**Hon. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, the new building Canada plan offers more money for infrastructure across the board. There will be an opportunity to use the gas tax fund in the way each municipality wishes. It is a direct transfer. The P3 Canada fund will have a threshold, but the red tape associated with it has also been looked at and any hiccups have been fixed.

The big picture is that there is a lot more money for infrastructure than there ever has been from the federal government in Canadian history.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of concerns related to the Department of National Defence and what is happening within its budget. I am sure the member is familiar with PPCLI. At one time it was located in Winnipeg. It has been relocated to Shilo. Some concerns have been expressed regarding some form of guarantee that there will be no downsizing whatsoever of the PPCLI or the Shilo base.

Is the member in a position to provide those assurances to the House that in no way will there be any sort of cuts to Shilo, given some of the cuts happening with respect to DND?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry is a storeyed regiment. It is celebrating its 100th anniversary next year. Manitoba is proud to have it with us.

I believe it left the Kapyong Barracks in Winnipeg under the Liberal regime. Therefore, perhaps the member has a better understanding on how to reduce the armed forces.



*Government Orders*

The Conservative government is improving the armed forces so it does the job that we have asked it to do. We are investing in defence, in our sovereignty and in our freedom.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will bring up some facts and figures. The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that the overall impact of budget 2012, fiscal update 2012, and budget 2013 would be a loss of 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.7% reduction in GDP.

Also Statistics Canada states that there are 6.5 unemployed people for every job vacancy in the country. It has also reported that we have had four consecutive years without significant change in the after-tax incomes of Canadians. Really, it demonstrates that Canadians are holding fast or having troubles getting ahead.

The member spoke greatly about the building Canada fund. The Minister of Finance came to Scarborough a few weeks ago to announce a big pile of money. When other mayors asked how they could access the program, the answer was that the criteria was not there, the Conservatives do not know yet. How in fact can they decide what programs do qualify when they have not even made the criteria yet?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, the building Canada plan will be active in the spring of 2014. That has always been the plan for the plan. Certainly that is what the stakeholders expect.

In regard to the statistics the member rhymed off, we are the only G7 country growing at the rate that we are. We are the only G7 country that has a GDP-debt ratio that can be dealt with. We are the only country in the world, maybe with Australia, that has weathered the economic storm and come out of the great post-war depression stronger than when we went in.

Over a million jobs have been created. The new free trade agreement with Europe will bring in hundreds of thousands of jobs. The prosperity will be wonderful.

•(1345)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, boy, is there a lot of hot air this afternoon. I suspect it will continue as we go forward. It is clearly up to constituents or anyone who is watching to pay attention to which side of the House is in favour of this omnibus bill and where we all stand on the issues. One member stands up and brags about how wonderful it is, and the next one points out all of the mistakes and errors that are there. It must be quite comical for people who are watching at times.

I am glad to have a chance to speak briefly to the omnibus legislation that has been brought to the House. I say “briefly” because closure has been introduced again. This is the fourth bill that has been introduced since the House came back after prorogation, and we have had closure on each and every one of them. The Conservatives are clearly in a rush. I am not quite sure where, but we have to think about that as Canadians.

However, this continues to be the same pattern the government has followed previously. We have prorogation, then we have a budget, and then we will have prorogation and we will have another budget. It is the pattern of management of House business that continues to be a huge challenge in here, as to how House business is dealt with. As I said, it is an omnibus budget then prorogation and

back to an omnibus bill and another prorogation. If at any point we try to go off of that particular calendar, then somewhere or another there will be another closure bill. It is a very sad reality when we talk about democracy in other countries, and democracy in our own country and our own House is being shortchanged every day with the kind of closure motions that are put down.

However, today we are not supposed to be here talking about the past because that should speak for itself for a lot of people who are looking. Let us look ahead a bit. Let us look past the government's mismanagement of the debt, past the Conservatives' meddling with Senate business, which has consumed everything going on in the House for several weeks now and clearly is going to continue on, and past the fact that the Conservatives continuously ignore the plights of middle-class Canadians. Today I will talk a bit about this budget.

This omnibus budget had its genesis somewhere deep within that 7,000 hollow words and empty platitudes of what was called a throne speech, a speech that some have called the longest and most incoherent piece of government rhetoric in living memory. It clearly was that, at least a half an hour too long. Indeed the Prime Minister spun quite a fiscal yarn into that throne speech, a tale that his Minister of Finance continues into this omnibus budget.

As an example, the Prime Minister would have us believe that he saw the recession of 2008 looming on the horizon. This is really odd because in the campaign of 2008, the Prime Minister said the recession would never happen. He guaranteed Canadians would never have a recession, and attacked those warning Canadians to batten down the hatches as fearmongering. We saw where that went. Indeed, Canada could have been better prepared had the Prime Minister actually listened to those of us in the Liberal Party who were sounding the alarm. However, as usual, the Prime Minister listened only to himself or those in the PMO.

This budget is a continuation of this closed-minded and confused fiscal management theory that the Conservatives continue to put ahead. This budget is again projecting a significant deficit. Just so people do not forget, I remind them that seven years ago the current government, when it got into office, inherited a decade of balanced budgets, annual surpluses of \$13 billion, declining debt, declining taxes, strong economic growth exceeding 3% annually, 3.5 million net new jobs and the most robust fiscal situation in the world. It was an ideal, perfect position for the Conservatives to come in. Despite all of that, the Conservative budget is another example of failures.

Besides dealing with the fiscal matters, such as the Supreme Court appointment process that has been completely bungled, this budget does little more than remind Canadians that the Conservatives have overspent by three times the rate of inflation. The Conservatives have eliminated the contingency reserves that Liberals had built into the federal budget process to protect Canadians against unexpected and adverse events. We have clearly very little protection built in anywhere today should there be a major problem for Canada. Most importantly, the Conservatives sent the surplus up in smoke and put Canada back into deep deficit long before, the key phrase being “long before”, the onset of the recession, which the Prime Minister's economic wisdom said was never going to happen.

*Government Orders*

• (1350)

Now as ridiculous as that sounds, people just have to read the books and read the blues and they will see how it is. Despite all of that looming evidence, evidence that almost every Canadian detected ahead of time, the Prime Minister continued with his denials. Despite collapsing markets in the U.S. and the onset of American bank failures, the Prime Minister continued to blindly plunge ahead. Rather than positioning Canada for the recession in advance, the Prime Minister suggested that economic problems in other countries would be a good thing for Canada. Remember how he projected good buying opportunities when other countries were in trouble.

I am not sure if this was deceptive or just clueless. Canadians will be the ultimate judge of this ineptitude but this country was left vulnerable, and this budget is further proof of just how serious that exposure was.

This brings us back to the omnibus budget that is before us today. After six Conservative deficits and nearly \$180 billion in new Conservative debt, the minister has the audacity to suggest that his debt-to-GDP target of 25% by the year 2021 is bold. Worse still is the extreme hypocrisy of a government that took Canada from its largest surplus in history to the largest deficit in history, promising balanced budget legislation. In my estimation, deficit spending should be viewed as a tax on future generations, and politicians who create deficits should be exposed as the tax hikers they truly are.

Remember, the government deficit is the difference between the amount of money the government spends and the amount it has the nerve to collect. It is odd to hear this particular promise from this particular Prime Minister's mouth because in the past 17 years he is the only prime minister to permit a deficit. He is the only prime minister to hike the national debt. The real story here is that the omnibus bill is an admission of the Conservative government's failure and ineptitude as fiscal manager.

Let us not forget that it was the Prime Minister that promised to attain a debt-to-GDP target of 25% by the year 2012. When the Conservatives missed that target, they began planning and now they have made the same kind of promise again, only this time they are promising to do it by 2021.

Conservatives can promise and then re-promise the same things over, but the promises are not credible. This budget makes promises and commitments but the promises are not grounded in sound fiscal policies and they are certainly not in the best interests of the middle class. The Conservatives think they can slash their way to prosperity but the past seven years has proven they only dig a deeper hole. Sadly, this hole now contains the Conservative cuts to old age pensions, to health care plans and to environmental projects, but prosperity still eludes the government.

There is an old saying that suggests the first thing to do when someone finds themselves in a hole is to stop digging. Budget 2013 is nothing more than a shovel and will yield the same results as its predecessors, which were advanced under the failed Conservative fiscal ideology. In every year since 2010, economic growth in Canada has been slower than the year before. No prime minister has done worse since the days of R. B. Bennett. What Canada needs most, alongside strong, competent, honest government, is a concrete

plan for greater sustained economic growth, focused on the middle class.

As the voice of the people of York West, I am truly saddened by the government's negligence and disregard for middle-class families, students, seniors and those working to make a living. Canadians are already being hurt by the fiscal policies of the government, and this omnibus bill is just another swipe at the middle class. I cannot support it. Clearly, it would be a good idea if the Conservatives did not support it either.

• (1355)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing her views forward.

I want to share with her something that has happened at the Department of National Defence. A veteran today, who was a member of the armed forces last week, Corporal Hawkins, was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He had one year to finish his 10 years in order to get a pension. I do remember the Minister of National Defence last year saying that no member of the forces would be pushed out, yet last week, last Friday, he was given his marching orders. He was pushed out.

Therefore, I am just wondering if my colleague could share with us how she sees the shortcomings of the government and the failed promises of the Minister of National Defence as this veteran, a soldier of yesterday, is pushed out of the forces and not allowed to finish his 10 years.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating my colleague on his new role as the critic for veterans affairs. We have been very fortunate that we have had some great members do some fabulous work on the veterans file. As his predecessor did before him, my current colleague is doing a great job.

We keep hearing about these issues for our veterans. It is nice to stand up and talk about all the wonderful things we are doing for them. It is that rhetoric we continue to hear from an awful lot of people. We actually get out there and talk to some of the veterans.

I have a young man in my riding who did 20 years in Bosnia and is now suffering with PTSD. He has been turned down several times. We have launched an appeal to get the proper support for the men and women who put a uniform on to defend our country and put their lives at stake. They get very frustrated hearing all the rhetoric about all the things they are going to be doing, and yet when they reach out for the help they need, the doors are always shut.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last number of months, one of the strongest advocates for seniors who are on pensions has been my colleague from Toronto. She has taken a look at how the government has increased the age of retirement from 65 to 67. I know that she has had the opportunity to tell the House on previous occasions about the impact that is going to have. I wonder if she could share with members once again her thoughts on the impact of increasing the age of retirement from 65 to 67.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that we intend to do a good job on this side of the House. I would expect that the only way it is going to change to 67 is if Canadians are deluded enough to re-elect the Conservative government. Under the Liberals, and in our future, 65 is an ideal age.

I have countless people in my riding and throughout the country who do not even make it to 65 because of the kind of work they have to do in construction and in difficult jobs and due to bad health. They do not make it to 65 to get their pensions. They are 55 and are already unable to work because of various injuries and so on, and they are looking for assistance. God bless everyone who wants to work to 67, 70, 72, or whatever and wants to pay the additional taxes, because the government could always use it, but an awful lot of people never get to 65, never mind 67, because they cannot wait.

On this side of the House, as far as the Liberals are concerned, if and when we have an opportunity to form government, that age will stay at 65.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month, and before it closes, I want to highlight some key ways our government is promoting equality for women.

Women make up an important part of our economic fabric. In fact, 187,000 businesses in Canada are owned by women. Now our opening doors initiative is helping young women access higher-paying, non-traditional jobs, like engineers and jobs in science and technology, carpentry, and plumbing. Now our government and the Minister of Status of Women are looking to promote more women on boards. Data shows that when women help direct corporations, profits rise.

Last June we passed the watershed bill, Bill S-2, which enables aboriginal women and their children living on reserve to stay in their homes in the event of domestic violence or family breakup. Finally, our maternal health program internationally is gaining great accolades.

The residents of Calgary Centre care about these issues, and on their behalf, I want to thank our government.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

[Translation]

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Students to discuss the impact of high tuition and student debt on the future of our young people.

I would like to reaffirm my support for our Canadian youth and for access to high-quality, affordable post-secondary education for

### Statements by Members

everyone. To that end, it is important to reduce the level of student debt by investing directly in post-secondary education and increasing the number and the amount of non-refundable bursaries.

The future of our country and our economy rests with our young people. We have to put in place measures to give them a good start in adult life by making post-secondary education as accessible as possible for all youth who want it.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 250 years ago this month, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by King George III establishing a boundary, the proclamation line, between the British colonies on the Atlantic coast and the aboriginal lands west of the Appalachian Mountains and establishing the important precedent that aboriginal peoples had rights to the lands they occupied.

[Translation]

The Royal Proclamation prohibited the purchase of aboriginal land by individuals and required all future purchases of land to be made by Crown servants.

[English]

It is the first document of the Crown to recognize aboriginal rights and freedoms. It laid the foundation for all future treaties and was so important that in 1982, it was included in section 25 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I ask all members in the House to join me in recognizing this historic anniversary for aboriginal peoples.

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### THE SUBURBAN

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, *The Suburban* is celebrating 50 years of excellence providing Montrealers with the news and analysis they need to take an active part in the life of their community. The newspaper has distinguished itself with the quality of its reporting and through editorial content that reflects a deep understanding of the events—local, national, and international—that shape our world.

*The Suburban's* success has been reflected not only in the accolades it regularly receives from readers but also in the numerous Quebec, Canada-wide, and international awards the paper has earned over the years since its modest inception on March 1, 1963 in Sophie Wollock's basement on Davies Avenue, in Côte Saint-Luc.

*The Suburban's* readership has grown over the years in the highly competitive marketplace of weekly newspaper publishing. This is testimony to the paper's ability to stay on top of the technological trends that have and are continuing to shape the media industry.

Congratulations to *The Suburban* on this milestone anniversary. We wish the paper continued success covering the issues that matter to the communities it has served so well for half a century.

*Statements by Members***JUVENILE DIABETES RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, only one short week ago, I hosted my eighth annual pancake breakfast in support of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. This commendable organization, driven by the hard work of both children and adults, is the largest supporter of type 1 diabetes research. At this year's breakfast, we saw a record turnout of 250 local residents and raised \$2,000 for our local JDRF chapter.

As there still remains no cure, efforts must continue until type 1 diabetes is fully conquered. As chair of the all-party caucus on juvenile diabetes, I remain committed to winning this battle. This past June, I hosted my third annual Barrie waterfront half-marathon, which raised over \$10,000 for diabetes research, and this upcoming weekend, I will be running in the New York City Marathon to raise vital funds to help assist those currently living with this disease in Simcoe county.

There are 300,000 Canadians currently living with juvenile diabetes, like my friend, nine-year-old Noah Stock, from Barrie, Ontario. Let us all go that extra mile for extraordinary kids like Noah Stock.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HISTORY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rachel Collishaw, a grade 10 teacher at Glebe Collegiate Institute in my riding. Rachel is this year's recipient of the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. She is being honoured for her creative approach to teaching her students about the terrible impact of war.

Rachel had her students conduct primary research about soldiers who died during the Second World War and tell their stories. What made this special was that 200 young men whose stories were told were also from Glebe Collegiate, and the sources used for research included old school yearbooks.

As a teacher, I am impressed by the dedication Rachel has demonstrated in her career. I am moved by the effort she has made to foster a spirit of remembrance among her students. I am proud to congratulate Rachel on her well-deserved award.

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**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the aerospace industry in Canada has made Canada the fifth-largest aerospace country in the world. It contributes \$22 billion from exports each year for our economy.

The Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, which represents this industry nationally, recently held the 2013 Canadian Aerospace Summit in Ottawa. During this event, the James C. Floyd award for aerospace achievement was presented to a Canadian company, Marinvent.

Marinvent is an outstanding SME that has provided an example of the increasingly important role small businesses can play in the

continuing success of Canada's aerospace industry. Our government's recent trade agreement with the EU will open up new opportunities for Canadian aerospace and space industries.

I congratulate John Maris, the founder and president of Marinvent, and his team for this award and AIAC for the great work it is doing in this important sector of Canadian industry.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada-EU trade agreement will have great benefits for small businesses, manufacturers, and the people of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette. Companies in my riding, such as Spruce Products, Hylife Foods, Louisiana Pacific Building Products and manufactures such as AG Shield in Benito, will now have access to a \$17-trillion market of more than half a billion people.

This ambitious agreement with the European Union is a big win for workers, businesses, and families throughout Manitoba. Hard-working Manitobans will benefit, especially in key sectors of the local economy, including our freshwater fishermen, forestry workers, electronics manufacturers, agriculture exporters, and the investment and service industries. These industries employ nearly half of all Manitobans.

The trade agreement with the EU will provide a \$12 billion annual increase to Canada's economy. This is why workers and businesses across all sectors of our economy strongly support our Canada-EU trade agreement.

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**COMMUNITY LIVING MANITOULIN**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, community living associations are non-profit organizations that make a big difference across Canada by helping people with an intellectual disability be fully included in all aspects of their community's life.

Recently I was privileged to participate in Community Living Manitoulin's inspirational annual harvest ball awards ceremony, where special recognition for individual achievement was given to Howard Panamick for charting a new direction in his life and to Roger Howard, who was promoted to manager at the Everything Under the Sun thrift store.

The Canadian Association for Community Living, along with its regional and local partners, works toward a Canada where all persons can live in dignity with the opportunity to participate and share in all elements of life in their communities.

[Translation]

In my riding—in Hearst, Kapuskasing, Chapleau, Manitoulin Island, Elliot Lake, and Espanola—Community Living is making a difference by eliminating exclusion and discrimination.

[English]

By promoting respect for diversity and advancing human rights while working to ensure equality for all Canadians, organizations such as community living associations highlight the best of Canada and deserve our praise and support.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the presence of distinguished guests in Ottawa today.

Indeed, representatives of the Fédération des producteurs de porcs du Québec, the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec, the Fédération des producteurs acéricoles du Québec and several others have joined us to recognize the excellent work of our Prime Minister, who has delivered results for Canadians by reaching an agreement in principle on the comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union.

This brings many benefits to the Canadian economy. I am delighted for the agricultural sector in our rural areas, which will benefit from this agreement by gaining access to a market of 500 million affluent consumers.

We all know that our regional products have much to gain by being better known and becoming part of the eating habits of our European cousins.

I am convinced that the goals and expectations that led to this agreement will result in solid benefits and that the agreement will provide us with challenging and rewarding business opportunities.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

#### BLUEWATER SEAFOODS

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am saddened and frustrated to rise in the House today to share the news that a plant in Lachine is closing. This is the second one this year.

Old Dutch was brutally closed down in the spring and, on Friday, BlueWater Seafoods announced that it will be closing down. This closure has sent 125 workers and 125 families in my riding into a panic. From what I understand, the employer hopes to help the workers find better jobs. However, it is still a shock, when you have worked at the same place for 25 or 35 years, to learn that you will be at the bottom of the job-search heap.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives are not wondering why manufacturing jobs in Canada are dwindling and being replaced by low-paying jobs. They do not seem to be concerned by the fact that there

#### Statements by Members

are 1.4 million unemployed people now, when at the height of the recession there were 1.5 million people without work.

Perhaps they are calculating the number of jobs created but are forgetting about the ones being lost. I will continue to work with CEDEC, the provincial member and the mayor of Lachine to help workers in my riding because, at the end of they day, they are the ones losing out.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CAPITAL EXPERIENCE

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is an impressive group of students in Ottawa today. They are participating in a program I call a “capital experience”, whereby student leaders from each of the seven high schools in my riding come to Ottawa for three days each year to learn about career opportunities in public life.

This is the tenth year of this program. They have visited Parliament, the Belgium ambassador's residence, Amnesty International, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the press gallery, the University of Ottawa, and Summa Strategies.

I wish to thank those who shared their time with the students and thank the businesses and service clubs who sponsored them.

Today I welcome to Parliament Jillian Ribich and Landon Barnes from Brock, Carly Parks and Caroline Ford from Crestwood, Kory Gavin and Lyla Belsey from Fenelon Falls, Jillian Hawley and Riley Tait from Haliburton, Kate Fiddler and Kaylee Pietroski from I.E. Weldon, Katie Brown and Kyle Pugh from LCVI, Elissa O'Neill and Lindsey Dart from St. Thomas Aquinas, and Joe Tucker from Apsley.

I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing these young people all the best as they make decisions regarding their future careers.

\* \* \*

#### HON. FRED J. MIFFLIN

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man who served this country with honour and distinction, Fred J. Mifflin, born and raised in Bonavista, Newfoundland and Labrador.

At the age of 16, he joined the navy, starting as a midshipman. He rose through the ranks, becoming commander and finally rear admiral. In that time he commanded a total of 10 destroyers.

He contributed countless hours and thoroughly enjoyed his time with the Navy League and the Sea Cadets. He then retired from the Canadian Forces but continued his public service.

He was first elected Liberal member of Parliament for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception in 1988 and was re-elected in 1993 and 1997. From 1996 to 1999, he was appointed Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Minister of Veterans Affairs, and Secretary of State for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

His greatest honour of all was being a loving husband to Gwenneth, a father, and an extremely proud and loving grandfather.

*Oral Questions*

Fred Mifflin passed away peacefully on October 5, a tremendous testament to public service and above all to his family.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, years from now my great grandchildren will learn in school of a historic European trade agreement that helped benefit Canada and continued to do so.

Opportunities are endless across the nation, and in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, local businesses see this as an important opportunity to strengthen their consumer base in the European Union, and for some, domestically. For example, Cedar-line Greenhouses of Dresden will benefit by having more markets for the quality products they grow.

Our government understands agriculture like no other. We stand by many diverse commodities to ensure that each has fair market access and support.

We have a Prime Minister who stands up for Canada and will not back down. The result is CETA, the greatest trade agreement since NAFTA, and an achievement all Canadians can be proud of.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[Translation]

**THE PRIME MINISTER**

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country were stunned to find out that the Prime Minister hid the truth in the Senate scandal. Nigel Wright did not act alone. He may have resigned or been fired. Mike Duffy received one, two or possibly three cheques. Arthur Hamilton, the Conservative Party fixer, signed one, two or three cheques. The Prime Minister has told the truth about nothing, *nyet, nada*.

His flimsy story simply does not hold water. Every time he opens his mouth, he digs himself in even deeper. He is digging himself in deeper because he did not tell the truth. He painted himself into a corner the day he appointed those three wonderful senators. It is time for him to accept his responsibility.

At the time of the sponsorship scandal, he told Jean Chrétien to accept his responsibility. Now embroiled in his own scandals, he is behaving like a Liberal. The good old Reform days are over. The Prime Minister is nothing but a politician who has been worn out by Ottawa, worn out by the power that has corrupted his administration just as it did the one before.

Canadians deserve a good housecleaning here in Ottawa, not a Conservative scandal to take the place of the Liberal ones.

\* \* \*

[English]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada-Europe trade agreement is great for Canada and great for

companies in my riding of Don Valley West and indeed in all of southern Ontario.

Global Automakers of Canada, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, and the Forrest Green Group of Companies, all of whom are visiting Parliament Hill today, are but three examples of organizations that will benefit greatly from the Canada-Europe trade agreement.

This historic agreement will create 80,000 new jobs for Canadians and give Canadian business access to 500 million new customers. In fact, the benefits of this agreement are equivalent to increasing the average Canadian household income by \$1,000.

I am pleased to join these many groups in celebrating the Canada-Europe trade agreement, an agreement that is truly an historic event.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have just come back from Brandon. I met a lot of people there who are very disappointed in the Prime Minister. That includes a lot of people who voted Conservative in the last election who are very sorry that they did not get the clean, ethical government the Prime Minister promised them.

All across Canada, including in Brandon, people are all asking the same question: why does the Prime Minister keep changing his story?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there has been no change of story. On the contrary, the events are extremely well known.

Senators collected expenditures that they should not have collected, in our judgment, and of course a member of my staff facilitated an improper payment on that. That member has been removed, and those senators who have taken improper payment should be removed from the public payroll.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after saying that he had every confidence in Nigel Wright, the Prime Minister also said, with his hand on his heart, that he had, with great regret, accepted the resignation of Nigel Wright.

On a Halifax radio station yesterday, the Prime Minister had another version of the story, in which he dismissed Mr. Wright. There cannot be two stories. One of them must be false.

Which is the real story?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the facts are very clear.

Mr. Wright acted inappropriately, and for that reason, I very clearly explained to him that he no longer worked for me.

*Oral Questions*

[*English*]

Mr. Wright is no longer on the public payroll. That was the appropriate action.

We continue to have senators who took tens of thousands—in sum total, hundreds of thousands—of dollars of inappropriate expenditures. They should be removed from the public payroll by the Senate of Canada.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Senator Duffy said that there were “at least two cheques” involved in his deal with the Prime Minister’s Office.

How many cheques were there?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Duffy makes reference to the fact that the party reimbursed him for some legal expenses. That is a regular practice. The party regularly reimburses—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Prime Minister now has the floor.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, the party regularly reimburses members of its caucus for valid legal expenses, as do other parties.

What was shocking and unacceptable in this case was that Mr. Duffy had collected inappropriate money from the taxpayers of Canada. He had been told by everybody he should pay it back. He had said he would pay it back. He had said he did pay it back, and that all turned to be untrue, which is why Mr. Duffy should be removed from the Senate.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, who knew about the second cheque?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a payment from the Conservative fund to Mr. Duffy for his legal expenses. I repeat, it is not uncommon for the party to pay the legal expenses of members of its caucus on occasion, and the other parties do the same.

However, taking money from taxpayers to make inappropriate payments is another matter altogether. Mr. Duffy failed to pay that money back, and he should be punished by the Senate.

[*English*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on May 28 the Prime Minister said that there was “no legal agreement” in the Duffy affair.

How many lawyers does it take to negotiate no legal agreement?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the member is referring to. What I do know are the facts in this case.

Mr. Duffy took \$90,000 of expense money that he did not actually incur. He was told to pay it back; he committed to paying it back; he in fact said publicly that he had paid it back. That turned out to be a story told by Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright. As a consequence, Mr.

Wright no longer works on the public payroll, and Mr. Duffy should not be on the public payroll either.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister repeatedly told the House that only his chief of staff knew about the arrangement with Mike Duffy and that no Conservative Party funds were used in this affair. Neither of these statements were true.

Not only did at least 13 people know, but Mike Duffy’s legal bills for the cover-up were paid by Conservative donors. Will the Prime Minister clear the air and agree to testify under oath about this scandal and its cover-up?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the entire premise of that question is incorrect. It is not true that all of these people knew. It is on the contrary.

The case here is, as we have said repeatedly, that Mr. Duffy took \$90,000 of money from the taxpayers that he should not have taken. It was for expenses that had never in fact been incurred. He should have repaid those expenses. He was told to repay those expenses. He said that he would. He did not. For that reason, Mr. Duffy should be punished and should be taken off the payroll by the Senate of Canada.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for five days after this scandal broke, the Prime Minister said that Nigel Wright had his full confidence and could keep his job. Then the Prime Minister said that he accepted Nigel Wright’s resignation. Five months later, the Prime Minister tells us that Nigel Wright was fired.

Canadians find it hard to believe the Prime Minister’s story because he keeps changing it.

For the fifth time since last May, will the Prime Minister clear the air by testifying under oath about this scandal and its cover-up?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I think we have all been very clear on this. Mr. Wright was told that his actions were inappropriate and he no longer works for me. Mr. Wright has also accepted, himself, that his actions were inappropriate. He is no longer on the public payroll. He has accepted his responsibilities.

On the other hand, the reality is that Mr. Duffy still has not paid a cent back to the taxpayers of Canada. He should be paying that money back. The fact that he has not, the fact that he shows absolutely no regret for his actions and the fact that he has told untruths about his actions means he should be removed from the public payroll.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, whether it is the number of people involved or Nigel Wright’s actions, the Prime Minister’s story changes every day.

This Prime Minister is being deceitful. He has deceived not only his own party’s members and donors, but all Canadians, regardless of allegiance, who expect better from their prime minister.

For the sixth time in the House since the month of May, I am asking the Prime Minister to testify under oath about this sordid affair.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the real issue is that Mr. Duffy accepted reimbursements for expenses he never incurred.

Regardless of his statements, he has not yet paid back these expenses. For that reason and because of the scheme he and Mr. Wright came up with, Mr. Wright is no longer on the public payroll and that should be the case for Mr. Duffy.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Duly noted, Mr. Speaker. He shows no regret, has told untruths and should not be on the public payroll.

[Translation]

Who in the Prime Minister's Office gave Senator Duffy the media lines indicating that he had taken out a loan from the Royal Bank to repay his expenses? Who in the Prime Minister's Office came up with those lines, made up that story, for Mike Duffy? It came from the PMO.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the story that Mr. Duffy had reimbursed his own expenses when, in fact, he had not was the story of Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright.

[English]

Let me repeat that. The story that Mr. Duffy had reimbursed his own expenses when, in fact, he had not was the story of Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright. It is completely unacceptable for me and for the public to be misled in this way. That is why Mr. Wright no longer works here and that is why Mr. Duffy should not be on the public payroll, and the Senate should take action.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what does the Prime Minister say now that he knows that this tall tale was concocted in his very office?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I say exactly what I have said since May 15; that this is completely unacceptable. For that reason, obviously, Mr. Wright is no longer working for us and Mr. Duffy should also be removed from the public payroll.

This is crystal clear. I do not know what the difficulty is in the hon. member seeing this. I imagine the fact that he sat for 17 years and knew about bribery in Quebec explains why he does not see this, but it is crystal clear.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister or someone in the PMO ask Arthur Hamilton or the Conservative Party to pay back part of Mike Duffy's expenses? The answer is clear. Only the Prime Minister knows the answer. It is either yes or no.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party decides whether or not to cover the expenses of MPs and senators.

[English]

It is the decision of the Conservative Party whether it chooses to fund certain expenses of members of Parliament and senators. As I have said, the Conservative fund regularly does in fact cover the legal expenses of its members of Parliament.

However, the Conservative Party was not going to cover money that was taken improperly from the Canadian taxpayer and expected Mr. Duffy to repay that money. Mr. Duffy said that he would. He did not and that is why the Senate should take action.

• (1430)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, but if those expenses were "clearly inappropriate" why did the Prime Minister, whose own office controlled that fund, ask the Conservative Party lawyer to pay for Mike Duffy's expenses? Why ask to help cover up something that he now claims was clearly inappropriate?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know well, I said it was inappropriate all along.

When Mr. Duffy first came to me when we first addressed this, and we only addressed this one time within February, I told him his expenses were inappropriate. He could not claim an expense he did not incur and he had to pay those expenses back. I was assured that Mr. Duffy would and then eventually ensured that he in fact had repaid those expenses. He himself said he had. That was clearly not true. It was also not true on Mr. Wright's part. Mr. Wright has taken responsibility and paid the price. Mr. Duffy should do exactly the same.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, it was just last week that the Prime Minister said that it was "clearly inappropriate to try and collect travel expenses when one is living at a residence he or she has had for many, many years".

Today the Prime Minister insisted and said that anyone who did that should not be on the public payroll. That is what he just repeated, something he had said yesterday.

Carolyn Stewart Olsen charged \$64,000 in expenses for a home she has lived in for decades. Why is she still on the public payroll?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all expenses are being examined in the Senate. However, the fact that some senators have done something wrong is not a licence for the hon. member to make accusations without foundation against all kinds of people, against whom he has absolutely no evidence of anything improper.

The decision that is before the Senate now is to deal with the senators who have acted so flagrantly inappropriately, with large amounts of money, who have shown no or little regret. It is up to the Senate of Canada to remove those people from the public payroll.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's new Leader of the Government in the Senate, Claude Carignan, clearly admitted that he tried to negotiate an agreement with Senator Brazeau by offering him a less severe punishment if he apologized.

Did the Prime Minister support the action taken by the Leader of the Government in the Senate whom he just appointed?



*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my position is very clear and the time for apologizing is past.

It is now time for the Senate to take action and determine the appropriate sanctions for the actions of these senators. Mr. Wright is no longer on the public payroll and the Senate should remove the three senators in question from the public payroll as well.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister does not support the tactics of Claude Carignan, why is he still the leader of his government and his caucus in the Senate?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Senate, as we all know, is an independent body—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, if the Senate were not an independent body, those three senators would no longer be sitting in it, but the fact is it is.

The government's position is absolutely crystal clear. The time for making apologies over there has long passed. The senators have collected hundreds of thousands of dollars of money that they should not have collected. They did it deliberately or with little care. They have done so with no or little regret.

It is time for the Senate to act and remove them from the public payroll.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, were Pamela Wallin or Mike Duffy offered the same deal?

•(1435)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the time for apologies or any kind of settlement of this, in our judgment, has long passed. It is time for the Senate to remove those three senators from the public payroll.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on February 20, Mike Duffy sent the Prime Minister's Office an email accusing Nigel Wright of extortion and bribery, no less. Exactly what did the Prime Minister's Office do once it received that email of February 20?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's view and my view in this matter was very clear. Mr. Duffy had collected expenses that he had not incurred. It did not matter whether he could technically argue that these were within the rules, they were clearly inappropriate. He should have repaid those expenses. That was our expectation and I think we were very clear that it was our expectation that there would be consequences if that was not done.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. When the minister's chief of staff, Chris Woodcock, was in the PMO, he was up to his neck in the scheme to have Nigel Wright pay \$90,000 to repay Mike Duffy's expense claims. It was Woodcock who wrote Duffy's bogus media lines, used to deceive Canadians

about the source of the \$90,000. As late as May 15, Woodcock emailed Duffy to see if he was still sticking to the fraudulent lines that he had written for him.

Does the minister still have confidence in his chief of staff?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, you know how fond I am of a story. Let me tell the House another story about my father.

My father owned a pizza store. He worked 16 to 18 hours a day. I can tell the House what my father would not have done if he saw somebody stealing from his cash register. He would not have said "You are suspended, but make sure you come back every two weeks and collect a paycheque". What he would have said, "You're fired, leave", and he would have called the police.

That is the standard my father expected, that is the standard we expect on this side of the House and that is the standard that Canadians expect. It is only the Liberals who expect a different standard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Benjamin Perrin was the Prime Minister's personal lawyer and worked in the PMO.

According to Mike Duffy, Perrin was actively involved in the scheme to offer him \$90,000 to buy his silence. In fact, Perrin allegedly negotiated the agreement himself.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Has the minister reported Mr. Perrin's potentially criminal actions to the Law Society of Upper Canada? If not, when will he do so?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just to conclude that story, we also had a driver, Eugene. He was a Philippine immigrant and he used to deliver pizzas. Part of the agreement was that he would provide receipts for gas. Could Eugene have provided extra receipts? He could have, but he did not. He was honourable.

That is the standard we should expect from our senators. If we can expect it from a guy who delivers pizza, we certainly should be able to expect it from senators.

Only Liberals and New Democrats are trying to make victims out of these senators who stole from the Canadian people. We will stand up for taxpayers every day.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it smells not like pizza right now but like utter desperation on that side of the House.

Arthur Hamilton is well known for mopping up ethical problems for the current government. He passed on a \$13,000 extra cheque to Mike Duffy. Just what was that money for? Why did the Prime Minister's entourage pay Duffy's legal fees unless there was something very serious to cover up?

*Oral Questions*

The ethics code of Ontario's law society prohibits a lawyer from assisting in any dishonesty, fraud, crime or illegal conduct—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I do not know if the member got to his question or not.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

• (1440)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in an email released yesterday, Nigel Wright wrote that there were “several Senators with similar arrangements” to Mike Duffy. How many is “several”? Is it more than a few? Who are all these other senators who are ripping off taxpayers?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the leader looks at that, he will find that the issue in question concerns the fact that many senators and many members of Parliament have more than one residence. The fact of the matter is that having more than one residence does not entitle one to claim expenses one did not actually incur. That is the issue.

That is why this was unacceptable. It is why Mr. Wright should not have repaid Mr. Duffy's expenses, but Mr. Duffy should have repaid them himself. He did not do so, and he told falsehoods about doing so. Mr. Wright has been punished. Mr. Duffy should also be punished appropriately.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy says that he was threatened by PMO staffer Ray Novak and by Senator Marjory LeBreton to resign from caucus or be kicked out of the Senate. He was told, “Mike, this is the only option that can ensure your future livelihood”. Is that quote accurate?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the leader of the NDP now taking the position that Mr. Duffy and these senators are somehow victims.

The truth of the matter is that Mr. Duffy is in difficulty here because he took expenditures for which we all know he should never have been reimbursed. That was pointed out to him, and Mr. Duffy committed to repaying them. He did not repay them, in fact, as we all know. He worked out a secret arrangement with Mr. Wright, where Mr. Wright repaid them for him. That is obviously completely unacceptable. It is why Mr. Wright is out of the job and why Mr. Duffy should also be off the payroll.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was so secret that 13 people in his office were in on it. I remind the Prime Minister that it is not the NDP that reimbursed the expenses for those totally inappropriate and illegal things Mr. Duffy had done. It is the Conservative Party that reimbursed him.

The quote I read before was from Senator LeBreton in the Senate. She was threatening the senator and she is confirming it. She said, “Mike, this is the only option that can ensure your future livelihood”. If Mr. Duffy went quietly from caucus, they were going to have a better deal for him. He would have his job until age 75 or be gone. That is where the cover-up began.

Is this why Marjory LeBreton stepped down as his House leader in the Senate?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is trying to argue that Mr. Duffy was being threatened with some kind of inappropriate

sanctions. Mr. Duffy was being threatened with sanctions because he collected expenses he should not have collected. He should have repaid those and he did not.

At the heart of this is the reality that Mr. Duffy continues to believe he did absolutely nothing wrong in collecting expenses he never actually should have collected, and absolutely nothing wrong in telling the Canadian public he repaid them when he did not repay them. That is why Mr. Duffy faces the sanctions he faces today.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy was being bought off by the Prime Minister's own office to shut him up. That is what has happened.

Ms. LeBreton has said publicly that she took detailed notes of her conversation with Mike Duffy. Has she turned over those notes to the RCMP, because that is a document?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the senator in question has been accused of absolutely nothing.

The perpetrators here are absolutely clear in this particular affair. Mr. Duffy took expenses he should never have taken and then he falsely claimed to have repaid them. Mr. Wright repaid those on his behalf and did not properly inform me and others that that is what happened. That is why Mr. Wright has faced the sanction that he has. Mr. Duffy should also be removed from the public payroll.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend many farmers in my riding told me they were excited about the European trade agreement and market access to 500 million new customers, yet there was a concern that products such as oats and wheat currently possess tariffs of \$119 per tonne and \$190 per tonne.

Could the government please inform my farmers as to when they will be able to deliver their products to Europe tariff-free?

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this trade agreement is truly historic and will deliver tremendous long-term benefits to Canadians in every region of our country and across all sectors of our country.

Fishermen in Atlantic Canada, forestry workers in Quebec, auto workers in Ontario, farmers on the Prairies and engineers from the west coast, along with millions of other Canadians, will benefit from our effort to open up the largest consumer market in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### ETHICS

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, how many people were involved in the original plan, which was to ask the Conservative Party to repay Mike Duffy's expenses? How many people were involved in the initial plan?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our position is that Mr. Duffy should repay his inappropriate Senate expense claims.

[*English*]

Once again, my position was that Mr. Duffy should repay expenses himself, the money that he had taken from taxpayers for expenses he had not actually incurred. That money should be repaid to the taxpayers of Canada. That was not done. In fact, a fabrication that it was done was made. For that reason, Mr. Duffy should face the appropriate sanctions in the Senate.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that fabrication was concocted in the Prime Minister's own office.

Why did the Prime Minister, if it is all so inappropriate, ask the Conservative lawyers to pay his expenses? Why the contradiction?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, political parties do provide legal assistance to their members from time to time.

The fact of the matter is that we are talking about money that was taken inappropriately from taxpayers. It was the view of everybody on this side that the money should be reimbursed to the taxpayers. We were also assured not only that it would be but that it had been done. That was obviously untrue. The individual in my office who did that has faced the sanction. Mr. Duffy should face an appropriate sanction.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister therefore sees nothing wrong with using the money of the Conservative Party to reimburse the legal expenses of someone he says has broken the law. That is the ethics of the Prime Minister. Duly noted.

[*Translation*]

If everyone involved in the Senate expense scandal really did knowingly hide the truth from the Prime Minister—as he tried to claim again yesterday—and if he is the one, or so he says, who is the victim of the 13 people who hatched this plot around him, why have those people not been let go?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, on our side there is one person responsible for this deception, and that person is Mr. Wright, by his own admission. For that reason, Mr. Wright no longer works for us. Mr. Duffy should not either.

As I have said repeatedly, the concern of the Prime Minister of Canada in this case is that taxpayer money not be misused. Taxpayer money was misused. It should be repaid. Mr. Duffy has still not repaid it and should face sanction.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's story has changed nearly every day. The Prime Minister has yet to produce a single document. It is true that Mike Duffy has almost zero credibility, but his story is still more believable than that of the Prime Minister, and that is quite a feat.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is extraordinary. The leader of the NDP thinks he can

believe Mr. Duffy, who said on national television that he took out a loan against his assets to repay money he had taken inappropriately from the taxpayers, and who now turns around and says that, by the way, he never should have repaid any of it, that he was entitled to it all the time, and that it is not his fault that he made up these lies on national television. That is Mr. Duffy's responsibility and the reason why he should be sanctioned.

• (1450)

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the normal maximum salary for a chief of staff in the Prime Minister's Office is \$180,000 annually. I say normal because the treasury minister can grant an exemption if that person is being recruited from the private sector where the salaries may be higher.

Let us end the cover-up and get some straight answers here. Was Nigel Wright paid more than the maximum of \$180,000? What did he get in the way of taxpayer-funded benefits when he left in disgrace? How much?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I answered this yesterday. Mr. Wright will get what he is legally entitled to and nothing more.

How can we ever expect accountability from the Liberal Party? The Liberals defended a senator whose principal residence was Puerto Vallarta for 30 years, and they did nothing about it. Now we are seeing that at the same time they are obstructing the Senate.

The Liberals need to stand up for Canadians, stand up for taxpayers, and help us get rid of these three senators who took money from the Canadian taxpayer that they did not deserve. That is what we need to do. They need to get out of the way and start talking about Canadians.

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the PMO, three Conservative senators are under RCMP investigation related to their expense claims. To cover up the PMO involvement, the government leader in the Senate has moved to suspend them. However, here in the House the member for Peterborough has been charged with very serious offences under the Canada Elections Act and yet the government has made no attempt to suspend him. After all, he is still on the public payroll.

Why the double standard?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what are we talking about here? We are talking about the fact that the Liberals and the NDP do not want to talk about all of the things we are doing with respect to moving the economy forward. They do not want to talk about creating jobs. They do not want to talk about opportunity. They do not want to talk about free trade because they know that on every single issue that matters we are on the right track. They do not want to talk about the fact that we have created over a million jobs.

*Oral Questions*

We are not talking about a billion-dollar boondoggle for gas plants; we are not talking about unpaid legal leadership debts; we are talking about the fact that this Prime Minister stands up for taxpayers

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition. [Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, not only do we now know that it was the Prime Minister's Office that concocted the story about the Royal Bank and Mike Duffy's loan, but we also know that Pamela Wallin was forbidden by Senator Tkachuk from saying anything more than necessary.

Why is the Prime Minister not telling the whole truth about the role of his office and the Conservative senators in trying to limit the truth in this entire sordid business?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Senate has conducted audits on Senate expenses and continues to do so.

[English]

This is completely appropriate. Once again I go back. In the case of the three senators we are talking about, the facts are not in question. There are hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenses that have been collected that were either outside the rules or clearly inappropriate.

Everybody believes that. Those are the facts. I know that these particular senators feel no particular regret, or very little regret, for any of this. For that reason, they should obviously face the appropriate sanction and be removed from the public payroll.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, precisely because it was wrong, why did the Prime Minister pay to defend it?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the government does not defend the actions of Mr. Duffy.

Mr. Duffy collected \$90,000 in expenses that we consider to be inappropriate. We have been very clear from the beginning with him that he should have repaid this. I was assured that he had. He assured the entire Canadian public that he had in fact done so.

He had not. That is why he should face the appropriate sanctions.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, signing the historic trade agreement with the European Union makes Canada the only major developed country to have preferential access to the world's two largest economies, the economies of the European Union and the United States.

It is really unfortunate that the NDP and its anti-trade allies mislead Canadians about the importance of the trade agreement. They are actually claiming that the agreement will harm our ability to create jobs. Of course they said the same thing about the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Could the Minister of International Trade please help clear up these allegations?

• (1455)

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Yellowhead for that timely question. I would be glad to oblige him.

The evidence is overwhelming. Opening up new markets for trade around the world creates Canadian jobs. Sadly, the NDP remains beholden, both financially and organizationally, to the big union bosses and anti-trade activist groups. Their track record is clear. They have opposed almost every trade agreement Canada has ever signed.

When it comes to creating jobs and economic opportunities here at home, there is only one party in the House that Canadians can count on, and that is this Conservative government.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Keystone XL pipeline, the Prime Minister's forays into U.S. politics have been more divisive than helpful, catering to the Tea Party, slamming Democrats, ultimately making it harder for President Obama to approve the Keystone XL.

What is required is a credible message about environmental integrity, like our leader delivered in Washington last week.

When will the government do the same, before it is too late?

**Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Keystone XL pipeline would enhance national security, and create tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity on both sides of the border.

We agree with the analysis compiled by the U.S. State Department, which found that Keystone is not likely to result in incremental GHG emissions. The choice for America is a clear: a reliable, environmentally responsible friend and neighbour, or an unstable source with the same or higher GHG emissions.

We are supportive. Why is the NDP not?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, several times this afternoon, the Prime Minister explained that one of his issues with Mike Duffy and the others was that they have never shown any regret for their wrongdoing.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to express his regret to Canadians for not telling the truth?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that statement is not correct. The reality is that in a case like this, the prime minister has the responsibility to demand corrective action and when corrective action is not taken, to ensure accountability.

[English]

That is our responsibility, not to tell people things are going to be perfect, but when things go wrong to take corrective action and when corrective action is not taken, to ensure accountability. That is our responsibility and that is what we are doing.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has consistently taken action to protect Canadians from violent foreign extremists who seek to harm us. We brought forward Canada's first counterterrorism strategy and we have listed numerous groups as terrorist organizations. It has come to light that the member for Toronto—Danforth wrote a letter of support for a confessed terrorist, who also happened to volunteer on his NDP campaign.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please tell the House the government's position on the Tamil Tigers?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Tamil Tigers have been listed as a terrorist organization since 2006 because of their involvement in violent extremism. I am shocked that the NDP member for Toronto—Danforth would take steps to lighten the sentence of a convicted terrorist who was involved in his election campaign.

[Translation]

It is time for the NDP leader to take responsibility. He needs to rein in the member for Toronto—Danforth and take disciplinary action.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

[English]

#### ETHICS

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative Party lawyer Arthur Hamilton signed both cheques. Since the Prime Minister now claims that the whole deal was wrong, is he going to fire Arthur Hamilton?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this individual is not accused of anything.

I talked about how we dealt with this. Let us talk about how the NDP deals with these sorts of things. New Democrats tell us that we should fire or expel people on the flimsiest of allegations without, in some cases, any proof of anything against anybody. Then when we determine that actions should be taken, the Leader of the Opposition stands up and pretends these people are somehow victims of arbitrary actions. We will take the appropriate action regardless of what the leader of the NDP says.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every day, new, damning revelations are coming out about the Conservative leader in the Senator Duffy affair. There is a hint of panic in the air.

#### Oral Questions

Contradiction abounds, and the Prime Minister seems prepared to rewrite history to clear his name at all costs. However, the public has had enough. They want the truth, and 81% of them support the Bloc's call for an independent public inquiry.

Since he claims to be as pure as the driven snow, when will the Prime Minister launch an independent public inquiry?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. People are fed up. They are fed up with an unelected, unaccountable Senate. They are fed up with the fact that the NDP and Liberals are teaming up to defend three senators and former disgraced Liberal Senator Mac Harb because they took money that they were not entitled to. They are fed up with that and they want to see action taken. That is why in the Senate we have put forward a motion that Canadians support and a vast majority of this caucus supports that would remove them from the public payroll and bring accountability back.

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#### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. David Alward, Premier of New Brunswick.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Bill Boyd, Minister of the Economy and Minister responsible for the Global Transportation Hub from Saskatchewan.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2013 Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case: Cherry Smiley, Nahanni Fontaine, Susan Shiner, Constance Backhouse, and Julie Lalonde.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** Finally, I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the 2013 Indspire Awards recipients: John Nicholas Jeddore, Sarah Arngna'naaq, Christie Lavallée, Dr. Marie Yvonne Delorme, Maggie Paul, Rita Bouvier, Charlie Snowshoe, Dr. Evan Tlesla II Adams, Marion Ironquill-Meadmore, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Robert Watts, and James Eetoolook.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

*Government Orders***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[Translation]***CANADA-EUROPEAN UNION COMPREHENSIVE  
ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT**

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the trade agreement between Canada and Europe is the biggest deal Canada has ever made. It will create jobs and opportunities for families, businesses and workers across Canada. It is a historic win. Therefore, I have the great honour to table, in both official languages, the summary of the final negotiated results for the Canada-Europe trade agreement.

● (1505)

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion: That, in the opinion of this House, the government should set up an independent public inquiry to review the involvement of staff of the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister himself in the actions that led to the repayment of expenses fraudulently claimed by Senator Duffy.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*[English]*

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that the annual report of the Privacy Commissioner concerning the Privacy Act tabled earlier today should have been referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I regret any inconvenience this may have caused hon. members.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT NO. 2**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, A second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**Hon. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand behind our government's record on job creation, growth, and long-term prosperity, which is helping Canadian families and businesses.

Our government's top priority is what matters most of all to Canadians: creating jobs and securing economic growth. With one in five jobs depending upon exports, our prosperity depends on opening new markets for Canadian goods, services, and investment. That is why the Speech from the Throne launched the most ambitious trade agenda in Canadian history.

Just days after the speech, the Prime Minister negotiated an agreement in principle for the Canada-European trade agreement, which was just tabled this afternoon. When ratified, this would be the biggest deal Canada has ever made. It has the potential to create 80,000 new Canadian jobs.

However, to take full advantage of Canada's economic potential, we need to ensure that all of our workplaces are safe, fair, and productive. As highlighted in the Speech from the Throne, we want to lead the world in security and prosperity, not for the sake of doing so but so that Canadian families who work hard, pay their taxes, and play by the rules can get ahead.

Our goal cannot be clearer. Safe, healthy, fair, and productive working environments are vital for our workers, families, communities, and businesses, because when workplaces run well, Canadians benefit economically.

A safe and healthy workplace is not only essential for a business' competitiveness and productivity. It also protects its most important resource, our most important resource: Canadian workers. This is exactly why the Government of Canada has proposed to strengthen part II of the Canada Labour Code, which is designed to prevent accidents and injuries to workers.

We all agree that employers and employees are at the forefront of preventing injuries, identifying health and safety issues, and resolving any possible disputes in an effective and timely manner. What I just described is called the "internal responsibility system". It is the cornerstone of the Canada Labour Code.

Employers and employees are jointly responsible for the safety of all workers while in the workplace. Employees and employers are better able to assess and determine most effectively the particular workplace hazards and the health and safety needs of the employees. Employers have the most control over these conditions of work and how it is done. They have a responsibility for health and safety in their workplaces.

However, workers also have a responsibility to ensure their own occupational health and safety, including following prescribed procedures in handling equipment, hazardous substances, and other materials; wearing protective clothing provided by employers; complying with employers' instructions concerning health and safety; and reporting any possible hazards to their employers.

I want to point out that part II of the Canada Labour Code provides an employee with three fundamental rights: the right to know about hazards in the workplace; the right to participate in identifying work-related health and safety concerns; and, most important, the right to refuse dangerous work. All of these rights would remain enshrined in the code.

Our government's role is to support employees and employers in making and meeting their obligations and in ensuring compliance with the code. We do this in a variety of ways, which include conducting inspections; providing other tools, information and assistance to employees to help them in discharging their responsibilities; and responding to complaints and incidents.

Altogether, we have done a good job. The number of disabling injuries in industries under federal jurisdiction steadily declined by 22% between 2007 and 2011. In fact, there has been a marked downward trend since the start of the century. In 2011, there were 1.73 disabling injuries per 100 workers, compared with 2.51 in 2000.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

That is very good, but we must do even better, because the cost of a workplace accident is too high, especially for the workers involved. Businesses and the Canadian economy suffer as well.

[*English*]

In Canada, occupational injuries and illnesses cost the economy approximately \$19 billion a year, and an average of 1,000 Canadian workers lose their lives each year. Everyone has a role to play to prevent these injuries, illnesses, and fatalities.

We need to continue to work together, employers and employees, government and stakeholders, to understand workplace hazards, to identify potential dangers, and to find solutions to issues that threaten the health and safety of employees.

The health and safety of workers is a priority for this government. We are committed to ensuring that at the end of the day, every worker returns home safe and sound, and in my case, as a surgeon who works in this area, with all his or her fingers and toes.

The amendments to the Canada Labour Code we are proposing would better focus attention on the critical issues affecting the health and safety of workers in the workplace, better respond to imminent or serious situations of danger in a more timely manner, and reinforce the internal responsibility system.

[*Translation*]

These changes would ensure that the obligation to resolve occupational safety issues would fall to the people who are responsible for them.

We believe that employees and employers are the ones who know their work and working environment best. They are in the best position to resolve health and safety issues in their workplace.

[*English*]

One important amendment concerns the definition of danger. Currently, over 80% of refusals to work in the past 10 years, from 2003 to 2013, have been determined to be situations of no danger, even after appeal. With the proposed amendments, employees and employers would be better able to deal with health and safety issues through the internal responsibility system.

I want to make it very clear that the right of employees to refuse dangerous work is paramount and remains. The definition still provides protection from all hazards: imminent, serious, and long-term. Employees would continue to have the right to refuse all dangerous work. Employers would still be responsible for ensuring that their workplaces were safe and would be required to take action if they were not. Recourse mechanisms would remain the same for workers and employers.

### *Government Orders*

These proposed changes would not lead to fewer health and safety officers but would ensure that their time is used more effectively and efficiently to improve the enforcement of occupational health and safety.

The amendments would also have a very positive impact on our operations. They would ensure that the time—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I hesitate to interrupt the hon. minister, but we have had word that the interpreters are having difficulty hearing the minister, partly because of some of the background noise. I encourage other hon. members, if they do need to carry on conversations, to do so in a quieter way or perhaps to use the lobby. If the minister could keep that in mind as she speaks, it might help out the translators as well.

The hon. Minister of Labour has just under three minutes left.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, the amendments would ensure that the time of health and safety officers is used more effectively to enforce the occupational health and safety regulations and to focus more on preventing workplace accidents through increased awareness, education, and proactive interventions.

We want to reassure Canadians that when employers and employees could not come to an agreement on a workplace hazard or how to resolve it, health and safety officers at Labour Canada would still be available 24/7 to respond to urgent situations that required immediate intervention.

Under this approach, I, as the Minister of Labour, would have the authority to delegate powers, duties, and functions previously conferred on these officers. Aside from increasing support to them, this would also have the added benefit of greater consistency in decision-making across the country.

Rest assured that the new amendments would not affect the investigative capacity of the labour program and would not lead to fewer health and safety officers, as has been falsely reported in some media and by the opposition.

Health and safety officers are key to enforcing the Canada Labour Code. Through the delegation process, decisions with national impact would be made by HSOs with the necessary expertise. This would result in increased support to health and safety officers. This approach would provide them with additional guidance when making decisions and issuing directions that may have national implications.

This is about improving safety for workers. There would be no financial changes as a result of these amendments. What they would do is allow the labour program to better focus resources on critical issues affecting the health and safety of Canadians in the workplace. This means that we would be able to respond to imminent or serious dangers more quickly and resolve them.

I am convinced that these changes will result in a more streamlined process for the 9,000 federally regulated workplaces. More importantly, they will improve workplace health and safety.

*Government Orders*

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

These changes would put the decision-making responsibility in the hands of the people who best understand the problems they face in their workplace and how to solve them: employers and their employees.

[*English*]

As the workplace culture shifts to heightened health and safety awareness, which is evident from improving injury rates on the job, we need to modernize our legislation and the way we conduct business to reflect these realities.

Finally, rest assured that the fundamental rights and protections for employees remain. These changes would streamline procedures and practices to ensure timely and quality decisions and safer workplaces. Most importantly, these amendments would benefit workers, businesses, and all Canadians, which would lead to a more prosperous Canada.

I encourage all parties to support these necessary amendments with the passage of the budget implementation bill.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the member herself referenced, she is also a pediatric orthopedic surgeon. In that capacity, the well-being of her patients depends not just on her but on an entire team of health care professionals, many of whom are, of course, unionized. I know that she will value the dedication of those public servants who work with her every single day.

My question is why she would value only those contributions of provincial public servants and not those of federal public servants. As she will know, this bill, in effect, denies potentially all, but definitely some, public servants the right to free collective bargaining. Her colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, was on the radio saying that the government reserves for itself, at some point down the road, without defining that in the House for us now, the right to declare some federal public servants essential, therefore taking away from them the right to free collective bargaining.

I cannot believe that as the Minister of Labour she would condone and support that and would stand in the House and say that she is perfectly fine with taking the right to free collective bargaining away from hard-working, dedicated federal civil servants.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, I find the comments of the member opposite mildly amusing. What I will say is that at the labour program, as we always have, we encourage and support both parties whenever they are participating in their collective agreements in the federally regulated space for the private sector.

What we are doing with respect to amendments to the Canada Labour Code, and it is something I will continue to emphasize, is making sure that the rights of employees in dangerous work remain paramount and supported and that we have a more efficient and focused system so that we can make sure that workplaces are safe and productive. That is what Canadians want. That is what we are focused on. It is what we have heard from employers and employees.

We will stay focused on that and on creating jobs and making sure that Canadians can be productive.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Labour. I would actually ask the minister why it is that she did not feel that it would be important to see the types of changes she is bringing forward in stand-alone legislation. Why did she choose to use the back door of a budget implementation bill to bring in legislation that would, in fact, generate a great deal of debate and interest from all regions of Canada? We are concerned about some of the things she is doing through the back door, such as the definition of danger.

All of us are concerned and believe that an employee has to have the right to refuse work. We believe in the health and safety regulations. The minister is making significant changes through the back door of a budget implementation bill. Why did the minister not do the right thing and bring in separate legislation that would have enabled us to have a more thorough debate on the issue at hand?

● (1520)

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear that the member opposite supports what we are doing to make sure that workplaces are safe and productive. I am sure that means that he will be supporting the budget implementation act, and I am delighted to hear that. This is great news for Canadian employers and employees. We need as many members of Parliament as possible supporting what is occurring here so that we have safe and productive workplaces.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Labour, who is an orthopedic surgeon, and obviously a highly educated individual, what the budget offers to help improve skills in the labour force at the post-secondary university or college level.

**Ms. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, one of the key components of the budget is the Canada job grant, something that provides Canadians and individuals across the entire country with an opportunity to train for a job that is available today, working with employers. That is left alone the focus in the budget on apprentices to make sure that apprentices have opportunities with respect to federal contracts and are otherwise supported.

This is a great budget to make sure that Canadians are supported to get the skills they need in the places where jobs are available. I encourage the opposition to get on board. This is about supporting Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP)** Mr. Speaker, this is a dark time.

It is a dark time indeed, because we are confronted by parliamentary non-democracy at its height. As a result, we have a number of reasons to be significantly concerned for our future, not only as Canadians, but also as human beings who are part of the evolution of this great planet we call Earth.



*Government Orders*

We are all one on our planet and Canada plays a big part. Canada has long been a leader in environmental and democratic matters and in all kinds of areas that contribute daily to the evolution of our society and allow all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, to reach their potential in a healthy, well-balanced and democratic setting.

That is why I want to start my remarks by focusing on the consequences for our society and our civilization as we know them today.

I will discuss the tax on public services that the Conservatives have imposed and the unacceptable impact this will have on the workers who contribute to our society.

I will also talk about this government's inertia on environmental matters, an area in which we have long been leaders, and about the muzzling of its own scientists. Scientists working in a number of departments are seeing their research interfered with or cancelled for all kinds of reasons or their reports simply sitting on shelves unpublished.

I would also like to discuss the government's inaction on rail transportation, in terms of both safety and the underfunding of infrastructure in Canada. This is a subject that is particularly close to my heart.

Also unfortunately missing completely from this bill is the next generation, the young people who are the strength of the future, of our future. Young people are faced with a government that wants to put an end to any debate as soon as it begins, whether in the House or in the committees. However, in both the House and the committees, there is goodwill and good discussion.

When the government starts feeling the heat, it shuts down debate. That is unacceptable in a modern country that is a world leader in democracy.

This document is almost 300 pages long; the provisions of this budget implementation bill affect 70 pieces of legislation. Nevertheless, the government is putting an end to the debate as quickly as possible.

As for the public service, all departments are being asked to tighten their belts with, of course, one objective: balancing the budget. The consequences for the quality of the services provided to Canadians are a matter for concern. This is dangerous.

Whether we are talking about veterans, the unemployed, or those who receive old age security benefits, no one is answering them anymore. Wait times are so long that people get discouraged and do not follow through on their requests. However, the disabled, for instance, are entitled to tax credits, and others are entitled to weeks of employment insurance benefits or the guaranteed income supplement.

In the end, people get discouraged, because they are told to press a button, then another, then to dial another number, and then they get to wait for hours. Some have even told my office that while they were on hold, they got disconnected. There is nothing anymore. Nothing is happening anymore. In the House, where democracy is concerned, nothing is happening anymore. That is for sure.

● (1525)

I would now like to talk about the environment, that is to say the protection of the Great Lakes, our rivers and species such as the St. Lawrence beluga whales and Pacific salmon. There is no vision whatsoever anymore, except the one dictated by the oil industry. We hear about the extraction of shale gas and the oil sands.

Potable water is the next environmental resource we are going to have to protect. There is land that has dried up out west. Climate change is causing such disruption that in some places, certain crops can no longer be grown, since there is no more water or climate change has caused certain species to migrate. This is very serious. Water is the most vital resource for the human species. I spoke earlier about the consequences for humans and the natural cycle of things, and this is proof. The government has no vision for the environment. What are we going to do about water?

By introducing such a bill, the Prime Minister is undermining the state's ability to help and protect Canadians. That should be its role. The government should not be mistreating the middle class and the most vulnerable members of society. That is unacceptable.

I will now talk about labour law. The bill takes away the powers granted to health and safety officers by the Canada Labour Code and gives them to the minister. What is this annoying habit the Conservatives have of taking away as many discretionary powers as they can in order to turn them over to a minister? A deputy minister, senior officials, working groups and various public servants are all paid to do this work and objectively analyze this kind of thing. Instead, they decided to give the minister greater powers.

The bill will also significantly weaken employees' ability to refuse to work in unsafe conditions. Unsafe conditions cannot be analyzed from a minister's office; they have to be analyzed on the ground. I worked on the ground, both for workers and for employers. Employees and employers analyze the situation together, on the ground, working with a health and safety advisory committee. These studies are sometimes done every day, and even every hour in some industries. This is done in consultation with the employees who work in these conditions. Employers really need to give workers a safe working environment to help them work at full capacity, which will then move the entire system forward. This is important. Whatever the type of business or industry, health and safety should be a priority for the employer and the government, if the government wants to set an example. The example must be set from the top and at all levels. This is unacceptable.

I will now talk about science. The Conservatives have gutted our scientific research institutes, which are highly respected not only in Canada, but also around the world. Geographers and geologists study the environment. The Conservatives fired hundreds of scientists and researchers who are counted among the best in the world scientific community. They did all this without assessing the impact on the market and the economy. Research and development are the pillars of change and growth. More importantly, they are the economic levers that every major industrial country needs. Scientists are important.

*Government Orders*

•(1530)

Scientists must be respected. Moreover, funding should be provided to all science faculties across Canada.

To conclude, I would like to say a word about our youth. Young people need stable, high-quality jobs. With a budget like this, the government certainly cannot claim it wants to help young people and the next generation of workers in Canada.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to my NDP colleague's speech, which he delivered with great passion and enthusiasm.

He highlighted a number of key issues for Canada's future. I am very interested in one issue in particular: water. I have been working on this issue for quite a long time. The member also mentioned the fact that the government is no friend of scientific research. I would like to talk to him about a subject that has to do with both water and scientific research: the Experimental Lakes Region, an open-air laboratory that the federal government has been involved with for some 40 years, a place where scientists have been doing field research on water pollution. As we all know, the current government eliminated that program.

Does the member think that now would be a good time for the government to use Bill C-4 to reverse its decision and reinstate the research projects in the Experimental Lakes Region?

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

Scientific research on the environment, biodiversity and how pollution affects biodiversity, including the research in the Experimental Lakes Region, is critical to our future. It is just as important as healthy agriculture. Healthy agriculture needs water, as it happens.

Enabling research means having scientists who are at the cutting edge of all innovations. Consider all of the information needed to create projects to protect water, a rich natural resource. Canada has one of the largest reserves of fresh water on the planet.

The government missed an incredible opportunity to continue that research and to ensure that we have scientists on the leading edge of knowledge about both the environment and biodiversity.

•(1535)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Compton—Stanstead.

The most important thing on the subject of biodiversity in the omnibus bill is the issue of the selling off of federal properties in British Columbia. Bill C-4 calls it the Dominion Coal Blocks. This area of over 60,000 hectares is very important to the region's biodiversity. It is very important because there are also plans for a national park in that region.

I would like to ask my colleague if he agrees that it would be better to examine this very important proposal in a separate bill.

**Mr. Jean Rousseau:** Mr. Speaker, these are indeed examples of environmental legislation that should not be lumped together in a Sears catalogue or phone book, especially since those things are nearly obsolete. Legislation on biodiversity, which is so important for the environment, cannot be properly addressed in this way.

We were talking about belugas in the St. Lawrence. Studies and research have been done, but once again, the scientists who conduct this research are being muzzled and all of their hypotheses and evidence are being refuted.

Whether in western Canada, on the Pacific coast or on the Atlantic coast, this research is vital to Canada's future and to the environment. The study of climate change begins with studies of seabeds in our national parks. Changes have been observed in the migration routes of ducks, geese and Canada geese in the fall, specifically because the biodiversity and flora have changed in the lakes where they once stopped over before heading further south. There are many in my riding and some on the land right beside where I live. It seems as though these birds no longer know where to go.

The impact of climate change is measurable, which is why we need research. This kind of legislation should definitely not be included in such an omnibus bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to rise today in the House to speak to Bill C-4, the budget implementation act.

Over the past number of months and through the summer, I spent a lot of time going door to door, meeting with constituents at events and hearing their thoughts, suggestions, advice, and support. I have also taken the time to talk about our many budgetary accomplishments in 2013.

As has been stated by representatives and leaders around the world, Canada has shown exceptional leadership at a time when many countries are facing fiscal challenges, and Canadians are benefiting from the work of this government.

Our government has focused on using its budgetary means to reduce taxes and support Canadian families. Since we have been in government, we have introduced the tax-free savings account; made reductions to personal income tax; reduced the GST; created new target measures, such as the first-time homebuyers tax credit; and created the universal child care benefit and tax credits for children participating in fitness and arts programs, measures that are aimed at reducing the financial pressure faced by Canadian families.

Tax credits and benefits are not the only manner in which our government is helping Canadians manage with the prices of products. Even though the Canadian dollar has been strengthened in the past few years and has been strong, Canadians are still paying more than people in the U.S. for the exact same goods; in response, the economic action plan 2013 would help to eliminate tariffs to reduce the cost of many goods, and this is expected to represent about \$76 million in annual tariff relief for Canadian families.

As a parent of two children and grandfather of three, I understand how important these programs are in helping middle-class families provide for their children and live comfortably.

*Government Orders*

Frequently while door-knocking these past few months, I was greeted by seniors. They often asked why I was there. I was pleased to tell them that I wanted them to hear from me, but also that I was pleased to share with them what we are doing as a government to help our seniors and our veterans.

It is an honour to thank seniors for their many contributions in building the Canada we have today. At the very least, we as government should provide our seniors with programs and tax relief that allow them to plan and live comfortably in their older stages of life.

Our family caregiver tax credit, pension splitting, and expanded tax relief for home care services are a few examples of measures we have introduced to help seniors.

Since 2006, over \$2.7 billion in annual tax relief has been provided to seniors and pensioners because of our programs.

In less than two weeks, Canadians will be gathering in their communities to remember the bravery and sacrifice of our veterans and our current Canadian military. I look forward to joining the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 582 in my riding to participate in its annual Remembrance Day ceremony and parade. It is truly an honour for me.

In addition, the government is proud to honour the dedication and sacrifice of those Canadians who serve this country. A total investment of \$1.9 billion over the next seven years will be made to ensure that disabled, ill, and aging veterans and their families are receiving the support they need to retire and live in dignity.

There have been over 30,000 projects accomplished to build and enhance infrastructure across the country. These projects created jobs for Canadians and will facilitate growth and prosperity for many years to come.

Since 2006, our government has made several important and impactful investments in my community in Mississauga. I will give a few examples.

● (1540)

In the GTA, the lack of transit investment continues to be a problem for residents. The residents of Mississauga will benefit from the completion of the \$14 million in improvements to the Clarkson GO Station. The upgrades have made commuting easier for the more than 5,500 people who use the station every day.

We have invested \$15.6 million in the new Sheridan College campus, right in downtown Mississauga across from City Hall. It is a wonderful facility.

Another example is the \$35 million investment in the University of Toronto Mississauga Campus.

As well, over the last year thousands of residents have gathered at the new city Celebration Square, where our government invested \$13.3 million. Since I have been there to mark the completion of the project, I have visited the square several times for community celebrations. This project has really contributed to the spirit of the community in downtown Mississauga.

Furthermore, many residents have been impressed by investments in the redevelopment of Burnhamthorpe branch library, where our government invested \$5.5 million.

As Mississauga continues to grow, it is important to recognize existing infrastructure that needs maintenance in order to keep up with the growing interest of individuals and families in settling here. Across the city, over \$12.3 million was invested in replacing old water mains. These repairs were necessary to accommodate the great future we have envisioned for the city.

We did not stop there. Our government's mandate has always been focused on our economy and job growth.

To meet the labour shortages in specific industries and to assist the thousands of Canadians who have had a difficult time finding employment, we have made it a priority to invest in skills and training for Canadians by introducing the Canada job grant.

The grant is a combination of federal, provincial, and employer funding to help Canadians get the skills they need for in-demand jobs. Once fully implemented, this grant would help nearly 130,000 Canadians to obtain training in institutions such as community colleges and trade union training centres each year.

To assist small businesses, which contribute to the economic vitality of municipalities, our government has reduced the small business tax rate, lowered the federal corporate income tax rate, and extended the hiring credit for small businesses. An estimated 560,000 employers would benefit from this measure, which is expected to save small businesses about \$225 million this year. These steps will help encourage small business growth in Canada.

Let us not forget our young people. Our federal government has acted to help them gain work experience by supporting more internships, valued at about \$70 million. To encourage new ideas, about \$18 million was allocated to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to support young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34. Even though life is not easy for a post-graduate, I can reassure them that our government recognizes this, is acting to provide assistance, and will continue to do so.

By implementing Canada's economic action plan, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery. As I stated earlier, we are recognized by leaders around the world for having the courage to take the much-needed measures to deal with these economic challenges. In the past two years, we have already cut the deficit by more than half.

Canada's budget is exemplary. We recognize the needs that are faced by Canadians and have found a way to be fiscally responsible to protect our families, seniors, and youth.

I would like to encourage all opposition members to vote in favour of Bill C-4, move it forward, and continue to focus on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs, growing the economy, and securing Canada's long-term prosperity.

*Government Orders*

•(1545)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I find it strange that the member chose to stand here and talk about jobs when in fact his government has cut job after job in the federal public service and now the Conservatives are trying to remove the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

First, how does removing the right to a safe and healthy workplace fit into a budget bill?

Second, why are the Conservatives making a mockery of the democratic process?

Third, could he tell me how many people have lost their jobs in the federal public service since his government has been in power?

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon:** Mr. Speaker, to comment on the third question, it is really fearmongering. If she is referring to jobs lost in the federal public sector or any other sector, if the general idea is that more people working is better and efficiency does not matter, I do not think we can share that approach. We have to look at both. We have to look at the quality of work and we have to look for efficiencies in every sector. The numbers do not always translate into efficiency and economically it makes sense to actually cut jobs where it is necessary to achieve efficiency.

•(1550)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, and I especially thank my other colleague for asking such fundamental questions about Bill C-4. I was hoping for an answer, but we have not gotten any, as she just mentioned.

My colleague had a three-part question. I would like to focus on one aspect that has to do with Canadian workers and that is extremely important. I wonder why this is in a budget bill in the first place. Perhaps my colleague opposite can answer that.

Bill C-4 will make it harder for employees to refuse to work in unsafe working conditions.

Why is my colleague opposite trying to undermine the process that enables Canadians to refuse to work in unsafe working conditions? Does he have an answer this time?

[*English*]

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the idea comes from. Safety in the workplace is a priority for everybody, including for our government, and it should be for employers. There is no question about a safe working environment.

I come from industry. I had my own business. I used to manage a business. A safe workplace and the safety of working people are the priorities not only for government but also for employers. Nobody wants to put a worker in harm's way. Every employer should look at getting safe working conditions. That is a priority, should be a priority and will always be a priority.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a fourth mammoth hodgepodge bill that seeks once more to amend legislation that has absolutely

nothing to do with the budget. It is a scandal. We also have to debate it under the pall of a time allocation motion. Once again, debate is being limited. We are only in our second week of work. It is an absolute scandal.

Should we be surprised? We have just started work again after a prorogation, and the more things change, the more they stay the same, as the saying goes. It is a new session of Parliament but we have the same old tactics from this government.

This is the fourth mammoth bill with which the Conservatives are trying once more to push through legislative changes so that Canadians will not notice. Here we have a 300-page document that amends a number of pieces of legislation that have nothing to do with the budget.

The NDP is familiar with the Conservatives' bad-faith manoeuvres, and we will do everything in our power to put a stop to these underhanded tactics.

This bill is a travesty. It is supposed to implement the budget, but it includes measures that have nothing to do with the budget. I am thinking particularly of the government's shady attacks on the rights of public service workers. That is why we have been demanding, since the start of this debate, that Bill C-4, the budget implementation bill, be divided into several parts so that the appropriate committees can properly analyze and study the proposed changes.

We were only on the first day of the debate when the Conservatives moved a time allocation motion in order to cut off debate and once again prevent Canadians from seeing the entire content of this bill. To us, this way of doing things is completely anti-democratic. We cannot even debate a bill without debate being cut off. This has become the norm in this institution. It is a complete scandal.

Not so long ago, the Conservatives were talking about democracy. Unbelievable. They were saying that they listen to Canadians and co-operate with other governments. However, when they are here, they do everything they can to obstruct the work of the House. They would simply like us to support their bills with no debate, no discussion. This government would like Canadians to write them a blank cheque. Speaking of cheques, we know what they do with those. It does not always make much sense, so this is a cheque they are not going to get.

Canadians are not fools. As the NDP leader told the Prime Minister, Canadians are going to judge this government's actions harshly. Canadians do not want to see their government act this way and show so little respect for democratic institutions. The NDP is offering Canadians a true alternative to this government's anti-democratic ways. In 2015, the NDP will show Canadians that we can govern this country and that we will not engage in these underhanded tactics.

Coming back to Bill C-4, I would now like to discuss a division of the bill that deals with the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. Section 4 of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board Act will be replaced with the following:

There is established an independent board, to be known as the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, consisting of not more than 25 permanent members to be appointed by the Governor in Council and any number of temporary members that are appointed under section 6.

Thinking about this change to the number of board members, I can only wonder whether the Conservatives learned anything from the VRAB study in committee. Several accusations were made during that study, and many witnesses mentioned that the board was rife with patronage appointments, interference, procedural unfairness, a lack of expertise, and so on.

● (1555)

I will summarize what Mr. Leduc said; he was one of the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. He said that, unfortunately, our veterans do not have the benefit of a fair and equitable hearing. I think that that statement is a good summary of the problems veterans encounter with that board.

Have the Conservatives made any changes to ensure that this board will be made fair and impartial? Absolutely not. They preferred to reduce the number of members who will sit on it from 28 to 25; the effect of this will be to slow down the work and increase waiting periods.

The Conservatives will also continue to appoint their friends to that board despite the fact that many of them have no expertise and no knowledge that would qualify them to sit on it. Once again, veterans are the ones being penalized by this type of measure.

As my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore stated quite rightly, the government now wants to balance the budget on the backs of our veterans, on the backs of our heroes. Is that a good approach? Of course not. The Conservatives are only bringing in half measures that do more harm than good to our veterans.

If we take a look at budgets in this period of fiscal austerity that prevails throughout the world, we see that our allies have absolutely not cut their veterans' budgets; in fact, several have increased them. The Conservative government is clearly bucking that trend and is making deep cuts to the Veterans Affairs budget. That is a clear sign of the lack of respect the government has for veterans.

In addition to these new cuts and those to the number of members who sit on the VRAB, the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, the government is going to close nine district offices throughout the country. These Veterans Affairs Canada offices provided services to veterans. The Conservatives are also going to transfer Ste. Anne's Hospital, the last hospital to provide care for veterans, to the provincial government. The Conservatives continue to transfer veterans' services to government agencies that have no expertise, such as Service Canada, or they offload the task of caring for our veterans to the provinces.

According to the Conservatives, veterans are no different from other citizens. The government considers that it owes injured veterans absolutely nothing. The government feels that it has absolutely no moral obligation to veterans, which is scandalous. These days, veterans are angry with the government because of everything it has done over the past few years.

My colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore, the veterans affairs critic, recently introduced Bill C-447, which would completely

### *Government Orders*

dismantle the VRAB and implement a system with a peer-reviewed process for making medical decisions, which would be much more beneficial for veterans. A more effective and impartial board would better serve our veterans.

True to form, the Conservatives decided to introduce only half measures, such as reducing the number of VRAB members from 28 to 25, which could potentially increase wait times for hearings before this board. That is the extent of the government's respect for veterans.

Not just veterans will suffer the consequences of this budget implementation bill. The rights obtained and gains made in recent years by workers and public servants are also under attack. The most significant and most unacceptable changes in the latest budget implementation bill target Canadian workplaces.

In fact, the bill fundamentally changes Canadians' right to a safe and healthy workplace. How does it do that? It will take away the powers conferred on health and safety officers by the Canada Labour Code and give them to the minister.

The bill will also reduce a worker's right to refuse to work in dangerous conditions. We are convinced that no worker should be made to work in conditions that would put their health and safety at risk. This provision is ridiculous and we strongly oppose it. The government has always served as the watchdog for private business to ensure that workers have a safe environment. We wonder if the government knows what it is doing in this file. We really do wonder.

● (1600)

In addition, Bill C-4 will put practically all of the power related to health and safety into the minister's hands, without taking into account how that will affect protections for workers.

Bill C-4 also makes changes to the Public Service Labour Relations Act, eliminating binding arbitration as a method of dispute resolution in the public service. The only explanation for this change is that the government wants to provoke disputes with public servants.

I could go on and list more situations, but I will leave it at that.

[English]

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that excellent speech on Bill C-4.

*Government Orders*

The Conservatives came into this session with drums rolling. They were going to talk about a consumer-first agenda, yet we see in this Bill C-4, which is an omnibus bill that deals with 70 different laws of this country, that they have failed to address any of the consumer issues that Canadians want. They have failed to address the airline passenger's bill of rights. It is not here. They have failed to address the fact that cellphone bills are so high. They have also failed to address gas prices that average Canadians are paying, being gouged by big oil companies.

I know my colleague has done excellent work on the veterans affairs committee. I have had a number of veterans from my community come to my office asking for help, trying to navigate through the Veterans Review and Appeal Board.

Could the member highlight some of the issues he has discovered through his travels and through the committee, in regard to veterans not being treated fairly?

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and comments.

In the Speech from the Throne, the government took up several NDP causes, including protecting consumers' rights.

We look forward to seeing how this will play out. However, there really is nothing in this bill that will help consumers. Not that long ago, they rejected outright many of our proposals to help consumers. I look forward to seeing what they think of them now and what they will do to help consumers.

The committee looked at the issue of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. There are several problems with the board, notably a lack of procedural fairness. Many of the people who sit on the board—there are currently 24 or 25 people—have no knowledge of health and safety and no military knowledge. They are qualified because they are friends of the regime in power and the Conservatives. They were placed there. However, they have no military or medical knowledge, yet they must make decisions about problems that veterans are having in getting Veterans Affairs Canada to reverse its decisions. It is completely absurd. That is why we want to replace this board.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the questions I asked the Minister of Labour was in regard to how we in the Liberal Party believe that she should have brought in her own piece of legislation, given the number of changes that are being put into place through the budget implementation bill.

We are talking about the ways in which we define danger, for example, issues related to health and safety regulations and issues related to our unions. There is a lot of substance there that ultimately would have seen a great deal more debate and discussion by many different stakeholders across this country, given the importance of the labour file.

I wonder if the member might want to provide comment on what I believe is one of the greatest deficiencies of this legislation, the fact that it is incorporating so much other legislation through the back

door of the budget bill that it is preventing legitimate debate on a wide variety of other important issues facing Canadians today.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

He pointed out one of the biggest shortcomings of this bill: the fact that the government is amending approximately 80 laws in a 300-page document and we have only a few hours of debate in the House of Commons to examine it because the government moved a time allocation motion. This bill will not be examined properly. It is simply disgraceful. This bill addresses many issues, and we will not have the opportunity to conduct a thorough and proper examination of it. It could potentially contain mistakes, like the error concerning the tax rate for credit unions in the last omnibus bill. There may be mistakes in this bill that we will not see because we did not have the opportunity to examine it properly. It is completely disgraceful. Clearly, we are against this. What is even more disgraceful is that, because of the Senate scandal, the media are not focusing on Bill C-4 and so Canadians will not be properly informed of the changes that are being made.

[*English*]

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to some of the key initiatives in Bill C-4, the economic action plan 2013 act no. 2.

As a government, we have much to be proud of. I am glad to see that we remain focused on the issues that matter most to Canadians, which are job creation, keeping taxes low and returning to a balanced budget.

Through Canada's economic action plan, Canada has experienced one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery. We have created over one million net new jobs, of which 90% are full time and over 85% are in the private sector, which is an astounding figure.

Statistics Canada announced that 59,200 net new jobs were created in August and nearly another 12,000 in September. The national unemployment rate has fallen to 6.9%, the lowest level since December 2008.

I have seen the same recovery happen in my hometown of Barrie, Ontario. In September, the unemployment rate in Barrie fell to 7.2%, an improvement of nearly 2% from the September before, which is remarkably better than the 11.7% unemployment rate we saw a few years ago. Therefore, I am certainly seeing in Barrie the recovery that has occurred nationally. As Councillor Brassard said when I addressed the Barrie City Council in September, the federal government's initiatives have been the linchpin to this recovery.

*Government Orders*

Our strategies to create jobs are working. I am particularly proud of our government's support for job growth through the Canada job grant. As organizations grow, their success is often contingent upon knowledgeable staff. However, with a family to feed and a full-time job, it can be tough for staff to go back to school on a full-time basis. That is why our government created a program that would enable employees to train for better jobs without having to worry about the excessive costs to retrain. Canadians who have an offer of a new or better job might qualify for up to \$15,000 or more to learn new skills to accept that job. This will serve as a tremendous help to both employees and employers looking to grow their business.

However, the job does not end there. There is still more to be done. While more Canadians are finding work, I sympathize with the many Canadians who are still searching for gainful employment. We are not immune to the economic volatility beyond our borders. This is especially true for Canada's key trading partners, the United States and Europe. With our big export consumers still on shaky ground, that will have an impact on Canada's economy. That is why our government is staying focused on the economy and creating jobs. One way we are doing that is through supporting small business.

As we all know, small business growth has been one of the key components of Canada's recovery. Since taking office in 2006, our government has supported small business by keeping tax rates low. Small business is the economic engine that drives our economy. Statistics show that 75% of workers in Canada are employed by companies with four or fewer employees. Our commerce relies on keeping taxes low to maintain our competitive edge over many of our trading partners. I have heard this in Barrie.

On September 23, I had the pleasure of having the President of the Treasury Board in Barrie for two round tables, one with Meridian Commercial Banking, hosted by Councillor Alex Nuttall, and one with the Chamber of Commerce, hosted by its executive director, Sybil Goruk. It was that focus on training and small business that we heard at both those local round tables and that they appreciate our efforts on both those fronts.

We have already extended the hiring credit for small business up to \$1,000 for new hires, and over one million employers have benefited from that program. There has been some strong feedback from the small business community on this initiative. BIA 2 seeks to expand that recovery by freezing the employment insurance rates that employers and employees pay for the next three years. In Barrie, this means that businesses and their employees will be keeping more money in their pockets, which is great news for our local economy, especially our small businesses.

In my riding, I have seen first-hand how many local businesses have benefited from federal incentives and programs. Federal investments have also supported local businesses to create jobs. For instance, through a repayable contribution, Southmedic was able to take its plant from China to Barrie. It is providing medical masks. TNR Industrial Doors had a major expansion with another repayable loan. Those are good, high-paying jobs.

● (1610)

With a repayable loan, Wolf Steel, which does high-efficiency furnaces, was able to almost double the size of its company with an impressive expansion. Even more significantly, thanks to the

southern Ontario economic development agency, we were able to convince IBM to put a plant in Barrie. A \$20-million contribution has led to some of the highest-skilled jobs around just on Bayview Drive. Phase one is now open and phase two will be under way shortly.

I would also like to mention the federal contributions that led to the new wellness centre in Barrie. That was 400 construction jobs; 400 new full-time and part-time jobs for staff and faculty. The economic impact of this construction alone was approximately \$98 million for my community, a pretty significant benefit.

Last week, the Minister of Finance released the annual financial report of the Government of Canada for 2012-13. This report shows the continued downward track of Canada's annual deficit. In 2012-13, the deficit fell to \$18.9 billion. This was down by more than one-quarter, \$7.4 billion, from the deficit of \$26.3 billion in 2011-12, and down by nearly two-thirds from the \$55.6 billion deficit recorded in 2009-10. I certainly hear from around Barrie that this disciplined approach to deficit reduction is applauded and appreciated across Canada.

This is an excellent example of our government's responsible spending of taxpayer dollars. Further direct program expenses have fallen by 1.2% from the year prior and by 3.8% from 2010-11. We have found these savings without raising taxes or cutting transfers to the provinces and territories. The 1990 approach by the Liberals was simply to slash transfers to the provinces and that meant huge cuts to health care and education. That certainly was not the approach we were prepared to make. This has been a much more fiscally prudent manner to approach the deficit.

*Government Orders*

Our support does not end there. Our government has also recognized the need for improved infrastructure. Not only have we recognized this need but we have taken action by investing over \$4.5 billion into greater Toronto area infrastructure since we took office in February 2006. Since 2006, the City of Barrie alone, to give another example, has seen its share of the federal gas transfers not only become permanent, but they have risen from over \$2 million a year to \$8 million. There is a lot that can be done with that and the city certainly has. We have put \$7.2 million into various road renewal activities, and \$16.5 million into improvements of stormwater management, like Kidds Creek, Bunkers Creek, Sophia Creek, the Kempenfelt Bay shoreline, culverts and storm sewers. In fact, the City of Barrie got an FCM award this year for its excellent management of gas tax funding. We have also put \$2.1 million into the landfill improvement projects up on Ferndale Drive.

Continued investments in my region's infrastructure have improved amenities for families across the board. Building a better community is something that we all have a stake in and a commitment to new infrastructure helps make Barrie an attractive area to live, work, play and invest. I am sure that is the case in every community across this country. Certainly, Bill C-4 provides those significant tools to build our communities.

Not only does Bill C-4 address this issue now, but it includes initiatives that will help Canadians into the future as well. Canada has free trade agreements in force with more than 10 countries and half of those agreements have been brought into force in just over the last four years. These agreements are strategic economic advantages for our country in a wide range of sectors. I think we see that in every community in Canada.

Bill C-4 also addresses the Government of Canada's intent to set public service pay and benefit levels that are reasonable, responsible and in the public interest. Through the much needed amendments to the Public Service Labour Relations Act, we will ensure that the public service is affordable, modern and high performing, as taxpayers expect.

• (1615)

There is one other item I want to mention that I was particularly proud of in Bill C-4. That was the investments that were made in Lake Simcoe. This government has put \$59 million into the cleanup of Lake Simcoe. We have never seen a nickel put into Lake Simcoe before this government. Bill C-4 also puts in funds for protection against invasive species. Lake Simcoe is a tremendous jewel in our region. It contributes an estimated \$200 million to our region and more than 400,000 people depend on the lake for drinking water. We have seen the phosphorous levels go dramatically down, and I am proud that our government has shown such significant leadership on Lake Simcoe.

I commend the Minister of Finance for his incredible hard work on Bill C-4 and the astute leadership he has shown, respecting Canadian taxpayer dollars and investing in a manner that supports the economic growth of our country.

• (1620)

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments by the member for Barrie.

There are two things I would mention. One is that this supposed budget bill actually creates dangerous workplaces by forcing employees to continue to work even though a danger exists, unless somehow they can prove that danger is imminent or will cause serious harm. We are now getting into the whole range of things about what is imminent and what is serious. Is asbestos imminent? No. Is it serious? Maybe. Are changes to a person's reproductive system imminent? No. Is it serious? It depends on whether they want to have children. Those are two examples of the kinds of things the bill does to weaken this legislation.

The other issue is that there is nothing in the budget bill that helps small businesses in the hon. member's community deal with the cost of banking. The banks have recently raised the fees that businesses must pay to Visa and other credit card companies. The voluntary system just is not working and there is nothing here for it. Maybe he would like to comment on that.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, in terms of small businesses, it is very clear and widely recognized across the country that this government has been incredibly supportive, whether it was when we first got to office and reduced the tax rate for small businesses, or more recently with the small business hiring tax credit.

Recognizing small businesses as the economic engine of the country has always been a priority of this government, has always been a focus. Certainly I find it almost comical that the NDP would be standing up asking a question about small business. As we know, in every case when there has been an NDP provincial government in this country, small businesses have fled. I am sure the member recalls that when the NDP were in power in Ontario, I think we lost close to 10,000 small businesses under its economic management.

The best support for small businesses in Canada is a Conservative budget. We are certainly seeing that with the incredible support for small businesses that we have seen under the leadership of our current Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite intrigued by the whole issue of weakening worker protection. We are all quite close to our communities. We listen to Canadians. I have never heard anyone say that what we really need to do in this country is to weaken the ability of workers to stay away from dangerous work situations. No one in the entire time that I have been an elected MP has said to me, "This is a big problem. Too many workers are refusing to work in dangerous situations that are actually not dangerous at all."

I am wondering from where the impetus came for the government to act on this issue in this way.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly disagree with the interpretation of the hon. member.

This budget is certainly about standing up for Canadian workers. It is about creating more jobs and more opportunities. The impetus is creating jobs.



*Government Orders*

If we look at every aspect of this budget, it is about ways to stimulate our economy, because more jobs in our community, more jobs in our country, means there is greater competition for workers. I have certainly seen that in Barrie where our unemployment rate dropped from 11.7% to 7.2%. We are actually starting to see competition for workers, and that drives higher wages, that drives better working conditions.

We saw that with the expansion of TNR Doors, with Napoleon, with the acquisition of IBM. We are talking about creating a vibrant economy. That is what our Minister of Finance has been doing, and that is a win for workers across Canada.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, Rail Transportation.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

• (1625)

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in order for politicians to get through their very long days and heavy schedules, they have to take some pleasure in what they are doing. I must admit, however, that I did not enjoy reading Bill C-4 at all.

I therefore took a few minutes before writing these words to escape into my own mind a bit, and my thoughts turned to movies. I really had the feeling as I read through Bill C-4 that I was being shown an old movie—I am trying to refrain from saying a really bad one—in which I had played a role. I began to imagine the titles I could give to it.

If it were a French film, we could call it *Rebelote*. If it were an American film, we could call it *The Empire Strikes Back*. I must admit I spent a few moments imagining certain members of the party across the way wearing the emperor's costume or dressed as Darth Vader. I will not name them, but I will leave it up to my colleagues to picture them, given that Halloween is this week.

After these few amusing moments I allowed myself, I came back to more serious things and thought I would perhaps begin my speech with a reference to the words of the anti-slavery Republican President Abraham Lincoln, who defined democracy in the following way:

Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people.

That is quite simple, but quite concrete. I will not analyze this wonderful definition in detail, but the more time goes by under the Conservative regime, the more certain I become that our country is straying dangerously far from that democratic ideal.

When day after day I see how the members of this government, the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister himself seem mired in expense scandals, questionable deals made behind Canadians' backs, the silencing of dissident voices and the introduction of measures that are so complex that people feel their basic rights are being breached, I sincerely worry about the very future of our parliamentary system.

For the fourth time in two and a half years, this government is trying to circumvent parliamentary and public oversight. As the

saying goes, just the once will not hurt, but four times in two and a half years means it is becoming a habit for this government.

Canadians deserve better than a Conservative omnibus bill that again hurts Canadian families by increasing the cost of living and that creates very few or no jobs when all is said and done. This bill is very big. Its 300-odd pages cover 70 acts, and we have only a few days or a few weeks, to study such a bill. The entire package will very likely be studied by the Standing Committee on Finance, which must really have significant expertise in appointing Supreme Court justices, employment insurance and immigration. The committee members are exceedingly multi-talented.

I often wonder what I am doing in the House, if not fighting for democracy. These bills are so huge that it becomes very difficult to properly analyze and fully understand them. They usually contain an alarming number of wide-ranging measures intended to hide other controversial ones, such as the measures attacking Canada's public service.

For months now, the government's methods and attitude when it comes to employment insurance matters have been symptomatic of the Conservative ministers' inability to implement a policy and measures to move the country forward. These same ministers are being given more and more power with each omnibus bill.

The democratic process that is based on dialogue and collaboration was so violated that the reform turned into a hatchet job. Everywhere I go, Canadians feel attacked, deeply hurt and, worse than anything, poorer. When people feel poorer, it is because they can see it when they manage their weekly budget.

• (1630)

This is why we as NDP members are categorically opposed to this bill. The reasons are many, but I am going to focus on several points that deal specifically with employment insurance.

The NDP has opposed this reform from the outset. After months of consultation in the field, we came to the obvious conclusion that employment insurance reform is an economic failure and it has to be stopped as quickly as possible.

Curiously, in the provinces most affected by the reform, it is the provincial governments that now have to work to assess the disastrous consequences it brings. That is co-operation for you.

It does not make any sense. It is disrespectful for a federal government to refuse to work with its partners in other levels of government, or with practically all the members of this House. Even inside the federal government, voices are being raised to decry the way in which the government is imposing its ideology on such a sensitive issue.

I have given up counting the times when federal officials, who have always worked to serve their fellow Canadians, have shown their distress and their incomprehension at the authoritarian and brutal methods with which they are required to process claimants' files.

*Government Orders*

Unfortunately, these are not just files that have to be processed with profit-making quotas, probably. These are families that need help. That is the approach that the public service used to have. It is about supporting communities and stimulating the economy.

Bill C-4 follows the same path as the three previous omnibus bills. I am talking about Bills C-38, C-45 and C-60. Now Bill C-4 is amending 70 pieces of legislation and adding two completely new acts. I hope for the next time that this is enough. It also includes such measures as the one to abolish the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.

To be specific, Bill C-4 abolishes the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board and gives the Minister of Finance the power to manipulate rate-setting. Yet another power gathered unto the bosom of a minister. What does the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board do, or what is it supposed to do? Well, surprise, surprise, the answers in the bill are quite vague. We might say that there are none.

When the Conservatives set up the Employment Insurance Financing Board in 2008, we might have thought that they were headed in the right direction. We heard it said repeatedly in the House that this was probably a step in the right direction. However, one step forward, two steps back—that is what we have become used to with them. We thought that it might be the very tool to prevent successive governments from stealing employment insurance funds to eliminate other deficits. We expected the board to really prevent another misappropriation of that fund such as we saw under the Chrétien and Martin governments.

At that time, tens of billions of dollars in worker and employer premiums were simply stolen by the government. However, when it comes to the Conservatives, appearances can be deceiving and should never be trusted. The board remained a good intention, but in actual fact it is an empty shell, an institution without a soul, without powers and without purpose.

Let us go a bit further. The Employment Insurance Financing Board seems to bother the Conservative government. Why is this organization so bothersome? Why does it want to abolish it?

By eliminating the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board, once again the government is toying dangerously with morality. However, we feel it is essential to guarantee the protection of the premiums paid by employers and workers throughout Canada. It is a matter of social justice and fairness for all. Who among us can be sure that he or she will have a job for life and will never have to turn to employment insurance? The answer is simple—no one can.

Why continually attack those who are looking for work? Why does the government constantly attack those who are having trouble finding long-term, stable, permanent employment?

In conclusion, unemployment is of course a major concern for NDP members. We will introduce reforms to create jobs and curtail employment uncertainty everywhere in Canada as early as 2015, and even earlier.

• (1635)

In 2015, when we replace this tired government that is mired in scandals, we will restore a mechanism to protect the employment

insurance fund so that the money that is put into it is used in the way it was intended.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's comments. When he spoke about the employment insurance fund, he hit a sore spot for the Liberals and Conservatives.

In 2008, the Conservatives created the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board to show more transparency and independence with respect to employment insurance financing. We can only imagine how much money they spent on creating this board, whose objective was to be transparent. Now they are shutting down this board because it did not give them the power they needed. The government decided that it was not interested in what the board had to say and that the government was going to make the decisions. What a waste of money.

Could my colleague talk a bit more about employment insurance and tell us why we cannot trust the Conservatives or the Liberals not to dip into the fund, and what impact this has on workers who lose their jobs?

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very timely and interesting question.

To give a tangible figure, \$57 billion was stolen from the employment insurance fund by the Liberal and Conservative governments. Imagine just for a second, \$57 billion at 5% or 6% interest. This will give you an idea of the amount of economic leverage that we would have right now, especially to support families going through hard times. What is employment insurance? It is a social safety net that ensures that recipients can survive until they find another job. It is important to understand that most people who receive EI never exhaust their benefits because they find another job before the payments come to an end. EI was there to support them.

However, at this very moment, less than five out of 10 people, or even less than four—3.65 if remember correctly—who have made EI contributions are able to qualify for EI benefits just when they need them most.

This system, which was put in place at great expense and is given little chance to be effective, is yet further tangible evidence that the government that wants to do everything in secret and to concentrate as much power as possible in the hands of its ministers so they can govern from within the confines of their offices and without the public's knowledge.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I do not buy the numbers the member is putting on the record with regard to billions of dollars. I would love for him to clearly show that in any sort of a document.

My understanding is that when the Liberals were in government, it was the national auditor general who made the recommendations. Are Canadians and I to believe that if a national auditor general recommends something and if the NDP has anything to do with it, it will not follow the advice of the national auditor general? From what I understand that has taken place.

*Government Orders*

The member is giving the impression that the House of Commons should not follow recommendations of the Auditor General of Canada. Is that an adopted position of the New Democratic Party today?

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Very simply put, I recognize, once again, the Liberal Party's inability to be in sync with Canadians. The member need only visit any riding in Canada that has a organization that advocates for unemployed workers. All of these organizations will confirm the statistics that I just mentioned. Everyone in the community agrees. However, it is likely more difficult to admit that it is true when you are the one who dipped into the fund.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget implementation bill.

If we think back five years ago to the day to where we were in the global economy, certainly no one would forget the financial crisis that occurred in the United States, the failures of investment banking houses and the failures of banks throughout the United States. The Lehman Brothers, a 158-year-old investment bank, went out of business. We remember the troubled asset plan, TARP, that the United States brought in, which was \$700 billion to help keep the banking sector alive in the United States. We can all remember the “credit crunch” terms.

What is the point of that? The point is that it was one of the geneses of the economic downturn that occurred in early 2008 and for more than a year after that.

The idea is that the economic downturn did not start in Canada. No one would ever say that. Certainly, we were negatively impacted by the downturn. The contraction of the U.S. economy in 2005 was minus 1.5, a negative growth. The Europe eurozone went down 2%. Japan contracted as well by 2.5%.

When we put that in context, looking back five years ago, that is what this government dealt with. How to get out of it was the question we needed to answer.

Some of the realities in July and August 2009 were that the unemployment rate in Canada was 8.6% and 8.7% respectively, new car sales in 2009 dropped precipitously to under 1.5 million new cars, the Toronto Stock Exchange composite index was at 8,500, and I mentioned the economic contraction that took place.

The job of government is not one to create jobs. The job of government is to create an economic climate so it creates ease and assurance for businesses to conduct business, feel strong and secure, grow, make it through the tough times and add jobs.

My former employer, prior to getting elected, had about 150 employees. Today it has over 800. It was not due to our government. We did not create those jobs, but we created an economic climate for it to succeed, make it through those tough times and to now hire many new employees.

Since the economic downturn in 2008-09, and July 2009 is a benchmark we have used many times, the Canadian economy has added over one millions jobs, which is truly remarkable.

Another important fact we need to remember when we look back is that our unemployment rate in Canada is actually lower than the United States, and it has been that way now for a couple of years. It has literally been decades since our unemployment rate was lower than the United States. Canadians should be proud of that. Canadian businesses should be proud that they have created these jobs.

In addition to that, Canada's net debt to GDP is the leader of G7 countries with developed economies. That is something to be proud of. We have been able to get through these tough times of deficit and yet keep our net debt low. We will lead the G7 in net growth as well.

There are many things that Canada has done. We have been through the tough times and, again, it was not brought on by us but by the other much larger economies. However, because of our fiscal policy, we have been able to get through it.

The unemployment rate from September 2003 is now down to 6.9%. Huron county is at 5.4% and in Bruce county it is 4.5%. Certainly, I can take credit for none of that, but I am very proud of the people in our communities who are job creators. They have been able to adapt, respond and react to the fiscal realities and create unique and interesting jobs in our communities.

• (1645)

I mentioned new car sales. They were under 1.5 million in 2009. I can remember meeting in my office with car dealers at the time. They were thinking of any possible way to create a carrot, an incentive for people to buy new cars and get them going, because in December 2008 to July 2009 sales basically ground to a halt. In 2012, I am proud to report, sales were at a 10-year high. We saw 10-year highs in auto sales of over 1.7 million units. That is a 15% increase over the 2009 levels. The TSX composite index, as I mentioned, was at 8,500; it is at about 15,500 today, which is over a 50% increase.

What does that mean? Well, it means that the general health of the largest Canadian corporations is much better. Their earnings have increased and their capacity to grow and hire new employees has expanded. That is why we have seen the million-plus job increase since then.

What does BIA 2 have in it that is going to continue this growth? As policy-makers in our country, how do we continue to create a stimulus to continue to grow our economy? One of the things, in my opinion, is the freezing of employment insurance rates.

Here is an interesting fact. If we go back to 2000, the rate for the employee was \$2.40 per \$100 in earnings. Today, the frozen rate is \$1.88 per \$100 in earnings. We have been able to come through good times and bad, and we still have a very competitive rate.

*Government Orders*

Freezing the rates also helps employers, because we know that they pay 1.4 times what the employee pays, and that comes right off their payroll. It is very important for employers to be able to save as much as they can. I believe it is about \$660 million that Canadian businesses would have available to use to invest in capital and employees and to continue to grow their businesses. That is vitally important.

Another point that is important for policy-makers in creating a climate where investment is going to occur and create stimulus for our economy is increasing the lifetime capital gains exemption. The last time an increase took place was in 1988; in 2007, our Conservative government increased it from \$500,000 to \$750,000, which is a tremendous benefit to people who are in business and are there to create jobs in small businesses.

I come from a rural riding, and that is certainly a huge benefit for our farming community. Many farmers sell their farms and move into a new community where they will reinvest that profit and interest and create jobs and economic prosperity.

The lifetime capital gains exemption would now be increased from \$750,000 to \$800,000, and then in 2015 it would be indexed moving forward. That is very important, because a lot of the time, what happens is that capital gets locked in. It gets locked up, and the person holding that capital and that asset does not want to sell it because he or she will trigger a taxable occurrence. That is a part of life. That is just the way it is. However, for us as government, to create a policy that provides a reason to sell and let somebody else come in to reinvest and maybe grow the business is vitally important.

There is a ton that I would like to speak about. Another point that I will mix in very quickly is the accelerated capital cost for biogas. There is a farm in my community near Walkerton that has created a biogas facility that uses methane and food waste from the food industry to power two Caterpillar engines that create electricity. To be able to now accelerate the depreciation to create a stimulus and a reason to make an investment is a great opportunity.

There are about four or five other things that I would like to talk about. Hopefully, during the questions, I will be able to address them.

•(1650)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech rather carefully, as he was talking about how it is the role of the government to create the kind of investment climate that in turn would allow for job growth in Canada.

Just his afternoon U.S. Steel announced that it was going to shut down the blast furnace in its plant in Hamilton.

The member will recall that the federal government actually rolled over with respect to the foreign investment review it had undertaken. U.S. Steel had broken its commitments to the federal government; the federal government took the company to court, and despite the fact that the government won in the court case at every step of the way, the government abandoned that court case and just rolled over. Today we have an announcement that the blast furnace is being shut down permanently.

Would the member tell me exactly how his government is helping lay the foundation for securing jobs and for keeping jobs safe? Would he reassure the people of Hamilton that their jobs will be safe under his government's handling of the economy?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Mr. Speaker, one of my suggestions to the member would be to call Dalton McGuinty.

I was the chair of the auto caucus for a number of years. Time and time again we heard from automakers that Dalton McGuinty's flawed electricity policy in Ontario raised costs.

I used to work at a foundry. The furnaces in that business use a lot of electricity. Because of the policies of the Province of Ontario, companies that use a lot of electricity are now at a disadvantage because of Dalton McGuinty's policies.

I would call Andrea Horwath, the leader of the NDP, and ask her what she is going to do about it. She is quite happy to support Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been listening to the other side in this House boasting about its supposed economic accomplishments for quite a while now, and it is wearing a bit thin. What we notice in the speeches from the government side is this inherent contradiction in everything the members say. They say the economy was bad because of other countries, because the recession started with the housing crisis in the U.S. Then when things pick up, it is never because of an increase in demand elsewhere; it is always because of the government's policies.

The government says that although the recession started outside of Canada, we have a stable financial system and we have a good debt ratio; however, it never mentions that the stable financial system was there when it arrived and was preserved by the previous Liberal government. It never mentions that if we have a good debt ratio, it might be because of the seven years of continuous surpluses that the previous government built up.

One thing I find quite interesting is that the government takes credit for the growth in employment, but anyone who has read an economic textbook knows that employment naturally increases with population. Some economists are saying that the increase in employment is being driven by an increase in population.

How can the government constantly take credit for things that are happening naturally? Increased demand for oil is happening naturally. Immigration is bringing in more people and creating more jobs and so on, so how can the government always take credit for everything?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Mr. Speaker, with that kind of scrambled logic, there is no doubt why the Liberals are in third place and heading to fourth very quickly.

Under the leadership of our finance minister and our Prime Minister, the biggest problem we have right now in Canada, and certainly the biggest problem we have in Huron—Bruce, is finding people who are qualified to do the job.

*Government Orders*

Canada job grant: those are three words the Liberals should learn really quickly. We have people who want to work hard, who have worked hard, who need a hand up. They need retraining. I know all the professors down at the far end in the third party have no comprehension about that because they learned it in a classroom, but here, where we have actually done the jobs that are in the economy, we understand that sometimes people need to be retrained. Sometimes people need a chance to improve.

In Huron—Bruce, that is what we need. We need the Canada job grant. The professor party down there at the far end needs to clue in.

• (1655)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was going to focus on a very particular part of Bill C-4, but since this is a chamber of debate I feel I should address the very last remarks of my Conservative colleague across the floor.

This is not the first time I have heard Conservatives use the word “professor” in a very derogatory manner. In fact, the first time I encountered that was at all-candidates debate in the 2008 election. The Conservative candidate referred, very derisively, to Professor Dion.

I am sorry; I forgot the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville is still here.

This shows the attitude that the Conservative party and the Conservative mind have towards education, towards learning, and towards respect for an inquiry toward the truth. I feel I have to point this out, because the member opposite clearly intended to insult Liberal Party members by calling us the professor party; well, I am proud to be part of a party that thinks about facts and evidence and is occasionally humbled by facts and evidence.

Canadians need to know that the Conservative Party is the party that does not value education, does not value learning, and is essentially willing to insult teachers. I have to start my remarks with that rebuke. Canadians need to know what kind of party this Conservative Party is.

I have three post-secondary institutions in my riding of Kingston and the Islands: the Royal Military College of Canada, Queen's University, and St. Lawrence College. I know that all of the professors and their students would be insulted by the remark of my colleague across the way.

Let me now talk about a particular part of Bill C-4. I am referring to the changes that will be made to members of the National Research Council, the council members who serve in an advisory capacity to the management of the National Research Council.

In Bill C-4, the composition of the council is going to be reduced from 18 members plus a president to 10 members plus a chairperson plus a president. What I would like to do today is simply ask the question “Why?” That question has not been answered in the legislation. The change appears in the legislation, but there has really been no supporting argument from the government for making this change.

I want to talk about why this should not be considered a trivial change. These are not salaried employees. Some members, as I checked the record, thought scientist employees were being cut from

NRC, but these are experts who are meant to guide the management of NRC in planning for its future.

What we need to do is ask why the opportunity was not taken in Bill C-4 to, for example, establish some rules on replenishing the membership of the advisory council, to consult with them, and to put in place some guidelines on how to choose members.

Members may not know that only 5 of the 18 spots on the council are filled right now. This is a very strange thing, given the enormous changes happening at NRC. Later I will talk about that a little more.

One thing that the bill we are discussing today could have done is provide some guidelines on how to choose these council members. For example, we might want to have three sets of criteria: first, knowledge of research, innovation, and commercialization; second, the personal experience, accomplishments, and integrity of the person; and third, diversity in the composition of the National Research Council members.

This is a time of big changes, so this expertise is very necessary. The Conservative Party seems to believe in less governance and less consultation. It is very comfortable with less governance and less consultation.

• (1700)

Why should the management of NRC consult? Let me mention the report of a task force commissioned by a former Progressive Conservative government in 1987. In the report, the task force told the Mulroney government that it would be foolish for NRC management not to take advantage of the real and wide expertise found within the members of the council. That council would be the consultative body of potentially up to 18 members.

Why does this Canadian national institution need a large consultative body? The reason is twofold. One is that we are a very diverse country regionally, and NRC is supposed to serve this very diverse country. There is a part of NRC called IRAP, the industrial research assistance program. A web of industrial technology advisers across the country works with small companies to help them develop and commercialize their technology, connect with partners, get funding, and get the people they need to succeed. It is clear that NRC serves all of Canada and should be very sensitive to the large regional geographic diversity we have in our country.

In addition, NRC aspires to serve a large range of disciplines and sectors of technical capability. For example, it is involved in astronomy, metrology, security, aerospace, construction, health, and ICT. NRC is responsible for an enormous range of scientific disciplines and technologies. Therefore, it makes sense that its consultative body should reflect the broad range of technical capabilities NRC aspires to. This is something Bill C-4 could have tried to put in place but did not.

*Government Orders*

Let me also talk about why this is a special time for NRC and why a consultative body would be very important. It is a time of great change at NRC. In fact, NRC has never undergone such a great change. We know that there used to be institutes at NRC. They have been completely restructured into R and D portfolios with individual programs inside that have to get business plans approved through a four-step process. We know that this approval process has been very slow, probably too slow for the comfort of the Minister of State for Science and Technology. Certainly it has been too slow for the morale of the scientists and researchers at NRC.

We know that morale has been severely tested at NRC. We receive messages all the time from people who work at NRC. We even know that there was an online survey on the internal NRC website that showed how low morale was and how dissatisfied workers at NRC were. This is a time of extreme stress at NRC, and it is important to have that consultative body.

I might just throw out a question to the government to ask if a second pair of eyes checked out the idea of sending Tim Hortons cards to employees. Some went to employees who had lost their jobs.

In conclusion, this is an important time for NRC. This is an opportunity to make sure that NRC is fully consulting with the diverse geographic and disciplinary range it aspires to. This is a time when the NRC council could be strengthened and used to provide good advice to the management of NRC as it attempts this very ambitious transformation. It is a transformation that we know has had some problems. It has been a bit slow and has caused morale to suffer at NRC. The government has missed an enormous opportunity.

• (1705)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands for raising the importance of what we find at division 10 of Bill C-4.

When we are dealing with omnibus budget bills, there is scant attention paid to the multiple ways in which the legislation would impact on dozens of pieces of legislation.

I would ask about these changes to the National Research Council. They are obviously not intended to save money. They would reduce the scope of the work of the National Research Council in terms of the expertise upon which it can draw. However, the member failed to mention one of the other changes that has been brought about by this administration, which was the elimination of the position of the science adviser to the Prime Minister. It was recently outlined in a book by Chris Turner, *The War on Science*.

What does my hon. colleague make of this effort to undermine access to good advice from those who are qualified to offer it in areas of scientific competence?

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important for a government to have access to, respect, listen to, and act on the very best advice to formulate policy. That includes science advisers. That includes, in terms of the management of NRC, advice that can come from the members of the council.

The thing that can happen, if people are willing to accept this advice, is that sometimes they realize that they are wrong and have to

change what they are doing. That is what I mean by saying that sometimes we are humbled by respect for the truth. I think we should govern that way. It is a good thing for the country to govern in that way. It can be embarrassing sometimes for the government, but perhaps not as embarrassing as what the government is experiencing now. It is a good thing to be humbled by the truth sometimes. If we let ourselves be humbled by the truth, we will avoid the kind of situation the current government is in with the problems the Prime Minister's Office is having with some of the Senate appointments.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposes all omnibus bills, as we previously opposed the omnibus bills introduced by the Liberals in the 1990s.

However, my question is about employment insurance. We have spoken a lot about it on this side of the House. I would like to know whether my Liberal colleague approves of the changes to EI proposed in this bill, particularly the elimination of the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board.

I would also like to know what my Liberal colleague thinks about the fact that the Minister of Finance is being granted new powers that will allow him to play political games with the EI premium rate.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, we are not happy with how the current government has treated employment insurance. This bill was a chance for the Conservatives to change some of their plans, and they did not take advantage of that opportunity, so I would have to say that we are opposed.

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands opened his speech by commenting on a previous speech given by the member for Huron—Bruce. I want to ask him a question about that.

The member for Huron—Bruce was lauding the Canada job grant and how wonderful it is and how much it means to everybody in his riding. The interesting thing is that it is a myth. There is no Canada job grant. It has not been created.

The Conservatives have been spending \$90,000 per minute for commercials on TV for a program that does not exist. Why does it not exist? It is because they took \$300 million away from the provinces that were using that money for skills training. They took it for themselves and said that they would give it back to the provinces, provided that they do it their way. The Conservatives did that without consulting the provinces at all. There is no Canada job grant.

I would like the member for Kingston and the Islands to comment on the seriousness of youth unemployment and the lack of the current government's attention to that issue.

*Government Orders*

• (1710)

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in the chamber, the youth employment strategy is not working. The number of jobs the federal government has created for young people has decreased since 2006. It is something like half of what it was in 2006. I think it is very important for the government to look at that and to take some measures, because this will have a big impact on the economy. Youth is the age group for which employment has not recovered since the 2008 recession. There should be quite a focus on that, and there is not.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand and speak to Bill C-4 today, the last speaker before we vote on this.

Yesterday I heard a lot of discussion from both sides of the House. I want to take a couple of minutes to explain exactly what we are doing here. This is a budget implementation bill. It is the second one. We have one in the spring and one in the fall. It is the traditional way of doing things. We have a budget, and out of that budget, we have to implement what is going on in the budget. That is what this bill does.

I am the 69th speaker to this item. Twenty-two percent of members of the House have spoken to this implementation bill thus far. This is at second reading stage. Then the bill goes to committee, and committee studies the bill. It calls witnesses, has a discussion, and more members of Parliament have an opportunity to comment on the bill. Then the bill comes back to the House for report stage. Then there is another set of speakers to this. Then there is third reading.

More than half the members of the House of Commons have an opportunity to speak to the bill. That is a significant amount of input and debate on this implementation bill.

I have heard over and over about there not being enough time, about closure motions, and about time allocation. The reality is that the public expects us to get things done for them. That is what we are doing here, and that is what the implementation bill does.

I hear about the omnibus bill. The bill is 309 or 312 pages, French and English. I know that I can read 150 pages. I am making the assumption that the opposition members can read 150 pages. I cannot read it in French. I wish I had that talent, but I do not. I do not think there is anything in the bill we need to complain about in terms of there being so much in it that it cannot be understood. Those are not the facts.

We on this side will do our homework. We will do the job we need to do to get things done for Canadians and move things forward. There are many good pieces in this bill. If members do not want to read the whole bill, there are summary pages at the front. In the summary, the very first item is to increase the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 and to index it to inflation. For the first time, it would be indexed to inflation.

We are giving small businesses the opportunity to create jobs and create wealth for them, their families, and their communities. They get to keep it after they have done their jobs. They pass that on to the next generation. They sell it to the next entrepreneur, and they keep building this country through jobs and economic activity. We

support small business. We support entrepreneurs, and that is what the implementation bill does. I am very happy that we are getting it done.

Tonight we are voting on it. We will get it to committee and will get it back in this House. Hopefully we will get it passed by Christmas so that people can continue to create good-quality jobs for this country and for our youth, and we will continue to build a great Canada.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, October 24, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1755)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 6*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)

*Government Orders*

Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault	Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Easter	Eyking	Lake	Lauzon
Footé	Fortin	Lebel	Leaf
Freeman	Garneau	Leitch	Lemieux
Garrison	Genest	Leung	Lizon
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère	Lobb	Lukiwski
Godin	Goodale	Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
Gravelle	Grogoué	MacKenzie	Mayes
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	McColeman	McLeod
Hassainia	Hsu	Menegakis	Menzies
Hughes	Hyer	Merrifield	Miller
Jacob	Julian	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Karygiannis	Kellway	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Nicholson	Norlock
Larose	Laverdière	Obhrai	O'Connor
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Liu	Mai	Opitz	O'Toole
Martin	Masse	Paradis	Payne
Mathysen	May	Poilievre	Rajotte
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Reid	Rempel
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Richards	Rickford
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Saxton	Schellenberger
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Seeback	Shipley
Murray	Nash	Shory	Smith
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo	Sopuck	Sorenson
Pacetti	Papillon	Stanton	Storseth
Péclet	Pilon	Strahl	Sweet
Plamondon	Quach	Tilson	Toet
Rafferty	Ravignat	Trost	Trottier
Raynault	Regan	Truppe	Uppal
Rousseau	Saganash	Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia	Van Loan	Vellacott
Scott	Sellah	Wallace	Warawa
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	Warkentin	Watson
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
St-Denis	Stewart	Weston (Saint John)	
Stoffer	Sullivan	Wilks	Williamson
Thibeault	Toone	Wong	Woodworth
Tremblay	Trudeau	Yelich	Young (Vancouver South)
Turmel	Valeriote — 124	Zimmer — 151	

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1805)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 7)***YEAS**

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht



*Private Members' Business*

Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Bevington	Blanchette
Allison	Ambler	Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Ambrose	Anders	Borg	Boulerice
Anderson	Armstrong	Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Aspin	Baird	Brisson	Brosseau
Bateman	Benoit	Byrne	Caron
Bergen	Bernier	Casey	Cash
Bezan	Blaney	Charlton	Chicoine
Block	Boughen	Chisholm	Choquette
Braid	Breitkreuz	Chow	Christopherson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Cleary	Comartin
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Côté	Crowder
Butt	Calandra	Cullen	Cuzner
Calkins	Cannan	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Carmichael	Carrie	Day	Dewar
Chisu	Chong	Dion	Dionne Labelle
Clarke	Clement	Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Crockatt	Daniel	Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Davidson	Dechert	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Devolin	Dreeschen	Easter	Eyking
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra	Foote	Fortin
Fantino	Fast	Freeman	Garneau
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Garrison	Genest
Flaherty	Fletcher	Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Galipeau	Gallant	Godin	Goodale
Glover	Goguen	Gravelle	Groghé
Goldring	Goodyear	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Gosal	Gourde	Hassainia	Hsu
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hughes	Hyer
Hawn	Hayes	Jacob	Julian
Hiebert	Hillyer	Karygiannis	Kellway
Hoback	Holder	Lamoureux	Lapointe
James	Jean	Larose	Laverdière
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent	Liu	Mai
Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Martin	Masse
Lake	Lauzon	Mathysen	May
Lebel	Leaf	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Leitch	Lemieux	Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Leung	Lizon	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Lobb	Lukiwski	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Lunney	Mackay (Central Nova)	Murray	Nash
MacKenzie	Mayes	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
McColeman	McLeod	Pacetti	Papillon
Menegakis	Menzies	Péclet	Pilon
Merrifield	Miller	Plamondon	Quach
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Rafferty	Ravignat
Moore (Fundy Royal)		Raynault	Regan
Nicholson	Norlock	Rousseau	Saganash
Obhrai	O'Connor	Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon	Scott	Sellah
Opitz	O'Toole	Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Paradis	Payne	St-Denis	son)
Poillievre	Rajotte	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Reid	Rempel	St-Denis	Stewart
Richards	Rickford	Stoffler	Sullivan
Saxton	Schellenberger	Thibeault	Toone
Seeback	Shiple	Tremblay	Trudeau
Shory	Smith	Tunnel	Valeriote— 124
Sopuck	Sorenson		
Stanton	Storseth		
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Trost	Trottier		
Truppe	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 (Vancouver South)		
Zimmer— 151			

PAIRED

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.  
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**EMPLOYEES' VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC)** moved that Bill C-525, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act (certification and revocation — bargaining agent), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**NAYS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Atamanenko
Aubin	Bélangier
Bennett	Benskin

*Private Members' Business*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today and talk about the employees' voting rights act.

The bill was first introduced on June 5 back, in the spring. This legislation seeks to harmonize the Canada Labour Code, the Public Service Labour Relations Act, and the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act.

It is well known through jurisprudence in our country that the fundamental right of peaceful association is afforded to all Canadians. This is especially enshrined in section 2(d) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Supreme Court of Canada has reiterated that when it comes to our rights as working Canadians, peaceful association is protected.

I have heard from constituents all over my riding and across Canada about concerns that workers have when it comes to their union's representation. They feel confined and they speak of intimidation from their own union and its organizers.

I will talk a little bit about a particular call I had from someone who was so worried about the intimidation and tactics that his own union had placed on him that he was reluctant at first to even give me his name as one of my own constituents. He related stories to me on a personal level about vindictiveness and intimidation tactics being used by his own union against him just because he was asking some questions about how union dues were spent and other matters pertaining to his union membership.

The right to peaceful association is granted to workers through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but the unmitigated right union leaders feel they have to represent a particular workplace is not protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is something that must be earned from the membership.

Union leaders have forgotten that representation is contingent upon workers placing their trust in the particular union of their choice through a democratic selection process. It is for this very reason that I introduced the employees' voting rights act.

It is time to put the needs of the boots over the needs of the suits when it comes to workers with respect to their representation. The democratic vote is something for which people have fought for centuries. Democracy is fundamental, and many people have paid the ultimate sacrifice for that. The right to be able to vote one's will, free of intimidation or threat, is a fundamental freedom and a right that should be extended to all workers.

I have a hard time understanding how anyone could be against a mandatory ballot vote. In his recent ruling in the Province of Saskatchewan v. the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the Honourable Mr. Justice Richards wrote on behalf of the majority of the Court of Appeal's ruling, "The secret ballot, after all, is a hallmark of a modern democracy."

I agree with the Hon. Justice Richards. If union membership can elect their national president or any of their executives, directors, or leadership by way of a secret ballot, then in all fairness the workers should be afforded the very same right to have a secret ballot during the union certification process.

Justice Richards is a very wise and pragmatic man. As he continued in rendering his verdict, he stated:

...a secret ballot regime does no more than ensure that employees are able to make the choices they see as being best for themselves.

This is the essence behind the employees' voting rights act: giving the workers the right to vote and making sure their voice is heard loud and clear in a definitive manner.

It is not the responsibility or duty of any legislative body, this House included, to provide a statutory framework that makes certification or decertification with a collective bargaining unit as easy as possible. However, it is the responsibility and duty of legislators and this House to ensure that the voices of employees are heard in a fair and democratic manner.

● (1810)

The employees' voting rights bill does just this. The legislation strikes a balance in the certification and decertification process of a collective bargaining unit, and it is not about swaying favour toward the union or the employer. This is about balance.

The legislation I propose would create a fair environment in which workers are the ones making the choice as to what they feel is best suited to their needs. I do not expect my colleagues in the NDP to understand or even accept these proposed changes, which is fine with me. Hard-working Canadian families know the NDP is clearly in the pockets of the big union bosses who want to maintain their stranglehold on workers and muzzle their democratic voice.

We know that not every single employee wishes to be part of a union. We also know that unions are driven by the need for power. They are furnished with a never-ending stream of monies through the dues they collect from those hard-working employees they claim to represent.

Justice Rand acknowledged the merits of the secret ballot as a way to counterbalance the unadulterated power of union suits. Justice Rand understood the potential for intimidation to be thrust upon workers by those seeking to exercise power or control over them.

I have heard, loud and clear, the positions of the unions. I have read the visceral nature of comments from people who are card-carrying members of the Alberta New Democratic Party and what they think of the employees' voting rights bill. Let me say this. I will not be intimidated by union bosses or union organizers. When we hear one person complain about the actions of union organizers, that can be dismissed as a one-off situation. However when we see the mountain of complaints that end up at the labour relations board, it is concerning to me.

The voice of workers is being trumped by the personal desire of union bosses and organizers. Democracy should not be about suppression.

The right to peaceful association is one that extends to all workers in Canada, should they wish to have a union represent them or not. The choice is theirs to make, and it should be theirs to make. The choice does not belong to the union.

The current card-check system has its flaws. It leaves open the opportunity for employees to be intimidated and for undemocratic behaviour to be conducted. If Robyn Benson can be elected as the national president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada through a secret ballot vote, then I will let the NDP and Mrs. Benson explain why Canadian workers should not have the same right to a secret ballot vote to determine if they want to have a union in the first place.

I believe firmly that the provisions included in the employees' voting rights bill would bring balance to our labour relations. It would bring much-needed changes to the legislation that governs our federal sectors. As well, this would deliver a clear message from the employees who work in the workplace. I can think of no better uniting force for workers than to have a strong and unified voice, one way or the other.

The union bosses have lost their sense of what hard-working Canadians need and want. The employees' voting rights bill is about workers. It is about workers recapturing their voice. It is about workers being able to stand up and say in an unwavering manner what they, the workers themselves, want, not what the union leadership wants.

Make no mistake; unions have a place in our system, but the leadership of these labour organizations have to accept the reality that we live in today. They need not be afraid of these proposed changes. Should the employees in a workplace decide that the service being provided or offered by the union is one they feel is worth the investment, then they will continue to hold the place they have or gain entry into whichever workplace they are attempting to enter.

Union membership, however, is on the decline in OECD countries. This is a trend that should alarm union bosses and union organizers. However, it seems they are more content with fighting semantics than embracing the need for change and evolution. They need to accept that they do not have a monopoly on the representation of workers. Just because they are a union and they wish to represent a certain employment sector, that alone should not be the deciding factor as to whether a union is in that workplace or not. It should always be the employees' choice.

The employees' voting rights bill is about empowering the workers, giving the employees the hallmark of a modern democracy and providing the workers with an opportunity to exercise their democratic and charter-protected right of peaceful association through a secret ballot vote.

The provisions contained within the employees' voting rights bill would demonstrate the will of the employees in a clear and definitive manner.

•(1815)

I hope that all members of the House, and particularly my colleagues in the NDP, will support workers and the principle of democracy and get behind this legislation, unite with workers and give them back their voice. If members wanted to take a look at all of the polling information, it would be very clear to everyone in the House that when Canadians are asked whether they think a secret ballot should be in the workplace, in virtually every poll, poll after

### *Private Members' Business*

poll, the results are very clear. Over 80% of workers in most polls want the right to have a secret ballot vote in the union certification and decertification process. What is even more interesting is that, depending on the poll one looks at, these results are higher in the province of Quebec and even higher when asking a current member or a past member of a union, because these employees clearly understand what can go on in the workplace when it comes to union intimidation and fear tactics.

I have heard several criticisms from various voices—and I know who those voices are—that allege that my legislation would create an unfair situation. It is not unreasonable to expect that a union should have a large majority of support from the workers it claims to represent. The only way to truly know that is by having a secret ballot vote. Some would contend that no MP is elected with a large majority in that way. They should be careful what they say, because some MPs are actually elected with large majorities and I might be one of them.

On the other hand, I never go to a doorstep of someone's house, as it is alleged in various cases before the labour relations board. None of us, when we are door knocking, have the privilege of going up to people on their doorstep and saying, "I think it's in your best interest if you vote for me right here, right now". That is intimidation. We would not tolerate that kind of tactic or behaviour in the election of any member of Parliament in the House, and it should not be accepted in the workplace either.

I want to end by saying it is not unreasonable at all to expect that a secret ballot should be provided to workers. There is absolutely nothing to fear other than a true and valid result from asking workers what their true wishes and desires are regarding whether they want to belong to a union or not. The only way to do that is to give them a secret ballot vote.

Let us get on with business and this debate. I am curious to see what kinds of comments are going to come from this. This is a very straightforward piece of legislation. It simply proposes to take an option in the labour law that says right now that the labour board may conduct a vote. Let us conduct that vote every time and make sure Canadian workers' voices are clearly heard.

•(1820)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Wetaskiwin for his bill and the debate he is bringing before the House. I would also like to congratulate him on being re-elected two years ago in his riding. I believe that he won 81% of the vote. That is quite impressive, I must say.

Now, let us look at the details of his bill. If workers want to unionize, they must have an absolute majority, not just of those who vote, but of all those who work in the bargaining unit. With 81% of the vote, he had sufficient support to be re-elected.

Why does the member want to subject workers in our country, men and women who want to form a union, to a more stringent rule than the one that governed his own re-election?

*Private Members' Business*

[English]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, no member of Parliament was elected by a yes/no question, not even the member who just asked me that question. The question on a ballot in a union certification process requires a yes or no. There are not five or six candidates vying for a first past the post system, which we have here.

What is unreasonable right now is that there are certain circumstances whereby unions are created in this country with less than 50% of the workforce's support. That means that the minority of workers in that workplace have their will imposed on the majority of workers. In a union certification process, if the union membership can convince the members to sign 50% card check, why on earth can they not do it in a secret ballot? What do they have to be afraid of?

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to make substantive changes to the provisions in the Canada Labour Code is fairly significant, which this is, so I would think there would be a fair amount of documentation on the rationale behind the purpose of this legislation.

There have been very strong accusations about intimidation by union leaders and union organizers.

I would ask my colleague, in this day and age where everybody is so hypersensitive about harassment and harassment charges, if he could give us an indication of the total number of charges that have been laid against union officials for harassment or if he could give us the number of files that have been before the labour relations board with regard to such actions.

• (1825)

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the same privileges I do as a member of Parliament. He can ask the Canada Industrial Labour Relations Board this question himself.

However, I have a lot of cases that have piled up. There are cases in the media. I would be more than happy to talk about them.

In fact, I could table the document right now if I had all-party support to do it, cited as *Fabricland Pacific Limited v. International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Local No. 287*, in which the individual here claims just that, that people show up at her place during the union certification drive, demanding that they sign the card check.

I understand that my Liberal colleague, who I believe is the critic on the labour file, is asking this question; so let us debate it. Let us have that discussion. If he has some different ideas as to how we could improve the legislation, I would be willing to listen to what those happen to be.

However, if he wanted to look up some statistics about the need for democracy, one only needs to count the over 100,000 names on cenotaphs across this country of people who fought for freedom and democracy and the ability to cast a secret ballot vote. Surely to goodness that list is long enough.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member is trying to impose democracy where we find very little, which is in this chamber.

The notion that a small minority of members of a bargaining unit could in fact turf out a union is anathema to me and to many trade

unionists. We know where the intimidation comes from. One only has to talk to the workers at a McDonald's in Ontario, in Orangeville, to find just what intimidation from the employer is all about prior to a vote. Yes, they had enough cards before the vote, then the vote, and the vote overturned it because they were all afraid they were going to lose their jobs because the employer was going to fire them all if they voted in favour of the union.

That is exactly the kind of thing that this card check certification in the labour code prevents. The intimidation comes from both sides.

I wonder if the member would comment.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has asked a very discerning question. I would say back to him, just as we have in our democratic process to elect members to this House, there is nothing wrong with an environment whereby the employer and the union are vying for support of the worker during a union certification drive.

If that is the case, then the workers themselves ultimately will have their choice through a secret ballot vote. They will either decide that forming a collective bargaining unit is in their best interests or not, which means the employer is going to have to do everything it needs to do to maintain its workforce and the union is going to do everything it needs to do to convince employees to vote in favour of union certification.

Competition between those two events will only result in the best offer being made to those employees.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is no reason to worry. Unions are not afraid of competition when it is done fairly and equitably and when there is truly a balance of power.

The NDP and I agree that this private member's bill, Bill C-525, is

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The translation is not working. It is now.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie can start his speech over.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, unions are not afraid of competition when it is done fairly and equitably and when there is truly a balance of power. Unfortunately the government is targeting that balance.

The NDP and I agree that this private member's bill, Bill C-525, is sadly a new way for the Conservatives to trample workers' right to unionize.

I want to point out that this initiative is not an isolated event. It is yet another vicious Conservative attack in their war against the union movement and, as a result, against the middle class.

This government is once again using dubious tactics to advance a completely ideological and backward agenda. As with its previous Bill C-377, which also aimed to weaken unions, the government is trying to make matters worse with Bill C-525.

However, the Conservatives need to remember that the right of association benefits our economy. It helps protect millions of good-quality jobs in Canada and is recognized by both international law and our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Through the decades, union struggles have built stronger communities and allowed domestic demand to flourish because of decent working conditions and better purchasing power. They have also helped to make a place for women in the workforce and to establish pension plans so that people can live in dignity in their golden years.

That brings us back to the latest Conservative affront to the workers of our country. We must not forget that this bill denies employees' legitimate, normal right to form a union after getting more than 50% of their signatures on membership cards. This principle remains important to the NDP and represents the surest and most civil way for people to organize in the workplace.

Bill C-525 not only goes so far as to demand a significant increase in the number of cards that need to be signed to set the process of union certification into motion, but it also flies in the face of all our traditions about the rules for a secret ballot.

In an unprecedented and troubling move, this government will automatically count employees who do not express support for the establishment of a union with those who oppose it. It will become much more difficult for workers to form a union than for a political party to win an election in Canada.

Here is a very specific example. Let us say that people in a workplace of 100 employees want to stand up for their rights and improve their working conditions. Naturally, they look to form an organization, a union, that will do so. The time comes for the vote imposed by our friends opposite. According to their rules, it takes a majority of all the workers, not just a majority of those who get out and vote. This is really pernicious, really perverse.

If 49 of our group of 100 go and vote and they all vote for a union, sorry, that will not be enough. The attempt fails because those who did not vote are deemed to have voted against the union. It is incredible and absurd.

If the employer gives some people the day off on voting day, he completely changes the picture. The icing on the cake is that, when the workers try to abolish the union, those who do not vote are considered to have voted in favour of decertification.

Do we all realize that the dice are loaded in this bill and that it is so flawed that, frankly, it has become offensive?

• (1830)

[English]

This new anti-union bill is the last attack of the Conservative government to weaken the labour movement and the capacity of workers to organize themselves in their workplace. To preserve the process where people sign membership cards is the best way to protect workers from the pressures and tactics of some employers. To impose a vote is to open the door to threats and intimidation. The studies are clear. When we take that road, the success to form a union drops. It is a 10% to 20% decrease. It is a huge difference for

### *Private Members' Business*

thousands of workers, men and women, who would not be able to benefit from a union.

What is especially vicious in this bill is when the vote comes, all of those who did not vote are considered to have voted against the union. This is incredible. The best is when they have a vote to kill the union, all those who did not vote are counted as if they have voted in favour of the end of the union. Can we not all see that this is unfair, that it is a biased process against employees?

[Translation]

We have to ask why the Conservatives want to bring in such a system for workers covered by the Canada Labour Code. Every province that has adopted this method has seen adverse effects.

In Ontario, when similar legislation was passed in 1995, the number of accreditation requests dropped by 40%, and the percentage of successful requests fell below 50%. The same thing happened in British Columbia between 1984 and 1992.

Although the Conservatives maintain that they are acting for the good of the economy, and I have my doubts about that, it cannot be said that they are giving much thought to middle-class workers. Once again, the Conservatives have chosen to further business interests at the expense of those of ordinary people.

The Conservatives would have us believe that there will be no impact on the ability of Canadians and Quebecers to unionize. That is completely false. Either they know this and it suits them just fine, or they have no idea of how things happen in real life, on the ground, at McDonald's and Walmart and the Couche-Tard convenience stores in Quebec.

As proof, if you take even a glancing look at university research on the matter, you can clearly see the negative impact that seems to follow moving from the traditional union accreditation method using membership cards to a secret ballot. Successful unionization attempts fall by 9%, according to researcher Susan Johnson of Wilfrid Laurier University. In this way, we will run the risk of getting closer to an American model, where lower salaries are the norm and the middle class is being eroded.

The member for Wetaskiwin has certainly not read these studies. If he had done so, he would have understood that using the current membership card accreditation method reduces the use of unfair and dishonest practices by the employer. However, perhaps he is familiar with these studies and is quite pleased with them. It is either one or the other.

To put it plainly, with the traditional method involving cards, 50% fewer employers decide to wage an anti-union campaign. This translates into a better work atmosphere and more respectful relationships. Otherwise, we are opening the door to the use of threats, to barely veiled references to potential closures or job losses, the usual scarecrows employers brandish to frighten workers who simply want to stand up for themselves and improve their lot.

The period between the request for certification and the vote seems to be the key moment when chances of success drop significantly. The longer the wait, the more time employers have to intervene and use unfair practices to have a negative influence on employees.

*Private Members' Business*

Members in the House right now have to pay attention to that fact, which has been studied and reported on. It is clear that Bill C-525 goes much further than its sponsor would have us believe. We have to ask ourselves what kind of society we want. Do we want a more egalitarian society like the one we have had in Canada for decades, or do we want a less egalitarian society similar to the one in the United States?

It is clear to me that the government has made its choice. Bill C-525, like Bill C-377, clearly reveals the Conservatives' economic strategy centred on poorly paid jobs and workers at the mercy of their employers.

However, I want to say that the NDP has made its choice too. The NDP will keep working for workers, for their rights, for better distribution of wealth and for the dignity of all.

● (1835)

If the government really wants to improve the labour market and families' living conditions, it should strengthen our communities, not try to undo what little progress the middle class has made.

It is sad to see that, after failing to revive the economy, the Conservatives are giving up on creating and maintaining good jobs. Before trying to teach workers a thing or two about democracy, the Conservatives should do some soul-searching. People are asking serious questions about their ability to manage the country, about prorogation and about scandals.

[English]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am getting the translation now, but I was not getting it and I am most interested in what my colleague has to say.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** For the remaining minute of his speech, the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie could perhaps continue with the last page, for example.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Mr. Speaker, if the government really wants to improve the labour market and families' living conditions, it should instead protect the rights of workers.

It should strengthen our communities, not try to undo what little progress the middle class has made. However, it is sad to see that, after failing to revive the economy, the Conservatives are giving up on creating and maintaining good jobs.

Before trying to teach workers a thing or two about democracy, the Conservatives should do some soul-searching. Canadians and Quebecers are asking serious questions about how the Conservatives are running the country, the prorogations of Parliament, the attempts to cover up scandals, robocalls, election expenses, and the Senate.

Workers in this country know that they can count on one party, the NDP, to be their voice in Parliament and stand up for their interests.

In 2015, we will bring down this government of privileged and powerful people and install a government that, for the first time, will meet the needs of the people.

● (1840)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** My apologies to all hon. members for some of the audio difficulties we experienced with that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-525, the bill we are debating today, is yet another piece of Conservative anti-labour legislation that will be used to try to turn back the clock on labour relations in our country. My party and I oppose this legislation as it is written.

Today, I want to talk about why this bill is bad labour relations legislation, why it is undemocratic at its core and why it is not needed. It is simply a solution in search of a problem.

The decision by the House to either pass or defeat the bill will come down to whether we believe it upholds the principles inherent in making good labour laws through a legitimate process, a process that is driven by the groups directly affected, employers and unions, through a real consultative and consensus-building process that is based on the principles of balance, fairness and mutual respect.

I remember back to the last bill we had. Almost no Conservative members in the House stood up for those principles in what was another anti-labour Conservative bill, Bill C-377, which was passed in the House earlier this year. It took a small group of Conservative senators, led by Senator Hugh Segal, to stand with all of my Liberal Senate colleagues and oppose the bill in the Senate. In the coming weeks, as we debate Bill C-525, I ask my Conservative colleagues opposite to have the courage to uphold these principles. I ask that they base their decision on what is right, not what they are being told is right by the Prime Minister's Office.

Bill C-525 would impact thousands of employers and approximately 600,000 employers within the federal jurisdiction. That is 600,000 people who have the right to ensure we as politicians respect principles inherent to creating fair and balanced labour relations laws for them and their employers.

We are fortunate that the current federal labour system is well-respected and supported by both unions and employers. Why? Because it is a result of a genuine and proven consultative and consensus process that has been followed for decades for amending the Canada Labour Code. There are clear examples of thoughtful, balanced and independent reviews of the Canada Labour Code. The last major consultative review of the Canada Labour Code occurred in 1995 and the subsequent report "Seeking a balance: Canada Labour Code, Part 1, Review" was authored by Andrew Sims.

The Sims report was led by a three person panel of highly regarded neutrals. It involved seven months of research and consultation.

*Private Members' Business*

In that report, Mr. Sims outlined the guiding principles that served the review, including that the existing Canada Labour Code basically continued to serve its constituencies well, that stability was desirable and that pendulum-like changes to the Code did not serve the best interests of the parties or the public and that consensus between the parties was the best basis for advocating legislative change.

Basically, Mr. Sims said that if labour laws were to be changed, they should be changed because there was a demonstrated need because the legislation was no longer working or serving the public interest or it should be done on a consensual basis.

I ask the House whether it believes Bill C-525 meets these criteria or is based on those principles that employers and unions currently respect and agree upon.

● (1845)

The Sims report went on to talk about the dangers of politicizing labour laws. I think that is what we are seeing here. I quote from the Sims report:

Throughout our deliberations, we heard both labour and management comment on the need for stability in our labour legislation. Both sides were reacting to what they view as excessive experimentation in the labour law reforms of a number of provinces.... Some would push the pendulum one way, some the other. However, the concern identified by both sides is that the pendulum should not be pushed too far or too frequently. To do so destroys the predictability and underlying credibility upon which an effective...system depends.

The Sims report was a true consultative review of the Labour Code. Can anyone in this House say that the process we are following, which would make a significant change to the code, is either thoughtful or balanced and based on the wishes of the people affected?

For labour legislation to be effective, it must be driven and implemented by the stakeholders, including employers, unions, and the government, through a real consultative process, not by private members' bills that are based solely on political motives.

The question has to be asked: Who do we think is driving the bill? I have talked to labour groups, such as the CLC, and employer groups, such as FETCO, and I can tell the House that it is neither of those groups. They are both saying that the way to make changes to the Labour Code is through consultation and consensus.

Who is driving the bill if it is not the two direct parties involved in this, the two parties whose lives will be changed? Obviously it is those people who care little about what employers and unions in the federal sector want. If my Conservative friends will not listen to me, I hope they will listen to the people who are directly affected by this legislation.

Make no mistake, Bill C-525 makes a substantive change to federal labour laws. It fundamentally changes the rights of workers in how they can unionize, replacing a card check system with a mandatory vote system. However, it is not the standard vote system used by a number of provinces, where a union needs only 50% plus one. Instead, it is a grossly undemocratic process that would count anyone who did not vote as voting no. What democratic principle is that based on?

Their true intentions could not be further from the hollow words they have expressed. Let us be frank. The bill is about one thing and

one thing only: discouraging unionization in this country, plain and simple.

Bill C-525 would change the rules for forming and dissolving a union from a majority process to a minority-driven process, making certifying a union more difficult while making decertifying a union easier.

The past decades have witnessed much progress in striking a balance between unions and employers. One of the main reasons is that improvements to labour law, in particular, the Canada Labour Code, have been done within the framework of the Canada Labour Code. Bill C-525 looks to bypass that established process that requires adequate consultation and support of the parties.

Bill C-525 is not wanted by unions or employers in the federal sector. The only ones who want this are my counterparts across the way.

The carefully struck balance in the Labour Code ought not to be taken for granted. There is simply no need to alter what is working well. I challenge the government, I challenge my colleagues across the way, to have the courage to stand up for consensus, balance, and fairness and to vote against the bill.

● (1850)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today about the member for Wetaskiwin's private member's bill, the employees' voting rights act. This bill aims to amend the rules for union certification and decertification in federally-regulated workplaces, to ensure that all individuals have access to secret ballot voting. I commend my hon. colleague for raising and pursuing this issue.

Democracy is fundamental to Canadian society and all employees should have the right to vote on whether they wish to form a union or not. Canadian labour laws are in place to protect the rights of workers, while ensuring a fair and productive workplace environment for businesses to maximize Canada's economic potential. One of these rights is, again, to join or not join a union and participate, or not, in the collective bargaining process.

In Canada, including provincial and federal jurisdictions, about 30% of the workforce is unionized. This includes occupations like transportation workers, manufacturers, miners, electricians and workers in other construction trades. It also includes professionals, such as engineers, nurses and employees in federal, provincial and municipal public administrations, schools and hospitals. All in all, there are about 4 million unionized workers in over 100 different unions.

*Private Members' Business*

Some workers are of the view that unions help them to negotiate collective agreements with their employers, protecting them against what they feel are arbitrary changes in work rules, discrimination, unfair treatment and unequal pay for similar work. Obviously, others are flat out opposed to unionization. What both of these groups of workers have in common is that they do have the right and the freedom to choose to be, or not be, part of a union. This bill is designed to extend that principle. It would help to ensure that all employees would have the opportunity to express their wishes about forming or decertifying a union.

Currently, a card check system can be used to form a union. If the majority of employees sign membership cards, they can automatically be certified as a union. When the level of employee support is insufficient for automatic certification but meets a minimum threshold, for example, 35% under the Canada Labour Code, the labour board conducts a vote to determine employee support for a union. If the majority of employees casting ballots supports a union in this vote, the union can be certified.

For example, under our current system, if 11 out of 20 employees sign the union membership card, the remaining 9 individuals may not be asked to sign and may not even be aware that their colleagues want to form a union, yet they could automatically be unionized. This means that in many cases, unions can be certified without giving all employees the opportunity to express their wishes.

The bill proposes to eliminate automatic certification and use mandatory secret ballot votes to certify or decertify a union in all cases. This will make votes no longer the exception, but the rule for certifying or decertifying unions. The employees' voting rights act would ensure that all employees would have the opportunity to express themselves by a secret ballot vote when considering whether to certify or decertify.

We have heard a lot about employers and intimidation and the unions and intimidation, but what no one has talked about, and what was my own individual experience. It was a good workplace that had been in operation for many years. The situation was changing in terms of reorganization and there was a debate going on. There were people who felt very strongly. It was a small group of about 25 employees. It had nothing to do with the employer or any kind of intimidation. It had to do with the employee wanting the ability to have a secret ballot so that not all the members, colleagues and co-workers, who felt strongly on one side or the other of the issue, would know how he or she voted. What we have lost in this debate today is the simple ability for workers to exercise their votes in secrecy, like we do every day in every election in Canada.

Our Conservative government supports the right of every employee to a secret ballot.

• (1855)

It would provide every employee with the ability to voice his or her opinion and would allow time to fully consider his or her decision before voting for or against the union. That is why we support the intent behind Bill C-525 and will vote in favour of it at second reading.

That said, there are areas of the bill that we believe could be amended, and we would like to hear from and consult with our

stakeholders, both employer and union, in committee. The House committee will have an opportunity to carefully study the bill. It will consult with stakeholders and carefully consider their input and views.

We support the intent of Bill C-525. It must find the right balance between the needs of employees, unions, and employers, and I am confident that the bill could do just that.

I would like to encourage my hon. colleagues to support this bill at second reading and defend the democratic rights of the workers of our country. This legislation would ensure that every federally regulated employee had access to a secret ballot vote when considering union representation. Again, I ask members to look back to the example of the small, tight-knit workplace. Workers had a difficult decision because of changing circumstances, and they wanted to exercise that right with privacy, even from their colleagues, in terms of what decision they made.

The legislation would ensure that employees would determine for themselves whether they wished to be represented by a union, and they could have their voices heard.

With any legislation, of course, it is important to hear the views and feedback of those who would be most impacted and to take them into careful consideration. I have no doubt that the members of the House committee would carefully consider the principles behind the bill and would examine the unique perspectives of employees, unions, and employer groups that would provide needed perspective on the bill.

Again, I congratulate and thank the hon. member for working to support the rights of employees by raising this issue and I would like to encourage hon. colleagues to stand in support of this bill at second reading. We can have a great discussion.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to the debate on this private member's bill, Bill C-525.

It makes me reflect on my own background. I started my working life in the retail sector, working for a very large employer in a non-unionized workplace. As a young person, I did not really know the difference. I was glad to get some money for the work that I did. However, then I applied for and I was successful in getting a job in another workplace. It was another Canadian employer but this one had a pre-existing union.

My salary increased substantially when I went to work for the second employer. I suddenly had all kinds of health benefits and extended benefits that I did not know were possible. I also had a grievance procedure, which meant that if there were problems in the workplace that could not be resolved, there was a mechanism to address these problems without having to go as a sole individual employee to the employer. Instead I would have some guidance and assistance through my workplace representative.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

When I first began to work in this second job, the employer, as usually happens, told me about the workplace and the advantages of working in this workplace, and I was very happy to be there. It was only later that I found out that it was people who had come before me who had gotten together to form a union and who had negotiated in successive collective agreements to improve the wages, the working conditions and the benefits of that workplace through many hard-won gains over a great many years. I discovered that it was not just the generosity of the employer that made that a great place to work, it was in fact the work of other employees who were there and people who had come before us who had made that a great place to work. They had negotiated a standard of living that allowed people to earn decent wages and benefits right across the country for that employer. I was very proud to be a member of that union and to work to improve the standard of living and the benefits for those who would come after me.

With this private member's bill, the hon. member opposite would bring the weight of the law down on the side of the employer. The bill would take that collective bargaining scale and further tip it toward the advantage of the employer, making any improvements in the workplace so much more difficult for the working people and making it that much more difficult for them even to get a union.

The member, in presenting his bill, talked about democracy, yet he sees no contradiction that this would in fact disenfranchise so many working people in the federal jurisdiction across this country. I find it absolutely shocking that he would stand there and talk about democracy when he would erode and undermine the democratic rights of so many working people in the federal jurisdiction.

Let me explain. What the bill ultimately would do is change fundamentally the voting process, so that when working people are deciding whether to join a union or to cease to belong to a union, the votes that are counted would be all of those in this group of workers, even those who choose not to participate in the vote. In other words, if they do not vote, their vote would always be counted against the union. In other words, it would be a process of heads the employer wins, and tails the workers lose.

● (1900)

It would be weighted disproportionately in favour of employers, and that would make it almost impossible for working people to form a union or to keep a union where there is a decertification vote.

As my colleague has just said, Bill C-525 sets the bar so high for workers to join a union that the sponsor of the bill, who won in his own riding by over 80% of the vote in the last election, could not get elected under these rules for union certification. In fact, not a single member of the governing party would be elected under these same rules.

It is clearly hypocritical. It is clearly unfair. It is clearly designed to undermine the ability of working people to decide to have a collective voice to negotiate on their behalf and to represent them in the workplace.

The member opposite has been asked who he consulted with in presenting the bill, which would fundamentally and radically change the system of labour relations in this country. Who did he consult

with? He could name no one, yet clearly this is a bill that the government seems to have thrown its full weight behind.

It is not surprising that there has been a lack of consultation. That has been the hallmark of the government. It has also been its hallmark to try to impose its radical changes on Canadians, whether it is omnibus budget implementation bills or it is bringing in closure in the House. The government has just introduced the fourth of its mega-bills into the House, which throws everything in but the kitchen sink and changes a massive number of laws all in one fell swoop without adequate consultation, and it has also stifled democratic debate on a record number of occasions.

The government's desire with this private member's bill is in fact to stifle democratic debate and democratic participation in our federal jurisdiction workplaces. It does seem to go hand in hand with its standard procedure.

Ultimately what the government would like to do is see a decline in union representation, federally, in this country. I think what Canadians will very quickly see is that, as we have seen in the United States, this will be an attack on middle-class living standards in this country. Working people will earn less, have fewer rights in the workplace and have less democratic input into the place where they spend most of their lives, which is the workplace. It will undermine the middle-class standard of living and it will increase inequality.

It does not have to be that way. We can look at some of the most productive, most competitive countries in the world. Look at some of the Scandinavian countries, countries like the Netherlands or Germany, the powerhouse of Europe. They have incredibly high levels of union representation. What that means is that employers and employees sit down together and negotiate. Everyone wants the workplace to do well, wants the company to succeed, and wants working people to have their fair share. That is what union representation is about.

I see my time is up. I thank the Speaker for the opportunity. I say shame on the government if it pursues this anti-union, anti-worker, anti-middle class agenda. We will not stand for it on this side of the House.

● (1905)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[English]

## RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I put a question to the Minister of Transport some days back. The issue was with the growing concern with rail disasters and the failure of the government to assert its powers to intervene and prevent these incidents. There is great concern that there has been, reportedly, a 3000% increase in dangerous rail traffic. The minister responded by saying the health and safety of Canadians was a top priority and then cited a statement by the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities endorsing the actions taken by the government.

It is important to clarify that, as I understand it, the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities did thank the minister for suggesting that it would require increased insurance in the case of disasters. In fact, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has called for preventive action, to prevent further incidents, not simply action after the fact. It has called for three specific measures: equipping and supporting municipal first responders to rail emergencies; ensuring federal and industry policy and regulations address rail safety; and preventing the downloading of rail safety and emergency response costs to local taxpayers. In fairness, the federation did say it looked forward to working with the Minister of Transport to deliver concrete reforms, which it is still awaiting.

What deeply troubles Canadians is, sadly, that the response by the government to tragedies such as in Lac-Mégantic and additional rail disasters is seriously inadequate. The situation in Canada is that the federal government has unilateral jurisdiction over rail and, therefore, Canadians wait for it to take action. They cannot turn to their provincial jurisdictions. The focus has been only after the effect instead of on prevention, such as measures to deal with insurance after the fact if there is a serious incident.

What communities are calling for is preventive action. The rail workers are calling for an end to railway self-regulation. They want the government to assert its power to regulate dangerous shipping, prevent loss of life and prevent damage to the environment.

I would like to raise several recent major incidents. At Wabamun Lake in Alberta in 2005, a CN derailment spilled 700,000 cubic meters of bunker C oil and a large portion of pole treating oil into Wabamun Lake. The important recreational lake was closed to swimming, boating and fishing for an entire year. It was the largest spill into fresh water in North American history. There was an absolutely abject response by the federal government to that. It did not show up until a week later to assist the first nations whose lands were badly damaged.

The Cheakamus River disaster, a few days later in British Columbia, spilled 40,000 litres of sodium hydroxide, killing the fishery that had just recovered. In my own riding, tanker cars of hazardous chemicals come through into the heart of the community daily. Now I have heard recently about dangers of a CN burned-out bridge in Slave Lake.

When can we expect the government to take preventive action, assert its regulatory powers and actually protect Canadian communities and our environment?

● (1910)

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has taken concrete actions to enhance the safety of the Canadian rail system, making it one of the safest in the world. Transport Canada must constantly review incidents with the view of enhancing safety.

That is why the work of the Transportation Safety Board is so important. The Transportation Safety Board is investigating the Gainford incident, for example, and the department will not hesitate to take appropriate safety actions regarding any identified safety deficiency brought forward to the department.

In 2007 our government conducted a full review of the Railway Safety Act. The independent review panel made recommendations to improve rail safety after national consultations with key stakeholders. Transport Canada agreed with all of those recommendations and has been taking action to address them.

Our government amended the Railway Safety Act to further improve safety by providing new authorities for improved oversight and enforcement.

One of the amendments requires railways to get a safety-based railway operating certificate before they begin operations. Another amendment allows us to implement administrative monetary penalties as a new tool for dealing with companies that do not meet safety requirements.

The tragedy at Lac-Mégantic and the derailment in Gainford highlighted the importance of continuing to work together to keep such incidents from happening. This government has made further concrete efforts to enhance the safety of rail and the movement of dangerous goods.

On July 23, Transport Canada issued an emergency directive to railways companies, requiring, first, that two operators be present at all times for trains carrying dangerous goods; second, that no trains transporting dangerous goods be left unattended; third, that all cabins be locked; fourth, that all reversers be removed from locomotives; and fifth, that all brakes be properly applied on all locomotives.

The department also issued a ministerial order obligating railway companies to develop rules to comply with these requirements permanently.

In the aftermath of these events, the minister has also spoken with many groups to determine how they could strengthen railway safety standards. Transport Canada will continue to co-operate and work with industry and communities to identify further measures to improve safety for all Canadians. The approach has been warmly accepted and has been lauded by such groups as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

To emphasize the importance of transportation safety, the Speech from the Throne noted two important actions: first, that shippers and railway companies would be required to carry additional insurance, so they are held accountable; second, that Transport Canada would take targeted action to make the transportation of dangerous goods safer.

On this second point, the department issued a protective direction in October requiring parties who import or offer for transport crude oil must retest the classification of crude oil if that classification test has not been conducted since July 7, 2013. They must also make those test results available to Transport Canada as well as update their safety data sheets and provide them to Transport Canada's Canadian Transport Emergency Centre. Finally, until such testing is completed, they must also ship all crude oil as class 3 flammable liquid packing group 1 when shipping by rail.

In short, we are continuing to take action to improve Canada's rail safety system. Since the 2007 review of the Railway Safety Act, train accidents have actually decreased.

The department's continued actions will continue to reduce the risk of accidents, enhance competitiveness of our nation's railways, and increase the public safety of Canadians.

Transport Canada remains dedicated to keeping Canada's transportation system safe and secure.

• (1915)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I have to reiterate again: we appreciate that the government has taken some actions, but regrettably, it is by and large after the fact.

More than half a dozen measures that the Transportation Safety Board directed should occur two decades back have still not occurred. I do not have time to list all of them, but I encourage the government to go back and look at the many reports of the Transportation Safety Board done after the fact.

Canadian communities are calling for the government to use its regulatory powers. Why regulatory powers and not emergency

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

orders? That is because regulations require that there actually be consultation with the communities that are impacted.

What Canadians, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, are calling for is that the government actually assert its regulatory powers, consult with the municipalities, and come forward with a concerted regulatory agenda to avoid these serious accidents in the future.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Mr. Speaker, our government believes that a strong preventative safety program is one built around compliance with appropriate regulations. That is why our government has taken concrete measures to enhance the safety of rail and the transportation of dangerous goods: so that accidents such as the one in Gainford and the tragedy at Lac-Mégantic are not repeated.

After Lac-Mégantic, our government issued an emergency directive to immediately enhance the safety of rail transportation, followed by a ministerial order requiring industry to develop rules to make those measures permanent. The department issued a protective direction requiring a person who imports crude oil or offers it for transport to retest the classification of their crude oil prior to transport.

We are working closely with industry, first responders, and communities to identify additional measures to enhance the safety of rail transportation and the transportation of dangerous goods.

It should also be noted that since the comprehensive Railway Safety Act review in 2007, we have taken decisive action to reduce the possibility of accidents and derailments in the rail industry. In fact, since that review there has been a marked decline in rail accidents, which is a result of our commitment to improving rail safety.

[*Translation*]

**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 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)



# CONTENTS

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Privacy Commissioner

The Speaker ..... 507

### First Nations Elections Act

Mr. Duncan (for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) ..... 507  
 Bill C-9. Introduction and first reading ..... 507  
 (Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) ..... 507  
 (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..... 507

### Petitions

#### Human Rights

Mrs. Smith ..... 507

#### Criminal Code

Mrs. Smith ..... 507

#### VIA Rail

Mr. Caron ..... 507

#### Pensions

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) ..... 508

#### Proportional Representation

Mr. Stewart ..... 508

#### Electronic Petitions

Mr. Stewart ..... 508

#### Navigable Waters Protection Act

Mr. Bevington ..... 508

#### Kitsilano Coast Guard Station

Mr. Donnelly ..... 508

#### Shark Finning

Mr. Donnelly ..... 508

#### National Sustainable Seafood Day

Mr. Donnelly ..... 508

### Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 508

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Economic Action Plan 2013 Act No. 2

Mr. Bevington ..... 508  
 Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) ..... 509  
 Mr. Lamoureux ..... 510  
 Mr. Keddy ..... 510  
 Mr. Giguère ..... 512  
 Mr. Hsu ..... 512  
 Ms. Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) ..... 512  
 Mrs. McLeod ..... 514  
 Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) ..... 514  
 Mrs. Smith ..... 514  
 Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) ..... 516  
 Mr. Thibeault ..... 516  
 Mr. Aspin ..... 517  
 Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) ..... 518  
 Mr. Casey ..... 519

Mr. Rickford ..... 519  
 Ms. Murray ..... 519  
 Mr. O'Toole ..... 520  
 Ms. Chow ..... 520  
 Mr. Anderson ..... 521  
 Mr. Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) ..... 522  
 Mr. Casey ..... 523  
 Mr. Shipley ..... 523  
 Mr. Thibeault ..... 525  
 Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) ..... 525  
 Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) ..... 525  
 Mr. Valeriote ..... 527  
 Mr. Godin ..... 527  
 Mr. Scott ..... 527  
 Mrs. McLeod ..... 527  
 Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) ..... 529  
 Mr. Godin ..... 529  
 Mr. Scott ..... 529  
 Mr. Giguère ..... 530  
 Mr. Blanchette ..... 531  
 Mr. Dusseault ..... 531  
 Mr. Clement ..... 531  
 Mr. Ravignat ..... 532  
 Ms. May ..... 533  
 Mr. Giguère ..... 533  
 Mr. Sandhu ..... 533  
 Ms. May ..... 535  
 Mr. Lamoureux ..... 535  
 Mr. Fletcher ..... 535  
 Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) ..... 536  
 Mr. Lamoureux ..... 536  
 Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest) ..... 537  
 Ms. Sgro ..... 537  
 Mr. Karygiannis ..... 538  
 Mr. Lamoureux ..... 538

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Women's History Month

Ms. Crockatt ..... 539

### Post-secondary Education

Mr. Godin ..... 539

### Aboriginal Affairs

Mr. Chong ..... 539

### *The Suburban*

Mr. Scarpaleggia ..... 539

### Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation

Mr. Brown (Barrie) ..... 540

### Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching

Mr. Dewar ..... 540



<b>Presence in Gallery</b>	
The Speaker .....	549

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

<b>Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement</b>	
Mr. Harper .....	550

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

<b>Economic Action Plan 2013 Act No. 2</b>	
Bill C-4. Second reading .....	550
Ms. Leitch .....	550
Ms. Charlton .....	552
Mr. Lamoureux .....	552
Mr. Fletcher .....	552
Mr. Rousseau .....	552
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	554
Ms. May .....	554
Mr. Lizon .....	554
Mrs. Hughes .....	556
Ms. Doré Lefebvre .....	556
Mr. Chicoine .....	556
Mr. Sandhu .....	557
Mr. Lamoureux .....	558
Mr. Brown (Barrie) .....	558
Mr. Sullivan .....	560
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	560
Mr. Aubin .....	561
Mrs. Hughes .....	562

Mr. Lamoureux .....	562
Mr. Lobb .....	563
Ms. Charlton .....	564
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	564
Mr. Hsu .....	565
Ms. May .....	566
Ms. Doré Lefebvre .....	566
Mr. Valeriote .....	566
Mr. Wallace .....	567
Amendment negatived .....	568
Motion agreed to .....	569
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..	569

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

<b>Employees' Voting Rights Act</b>	
Mr. Calkins .....	569
Bill C-525. Second reading .....	570
Mr. Boulerice .....	571
Mr. Cuzner .....	572
Mr. Sullivan .....	572
Mr. Boulerice .....	572
Mr. Cuzner .....	574
Mrs. McLeod .....	575
Ms. Nash .....	576

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

<b>Rail Transportation</b>	
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) .....	578
Mr. Watson .....	578

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