



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, April 8, 2014**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

### INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to article 19 of the constitution of the International Labour Organization, the ILO, member states are required to bring recently adopted ILO conventions and recommendations to the attention of the competent authorities.

[*English*]

I am pleased to submit to the House, in both official languages, two copies of the report of the Canadian position with respect to a convention and recommendations adopted at the 99th session, June 2010; the 100th session, June 2011; and the 101st session, 2012, of the International Labour Convention, in Geneva, Switzerland.

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and an honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, in relation to Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act and the Canada Transportation Act and to provide for other measures.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

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### HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-588, an act to amend the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act (Sambro Island Lighthouse).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce my bill for the protection of Sambro Island lighthouse.

Sambro Island lighthouse is found off the coast of Nova Scotia at the mouth of the Halifax Harbour, just off the small, proud fishing community of Sambro. It was the earliest lighthouse built in North America, and it is the oldest continuously working lighthouse in the western hemisphere.

In 2010, the government declared almost 1,000 lighthouses surplus to its needs, meaning that Fisheries and Oceans would no longer have the responsibility to care for any of these lighthouses.

The community wants to protect the Sambro Island lighthouse. It is a piece of our history, our story, and it is an iconic structure for the area.

However, it is not realistic to assume that the community can take on the responsibility of this lighthouse, a lighthouse that is located on an island, in the Atlantic Ocean, a lighthouse that quickly becomes inaccessible due to weather or swells.

My bill would designate the Sambro Island lighthouse as a heritage lighthouse under the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act, and put the responsibility for this iconic structure where it belongs, with Parks Canada.

I would like to thank the community members of Sambro and Ketch Harbour and area, and the Sambro Island Lighthouse Heritage Society, who have worked so hard to draw attention to the fate of the Sambro Island lighthouse and tried to develop a community solution.

I would also like to recognize the work of Barry MacDonald, who has worked tirelessly to protect our lighthouses across the country and who continues to offer his expertise to our cause.

I hope that all members can recognize the importance of the Sambro Island lighthouse to Canada, to our country, and that they will support the bill.

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

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### NATIONAL GARDEN DAY ACT

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-589, an act respecting a National Garden Day.

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a private member's bill that would enact a national day for gardens, which would be the Friday preceding Father's Day. One might wonder why it would be Father's Day, not Mother's Day. In discussions with horticulture societies across the country and the Canadian Horticultural Council, they have acknowledged that the horticultural industry is a billion-dollar industry across the country.

After the severe winter we have all lived through in this country, I think we would all appreciate that one of the things to look forward to would be flowers—flowers blooming in beautiful colours in gardens from coast to coast to coast across this great land of ours. This would be a way, not only to plant our own gardens, but to enjoy our neighbours' gardens as well. That is not to suggest that we should take flowers from our neighbours' gardens, unless, of course, they are offered to us as a donation to plant in our own garden to propagate it even more. This would be a way for all of us who have lived through this harsh Canadian winter to look forward to something that is truly spring-like, that truly makes us feel good, and that is actually good for our environment.

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

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**PETITIONS****PENSIONS**

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from members in my constituency asking the Government of Canada to work with provincial and territorial governments to increase pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans, and implement a fully funded plan to phase in such an increase without delay.

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition, with hundreds of names, from people from Sault Ste. Marie who are very concerned about the federal government's abandonment of the Algoma Central Railway. The Algoma railway plays a very important role in northern Ontario, connecting communities that are unable to be connected in any other way. It is also an economic corridor for many of the outfitters in the small communities along the route.

The petitioners are frustrated with the lack of action by the federal government. The petitioners are asking parliamentarians and New Democrats to stand up to fight for the vision of sustainable rail transportation across Canada, and particularly on the Algoma Central Railway line.

• (1010)

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I table a petition from residents of Winnipeg North who are concerned about the government's decision to increase the age for receiving OAS from 65 to 67. The petitioners believe that people should be able to continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65, and that the government not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs: OAS, GIS and CPP.

**NUCLEAR FUEL PROCESSING LICENCE**

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition centres around the GE Hitachi plant on Lansdowne Avenue. The petition is signed by residents, some of whom have lived around the plant for 40 years and never known exactly what it produced, notwithstanding a condition in the licence that required the plant to tell everyone who lived around the plant. The petitioners are very concerned about the lack of oversight in the enforcement of the licence.

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition pertains to the fact that in Toronto right now, up to 50% of all workers cannot find a full-time stable job, a job that comes with benefits, a workplace pension, and job security. The petitioners are expressing concern for that and support for my private member's bill calling on a national urban workers strategy.

**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, finally, notwithstanding the government's decision to clamp down on pay-to-pay fees, there are still a multiplicity of examples of companies charging their customers money just to receive their bill in the mail. This unfairly targets seniors and people on fixed incomes.

[*Translation*]

**VIA RAIL**

**Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to table three petitions on the same subject: the decline of VIA Rail service in eastern Canada.

One of these petitions was signed by thousands of people in the Acadie—Bathurst region; others were signed by 24,000 people in the Campbellton region; and another was signed by about 5,000 people in my riding, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

The petitions I have here are just some of those many signatures, but they testify to the truly deplorable decline in our region. In the Gaspé, the train used to run three times a week, but now there is no service at all. In northern New Brunswick, it used to run six times a week; now it runs just three times a week.

If CN closes the 70-kilometre line from Miramichi to Bathurst, passenger rail service in all of eastern Canada could be lost for good.

[*English*]

Sir John A. Macdonald's national dream is at risk. I hope the government will uphold its predecessor's dream and ensure coast-to-coast service.

## MINING INDUSTRY

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present petitions from residents of the Victoria area in support of private member's Bill C-474. This bill calls for transparency in the activities of mining corporations abroad, requiring the publication of any funds and moneys that have been provided by them or their subsidiaries to any foreign government for purposes of furthering mining, oil, and gas industry activities.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from residents of Vancouver and the Burnaby area. It is very timely, given the opening of the process under the National Energy Board for the proposed Kinder Morgan expansion. The petitioners are calling for the respect of this House, the federal government, and the province for the moratorium on tanker traffic on the B.C. coast, which has existed since 1972.

[Translation]

## PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATORS

**Mr. Tarik Brahmī (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I have two petitions signed by people from Montréal who are asking MPs to create a separate offence for individuals who assault on-duty bus drivers.

They are very concerned about the safety of public transit, particularly in view of the desire to enhance public transit in Montréal, throughout Quebec and across Canada.

[English]

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions signed by thousands of Canadians across the country, including those from my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam, and Port Moody.

The first is from Canadians who are concerned with cuts to Canada Post, the elimination of door-to-door service, the loss of up to \$8,000 jobs, and the significant increase in postage. They call on the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts and look for ways to innovate in areas such as postal banking.

•(1015)

## SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians who want the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning and ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins to Canada.

[Translation]

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table three petitions today.

The first is about a public transit strategy.

## Routine Proceedings

## CANADA POST

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** The second is about Canada Post. The people want to know the government's position on the Canada Post Corporation Act.

## DRUG SHORTAGES

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** The third petition is about my Bill C-523 on the mandatory disclosure of drug shortages. The people who signed this petition have observed that the Government of Canada's voluntary approach has not reduced the impact of shortages on patients and health care professionals.

[English]

## JERICHO GARRISON LANDS

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a set of petitions from residents of Vancouver, as well as my riding of Vancouver Quadra, who are concerned about the announcements that there will be a strategic disposal of what is known as the Jericho Garrison lands, which is 22 hectares of land in the middle of west Point Grey. It has significant heritage buildings, trees, and green spaces.

They are concerned that there has been no public consultation with respect to this disposal. The efforts that I have made to get clarity about the timing and a commitment for consultation have been rebuffed by three different ministries. Therefore, they are calling on the Government of Canada to coordinate a full process of public consultation prior to the commencement of any disposal of the Jericho lands.

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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, Question No. 307 will be answered today.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 307—**Mr. Scott Simms:**

With regard to the Ship Source Oil Pollution Fund (SSOPF): (a) what actions have been funded by the SSOPF, broken down by (i) province, (ii) event site, (iii) departments involved, (iv) companies involved, (v) vessels involved, (vi) cost, (vii) details of all analysis and results, (viii) the file numbers of all departmental or ministerial briefings related to each event; and (b) what are the details of all events the fund has considered assisting, or for which the fund has been applied to, but not actually funded, broken down by (i) province, (ii) event site, (iii) departments involved, (iv) companies involved, (v) vessels involved, (vi) anticipated cost, (vii) details of all analysis and results, (viii) the file numbers of all departmental or ministerial briefings related to each event, (ix) the details of why the request to assist was declined?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the ship-source oil pollution fund is independent and operates at arm's length from the department. The fund has an administrator who is responsible for its management and the payment of claims for compensation.

Questions regarding any claims to or payments made from the ship-source oil pollution fund should be directed to the fund.

\* \* \*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 304 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 304—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to the costs of providing security to the Prime Minister, what are the total costs for each fiscal year, from 2003-2004 to 2013-2014?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

## TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request an emergency debate on the huge problems we are having with the temporary foreign worker program. As we know, this is not a new issue, but it has become an emergency since time after time we have had the HD Mining scandal, the RBC scandal, the oil sands, and now McDonald's in Victoria, and other fast food outlets. It is an absolute abuse of this program, where Canadians are being displaced.

As we have no opposition day motions left before Friday is upon us, I am requesting an emergency debate so that we, as parliamentarians, can address the major flaws in this program. Canadians right across this country, whether I speak to them in my riding, or in Toronto or Edmonton, are very worried. In Victoria, there is an example of Canadians being denied jobs while temporary foreign workers are being brought in.

Parliamentarians need a detailed debate because when the media reports on something, there is a tiny tinkering with the program and then we carry on. Tinkering will not fix this program. The key question is why LMOs were granted. I would suggest it is because the proper data, proper enforcement, and procedures required to

make sure that Canadians are not being denied the jobs are not in place.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are not opposed to the temporary foreign worker program, but it has to be used only when employers are training people for the skill shortages that exist or when there are no Canadians available. It does not mean displacing Canadians from the jobs that they can do. Youth unemployment is in the double digits. This is an emergency right across this country.

• (1020)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising this issue. Although I am sure that she has a concern, I do not find that it meets the test to grant an emergency debate.

I will point out that the House, in a few moments, will resume debate on the budget implementation bill, where, of course, members are granted more latitude on the types of remarks they can speak to. I am sure members who wish to can avail themselves of that opportunity.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1**

The House resumed from April 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you how disappointed I am with this bill. After all this time, one might think that we are accustomed to this kind of bill, which is so bad for Canadians, but I am not. Bill C-31 is a very important reminder of that reality.

I rise today to denounce the Conservative government's arbitrary tactics. Last Friday, the government introduced Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures. The problem is that this bill is another omnibus bill. It is over 360 pages long and includes a wide range of complex measures.

I would also like to remind any Canadians who are watching that we are debating this bill under a time allocation motion.

Once again, the Conservatives are trying to keep Canadians in the dark and make changes to many laws without any consultation or parliamentary oversight.

*Government Orders*

Among the laws affected or created by the many provisions, such as the Old Age Security Act and the Administrative Tribunals Act, there is the new bridge for the St. Lawrence act, regarding a bridge linking Montreal with the south shore.

It should be noted that the Champlain Bridge legislation is well hidden in the 360 pages, and for good reason: we can see right off the bat that the bridge will not be subject to the User Fees Act or the Bridges Act. These two laws that provide consumer protection and safety guarantees will not apply to the Champlain Bridge.

What that means is that safety and inspection provisions of the Bridges Act will not apply to the Champlain Bridge. In other words, it will not have to meet the same safety standards as other bridges. That is very alarming.

Who will be responsible for monitoring the safety of this bridge?

Furthermore, the new bridge for the St. Lawrence act will not require the holding of mandatory consultations on user fees established by a regulating authority. This means that the obligations to notify and consult people, justify the fees and create an independent advisory panel to address complaints will not apply to the Champlain Bridge. That is incredible.

In other words, the government is casually deciding to make taxpayers pay for using the new Champlain Bridge, but is taking away from them the means to have a say in the matter. This is confirmed in section 9, which states:

9. Any owner of a vehicle using the bridge must pay any toll, fee or other charge that is applicable to the vehicle under this Act.

We do not yet know what the toll will be for vehicles, and it might be higher than other tolls because the User Fees Act will not apply.

The law that the government wants to impose is unfair and totally arbitrary. We are going to find ourselves in a situation where people are going to pay to use the new bridge, but would pay nothing if they used the Victoria Bridge, for example. Does the government not see that it is going to shift traffic with these measures?

That is really going to impact mobility in the region.

● (1025)

According to the Agence métropolitaine de transport, 200,000 people travel across this bridge each day. The toll will not only stifle Montreal's economic development, but it will also have an impact on household expenses. Since the Conservatives came to power, they have not stopped imposing taxes on households. They do not let up. The toll the government plans to levy proves once again that it is incapable of listening to Canadians and plans to keep making them pay.

The government talks about the need to get people involved in the bridge construction but has not given us any information about funding for the project. The government likes to boast that it is implementing a public-private partnership contract but has not told us how much it will contribute. There is a lack of transparency when it comes to this project.

The legislation governing the new bridge over the St. Lawrence is merely a reflection of the approach the Conservatives have been using since 2011, an arbitrary and abusive approach that is not in

keeping with what the provinces want. To move our country forward, the federal government must work hand in hand with the provinces. On this issue in particular, the government should sit down with elected officials and discuss the progress on the new bridge, since Quebec's situation is special in that it has bridges that fall under federal jurisdiction.

In spite of this, the Conservatives are pretending to listen to what people want and are moving forward without consulting those who are directly involved. Given the urgent need for a new bridge, it is worrisome that the Conservative government is not listening to the Government of Quebec, the mayor of Montreal or the south shore mayors. The federal government should work with provincial and municipal partners, rather than arbitrarily imposing decisions on them.

That is why the NDP and members from the south shore—myself included—will not sit on the sidelines. My constituents and others who are affected by this toll are concerned. We live in a democratic country where the government is elected by the people. Right now, people are saying that they do not want this bill and they do not want this toll. The government needs to listen to them. It needs to listen to reason.

In closing, no other government has ever shown so much contempt for our parliamentary institutions and Canadians. This single bill is over 365 pages long and amends more than 40 laws, making it impossible for MPs to do their jobs properly.

It is obvious that our democracy is suffering. The work being done by parliamentarians in the House of Commons is also suffering. Instead of drafting a mammoth bill that is designed to push hundreds of changes through without in-depth study, the government should be taking care of the needs of Canadians.

There is nothing in this bill to help the 300,000 Canadians who have become unemployed since the recession find work or to replace the 400,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost under this Conservative government.

● (1030)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the two points the member referenced in her speech.

The first is with respect to the whole issue of the bill itself. It is important to recognize that it is only since the Conservative/Reform Party achieved its majority government that it has adopted a new attitude of a lack of respect for proceedings in the House of Commons. That is why we have, yet again, another mega-budget-bill that would change several dozen pieces of legislation by sneaking them in through the back door of a budget bill. It is anti-democratic.

The question I have for the member is with respect to infrastructure. She makes reference to the Montreal bridge, which is a very important bridge. We in the Liberal Party have been advocating for that bridge for years in terms of the changes needed and in terms of making sure that the budget dollars are there.

*Government Orders*

Does the minister want to comment on the budgeted amount last year compared to this year, 2014, when we have seen an 87% decrease in funding for infrastructure, which is what finances bridges and so forth?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for such a relevant question. As I said in my speech, ever since I was elected in 2011, this government has repeatedly introduced omnibus bills that contain everything but the kitchen sink. The government has put anything and everything in there, in a deliberate attempt to keep Canadians in the dark and impede our work.

We are in Parliament. In French, the word “parlement” contains the word “parle” or “talk”. Unfortunately, that is not what is happening. We know nothing about funding for this bridge. We know that there is a public-private partnership, but the amount of the government contribution is unknown. We have no information about it.

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her compelling speech. Could she tell us again how the NDP plans to make life more affordable and reduce household debt?

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her relevant question. I also thank her for the work she does on her committee.

Canadian families are our priority at the NDP. I reiterated that this government is not doing anything for Canadian families. It does not even want to listen to them. It is completely disconnected from reality. We want to give these families a break.

For example, we want to lower credit card interest rates and we want to bring the age of eligibility for pensions back to what it originally was. We are primarily thinking of Canadian families and of the reality they face. We also want to help small and medium-sized businesses. We want to help the manufacturing sector, which has lost 400,000 jobs under the Conservative government.

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that she wanted to help Canadian families. My question is pretty straightforward. Since forming government, and through tax breaks, we are giving, on average, about \$3,400 back to Canadian families. That is more money in the pockets of Canadian families. Each one of those measures the opposition party has voted against.

How can the member say that she is helping Canadian families when she is voting against tax breaks for Canadian families?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, we made it very clear that we are against proposals that are not in the best interests of all Canadian families.

The Conservatives are talking about tax credits for people who want to take music lessons, play piano and so on. I do not think that a family on social assistance can take advantage of that tax credit. This is just one example. The Conservatives work for wealthy

families and not for all Canadians. The NDP, on the other hand, takes everyone into consideration, regardless of their family status.

• (1035)

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to highlight today some of the key measures contained in Bill C-31, economic action plan 2014 act, no. 1. I would like to preface my remarks by congratulating our former minister of finance for setting us firmly on the path to a balanced budget in 2015-16 and commending his successor, our current finance minister, for so quickly and capably stepping into his new shoes.

In economic action plan 2014, our Conservative government renews its commitment to Canadians by focusing on three priorities. Number one is returning to a balanced budget. Number two is promoting jobs and economic growth. Number three is supporting families and communities.

Economic action plan 2014 act no. 1 contains a number of important measures that are designed to foster job creation and economic growth; connect Canadian workers with available jobs; improve infrastructure, trade, and resource development in Canada; and support Canadian families and communities.

Obviously, in the time I have, I cannot hope to touch on all these subjects, no matter how briefly. I will, therefore, confine my remarks to highlighting a few of the key initiatives that underscore our government's commitment to Canadian families and communities.

As members know, the government has put in place a number of tax relief measures to help hard-working Canadians save money wherever they can. In fact, because of the actions taken by the Conservative government, Canadians now pay \$3,400 a year less in taxes than they did during the final year of the previous Liberal government.

We introduced the volunteer firefighters' tax credit three years ago in recognition of the important contribution volunteer firefighters make to the security and safety of their fellow citizens and community members. In the same spirit, in economic action plan 2014, we announced a new search and rescue volunteers' tax credit for ground, air, and marine search and rescue volunteers. These brave men and women support the Canadian Coast Guard, police, and other agencies and are often the first on the scene in the event of a local emergency or natural disaster. Well-organized, well-trained, and well-equipped, search and rescue volunteers are an integral part of Canada's emergency response system.

Search and rescue volunteers dedicate their time and energy to ensure the safety and survival of their fellow citizens, often putting their own safety and even their lives at risk. The new tax credit is a sign of our recognition and appreciation for the important role they play and our commitment to improving the safety and security of all Canadians.



*Government Orders*

Individuals who perform at least 200 hours of service during a year would be able to claim a non-refundable tax credit on their personal income tax and benefit returns, starting in the 2014 tax year. The search and rescue volunteers' tax credit would provide up to \$450 in tax savings for the eligible year. The hours volunteered for search and rescue could be combined with volunteer firefighter activities, so volunteers with at least 200 hours of combined eligible search and rescue and firefighting services in a year would be able to choose between claiming the volunteer firefighters' tax credit and the new search and rescue volunteers' tax credit.

In total, more than 100,000 dedicated volunteer firefighters and search and rescue members might benefit from these credits. Our Conservative government is proud to recognize their outstanding commitment and the difference they make to their communities.

The search and rescue volunteers' tax credit is just 1 of more than 20 tax measures contained in Bill C-31. Economic action plan 2014 would build on previous tax relief measures the government has introduced to support Canadian families and improve their quality of life.

For example, we have included measures that would make adoption more affordable for Canadian families. We would increase the maximum amount they may claim for the adoption expense credit to \$15,000 for the 2014 tax year. The amount would be indexed to inflation in future years. This is a fantastic new relief for prospective parents who are looking to provide a deserving child with a loving home.

Our Conservative government is also making sure that the tax system takes into account the health needs of Canadians and the change in nature of our health care system.

• (1040)

Through Bill C-31, we would exempt acupuncturists and naturopathic doctors' professional services from the goods and services tax and harmonized sales tax. We would also expand the list of eligible expenses for the medical expense tax credit to include expenses incurred for service animals specifically trained to assist an individual in managing severe diabetes, as well as costs related to design of individual therapy plans for certain disorders and disabilities.

In the same vein, we have expanded the list of GST-HST-free medical and assistive devices to include prescription eyewear that electronically treats or corrects vision. Most importantly, we would remove the need for individuals to apply for the GST-HST credit. Starting with the 2014 tax year, the Canada Revenue Agency would automatically determine the credit each individual is entitled to receive. This would both simplify the process for taxpayers and improve administrative efficiency. In the case of eligible couples, the GST-HST credit would be paid to the individual whose return is assessed first. This is consistent with CRA's commitment to reduce red tape.

Finally, I would like to discuss our government's plan to correct a historic anomaly. The legislation we are debating today includes a proposal that would correct an irrelevant piece of legislation left over from the 1920s, a relic of the prohibition days. As it stands, the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act prohibits Canadians from

taking beer or spirits across provincial borders, even for personal use. Through Bill C-31, we would take action to remove this federal barrier, just as we did in 2012 in the case of transporting wine from one province to another for personal use. Indeed, while respecting provincial jurisdiction, our government wants to encourage and promote market competitiveness by eliminating provincial trade barriers when possible.

I wish to conclude today by saying I am proud of our government's record of achievement and our sound fiscal policies. We are on a track to balance the budget in 2015-2016, and at the same time that we are delivering on this commitment, we have cut taxes and removed more than one million low-income Canadians from the tax rolls since 2006. In short, we have made Canada one of the best places in the world to live, work, and raise a family. Our government will stick to the priorities we have outlined in our economic action plan: supporting jobs and growth, supporting families in communities, balancing the budget, and reducing debt. These are the priorities of all Canadians.

I have barely scratched the surface of Bill C-31 today. I strongly encourage all members of the House to read economic action plan 2014 act no. 1 from cover to cover and give it the support it deserves.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the current budget does not favour job creation, nor does it encourage Canadian businesses to invest. Major corporations rake in \$576 billion here in Canada, and this money is not reinvested in job creation.

Could my colleague tell us what concrete measures the government plans on taking in this bill to ensure that businesses reinvest in creating stable, well-paying jobs in all regions of Canada, including the Atlantic region, which is where my colleague is from?

• (1045)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. The signing of the free trade agreement with the European Union, which the opposition so far has not supported, would create a number of jobs and great opportunities in Atlantic Canada. The closest ports to Europe are St. John's, Halifax, and Saint John, New Brunswick, so they would win by default on this trade agreement, with increased container traffic crossing the Atlantic and increased opportunities for Canadian products, especially fish and seafood.

However, the hon. member has a good point. It is not just about jobs in one region of the country; it is about jobs across the country from coast to coast to coast and, as my colleagues from Ontario like to say, to the fourth coast, which is the shores of lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan, and Superior. There is a fourth coast in Canada that we often forget about, but the budget does not forget about it. It does create jobs from coast to coast to coast to coast. It does that.

*Government Orders*

We have already created one million jobs since the great recession, since we formed government in 2006, one million real jobs for Canadian citizens. In this budget alone, there are a number of actions we would implement, positive measures to create jobs and opportunities: connecting Canadians with available jobs and fostering job creation; creating the Canada apprentice loan to provide apprentices registered in Red Seal trades with access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year; investing in the expression of interest immigration system to better respond to the needs of Canada's economy; cutting the red tape burden. These are all examples of creating jobs, all included in this budget.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ministers or members of the Conservative Party often like to use the term “economic action plan”. It is almost as if someone in the Prime Minister's Office gives them a little star by their name if they make mention of that and say something positive about it. It is nothing more than a platitude for which the taxpayers have had to pay literally tens of millions of dollars in advertising. The Conservatives have invested more money in that platitude than they have in creating jobs for young people across Canada.

In regard to the whole idea of our middle class, that is a portion of society about which the government tends to have forgotten, a fairly important portion. We have a question in regard to the average household income. When we look at the bottom 20%, we see it is now receiving \$500 less, on average, than when this government took office. I wonder if the member might be able to comment on how it is that the middle class is not getting the type of attention it should be getting from the government, given the standard of living, the debt ratio, and the fact that the number of youth who are still living at home has actually gone up under this regime.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary, give a short answer, please. We are out of time.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** I have a short answer to a long question, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of factors the hon. member mentioned.

First, our advertising budget for this government is significantly less than the advertising budget of the previous government. It is 60% less. Those are real numbers.

Second, the hon. member talked about the bottom 20% of society. There is an extra one million people not paying taxes today because of changes we made to the taxation system. Average Canadian families, as I mentioned before, have \$3,400 more in their pockets to spend on the commodities and the issues that are important to them than they had under the previous government.

These are all significant changes brought in by our government.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this Conservative government bill, which could be described as another mammoth bill.

Obviously, my colleagues and I strongly oppose this bill, because of its contents, of course, but also because of the process, which is increasingly undemocratic. This bill shows real contempt not only for Canadians, but also for Parliament, and for MPs and committees. It is particularly appalling.

This bill does absolutely nothing to support job creation. In fact, there is unfortunately nothing really positive in this bill. It is too bad, because a budget implementation bill could be very constructive and do a lot for Canadians. The government and the official opposition could work together in Parliament. It is really sad that we have to see these kinds of bills. I almost feel jaded when I speak to this kind of mammoth bill, which the Conservatives are ramming down Canadians' throats without consulting them or the opposition, without consulting anyone, really. The Conservatives bulldoze their way through and impose their agenda on everyone.

The Conservatives want to make a large number of changes without properly examining them. They are spreading misinformation. I do not have the bill with me, which is unfortunate, because it would be worth showing just how huge it is. It is over 350 pages long and has 500 clauses. It amends dozens of laws. It contains many measures that were not even mentioned in the budget statement. As I just said, it is completely undemocratic. The committees are not being given the opportunity to properly examine the sections that concern them, which I see as highly problematic. The Conservatives are making unilateral decisions without consulting anyone.

As I was saying, there is nothing in this bill to help unemployed Canadians, and there are 300,000 more of them than before the recession. Nor is there anything to replace the 400,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector that have been lost under the Conservatives. Nor are the Conservatives renewing the job creation tax credit for small businesses, which really need it.

It is clear to me that small and medium-sized businesses in my riding are in desperate need of a helping hand. Let us not forget that SMEs are a major economic driver. They are responsible for at least 70% of Canadian jobs. That figure might not be exact, but it is a huge percentage anyway. It is nothing to sneeze at. Small businesses need help from the government so they can hire people and stay in business. That is all the more true in a recession.

There are also a lot of changes to rail safety and transparency. That comes as quite a surprise and makes no sense considering what happened this summer in Lac Mégantic, which is quite close to my riding. These changes would allow the government to amend or remove several rail safety regulations without notifying the public. Changes could relate to engineering standards, employee training, hours of work, maintenance and performance. Basically, people will not be informed when the Conservatives weaken safety measures, and experts will not be able to express their opinions to the minister before the changes take effect.

I talk about this often because giving more discretionary power to the minister really infuriates me. I do not know why the government is giving even more power to the minister. I do not understand. There are experts in every field, and the minister should consult them.

In many municipalities in my riding, the railway is located close to residential areas, and people are worried.

*Government Orders*

•(1055)

Shortly after the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, the member for Brossard—La Prairie, the transport critic, held a public consultation in my riding in October. The people told us that they were worried about safety standards and railway transportation in Canada. It makes absolutely no sense to weaken these standards.

This budget creates another problem for immigrants, who will now have to live in Canada for 20 years, instead of 10, before they are eligible for GIS, survivor or old age security benefits.

Family reunification is also being made much more difficult. This is a step in the wrong direction. In my riding, there are many refugee families that have moved to Canada, want to contribute to our country, and want to live and work here. It is unfortunate that these people, who make a major contribution to our country, have to wait and be separated from their family for a longer period of time.

Why should we make it more difficult for them to come here and why are we complicating the citizenship and family reunification process? Why are we depriving them of what they will need later? This deplorable measure demonstrates just how closed our country is becoming. I do not understand this because we are recognized as a welcoming country.

I have just mentioned a number of problems with this bill, but we also have solutions. The NDP likes to speak out, but we also like to suggest solutions. “Working Together” is still our motto.

The government needs to go back to the drawing board and come back to us with a decent budget. It would be great if the government invested in innovation, economic development and high quality jobs for the middle class. It would also be great if it developed a strategy for youth unemployment, since it is not right that the youth unemployment rate is so high.

We need to be proactive, but the government is not. Another solution would be to offer a credit to businesses when they hire and train young people. The government did not renew that credit for SMEs, even though it would make a lot of sense to do so.

Furthermore, the government could work with the provinces to address the skills shortage and to develop the labour market. It is not currently working with the provinces. Instead, it is dumping the problems on the provinces, which is not ideal. The government should also address the serious infrastructure deficit by cancelling the \$5.8 billion in cuts to local infrastructure.

It would also be important to simplify the procedure for rural communities to request and receive funding for infrastructure projects, since the government is also dumping problems onto municipalities. What they actually need from the federal government is more help.

•(1100)

I see that I am out of time, so I would be pleased to take questions from my colleagues.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that we are having to debate these bills in this forum yet again. One of the issues that concerns many of us in relation to

budget bills is that we used to have in front of us very clear proposals on how to invest in Canada and in our communities. One of those issues is infrastructure, the city's agenda.

I want to ask my colleague about some of the infrastructure issues in her riding. I know that here in Ottawa we have many issues that we are concerned about and for which we want to see better partnership with the federal government. However, I would like to hear from my colleague about some of the infrastructure needs and the need for immediate investment—not in 10 years from now, but immediate investment—in infrastructure in her riding and how that need affects her constituents.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his most brilliant question. Infrastructure needs in my riding are indeed desperate.

Municipal elections were held in Quebec recently, and I am in the process of doing another tour of the municipalities to meet with the newly elected officials and meet again with those who were re-elected. The mayors of all 25 municipalities in my riding are telling me about the desperate infrastructure needs.

I think that this speaks volumes and that the government should trust these people who are on the ground with citizens and in the communities before making budgets like this.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, quite clearly one of the major issues facing Canadian municipalities and others is the infrastructure deficit. We have seen the Conservatives come up with this idea, and it was clearly expressed by my previous colleague, about the Champlain Bridge and the need for the toll on the bridge. My colleague at that time had a valid argument about the nature of tolls and how they change people's habits.

Anybody who has had time to travel through Mexico by road and see the difference between the toll roads built by Mexicans in public-private partnerships and the free roads where all the traffic goes, while there is very little traffic on these magnificent toll roads, will understand that simply going through these processes is perhaps not going to determine a result that they would want.

Does my colleague believe that infrastructure really is a common need and a common expression of Canadian development, and that it should be covered by means that come out of our public system rather than by this jury-rigged toll system that is being proposed for the Champlain Bridge?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Claude Morin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting question.

It is interesting because my colleague is talking about a certain kind of infrastructure democratization. The Champlain Bridge is not in my riding, but it will affect a lot of people who live there because it is quite nearby. A lot of people in Saint-Hyacinthe work in Montreal and use the Champlain Bridge every day.

*Government Orders*

We will end up with a toll bridge. Suppose it costs \$2 to cross the bridge. If we add that up, that makes \$4 a day, \$20 a week and \$100 a month. That will hit many people right in the wallet, and a lot of them will not be able to afford to use the bridge.

We will end up with some people who have the means to use the bridge and will be able to avoid the traffic, sort of like on the highway 25 bridge, and some people who will take the other bridges because they will not be able to afford to use the new bridge. The problem here is that people who cannot afford to use toll roads are being excluded.

• (1105)

[English]

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures.

Our government has worked tirelessly to deliver effective change for Canadians and to put Canada back on the road to balanced budgets.

After consultations across the country, we have produced a plan that not only works for Canadians but that will also make sure that Canada is financially sustainable. Our hon. colleague, the former finance minister, tabled a budget just weeks ago. Since then, my office has seen an outpouring of support from constituents who value trade, security, and prudent economic management.

The world has been hit by repeated crises over the past few years. It is becoming harder for governments to maintain the trust of markets. We are no longer allowed to believe that we can escape the costs of financial recklessness and ineptitude. The budget implementation act before us holds many measures that will markedly improve the lives of Canadians.

Our government is working to ensure that Canadians can fill the skills gap to both provide vital services and ensure viable livelihoods. By increasing paid internships for young Canadians, the government will commit \$55 million to help recent graduates find work in their fields. By getting graduates to work, Canada can make the most of its skilled labour force and provide opportunities for young Canadians to flourish.

At the same time, the government will ensure that older workers have opportunities to find new employment. As Canadians are living longer, we must face the unexpected challenges posed by longevity beyond one's financial plan. By investing \$75 million in training for older workers, our government will make sure that all Canadians can find good, skilled jobs.

Help is not limited to the young and the old. Through the job-matching service, this Conservative government will grease the wheels of commerce and ensure that employers and employees can find their perfect matches.

With Canada's ever-increasing integration, not only into the world economy but between provinces, it is vital for the federal government to play a role in smoothing labour markets across the country. Never before have we seen the kind of mobility we see

today, nor have we realized the promise that such mobility creates for families and communities. It is not enough to be looking for a job. We need to support those who are currently training for jobs that will fill much needed positions through the Canada job grant and the Canada apprentice loan. The federal government is investing in high-skill jobs that are currently going unfilled in many parts of the country. By ensuring that Canada has the skilled tradespeople it needs, our government is making sure that the economy can function smoothly. This budget is about embracing the future with skilled jobs, a thriving economy, and a balanced budget.

Through this budget, rural communities will stand to benefit from improved broadband access in rural and remote areas of the country. It is important that Canadians in rural areas, like parts of the British Columbia interior and northern B.C., have an acceptable degree of access to the Internet. Failing to update Canada's digital infrastructure could doom those outside of well-covered areas to technological backwardness and put them at a perpetual disadvantage.

Investments in science and technology, such as the government's \$222 million grant to the TRIUMF physics laboratory at the University of British Columbia, promises to pay dividends not just in commercial terms but in academic, intellectual, and technological advances.

British Columbians and Canadians stand to profit immensely from the measures presented in this budget.

The budget implementation act goes further by continuing the good work of the red tape reduction action plan. This budget will make life easier for small and medium-sized business owners.

• (1110)

In too many areas of Canadian life and work, excessive red tape holds us back. The Conservatives have demonstrated a commitment to making Canada work in a way that benefits consumers, workers, and citizens by removing arbitrary and wasteful barriers to businesses.

There are also significant changes to the tax code. The tax code is not a subject that gets many people excited, but by eliminating over 800,000 payroll deduction remittances to the Canada Revenue Agency every year, this government will be helping over 50,000 small businesses lower costs imposed by bureaucracy.

Our government is always concerned about the security of Canadians. For any number of reasons, the lives and well-being of Canadians can be in danger, and it is a key role of government to offer solutions. By investing a further \$25 million, we are aiming to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls. This sector of our community is often the target of abuse above and beyond that faced by others. They deserve a government that comes to their protection.

Our government will invest \$11 million to upgrade the earthquake monitoring systems that protect the homes of my constituents in the Lower Mainland and in high-risk areas across the country.

*Government Orders*

Over one million net new jobs have been created since the recession ended in July 2009. During the crisis and afterward, our government has provided a steady hand at the tiller, ensuring that Canada's policies work toward stability, growth, and prosperity.

Our banking system has been ranked the most stable in the world for the sixth year running by the World Economic Forum. The numbers do not lie. The deficit will be a meagre \$2.9 billion this year, with a \$6.4 billion surplus coming next year. This is a momentous achievement. When the previous government balanced the books, it did so by raising taxes and slashing transfers to the provinces. Our government has none neither. In fact, we have done the complete opposite. Next year, our government will provide British Columbia with \$4.17 billion through the Canada health transfer, an all-time high. Not only that, this is \$1.3 billion more than under the previous Liberal government. That is a 49% increase.

As well, we have reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. Our strong record of tax relief has meant savings of nearly \$3,400 for a typical family of four in 2014. Without raising taxes on Canadians or simply moving costs to other levels of government, the Conservatives have a credible plan for long-term fiscal success. The opposition has made it clear that it will raise taxes and then increase spending beyond even that. Therefore, I commend our Conservative government for such a thoughtful and solid document.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech.

The Conservatives often talk about how they created a million jobs and that they want to create more. However, in February's labour force survey, Statistics Canada said that 2014 employment growth has been weaker since the recession. As well, an additional 300,000 people have become unemployed since the current Prime Minister came to power. Young Canadians are facing an unemployment rate of 13.6%.

Does she have any suggestions about how to create jobs for youth?

•(1115)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is currently focused on what clearly matters to hard-working Canadians in their daily lives: helping create jobs, economic growth, and Canada's long-term prosperity.

With the help of Canada's economic action plan, Canada's economy has seen the best economic performance among all G7 countries in recent years, both during the global recession, and of course, throughout the fragile recovery.

Here are some facts I would like to tell the hon. member.

Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada since the end of the recession in July 2009. That is the strongest job growth in the entire G7, by far. Canadians have also enjoyed the strongest income growth in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have more than fully recovered business investment lost during the recession. Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business

investments in the G7. I would like to go on and on, but that is my answer to the member's question.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to cite a couple of problems with her overview.

She talks about the investment by the government in infrastructure, et cetera. We see at a time when we need critical support for infrastructure that it is actually pulling back. The last time we saw significant spending was when we pushed the government, after the financial crisis, to invest, and of course, before that, in 2005, when our leader at the time, Mr. Layton, convinced the government to, instead of corporate taxes, put money into infrastructure and into cities and to help out with post-secondary education.

By the way, that money continued in the budgets of the Conservative government in 2006 and 2007. It is important to note that.

I want to ask her this. When we have a crisis in job training, why is it that the government cannot figure out how to deal with foreign trained workers and actually train Canadians and young Canadians to give them opportunities? All we have gotten from the government are ads.

Even in the budget bill they have put in front of us, it is going to be loans for people to train. We actually need to fast-track them and get Red Seal people into the job market now, not just give them more loans, which leads to more debt.

Clearly, I think the government has failed, and I would disagree with the ideas she has put forward, because Canadians deserve better.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, our government has invested more money than any other government in infrastructure, with \$1.4 billion invested in infrastructure in my riding alone. Just think about the millions of dollars invested all over Canada.

I am proud of our government's record.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot really say I am pleased to rise today to speak to yet another omnibus budget bill, C-31.

[*Translation*]

This is yet another omnibus bill that contains numerous measures from other bills. However, given House procedure, we will not be able to study it adequately.

[*English*]

This is following up on the February 11, 2014 budget. We really need to get used to using the new term for it. It is the "annual thick brochure". It does not actually contain a budget any more, and I think Canadians ought to know that.

*Government Orders*

It is labelled “the economic action plan 2014, No. 1”, which means that we can expect another budget omnibus bill. It does not deal with the fact that Canada's debt under this administration has increased by \$123 billion. It does not deal with the fact that part of the reason that debt has increased and that cuts are being made to the services that we care about is that we now have the lowest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world, approximately half that of the United States.

I want to turn to a myth that is so often repeated in this place, that all of the other parties always did omnibus budget bills. That is not just a myth; it is not true. The previous all-time high omnibus budget bill was in 2005 under the administration of former Prime Minister Paul Martin. In 2005, it topped 120 pages.

The howls from the opposition, now in government, were so loud that that bill had sections stripped out, and another provision that was to amend the Environmental Protection Act to allow regulation of greenhouse gases was removed altogether. That was due to the protest about 120 pages being too much in an omnibus budget bill.

The current administration is the all-time record holder, and not just that, as the Bruce Cockburn song said, “...the trouble with normal is it always gets worse”.

Now we are supposed to expect that we are going to get two omnibus budget bills every year: the first one, 400 pages; the second one, 400 pages. So the cumulative total, the bulk of all the legislation that goes through this place, is in the form of omnibus budget bills, which are so anti-democratic and an abuse of parliamentary process that it must be raised at every turn.

This particular omnibus budget bill, at 362 pages, Bill C-31, has a lot of good things in it. There is no question that removing the GST from parking fees at hospitals and improving the tax treatment of adoptive families are good things. There are quite a few things in here that I would vote for, such as division 5, increasing the number of judges for Alberta and Quebec. These are all good things.

However, what of the things that deserve more study than they are going to get? That list is a very long one indeed. I turn our attention to 40 pages of this brick, pages 91 to 131, changes to the Hazardous Products Act and consequential amendments to other acts. These may all be, as described on the Health Canada website, good ideas, but they deserve study on their own. There are a lot of details we do not know.

This will bring into place the globally harmonized system to deal with workplace hazardous materials. It is very important that we study this properly. Certain sectors of our economy are currently exempt from the WHMIS provisions, including pesticides, consumer products, food, and drugs. A global system will bring these in, but we do not quite know how Canada will treat this and will not find out from the quick study we are allowed of an omnibus budget bill. There is 40 pages of this.

Another 30-plus pages is an entirely new act, the administrative tribunals support service of Canada act. It occurs in division 29 of Bill C-31, and it brings in a single administrator, appointed politically, to take control of a huge number of administrative tribunals: the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Canada Industrial Relations

Board, Competition Tribunal, Canadian International Trade Tribunal, Social Security Tribunal, and Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal. In the time I have, I cannot read out the names of all the tribunals that are suddenly whipped together under one act with one chief administrator. Far too few details are being provided about the purpose of this change. There is no purposes section under this new act; it is left to our imagination. I have to say, given the track record of this administration, given its attitude toward tribunals and officers of Parliament, the things that come to mind are not happy conclusions. This act's division 29 deserves separate treatment and adequate study.

● (1120)

On the changes to trademark, here we had an opportunity to do something to improve Canada's global competitive position by improving intellectual property rights to protect Canadian corporations abroad. The proposed changes to trademark are largely non-controversial, but why are they stuck in an omnibus budget bill? They have nothing to do with the budget.

Pages 207 to 259, over 50 pages of this monster bill, are all about trademark and coming into compliance with agreements from the Singapore and Madrid protocols. Why not have this as a proper study? Why not take the time to assess whether it is a good idea to reduce trademark protection from 15 years to 10 years?

I have been trying to reserve most of my time in this brief opportunity for the most egregious section of Bill C-31, which is forcing through, with a limitation on debate that applies to all of Bill C-31, some potentially devastating changes to Canadians' rights found under something called the FATCA. This Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act is thrown into Bill C-31, and I want to refer to the opinions of legal experts.

*Government Orders*

Some time ago, concerned about the FATCA, I did an access to information request and turned up a letter to Finance Canada from Canada's leading constitutional law expert, Professor Peter Hogg. He wrote to Finance Canada when the department it was in the early stages of working on this, and said that treating Canadians who might have some connection to the United States—not just those who might be born there, such as me, but who is no longer a U.S. citizen, or people who had parents born in the U.S., or once worked or studied there—differently than Canadians with no connection to the U.S. violates section 3 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, in which we are entitled to equal treatment under the law as Canadian citizens.

However, it gets worse than that. Here I want to quote extensively from advice to Finance Canada from two very knowledgeable tax policy law experts: Professor Allison Christians, the H. Eward Stikeman Chair in the Law of Taxation at McGill University; and Professor Arthur Cockfield from Queens University.

Both professors conclude that right now it appears that the only reason the current Conservative administration feels it has accomplished anything with FATCA is that it has staved off punitive measures against our commercial banks by the United States. That is the Conservatives' sole rationale for a non-reciprocal agreement that will violate the privacy, and potentially the charter rights, of as many as one million Canadians. They have done it to avoid the U.S. bringing sanctions against them.

These knowledgeable experts say that this implementation act would unduly harm the privacy rights and interests of all Canadians, unduly raise compliance costs for all Canadian financial institutions and Canadian taxpayers, and unduly raise legal exposure for Canadian financial institutions due to the ongoing potential liability for mistakenly transferred personal financial information.

Bear in mind that this FATCA that we are being pressed to pass so quickly would require our banking institutions to decide for themselves whether someone appears to have some connection to the United States, and then they will turn over the personal banking information of that person without their knowledge to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. It would also provide potentially sensitive commercial information held by Canadian firms to the United States, which if improperly revealed could harm a firm's competitiveness. It would interfere with the cross-border mobility of Canadian workers to the United States. It would impede Canada's efforts to enforce its own tax laws. It would violate the spirit and potentially the letter of a number of Canadian laws.

The advice from these knowledgeable tax experts is clear and compelling. Since we have as a nation have now signed this IGA with the U.S., we have protected the commercial banking sector from these penalties, and so we have time to get it right. Here is their advice.

We recommend that the government explicitly address what gains have been achieved by Canada in accepting the IGA, if any exist other than the relief of economic sanctions. If relief of economic sanctions is the only impetus for Canada's acquiescence to U.S. demands, we recommend that the Canadian Government challenge the legality of such economic sanctions....

● (1125)

In other words, the U.S. has no right to impose sanctions on Canadian banks. It says it does. We should challenge it in international court. These experts say that we should stop the introduction of FATCA, ensure that it does not violate our charter rights, protect the privacy rights of Canadians, and not rush into this. I urge the House to pull FATCA out of Bill C-31.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my notes say that this is an important piece because it updates the automatic exchange of information for tax purposes. Without an intergovernmental agreement between Canada and the United States, Canadian financial institutions and United States persons holding financial accounts in Canada would be required to comply with that, regardless, starting July 1, 2014, as per the FATCA legislation enacted by the U.S.A. unilaterally.

It is important for people to understand that this is important. It is an intergovernmental agreement. It is something that Canada has to support because of recent G8 and G20 commitments on the multilateral automatic exchange of information. The G20 leaders committed to this automatic exchange as a new global standard, and it was endorsed as the OECD proposal developing a global model.

It is important to understand that this is not just enhancing but also protecting Canadians, and it is important for us as we trade more and more.

● (1130)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful that we are actually having a conversation and talking about this issue. The reality of the FATCA that the current administration has accepted is that it does nothing for reciprocal exchange of tax information. It is non-reciprocal; it is asymmetrical. It is unprecedented in international law for one sovereign country to say, "Oh gosh", and cry uncle, "They are going to get our information whether we like it or not and they are going to punish our banks".

The best legal minds in our country are advising the administration not to cave in just because the United States says it has a right under its domestically passed legislation, but which has not been ratified as an international treaty by its senate. There are a number of legal issues here, for which I do not think we have shown sufficient backbone in response. We do not need to accept a law passed by the U.S. Congress. Would we accept a law passed by the People's Republic of China that requested information of Chinese citizens in Canada? Are we to accept that in response to laws passed in other countries with implications for Canadian citizens, the Government of Canada can do nothing but say, "Here's all the information we can provide you. It's private. We're not warning Canadians. We're giving it to you. Good luck".

Everyone knows that Canada is not a tax haven. People who live here, Canadian citizens and residents, pay taxes. We pay more taxes than people do in other countries. We need to protect the privacy and charter rights of Canadians.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think that the Conservative member, the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification, clearly proved that this portion of Bill C-31 should be studied separately.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands eloquently established and demonstrated that this part of the budget should be studied independently of Bill C-31. She also demonstrated that parliamentarians, regardless of party, are being denied an opportunity to study this part of the bill in detail, even though it will significantly affect Canadians, financial institutions and the Canada Revenue Agency. A Radio-Canada report stated that implementing this would cost CRA \$100 million.

Who does my colleague think will have to foot this pricey bill?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

I completely agree with the member. It is clear that FATCA is advantageous for the United States alone. There is nothing in it to help Canadians. As the lawyers and legal experts explained, the only reason why the Government of Canada accepted this agreement, which will violate the rights of Canadians, is that the U.S. government threatened to impose sanctions on our banks.

• (1135)

[English]

We need to take this very complex section out. As the legal experts have commented, there was a truncated period for public comment. Very little time was provided for the financial sector, and look at the costs and what it will mean to our banking institutions and credit unions to comb through all the material they have on every customer. It will raise the costs. The banking sector does very well, but this is going to raise consumer costs and it will violate charter rights.

Surely it should be removed from an omnibus budget bill for proper study. Additionally, we should go to international court to challenge the idea that the U.S., through a domestically passed law, has the right to punish commercial banks in Canada.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it really is a shame that, once again, the Conservatives are pushing through yet another omnibus budget bill. Since 2011, the NDP in opposition has fought to break down government omnibus budgets brought to the House into manageable legislation so that members have the opportunity to consider and debate the new legislation that is being proposed and deliver better results for Canadians.

Omnibus bills have had a bad reputation on Parliament Hill for some time now. No one, other than the Conservatives, seems to really like them. I would like to share some strong words on omnibus bills from a member in the House of Commons from 1994. The member said:

...in the interest of democracy I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns?

We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse?

Who said that? Let me tell members. This blast from the past is absolutely right, and I would introduce him to the Prime Minister if they were not already so close, as it was the Prime Minister himself who said this when he was the leader of the opposition.

Let us get back to the budget implementation bill that is before us. It is amazing that the budget implementation bill is over 350 pages long, has almost 500 clauses, would amend dozens of bills, and—this is the best part—includes a variety of measures that were never even mentioned in the budget speech by the Minister of Finance. One would think that measures in the budget implementation bill would also have actually been in the budget, but not so much this time.

I should give credit where credit is due. There are some parts of the bill that the NDP supports. For example, the government is using the budget implementation bill as an opportunity to rectify its previous attempt to levy the GST and HST on hospital parking, a leftover from budget 2013. This, however, does not make up for other measures included in the budget implementation bill or for Conservative attempts to ram this bill through the House.

The truth is that the budget implementation bill includes a large variety of complex measures that deserve thorough consideration and scrutiny. The tabling of such a large and wide-ranging bill in such a short timeframe undermines Parliament, because it denies individual MPs the ability to thoroughly study the bill and its implications. This is one of the most important jobs of an MP. It is one of the reasons the people of Scarborough—Rouge River sent me here to Ottawa.

Unfortunately, the budget implementation bill fails to provide solutions for issues that matter to Canadians and to my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River, such as jobs and the economy, immigration and family reunification, safety, and retirement. I will talk about a few of those today.

Despite the cries from the Conservative benches that they are the best managers of the economy, the budget implementation bill would fail to help the leading drivers of our economy: the small and medium-sized businesses. We know that small and medium-sized businesses provide 70% of new jobs in the Canadian labour market. Unfortunately, the budget implementation bill would fail to renew the small business job creation tax credit first proposed by the NDP in 2011.

When 300,000 Canadians are struggling to find work, would we not want to make it easier for small businesses to hire more workers? Unfortunately, the budget implementation bill fails to do this and would fail to help these employers.

It would also fail the struggling Canadian worker. There is nothing in the budget or this bill to get the almost 300,000 unemployed back to work or to help replace the 400,000 manufacturing jobs that were lost under the Prime Minister's watch.



*Government Orders*

The cruel joke is that while 300,000 unemployed Canadians are looking for work, the Conservatives have failed to stop abusing the temporary foreign worker program. The Conservatives promised two years ago to create a blacklist of employers who had broken the rules of the temporary foreign worker program. Today, two years later, there are still no names. Let me repeat that. There are no names on the list, despite Alberta, one province, identifying over 100 cases in which employers broke the rules, and that is just one province. We have ten provinces and three territories.

Why should Canadians take the Conservatives' promise to address the abuse of the temporary foreign program seriously? Why should we trust them now?

The truth is that there is not a lot of trust between Canadians and the government. Many Canadians who may have cast their vote for the Conservatives found out the hard way how flimsy that trust is when the government announced changes to the GIS and old age security. Many of my constituents in Scarborough—Rouge River are concerned about their livelihood and future with regard to these changes.

• (1140)

The budget implementation bill would stop payment of the guaranteed income supplement and the old age security survivor allowance to sponsored immigrants, even those who have lived in Canada for 10 years and even if they are still within the sponsorship period during which their families are financially responsible for them, which of course the Conservatives doubled from 10 years to 20 years just last year. This means that immigrants who arrived under the family reunification program may have to wait up to 20 years to be eligible for the guaranteed income supplement and survivor allowance. Does this seem fair to new Canadians? Let me repeat that so it is very clear. This bill would change the rules so that there would be no more guaranteed income supplement or old age security survivor allowance for sponsored immigrants during the entire sponsorship period, a waiting period of up to 20 years. That is unbelievable.

It is just as unbelievable as yesterday's announcement from the Transportation Safety Board that revealed that Canadian rail companies are not reporting all derailments. My constituents are very concerned about rail safety in our community. Scarborough—Rouge River is a densely populated community. Trains run through our community, and we have the large eastern Toronto rail yard right in the centre of our community. There is a great concern about our safety and our environment. These concerns have crossed the minds of many Canadians, not only my constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River but any Canadians who live by the rails.

This is what makes the Conservatives' unwillingness to open the omnibus budget implementation bill to allow independent study of all of the important parts so dangerous. The budget implementation act would allow the government to change and repeal a wide variety of railway safety regulations without informing the public. Those include the standards for engineering, worker training, hours of work, maintenance, and performance. Cabinet decisions changing safety requirements for the transport of dangerous goods would also be a secret, including changes to the classification of dangerous

goods, the training and qualifications of inspectors, and rules regarding importation and transportation of these goods.

These changes would prevent the public from knowing when Conservatives weaken safety measures and would prevent experts from advising the minister before the changes would come into effect. It would not be a change that would make our railways and communities safer. Why are the Conservatives regressing on railway safety and trying to move the results of government decisions on railway safety behind closed doors?

This raises another, larger, question: why are the Conservatives against opening the door to transparency? We see it time and again. The Conservatives want to keep the changes to railway safety regulations closed. The Conservatives do not want to open this omnibus bill because they do not want members to tell them what Canadians really think. They do not want the 308 of us to tell them what Canadians think is really going on in the country.

However, the omnibus budget does not need to be opened for me to share what the New Democrats would like to do. We must invest in economic development and high-quality middle-class jobs. That is a priority for the NDP. We can do this by working with the private sector to help Canadian businesses strengthen, grow, and create jobs. We should continue to build on the existing job creation tax credit for small and medium-sized businesses to help the true drivers of our economy, the SMEs, to grow.

We need to make more jobs available to Canadians by stopping the abuse of the temporary foreign worker program. The Government of Canada should work with the provinces to improve monitoring. Employment and Skills Development Canada and Citizenship and Immigration must be able to deny employers' labour market opinions and withdraw work permits from employers who abuse the program. We should also set out a path for citizenship for temporary foreign workers to encourage skilled workers to stay in Canada and continue to contribute to the economy.

The government needs to fulfill its commitment to help Canadians save and invest for their retirement. The NDP will continue to fight for the immediate reversal of the federal government's plan to raise the retirement age for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement to 67.

I could continue, but I do not want to give it all away. I would rather share it with my colleagues across the floor after we open up the omnibus budget bill. However, I fear that the Conservatives will not budge.

*Government Orders*

•(1145)

The Conservative government will continue to cry out otherwise, but Canadians recognize that this is just another omnibus budget bill designed to ram through the House hundreds of changes with as little study and as little oversight as possible, and that is just not fair. Canadians deserve better, and that is why the NDP is here to be the real eyes and ears for Canadians and to hold the government to account.

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of items the member opposite touched on, but the thing that resonates the most with me is her lack of attention to focusing on jobs and job creation.

Economic action plan 2014 focuses substantially on job creation, whether it be the \$55 million investment in internships for young Canadians or the new apprenticeship opportunity with the apprenticeship scholarships program that is being created by the Government of Canada to support those young Canadians who are most interested in entering into apprenticeships.

We know that substantive support is needed. We are addressing that concern. It is concerning to me that the member opposite does not focus on those opportunities for young Canadians. These are substantive initiatives that would create jobs and job opportunities and skills training for young Canadians. Why is she not supporting the budget bill with those fabulous opportunities for young Canadians, many of whom live in her riding and in mine?

I am supporting the budget bill because of those initiatives. Why is she not supporting it? Maybe she could be accountable for that and comment on it here in the House.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Labour for the comments and questions she put forward. I wish she would open up the omnibus budget bill so that we could actually debate it, so that we could look at each individual part of it.

As I mentioned, there are some parts of the budget that the NDP supports. From day one, we have always been supportive of creating jobs and taking care of the high level of unemployment in this country and the extremely higher level of underemployment in this country.

A quarter of our university graduates with an undergraduate degree are severely unemployed or underemployed, and it was the Conservative government that was in charge of making that happen. The government has been sitting in the driver's seat while we saw a quarter of our university graduates being severely unemployment or underemployed.

Why do the minister and the government all of a sudden care about the youth in this country and say that they are doing something for the young people in this country? They sat there and watched as a quarter of our university graduates became unemployed or severely underemployed.

I talk to young people in my community every day, and they are hoping that they can have jobs in our community. The government sat there and watched as it sent jobs out of this country. The Conservatives are the ones who allowed the temporary foreign

worker program to be abused and allowed jobs to be taken away from our young people and Canadians, and the minister now has the audacity to say that we are not fighting for Canadians and for our young people's jobs. Please, I do not need to repeat myself.

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Certainly it segued nicely into what I want to talk about, which is, of course, young Canadians and students.

We have already heard about the crushing unemployment that youth are facing, and now we have the cancellation of the small business hiring tax credit. However, something else is also happening to young people, and it has not been discussed yet.

For some odd reason, the government decided to cancel the \$5,000 vehicle exemption that students would get when they applied for student loans. This will make life much more difficult and education less affordable and accessible for rural and suburban students in particular.

Statistics show that if we live between 40 and 80 kilometres away from a post-secondary education institute, we are 31% less likely to attend. Now, with the cancellation of the vehicle exemption of \$5,000 that students used to be able to put against their student loans, students will face larger costs in attending school. That applies in particular for a school like U of T Scarborough Campus, which is in my colleague's riding.

•(1150)

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Speaker, this is such an important question. I thank my colleague for this question and the statistics that he pointed out.

The government is making it harder for already underprivileged students who have to rely on the student loan program to get themselves through school, like I did. If I had not had access to the OSAP loans and the vehicle exemption tax credit, I would not have been able to afford to go to school. I would not have been able to afford to get a university degree. That is what the government is trying to do. It is trying to make it so that youth who grow up in families that are not privileged do not go to school. It is trying to make it more difficult for students who grow up in poverty or situations where education is the key for them to leave that cycle of poverty, that cycle of discrimination, whatever it might be.

The government is making it more difficult for people like me to get an education, to serve my community and country, and to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. That is not fair. We need to make sure that we are looking out for all students and young people in our country, not just the privileged. It does not make sense that the government would cancel the \$5,000 vehicle exemption credit because rural and suburban communities need to ensure that their young people are getting educated as well.

[Translation]

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to economic action plan 2014 as Minister of Labour and Minister for the Status of Women.

*Government Orders*

[English]

To begin with, I take issue with the last comment by the member. Whether it be the working income tax benefit or numerous other opportunities for Canadians, there are over a million low-income Canadians who are no longer on the tax rolls. Therefore, I encourage the member opposite to please look at the facts. The facts are that low-income Canadians are actually way better off under this government. The former minister of finance did an outstanding job of making sure that they were protected.

Canada has weathered the economic storm very well, especially compared to other countries. Since our government introduced economic action plan 2009 to respond to the global recession, Canada has not only recovered all of its output and all of the jobs lost during the recession, but it has exceeded pre-recession levels. Over the last four years, employment has increased by over one million and is now approximately 590,000 above its pre-recession peak, giving Canada the strongest job growth record among G7 countries over the recovery.

Our economic performance has not gone unrecognized. Both the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development expect Canada to be among the strongest growing economies in the G7 over the years to come. As well, for the sixth year in a row, the World Economic Forum rated Canada's banking system as the world's soundest. Three major credit rating agencies have reaffirmed our top rating for Canada, and it is expected that Canada will maintain its triple-A rating in the year ahead.

[Translation]

Even before the global crisis, our government moved to lower taxes, reduce red tape and promote trade and innovation.

[English]

That said, there is still work to be done. That is why economic action plan 2014 continues our focus on the drivers of growth and job creation: innovation, investment, education, skills, and communities.

[Translation]

It marks the next chapter in our economic plan and leads us to a balanced budget by 2015.

[English]

Our plan also includes a number of initiatives to support Canadian individuals and families, Canadian students, and single parents.

We have introduced the new Canada loan program that provides apprentices and Red Seal trades with over \$100 million in interest-free loans.

We are further supporting young Canadians entering the economy by investing \$55 million to create paid internships for recent graduates in small and medium-sized businesses.

We are helping older workers get back to work by investing \$75 million in a targeted initiative to support older workers who want to participate in the job market.

There are also a number of initiatives in economic action plan 2014 that pertain directly to my responsibilities as Minister of Status of Women, such as, increasing support to Status of Women Canada to increase a mentorship program for women entrepreneurs; proposing that over the next number of months, the Minister of Status of Women will consult on how to increase the number of women entering business, and succeeding and participating in business; and, providing an additional \$40 million to the Canada's accelerator and incubator program to help entrepreneurs create new companies and realize the potential of their ideas, through intensive mentoring and other resources to make sure they are successful in creating jobs.

There are also a number of initiatives in the budget that will help address violence against women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, by promoting justice and the protection of the most vulnerable in our communities. These include the implementation of the Canadian victims bill of rights; \$22 million, over two years, for the aboriginal justice strategy; \$8.1 million, starting in 2016-17, with \$1.3 million per year ongoing, to create a DNA-based missing persons index, something we have heard a significant amount about and I am delighted we are moving forward on; and, an additional \$25 million to renew our efforts to directly address the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women.

As hon. members will recall, the Helping Families in Need Act passed in this House last year, providing support for parents of critically ill children. It also supports parents of children who are missing or have been killed as a result of a crime, one of the most terrifying and difficult experiences that a parent may go through.

As the previous minister of finance stated in his February budget, we are now enhancing our support for families. We are making access to sickness benefits through the employment insurance program more flexible for those receiving parents of critically ill children or compassionate care benefits. This builds on the enhancements for those who are receiving parental benefits introduced in the Helping Families in Need Act. This legislation means that parents will benefit from temporary income support while caring for their critically ill child. For employers, it means retaining valuable employees who otherwise may give up their jobs to take care of their child.

As a practising physician, I can attest that one of the most important components of making sure that a child becomes well is making sure that his or her parent is with him or her. As a government, we need to do all we can to support these families in that absolutely critical time of crisis. This means that for a couple of those children who were diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, their parents will be eligible for the 35 weeks of critically ill benefits, and they are entitled to and may receive more weeks than they had before.

*Government Orders*

To ensure that leave provisions match the compassionate care leave and leave related to critical illnesses that are fully engaged in employment insurance provisions, the Canada Labour Code will also be amended.

The federal income support for the parents of murdered and missing children grant allows recipients to interrupt these payments to get access to employment insurance sickness benefits as well. Currently, the Canada Labour Code does not explicitly provide job protection to federally regulated employees under these circumstances. These amendments will ensure that the code is fully aligned with that grant, allowing Canadian parents to grieve, to search for their child, or to be with their child if he or she is critically ill.

Other consequential changes are also being put in place to be consistent with the application of the code. All these amendments will come into force on the same day as the related amendments to the employment insurance act.

The adjustments to the Helping Families in Need legislation are the latest in a number of initiatives taken by the government to help Canadian parents balance work life and family responsibilities, in this case, in one of the most important roles they have, that of caring for their child.

This government has earned a strong and well-deserved reputation for wise economic management. In the lead-up to the global recession, we paid down over \$37 billion in debt. Unlike other countries, when hard times came, Canada had the leeway and flexibility to navigate through the economic and financial storms that arose outside of our borders.

Canada's deficit has been reduced by two-thirds since 2009. This puts us well on our way toward our goal of a budget surplus of over \$6 billion in 2015, even after taking into account the \$3-billion annual adjustment of risk.

Balancing the budget and reducing debt will provide a host of benefits that will go beyond the bottom line. It frees up tax dollars that might otherwise be spent on interest costs. These can be used to lower taxes or invest in other priorities for Canadians.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

It will strengthen our country's ability to respond to longer-term challenges, such as population aging, and unexpected global economic shocks.

[*English*]

It would strengthen our country's ability to respond to long-term challenges, such as an aging population and unexpected global shocks. It would help to ensure fairness and equity for generations to come, by avoiding future tax increases and a reduction in services.

[*Translation*]

Good economic management requires tough decisions, a focus on priorities, and sound judgment. This has been the approach of our government from day one, and it continues in economic action plan 2014.

[*English*]

I sincerely hope that all hon. members will join us in giving the budget their full support.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women for her speech.

The picture she paints of the Conservative government's measures does not capture the reality in my riding. Many older women often live alone and have very little means. Pensions have been stagnating for years and incomes are quite low, while the cost of housing and devices such as hearing aids is going up.

Can the Minister of Status of Women tell us what measures the government is implementing for these older, retired women whose pension incomes have been stagnating for years because the government refuses to increase them?

[*English*]

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, to reiterate what has happened in previous economic action plans, one item was the government's most substantive investment in 25 years, augmenting the GIS and the OAS, ensuring that low-income senior Canadians are provided with the opportunity to be better supported.

With respect to this budget in particular, economic action plan 2014, there are a number of items, particularly on the medical care side, that I think many of her constituents would have great benefit from.

One is the expanded tax relief under the medical expenses tax credit, ensuring that the costs associated with many of the items receive the tax credit—I know that in my capacity as a physician, many elderly individuals have diabetes, so those items—and also removing the GST/HST on many health products and care. These are issues that are top of mind for older Canadians. I recognize that the aging population has health care needs. These are two specific initiatives that would address those concerns.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister relates to investments that our government is making in Canada's youth. Providing Canada's youth with opportunities, information, and education is vital to the success of our country. Economic action plan 2014 would make a number of key investments to ensure that today's youth have the skills they need to get the jobs of today and tomorrow. These are programs such as the Canada apprentice loan, the internship for young Canadians, simplifying the Canada student loan program, helping young entrepreneurs, promoting healthier lifestyles, and on and on. It is a terrific list of programs.

Would the minister explain to the House how these significant investments would create employment opportunities for young Canadians?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. K. Kellie Leitch:** Mr. Speaker, similar to myself, the hon. member has a rural riding. I know in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, whether it be in Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, or Elmvale, the issue of ensuring that young apprentices are supported is top of mind. The dinner table conversation that took place about only going to university is changing to college because of those great opportunities when one graduates to have a well-paying job.

This government recognizes that. That is why we have created a new apprenticeship loan program, \$100 million of interest-free money for young Canadians who want to educate themselves for the jobs available today. We know there are tens of thousands of jobs available, and we want to ensure they are prepared. In addition, there is \$55 million for paid internships. It is ensuring that young Canadians have the skills they need and are provided with supports, so they can develop them and then expand those opportunities in businesses.

I have a wealth of small businesses across my riding. Whether they be in Alliston or in Creemore, they want to ensure they have young Canadians working for them so they can grow their firms. These internships for small and medium-sized businesses would provide exactly that opportunity.

● (1205)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-31, the Conservatives' first bill to implement budget 2014. Yet again, it is another massive omnibus budget bill of over 350 pages and 500 separate clauses.

I will not be supporting this bill, because it fails to address the very real challenges faced by the middle class. Moreover, it does little to help Canadian youth find jobs at a time when there is persistently high youth unemployment and underemployment. Today, there are still 264,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians than before the economic downturn.

The bill does little to help middle class parents and grandparents make ends meet and tackle record high levels of personal debt. Today, the average household owes a record \$1.66 for every dollar of disposable income.

A few weeks ago, we had two weeks in our constituency offices, and 80% of my meetings were with people who are unemployed and looking for work. These were skilled people, engineers, lawyers, and Ph.D.s. There was one young man who had just graduated in nursing. Unfortunately, he could not afford the \$500 for the exam. As a result, he could not work in the field for which he had studied so hard.

I cannot be clearer: people in my community have education, are skilled, and are desperate to work, but they cannot find jobs. Instead of the government putting new programs in place, support services are being cut in my Etobicoke North community. I have gone to the minister several times on this issue, for both settlement programs and job programs.

During those past two constituency weeks, we needed to get weekly food programs for five families. They did not ask for the help, but I realized the need when I reviewed their resumé and saw the last time they had worked and the number of family members they needed to feed.

Four individuals asked for counselling to deal with their depression as a result of not having a job, and one talked of suicide.

I will bring up one more case. A refugee woman, 18 weeks pregnant, bled through the night. She was afraid to go to the hospital because she could not afford the health care. Now she is afraid of getting an ultrasound because she cannot afford to pay for it.

The Conservatives' changes to Canadian society do not happen in a vacuum. They impact real Canadians who are hurting. The government needs to learn to see the hurt and to respond.

Our community is seeing real economic challenges. The government seems out of touch when it talks about this recovery as if it were a uniform recovery that is affecting and helping people in all regions of the country. The reality is that there are groups that are simply being left behind. A lot of families are struggling just to get by.

University graduates have come in to get help after being out of school and out of work for two years. Grandparents have come on behalf of their grandchildren—the first in the family to graduate from university and college—asking why they had fled their country of origin to come to Canada, the land of promise, so their children could have an education, but now that they have an education, they still do not have a job.

The people in my constituency need jobs. I have worked hard to get them jobs. In fact, I obtained funding for a completing the circle program, a \$500,000 job program in our community. I personally review and edit resumé late into the night, sometimes doing two and three drafts. We get our people into jobs programs. We follow up with them to make sure their job searches are going in the right direction.

While they search, we help them with food, clothing, and whatever other supports they might need. We should all remember that we have seen a 31% increase in food bank usage since 2008.

At critical times, I have personally bought bedding, food, furniture, and medicine to help hurting Etobicoke North families. We had one lady come looking for help. She was in agony due to an ear infection that had raged for three weeks. She had pus and blood running down her face. The sad reality is that she could not afford antibiotics because she could not find a job.

● (1210)

I have MS patients who cannot take their drugs because they cannot work. How many more stories are there like theirs?

*Government Orders*

What I was looking for in the budget implementation bill, first and foremost, was real help for the people of Etobicoke North for jobs. Instead, we have over 350 pages with 500 separate clauses. Once again, my constituents are saddened by the fact that this is an omnibus bill with multiple sections that deserve full and proper hearings in committee and full parliamentary scrutiny.

Bill C-31 includes numerous measures that do not belong in a budget implementation bill; for example, rules about food safety, hazardous products, rail safety, and even the number of federal judges. The bill continues the Conservatives' battle against openness and transparency by weakening requirements to consult and inform Canadians about safety regulations and user fees. These changes have nothing to do with the implementation bill and are meant only to limit debate on important issues to Canadians. The Conservatives chose this anti-democratic route in order to adopt the bill's measures quickly and to avoid having them reviewed by Parliament.

The Conservatives have repeatedly abused Parliament by ramming through outrageous omnibus bills. For example, a few years ago the government introduced an 880-page omnibus bill, a grab bag of bills the government wanted to pass quickly. In fact, it was half the entire workload of Parliament from the previous year. As a result, the government was severely condemned for turning the legislative process into a farce.

More recently, the government introduced Bill C-38, the 400-plus page omnibus budget implementation bill. Through the bill, the government sprung sweeping changes on our country, affecting everything from employment insurance, to environmental protection, to immigration, to old age security. None of these changes were in the Conservative platform. They were rushed into law by "an arrogant majority government that's in a hurry to impose its agenda on the country".

The government's actions reek of hypocrisy. In the 1990s, the right hon. member for Calgary Southwest criticized omnibus legislation, suggesting that the subject matter of such bills is so diverse that a single vote on the content would put members in conflict with their own principles and that dividing the bill into several components would allow members to represent the views of their constituents on each part of the bill. The right hon. member is now using the very tactics he once denounced. It is a shame that he changed his tune when he was elected to the highest office in the land.

One newspaper previously stated that omnibus bills are:

...political sleight-of-hand and message control, and it appears to be an accelerating trend. These shabby tactics keep Parliament in the dark, swamp MPs with so much legislation that they can't absorb it all, and hobble scrutiny. This is not good, accountable, transparent government.

In this omnibus budget implementation bill, Bill C-31, parliamentarians are being asked to consider measures including compassionate leave, expansion of the adoption expense tax credit, medical expense tax credits, and sickness benefits. We would actually be supportive of these measures as individual measures, but unfortunately these positive measures are being lumped together with some very unreasonable, harmful, and regressive measures that we cannot support.

Like the omnibus bills before it, Bill C-31 includes corrections to mistakes in previous budget bills.

For the people of Etobicoke North and for young people across Canada, Bill C-31 offers very little. My constituents and Canadians need better and deserve better.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. We have the chance to work together on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I know how hard she works at studying her files and delving into the issues.

I would like to ask her what disastrous consequences these successive omnibus budgets have for the economic situation of women in Canada. Also, how did this situation deteriorate over the years, with the cuts to direct services for Canadians and the creation of low-paying unstable jobs that are often held by women?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the question. It is a pleasure to work with her on committee.

There have been tremendous cuts to women's groups, to Status of Women, a huge reduction in the service centres.

We could be tackling the major issues affecting women, like violence against women. We absolutely need a national action plan to end the violence. We need an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

We need to tackle pay equity. It is unconscionable that women in Canada earn 81 cents for every \$1 a man earns. There was a 2005 study by the Royal Bank of Canada, saying we are losing \$156 billion annually because of the pay equity gap.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, can my colleague elaborate on the disastrous long-term consequences of this omnibus budget implementation bill?

Over the years, how will this bill, and particularly the change having to do with FATCA, change the principles that are important to us?

What impact will this bill have on the laws that protect Canadians' privacy?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, there is an increasing trend in omnibus bills. We need to be able to undertake scrutiny, and we cannot.

One of the big changes is that the Canada I grew up in believed in a fair and just society, where everyone had an equal shot. If we worked hard, we had enough food on the table and a roof over our heads, we could send our children to college or university, and we could save for our retirement. Where is that Canada today?

*Government Orders*

The Canada I grew up in believed in feeding our neighbours' child when there was need, and believed that the government was there to look after our most vulnerable citizens. It is really shameful that the government has forgotten these core Canadian values.

We need to honour the promise. In 1989 and 1992, we promised to eliminate child poverty in Canada and to ensure safe, nutritious food for all. There are 169 other countries that feed their children every morning. In Toronto, 40% of elementary school students and 62% of secondary school students go to school hungry. Hungry children cannot learn. It is unconscionable.

● (1220)

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride today to rise here in my place and lend my voice to support Bill C-31, an act to implement certain provisions of the federal budget that was brought down on February 11, 2014, here in this House.

I represent the great riding of York Centre. York Centre is a unique riding. We have 15 different ethnocultural groups that represent at least 5% of the population. People come from all over the world to the riding of York Centre, and they come for a variety of reasons. They are escaping persecution. They are escaping racism. Most importantly, they are coming to this great country of Canada to seek opportunity for themselves, but more importantly, for their children.

Recently I read about a poll taken around the world asking people where they would like to live. What was their number one country, given their choice? The number one answer given was "Canada". We have read in the history books that 2,000 years ago, in the Roman Empire, the greatest thing one could say was "*civis Romanus sum*", "I am a citizen of Rome". Today, thanks to our Prime Minister and to the actions of our government, the proudest thing Canadians can say, no matter where they are, whether in Canada or around the world, is "I am a citizen of Canada". That is why we have people wanting to come to Canada from every corner of the earth.

Let me just step back a bit. Canadians have no monopoly on brains and ingenuity and creativity. That exists around the world. This is, however, one of the very few countries around the world that offers opportunity, so people come here seeking that opportunity to get a better life for themselves and their children. That is what Canada is about. That is the most Canadian thing.

We are so fortunate under this government. We have had a plan since 2006, unlike the previous Liberal government, which for 13 years balanced the federal budget on the backs of the most vulnerable people in our society: seniors and children. It was actually quite an outrage.

What we have done is increase transfer payments to the provinces. We increased the GIS, at a record level of 25%, just before the last election. We now have the best-performing economy of any G7 country. It is a jobs-driven economy. We have created over one million net new jobs since the depth of the recession in July 2009. We are leading the G7.

In the month of January, we had a budgetary surplus of \$2.9 billion and are on course to get a \$6.5 billion budgetary surplus by the time our next budget comes down in 2015. We have done this by lowering taxes to record levels. We have lowered the corporate

income tax to 15%, which has made Canada a huge investment opportunity and a destination for businesses to create jobs. We have negotiated nine free trade agreements, more than any Canadian government in history. We just closed negotiations on the Canada–Korea free trade agreement. Preceding that was the Canada–European Union free trade agreement. Trade means jobs, and this government knows that.

People in my riding tell me, when I go to door to door, which I do every weekend, that they have never had it better than under this government under the leadership of our current Prime Minister.

Our economy has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 economy, at 36%. The G7 average is 90%. Our second closest competitor is Germany, at just over 50%. We have the highest, strongest income growth of any G7 country, and we have recovered all of the business investment lost during the economic recession. The IMF, the OECD, and the World Economic Forum have said that Canada is the best place to do business. We have the strongest financial system in the world, exceeding Basel III.

● (1225)

We have the strongest fundamentals in place over the next 50 years to grow our economy substantially. That is what business looks for. We have frozen EI premiums. Businesses want stability to create jobs. They need to know that, and this government has done that.

All the credit rating agencies, from Standard & Poor's to Moody's, have reiterated our AAA credit rating. No other G7 country has benefited from such a credit rating as Canada has.

We have brought in a series of budgets since 2006 that are not Conservative budgets or ideologically driven budgets. These are Canadian budgets. These are budgets that are good for the people of Canada. We have job creation. We have an economy that will stimulate jobs and encourage investment, unlike the New Democrats, whose ideology gives them the answers before they even look at the evidence. That is why they do not bother to read bills that come before the House, because their ideology will give them the answer before they even need to read them.

We have lowered taxes on average Canadians. We have lowered the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, putting a thousand extra dollars in the pockets of Canadians. We believe that Canadians know what to do with their money better than what governments can do with it. We have enhanced the working income tax benefit. Eight million Canadians have opened up tax-free savings accounts. We have reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11% and the general business tax from 21% to 15%, as I indicated earlier. We are increasing the age credit and the pension income credit. We have taken more than one million Canadians off the tax rolls. No other government in Canadian history has ever been able to achieve that.

*Government Orders*

Our current unemployment rate, with a record number of people who want jobs in Canada because our economy is doing so well, is below 7%. In the heyday of the Liberals, in the mid 1990s, in an economy that was doing extremely well around the world, the unemployment rate never fell below 7%. We, in a fragile economy, must be doing something right, and it is not me who is saying that. It is all the economic institutions around the world who are saying that Canada is the model of economic performance.

When I was in business before I got into politics, I did a lot of travelling. People would come up to me when I would travel. They were very curious about Canada's success story and why it was doing so well relative to all other economies around the world. Now that I have been in government, I can see why. We are the only party that consults. We have had a plan since 2006 based on consultations with the Canadian people. The people told us that their priorities were jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity, and that has been our focus since 2006.

The only part of government spending we have reduced is spending on the operations of government. We have not reduced transfer payments to either people or governments. We have reduced spending on government operations, and that is saving the taxpayers of Canada money.

The first thing we did when we got into government in 2006, which put us in a good position to weather the economic storm that was coming, was begin to pay down the national debt by \$37 billion. That gave us the latitude in later years, when the economic recession hit, to have the manoeuvrability to run a short-term deficit. Because of our government's policies on job creation and lower taxes, we are now going to have a \$6.5 billion budgetary surplus, the only G7 country to have a surplus, in 2015.

• (1230)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague, who has a cheerleading approach to the budget, to reflect a little on the lack of any effort the government is making in the budget to deal with the promises it made in Copenhagen to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is an agreement the Conservatives made with the world. It is an agreement that may have some impact on the Canadian economy, but it could possibly have some very positive impacts on the development of green technology. With efforts we could make to live up to our international obligations, we could create an industry Canadians could feel proud of.

Right now, the budget offers up probably \$800 per Canadian in subsidies to the oil industry, not to the kind of effort we need in this country to move ourselves in a positive direction in this world.

How can we hold our heads up in the international context when we simply do not live up to our international obligations?

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the benefit of being in the NDP is that one can enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

Our government has done more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions than any other government in Canadian history. The way we have gone about doing that is not with a trade-off. It is not either/or. We can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate

change on the one hand but create jobs, growth, and economic prosperity on the other hand. That is exactly what we are doing, not just in this budget but with every piece of legislation we pass. Our focus is on what matters most to Canadians, and that is jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity.

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his speech, which I felt was one of the better speeches given in this House on this budget. It is a remarkable speech. I thank the member for his passion for our country and for recognizing this opportunity. I also want to thank him for his work on the finance committee.

The member talked about consultations as we went into the budget. Yes, I had the pleasure of seeing many members of Parliament holding these pre-budget consultations across the country, so I want to thank the member for that.

In his speech, the member talked a little about keeping taxes low, coming to a balanced budget in 2015, and not diminishing transfers of any type to our provinces or territories. He also mention EI premiums. Again, the opposition was pushing for increased taxes. The opposition has never seen a tax it would like to cut. Certainly, we froze the EI premiums.

I wonder if the member would speak a little more about the importance his constituents place on a balanced budget, on keeping other payroll taxes low, such as the Canadian pension plan, and on the good measures we have brought forward for helping seniors and for helping young people prepare for retirement.

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the excellent Minister of State (Finance) that we are so lucky to have in our government. He is doing wonderful work on our behalf and on behalf of all Canadians.

The minister spoke about taxes. It is clear that our government is on record as leading a job recovery, an economic recovery, based on lower taxes. We have seen what the NDP can do to an economy if it has its way. I refer all hon. members back to Ontario, when Bob Rae, before he became a Liberal, was premier of Ontario. We saw record levels of debt. We saw record levels of increased taxation. We saw record levels of unemployment, in fact the highest levels of unemployment of any jurisdiction in North America. Now the NDP would have us bring what they did in Ontario to Canada. I say no.

• (1235)

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand and speak to yet another 360-plus page omnibus budget bill. Yet again, as has been the case with the Conservative government, this bill is replete with law and policy reforms unrelated to or only minimally related to finance. This bill is more notable for what it excludes than what it offers to Canadians, but I will speak about that a little bit later.



*Government Orders*

Once again, it incorporates a myriad of legislative reforms belonging more appropriately, in a true, open, transparent, and democratic system, under separate stand-alone bills for policy initiatives with adequate opportunity for scrutiny and debate, not just by duly elected members of Parliament but also by Canadians who might be impacted these measures, and with referral to the appropriate committee for study.

It is regrettable that the Conservative government continues to table the type of budget implementation bills it does. There are some supportable measures in this bill, but the government just cannot resist putting in poison pills that my constituents absolutely cannot support.

However, I would credit the proposed action on a number of matters, which many have called for. One includes extending to 10 years the carry-forward period for specified donations of ecologically sensitive lands. That is a commendable measure.

Expanding the category of persons who may claim medical expenses to those suffering severely from diabetes is very important. In particular, our aboriginal communities are suffering immeasurably from this disease. It would be nice if the government also put in place measures so that they could afford healthy foods and that would help to address the symptoms and cause of diabetes.

Finally, the government is responding to a call by the Alberta attorney general and me to increase the number of appointments to the Court of Queen's Bench in Alberta. I am delighted that it has finally responded to that request, which has been outstanding for many years.

I am pleased that the Conservatives would extend at least a modicum or limited category of veterans' benefits, although they are still begrudging veterans the benefits they deserve from the period of 2006-13. It would have been nice if the government had moved forward and stopped the clawback and instead reimbursed and rewarded our veterans for the time served.

In addition, interest-free loans for apprenticeship training are most likely welcomed. Regrettably, absolutely nothing in this budget would trigger action by employers to offer more apprenticeships. It is nice that there would be money to borrow to participate in an apprenticeship, but we still have this longstanding failure by the corporations in this country, especially the major corporations, to make apprenticeships available.

Sadly, again, while the government persists in providing some measures that we have either long called for or would be happy to support on behalf of our constituents, there are many more matters of legislative concern in this bill.

For example, let us look at FATCA. This implements the Canada-U.S. intergovernmental agreement on the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, or FATCA. Grave concerns have been expressed by many of my constituents about these measures. This is a bill that absolutely should have come independently to this place for open debate and to allow citizens with dual Canadian and U.S. citizenship to come forward and testify to the issues, and for legal experts to testify to the matter and provide advice and counsel to the government on how it might be implemented in a fairer and more advantageous way for Canadian citizens.

Regrettably, the government has thrown it in the middle of a budget bill and there will not be that opportunity.

Secondly, let us look at administrative tribunals. We know that the government has serious problems with parliamentary officers, whom it is trying to stifle. This measure is also of grave concern. Instead of providing administrative services to the many federal tribunals, the government is proposing to consolidate them all in one office. The senior administrator would be appointed by the government.

This raises serious concerns, because these are quasi-judicial bodies that are supposed to be completely independent of government. One merely needs to consider the actions taken by the government against our quasi-judicial tribunals.

● (1240)

Time after time, the government has refused to reveal information to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This raises the question: is this some kind of mechanism whereby the Conservatives will be able to control and try to constrain the wide array of quasi-judicial tribunals in this country? It is obviously a matter that legal experts would like to come in to discuss separately, but that is not going to happen because it is contained within a budget bill.

Third is railway safety. This one is absolutely stunning. Day after day, issues are raised in this place about the abject failure of the government to adequately govern railway safety. This is a serious issue for my constituency. We have rail tanker cars coming into the very busiest part of my riding. In fact, they are going to continue to come through, literally feet from condominiums.

What is the government doing? It just defies reason. It is passing, in a budget bill, a measure that is going to rescind a mandatory duty to notify the public of measures on rail safety, and it is rescinding the opportunity for the public to comment on rail safety measures. It defies logic.

In the case where these measures are actually environmentally related, where the measures might be put in place to protect the environment, by rescinding this, the government is actually violating the North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation. In signing onto that agreement, Canada had undertaken to provide advance notice and opportunity to comment on any proposed law by government that might impact the environment.

No such notice was given of this law change coming forward. It is removing the opportunity for Canadian communities to have a say in rail safety. It defies logic that this would be in a budget bill.

Fourth is temporary foreign workers. The government is lauding the fact it is going to implement monetary penalties by regulation, where there is no opportunity for discussion. This is the government that, until it was pressured, did not even inform Canadians of corporations that are breaking the law on bringing in temporary foreign workers. Only because of pressure did it finally, this weekend, post some of those names. We are talking about major corporations that may be breaking the law regulating temporary foreign workers, and the government is going to issue a monetary penalty. It is not even asserting the powers it has right now, including the power to yank the permits for bringing in temporary foreign workers.

*Government Orders*

We look forward to the explanation by the government of why this would be in a budget bill. Obviously monetary penalties might be arguable. Normally these are brought forward in an amendment to the relevant statute.

Finally, I would like to speak to what is not in Bill C-31. There are no measures to support the renewal of the small business job creation tax credit, which would definitely help small startups offering energy efficient retrofits, or clean energy firms. There were a number of such entities, all excited to get going in my city and my riding. Youth were interested in going around and meeting seniors in their homes, giving them an affordable audit and then referring them to people who could energy retrofit their homes.

It is not there. The government is not interested in helping people reduce their energy use and save money.

There is absolutely no renewal of the ecoENERGY home retrofit program, which was one of the all-time popular programs, over-subscribed because it was so popular. The government decided to get rid of it.

There is a total absence of any measures, fiscal or other, to address Canada's growing greenhouse gas emissions, despite the fact that 81% of Canadians believe there is solid evidence of climate change and 84% want Canada to show leadership. Of course, I guess the problem is that the government is supported by the 30% who do not believe in climate change.

I look forward, in response to questions, to sharing more information, including the fact there are zero measures to get major corporations to invest money in alternative energy in Canada.

• (1245)

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona for her speech. She gave us a very eloquent overview of the situation.

She also mentioned that this omnibus budget bill will likely have unintended consequences given how problematic it is.

I know that she is very knowledgeable in such matters. Therefore, I would like her to talk about the impact of the absence of environmental measures in this budget, as she mentioned at the end of her speech.

[English]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question and her contribution to her constituency. She is a dedicated, hard worker.

Clearly, there is a major missing piece in the budget, just as there has been in all of the budgets the government has brought forward. The government espouses responsible resource development. It espouses support of the principle of sustainable development. Yet it has paid zero attention to that in any budget bill in this place.

Why is that important? Although my colleague says it is an issue of concern for the environment, it is actually a serious economic issue going into the future. While the rest of the world is shifting their investments to renewable power and energy efficiency because, frankly, in some jurisdictions like Iceland, and even in China, if they

invest in energy efficiency in their own jurisdiction, they are then free to export and get the export value of those products.

That is not the case in this country, where we are simply not seeing any measures come forward whatsoever to either reduce the power bills of Canadians, nor for us to invest in the jobs of the future for young Canadians in their communities.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, TransCanada Pipeline Limited's 4,500 kilometre energy east pipeline project would carry 1.1 million barrels of crude oil per day from Alberta and Saskatchewan to refineries in eastern Canada. According to TransCanada Pipeline Limited, the project is expected to add \$35 billion to Canada's gross domestic product over 40 years and would create 10,000 jobs.

Would the member agree that it is important for us to have the laws we are putting in place for responsible development of our resources so that we can indeed have an economy and protect the environment, which is why we do have the regulations in the bill she denies are there?

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I am left speechless because I do not see those provisions. In previous budget bills, yes, the Conservatives have downgraded the National Energy Board process, so that in fact we do not have the processes or mechanisms to have full-fledged reviews. It is regrettable that because of the downgrading of that process, they have probably severely prejudiced a lot of pipeline projects, particularly the gateway project.

No, indeed, I do not see the measures in there to ensure protection of the environment. In fact, I need to remind the minister that it is raw bitumen that is being sent in all directions out of Alberta, not crude oil, and that it would be nice to see the measures that are going into upgrading and refining within western Canada in the rest of Canada as well.

**Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, "Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice: all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things".

So said Adam Smith, the Scottish economist. To put it in a way that many Canadians who know their history would understand, it is about peace, order, and good government. That is the basis of what we do in this place. That is what we seek to do with all legislation. That is the jurisdiction of the Canadian Parliament.

*Government Orders*

Listening to the debate going on today, talking about the budget implementation act, the economic action plan of the Government of Canada, I heard some hon. members talk about not quite recognizing the Canada in which they grew up in this budget, the government's economic action plan. Therefore, I thought perhaps a little bit of context might be useful for understanding where Canada has come from in our economic past: what is Canada's historic approach to dealing with economic issues, and what in the past has impacted us that affects us in this economic legislation?

I will deal with a few of the myths and also bring forward some of the economic data, not only from Canada but from around the world, to explain why the government has it right, why the government has done what it has done, and why concentrating on what I spoke of earlier—low taxes, peace, order, and good government—is what works best for Canada.

What many Canadians often do not understand, or do not necessarily remember, is that one of Canada's primary, original economic strategies was low taxes. I know that may be difficult for some members of the opposition to understand, growing up thinking the Trudeau era was the norm for Canadian economic policy. However, in the early part of Canada's history, one of the absolutely basic strategies for attracting immigrants, investment, et cetera, to Canada was not having income tax. We know that Prime Minister Borden introduced income tax during the First World War to pay for the expense of the war. However, what is often forgotten is that the Conservatives in that era—and for that matter the Liberals until the era of Laurier, when they began to think about it—were opposed to income tax. One of the reasons they opposed it was that they knew low taxes would attract talent to Canada. Immigration from Great Britain and the United States, specifically, is what they were looking for. Of course, keeping taxes lower than the United States was important to this strategy because, with the opportunities in the United States, immigrants had a choice between the two countries.

Canada was built very much on this concept of low tax, a solid currency, low administration, and a low regulatory approach to governance. This is something that is often forgotten in debates nowadays, when we start to think and reference back to the mid-1970s as the basis for beginning our economic history of Canada.

We see these historic principles that worked so well in the founding of our nation being carried forward in our government's fiscal and budgetary policy. Let us look at a few of these things, historically, that the government has done. We know of course about the 2% cut to the GST, going from 7% to 6% to 5%. It was a measure that helped all Canadians, low income, high income, working Canadians, and Canadians who are on fixed incomes, across the board. Of course we remember the pension splitting that the government brought in to provide income tax fairness to seniors.

If I may digress here for a moment, there has been some debate in the public about one of the upcoming provisions for one of the next budgets. That is the expanding of income splitting to families, particularly families with children under the age of 18. One of the criticisms of the government wanting to bring this policy forward is that it would give tax cuts to people who make a fair bit of money. That is, it would give tax cuts to people who pay taxes. I have news. Unless one pays taxes, one cannot have one's taxes cut. We want

Canadians to pay taxes, because that is how we provide for our services in our country. Therefore, it is very good to have taxes cut.

• (1250)

Those who are most discriminated against under the current tax system will receive the most benefit under this tax provision, just as people who had pensions were the ones most likely to benefit from the change in the pension splitting provisions. Therefore, it should be remembered that this income splitting is not only good economic policy, but it is good social policy because it enhances the fairness of the tax system.

One of the most important things this government has done in these last few years is try to bring down and control the debt, the deficit in particular. Canadians may not remember this, but prior to 1975, Canadian debt tended to grow by 5% to 10% a year. Only in 1975 did our debt really begin to accelerate to 20% per year for slightly over a decade. It took many years after the follies of the Pierre Trudeau administration for us to begin to get a grip on our financial house here in Canada. That is one reason why I approve of the government's specific strategy of trying to get the deficit down to zero so that we can then begin to repay the debt we have built up.

All government spending is taxes. However, the question is this. Is it present taxes or future taxes with interest tacked on? That is why I feel it is important for all present Parliaments to do what they can to try to keep Canada's debt load low and eliminate the deficit now. In eras like World War I and World War II, there were situations where it was understandable to run a deficit. That is one of the most important things to note.

We have looked at the government's success in cutting taxes. Opposition critics are often fond of criticizing the cuts to corporate taxes. What they sometimes fail to note is that the share of corporate taxes presently tends to be almost identical, as a share of the GDP, to what it was when we had higher corporate taxes. For people who do not understand economics, that may seem a bit strange, but we need to understand that corporate taxes are merely one stage of the tax process. The profit of the corporation will eventually be taxed again at other levels later on. What corporations do when they see tax rates go up is reallocate capital, look for better places to invest, and cut back in other areas.

I was reading an interesting article that analyzed the effect of corporate taxes in the United States. It said that one of the biggest impacts of raising corporate taxes was wage pressure on workers. The lowering of corporate taxes has not hurt government finances and helps to put positive pressure on the salaries of workers.

*Government Orders*

There are a couple of other things for which I want to congratulate the government. While reading notes in preparation for this debate, I found this interesting. Departmental spending has gone down in three straight years. I offer my congratulations to the President of the Treasury Board and all the ministers who worked on that. That is incredibly difficult to do. With growth in population, inflationary pressures, et cetera, to keep departmental spending down in three straight years is a spectacular achievement, because all government spending is taxation, as I said earlier. The question is whether it is present taxation or future taxation. Keeping government spending down is one of the most important things here.

As I have approximately one minute left, let me list a few of the positive things our government has done. One in particular that we should continue to push for and emphasize is our trade agreements—one of the absolute best things we have done in this Parliament—with the European Union, with many countries in Latin America, and increasingly by reaching out to Asia.

Everything I have talked to comes back to those basic points, which are peace, order, and good government. If we keep taxes low, keep the money sound, and keep the administration of government light, in the end we will have a prosperous country, a good economy, and happy citizens throughout our country.

• (1255)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's overview. He has some posits on Canadian history, which I found interesting. I am not sure where he was going with it, though. I assume the next step he would say is that he would abide by Borden's rhetoric that there would be temporary income taxes. Maybe we have a new policy announcement from the Conservative Party that they are going to get rid of income tax.

Of course, that replaced the national policy, which was also hard on the western provinces of the day.

It was not always the shiny, happy kind of picture he is painting, but we can debate history and economics later, and I would love to do that any time.

On this particular bill we have in front of us, would the member not agree that the current government has continued this path of putting together budget bills that actually have very little to do with budgets? Would he not agree, as he used to when he was in opposition, that budget bills should be separated out, that we clearly need to be focused on the budget, separate from all these other initiatives, so we can actually have transparency, debate, and parliamentary oversight?

• (1300)

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, first, in reference to my colleague's remarks about economic history, I agree with the Laurier Liberals on free trade, and I agree with the Borden Conservatives on income tax. I am very open to ideas, as long as they are good ideas, from wherever they come.

With respect to the hon. member's remarks about omnibus legislation, I think sometimes it needs to be understood, when it comes to dealing with regulatory issues, that they have a profound effect on the economy.

Regulation that is set up to provide for health and safety is one thing, but sometimes regulation is put in there for economic steering and economic—let us say it—manipulation. Those things and those regulatory changes, I think, can be tied very closely and very tightly to budgets and economic action plans.

Would I like to have the hon. member on the record as opposing more elements of the federal government's budget, in specific? Yes, I would. It would make it much more direct and much easier for me to campaign against the NDP in my constituency.

**Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. I found his historical references quite interesting, as well.

One of the things about the parties opposite, the centre-left party and the left party, is that their economic policies are, by and large, to spend, spend, spend.

What I find amazing is that they never talk about the need to create wealth. They simply do not understand that one of the government's major roles is to set up a climate for investment and wealth creation.

I would like to ask my colleague and friend why it is that the two parties on the opposite side, the centre-left and the left-wing parties, simply do not understand the need to create wealth before we can spend it.

**Mr. Brad Trost:** Mr. Speaker, I would say, in reference to my hon. colleague's remarks that, when left-wing parties do get into government a for long enough time, eventually reality does bite them. We saw this in France, where President Hollande tried to raise the income taxes up to 75%. That began to cause fiscal issues. The economic problems began to grow; so now, the socialist government in France is beginning to retrench and pull away, because it has seen what every other country in history has seen: high taxes do not provide for a prosperous society; low taxes are one of the fundamental economic freedoms—not the only one—that help provide for prosperity for all citizens.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have here another season, another Conservative budget, another mammoth bill, another omnibus bill, another undemocratic bill, another Trojan horse bill. It is another season in Parliament where the Conservatives have introduced another brick of a bill.

Will this brick of a bill build the foundation for a prosperous economy? No. Will this brick of a bill build the foundation for an economy of solidarity? No. Will this brick of a bill build the foundation for a democratic economy? No. Will this brick of a bill build the foundation for a green economy and strengthen environmental protections? No. Will this brick of a bill build an economy of innovation and creativity? No.

The content of Bill C-31 undermines all that Canadians are and all that they can accomplish. This budget undermines everything Canadians are striving for, namely, a fairer, greener and more prosperous society where no one is left behind.

When I meet people from my riding of LaSalle—Émard, I am meeting people who work hard. I travel with them on the bus and on the metro. They often have unstable jobs and are struggling to make ends meet. They pay all sorts of fees, and this government's planned tax cuts are irrelevant to them because everything else costs more.

When I am in my riding, I meet with seniors. They are also concerned because their rent is going up while their pension stays the same because of this government's blind stubbornness. Seniors are concerned because they too are having trouble making ends meet. I meet families who are working extremely hard to make sure that their children have a bright future but who are struggling with debt and instability. They are concerned because they too are struggling to make ends meet.

Canadians are bearing the burden of the Conservatives' successive irresponsible budget measures, and Bill C-31 will only add to that burden. I would like to quote an article from *The Economist*, which reads:

• (1305)

[English]

...Canada's finance minister...has repeatedly warned of the threat household debt poses to the economy.

Yet [the previous] budget did little to encourage business investment or exports to take the place of consumers in supporting growth. Rather, his focus was on eliminating the federal budget deficit—currently at 1.4% of GDP, low compared with most G7 economies—before the next general election in 2015. His plan, which relies on spending restraint and unusually high revenue growth, is seen by many as wishful thinking.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in its *Alternative Federal Budget 2014: Striking a Better Balance*, warns:

...the growth that households contributed to the Canadian economy in the past year was entirely financed through household debt. Clearly this situation is not sustainable....

The real concern for Canada lies ahead, when mortgage rates do inevitably increase from their present historic lows. At that time, highly leveraged households, along with their consequent support for economy growth, will be seriously constrained.

[Translation]

In my riding, I see businesses closing and good jobs being lost. I see SMEs having difficulty covering their operating expenses or investing in growth and job creation. I see small businesses closing or struggling to survive.

Since the Conservatives came to power, the gap between the rich and the poor has grown faster than in other OECD countries.

We are also seeing the gap between large and small businesses growing. The Conservatives' policies for creating stable, well-paying jobs for all Canadians have quite simply failed.

[English]

In its *Alternative Federal Budget 2014*, the authors state:

The current federal government's policy of spending public revenues on corporate tax breaks, intended to stimulate re-investment in the Canadian economy, has failed. Rather than creating jobs and spending money on Canadian-made infrastructure,

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corporations have hoarded their government-subsidized profits to the tune of \$572 billion, raised top CEO wages to 171 times that of the average Canadian worker, and shifted their workforce into increasingly precarious jobs.

[Translation]

That is what comes of irresponsible austerity budgets and policies, these bricks that do nothing to build the foundation of a strong, solid, and prosperous Canadian economy.

I would also like to talk about a rather worrisome measure in the budget whose ramifications could have harmful consequences for Canadians. I am talking about the accord on the infamous Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, better known as FATCA, the American tax law on foreign accounts. A number of people have said that this accord might be inconsistent with Canadian privacy laws and that enforcing this law could be costly. Those costs would be borne by the financial institutions and by the Canada Revenue Agency. We can expect those costs to be passed on to consumers and taxpayers.

Our country needs leadership and a clear vision. The NDP has a number of proposals to build a lasting, supportive, prosperous economy for the future.

The NDP is proposing that the government make strategic investments in the Canadian economy, in innovative and productive industries, sectors where Canada has already proven itself. I want to speak specifically about sectors like the aerospace industry, a sector that is ignored in this budget but that is creating well-paying jobs in a value-added export industry.

If the government was willing to do so, it could also invest in the green technology industry, another sector that this government has ignored and neglected. Need I remind the House that protecting the environment is not inconsistent with responsible economic development? An NDP government would make strategic investments in the co-operative sector for a sustainable, democratic and 100% Canadian economy.

What I would like to see in this bill is a new partnership with the provinces and cities, instead of this government's paternalistic and controlling vision, especially when it comes to infrastructure. As a result, we would have vibrant cities and communities that would have the means to build safe and healthy places to live. We would have an environmental policy that would make Canada a leader in green technologies, energy conservation, electrification of transportation and waste reclamation. We would have a digital strategy in which revenue from spectrum auctions would be invested in infrastructure to provide high-speed Internet in all regions of Canada.

What I would like to see in this budget is a government that provides services that Canadians can count on.

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●(1310)

These are proposals that would build the foundation of a solid economic structure, a sustainable, mutually supportive and prosperous economy focused on the future.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech. Obviously she has many ideas different from what is discussed in the BIA, and I suppose that is why we have a democracy that allows people to get a chance to speak to the values they would like to see in these kinds of budget documents.

A substantial section of her speech talked about corporate tax and the rate the member would prefer to see it at. I would ask the member if she is familiar with Stephen Gordon's *Worthwhile Canadian Initiative*. He is a Canadian economist who has done substantial research in the area of corporate tax rates. He has said that the study and research that he has seen show that by lowering corporate taxes, we not only see gains in productivity because manufacturers can put new technology to work but we also see an increase in labour prices. We would actually see people making more money.

Does the member agree that further enhancements to productivity and increased wages would be good things for this country?

[Translation]

**Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I mentioned in my speech that companies had not reinvested \$567 billion, even though they had received tax breaks. Those corporate tax breaks are not being reinvested in Canada to create jobs. That was my point.

I must admit that I would have liked to have much more time to talk about this subject. I am sure all the other members in the House would agree, but unfortunately the government chose to impose time allocation. We will not have time to debate this bill—and, most importantly, to study it carefully in committee to improve it—even though this bill will have some very serious consequences for Canadians.

●(1315)

**Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-H  bert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. We need to remember that the government imposed a gag order on this bill after only 25 minutes of debate. It introduced yet another massive budget bill and has thrown all kinds of things into it. It contains poison pills, which means that there are things we agree with and things we do not agree with.

I really appreciate the direction my colleague took in her speech when she made some worthwhile suggestions. She spoke about the co-operative movement and about technology. I would like to know what she thinks about the shortcomings in this budget with respect to technology. Perhaps she could tell us whether she agrees with me that there are shortcomings.

Technology is not just about innovation. It also includes basic research. There is a university in my riding, and I am told that cuts are being made to basic research and the focus will be strictly on

innovation. We are breaking the innovation chain. Are we not setting ourselves up for challenges in the future by not investing in research?

**Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very insightful question. This is something we looked into together at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, where he had the opportunity to serve a few times. He also looked into this when he was the science and technology critic.

My colleague is absolutely right. There has to be a chain. You have to go from the top down. Applied research is downstream, but there needs to be a well, a reserve. This well is drying up because the current government has no interest in science and is not particularly interested in basing its policies on science or solid evidence. We all know about the cuts at Statistics Canada. This data is key to ensuring we have an economic portrait of Canada for our discussions on the economy and the budget. This information is missing and data collection has stopped since the famous long-form census was cancelled. That worries me, and it should worry my Conservative colleagues because not having this economic portrait is very harmful to Canada's economic future.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-31, the budget implementation act.

This bill will enact various measures that were outlined in the budget that was presented to the House last month. I am very happy that the government is moving forward expeditiously to put these measures in place to benefit all Canadians.

Today I will outline why I feel as though this bill will benefit residents in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, and indeed Canadians from coast to coast.

Before I begin, I want to take some time to congratulate the former minister of finance, a good friend of mine, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, on a job very well done. He was first elected to the House of Commons in 2006, after spending several years with the Ontario provincial government.

He has tirelessly represented the people of Whitby—Oshawa in his work here in Ottawa. The accolades that he has received internationally, and his recognition as the greatest finance minister in the world, truly demonstrate that he was certainly one of the greatest finance ministers that our country has ever had.

I wish him all the best in his retirement, and, again, commend him on a job well done.

Further to this, I would congratulate the member for Eglinton—Lawrence on his recent appointment as Minister of Finance and wish him all the best as he carries out his duties in this position. I am certain that he will carry out sound economic policies for Canadians in the years to come.

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Before getting into the specific measures contained within Bill C-31, I would like to respond to some of the opposition criticism that the bill has received. Bill C-31 has been widely criticized by some of my colleagues across the way as being an omnibus bill. It is often presented that the bill has a wide range of initiatives and will implement new measures in many different areas and many different sectors.

What I think is being misunderstood here is that the problems that are facing our economy are not simple and contained to a specific sector or field. There are a wide range of issues that we are presented with, and we therefore need a comprehensive plan to tackle these issues. That is why Bill C-31 will implement a wide sweeping plan that will ensure increased growth and continue our leading economic prosperity from the recession.

One of these measures that I am very pleased to see implemented is the new building Canada plan. I was pleased to see that recently the government announced that this fund was open for business and municipalities could begin their applications to secure funds for the upcoming construction season. A \$53-billion plan for provincial, territorial, and municipal infrastructure will provide stable funding for a 10-year period, the longest in Canadian history.

I, and many of my colleagues on both sides of the House, have spent some time in municipal politics, and I believe we all understand the importance of stable infrastructure funding. This will ensure that municipalities have the funding they need to carry out projects that will help them to better provide important services to Canadians.

In my riding, the new building Canada plan has received substantial interest. Many municipalities are looking forward to taking advantage of this record level of funding for local projects.

In discussing the upcoming construction season, I think it is important to discuss the importance of government funding in relation to creating summer employment. I am sure that when communities are able to secure funding through the new building Canada plan, many jobs will be created in many different fields.

Our government has always supported job creation and training. This budget continues this record.

Through the Canada job grant, Canadians will get the skills they need to get in-demand jobs. An investment of \$40 million, for up to 3,000 internships in high-demand fields, and \$15 million, for up to 1,000 internships in small and medium sized businesses, will support further job creation.

Furthermore, pilot projects to expand the use of innovative approaches to training apprentices and the creation of the Canada apprenticeship loan will support training and employment through apprenticeships. The Canada apprenticeship loan will help apprentices registered in Red Seal trades to complete their training by providing access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year.

Therefore, I think it is very safe to say that this budget supports job creation and training and implements measures to address skills shortages and unemployment.

● (1320)

Continuing on with our commitment to improving Canadian infrastructure, this budget contains measures that would specifically address the needs of rural areas. I was very pleased to see that \$305 million would be invested to extend and enhance broadband service for up to an additional 280,000 Canadians. In today's high-tech world, with reliance on services provided through the Internet, broadband service is very much needed in rural areas.

This is certainly a welcome announcement in my riding. On a personal basis, the area where I live is one without high speed Internet because of the topography. Hopefully, this initiative would allow companies to address spots like this and others, not just in my riding but across the country.

This budget would also support a strong and stable health care system. This year is significant in that the health accord would shift to the Canada health transfer, which would increase funding from \$30.3 billion to \$40 billion over the next 10 years.

Further to this, the budget would expand health-related tax relief by removing the GST and HST on more health care products and services to better reflect the health care needs of Canadians. Canadians are proud of their health care system, and this budget would continue to improve this already proven successful system.

My riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is surrounded by the Great Lakes on three sides. The recreational fishing industry is a vital source of economic activity and tourism for several communities. This budget would make a significant amount of funding available that would support growth in these communities through the recreational fishing industry.

It should be noted that the recreational fishing industry provides about \$8 billion in economic activity in this country and has become extremely important to many people in my riding.

The first way in which this budget would improve the recreational fishing industry is through support for small craft harbours. The budget would invest an additional \$40 million to ensure that harbour facilities meet the needs of local fishermen.

Furthermore, I was very pleased to see that the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program was extended, through a \$15-million investment. That program was originally put in place about a year ago. There was a lot of effort from a number of MPs from this side of the House. In particular, the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, in Manitoba, put a lot of work into that. It is something that is very important to his riding, my riding, and many other ridings in the country.

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Several groups in my riding have already received funding through this program, and the projects they intend to carry out will go a long way in establishing a secure recreational fishery. I am looking forward to seeing other sportsmen's associations and groups receiving funding through this program to support local fisheries. These people are true stewards of the environment, and they are committed to a healthy ecosystem. This funding would go a long way to creating a healthy environment and a strong recreational fishery.

In relation to getting out and enjoying nature, I was also very pleased to see that a \$10-million investment would be made to improve and expand snowmobile and recreational trails. These trail systems provide a great deal of economic activity and are a great way for Canadians to see the countryside. The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, the National Trails Coalition, and other groups do a tremendous amount of work to maintain a very successful recreational trail system in Canada.

I can tell the House that with this program and the winter and we have had this year, we saw snowmobilers in my area coming in, renting motel rooms, and buying gas and meals. The tourism effect was great, and it went right into April this year.

With that, I am going to leave it, and I look forward to any questions.

• (1325)

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are, as the member mentioned, some disagreements on some of the changes. There is the new health transfer, which was put in place without any negotiation with the provinces.

However, I want to raise an issue that rural and suburban students are facing. I would like to ask the member what he would say to the students in his riding about this. Why did the government eliminate the \$5,000 vehicle exemption credit for students who are seeking student assistance, which is actually going to make life more difficult and make education less affordable for students in riding like his?

I just want to pass along a statistic. Students who live 40 kilometres to 80 kilometres from a post-secondary institution are 31% less likely to attend an institution. For students in ridings like his, with rural and suburban areas, what would the member say to them about that cut?

**Mr. Larry Miller:** First, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his questions and for pointing out the amount of dollars committed to health care in the term of this government, and the future commitment to make sure that is there.

With regard to the lack of dollars spent on health care in this country, some might argue that it is never enough. However, the commitment to keeping it, increasing it by \$10 billion over the next 10 years in the increase alone, is something we have to keep doing. There are always better ways of doing things, and we should always be open to that.

I come from an area where a lot of the young people go away to university. I know that with some of the programs and supports that government has given them, they are very appreciative, and we will keep doing that.

• (1330)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, apropos of the environmental theme of my friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound's speech, I want to thank him again for his private member's bill that banned bulk water exports, one of the best pieces of legislation since I have been elected. However, I have to disagree with him about Bill C-31.

This omnibus budget bill is not just large and complex because the economic problems are complex, as he suggests, but actually because it has become all too common. I think it is an affront to Parliament and an affront to democracy.

This administration has chosen to throw in things that have nothing to do with the budget, things such as adding additional judges to Alberta and Quebec. That is something I support, but it does not belong in a budget bill. There are changes to trademark law; changes to the Hazardous Products Act and to the workplace hazardous chemicals regime; and substantial and devastating and anti-constitutional provisions under the Foreign Accounts Tax Compliance Act, known as FATCA.

I would ask him if he would not be willing, within his own caucus on that side, to argue against the use of such monster bills in the future?

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for her question, for her kind comments on my private member's bill that went through the House unanimously, and for her support on that.

We ran on a commitment to do a lot of things. If she were fair and would express honestly, she would agree with my next comment. At the end of the day, it would not matter what we had in our budget, the folks across the way would be more than likely to vote against it. That is what opposition does, which is unfortunate in this place, but it is the way it is.

The things we have in the bill are very important to Canadians and our economy, and I fully support them.

**Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise this afternoon to speak in support of our government's economic action plan 2014.

I am very pleased that our government is on track to a balanced budget in 2015, as we committed to in 2011. We are doing so responsibly, unlike the previous Liberal government, which balanced the budget on the backs of the provinces and hard-working Canadians. Our government, under the leadership of our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, will balance the budget while continuing to grow provincial transfers to record levels. For my province of Manitoba, federal transfers will total almost \$3.4 billion in 2014-15. That is an increase of 24% from what it was under the previous Liberal government.



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Under this government, we have cut taxes nearly 160 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years. That will save the average Canadian family nearly \$3,400 on its tax bill this year. We have also invested in job creation and training, business, innovation, and trade and have provided support for families and communities from coast to coast to coast. This government is dedicated to jobs and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

I would like to highlight how economic action plan 2014 will continue with our government's strong performance in job creation. As we all know, Canada has led the G7 in job growth, with over one million net new jobs since the economic recession in 2007, with over 85% of those jobs being full time. Simply put, Canada has outperformed every other G7 country and has experienced the strongest real per capita growth in the G7. This is because our government is serious about creating jobs and long-term prosperity for Canadians. This is why economic action plan 2014 focuses on initiatives to support job creation, investments in innovation and trade, and support for families and communities.

I am pleased to highlight the creation of the Canada apprentice loan through the expansion of the Canada student loan program. Costs associated with completing an apprenticeship can be significant, from tools to educational fees to living expenses. The financial strain on Canadians in apprenticeship programs, especially those with young families, can be challenging. This program would provide apprentices in Red Seal trades access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year. Our government is making it easier for Canadians to acquire the skills and abilities needed for a career in high-skill and in-demand jobs.

Through economic action plan 2014, this government also proposes to renew the targeted initiative for older workers program, investing \$75 million over three years to assist older workers in vulnerable communities who have been affected by significant downsizing, closures, or high unemployment to reintegrate into the workforce. This would provide employers with experienced and talented staff, would benefit the economy, and would provide support and security for older Canadians who have experienced job loss.

Not only has our government invested in connecting older workers with jobs but we are also enhancing the job matching service and are modernizing the national job bank. Our government is committed to helping unemployed Canadians get back to work, giving them the first chance at available jobs. That is why the enhanced job matching service would provide modern and reliable tools for job seekers that would match their skill sets to available jobs. It would provide employers with the tools needed to look for qualified Canadian workers through timely access to job postings and consolidated labour market information.

Additionally, these initiatives would provide information to inform young people about fields of study that are relevant to the existing and forecasted demand for labour in particular occupations. This would help students make better choices about their education. Ensuring that students have the tools needed to better plan their routes to future employment is critical for a strong Canada.

A disability does not mean an inability. Unfortunately, Canadians with disabilities are too often under-represented in the workforce. Our government recognizes that employers accommodating persons with disabilities in the workplace is good for business and empowering to individuals, and it stimulates the economy. However, education and training are often required to overcome barriers, dispel stigmas and/or myths, and put action to words.

I would like to specifically highlight our government's \$15 million contribution over three years to the ready, willing and able initiative of the Canadian Association for Community Living. Persons with intellectual disabilities and those with autism spectrum disorder face added and unique barriers to employment, yet we know that these individuals are not only eager to participate in the workforce but are capable of participation. This contribution to the Canadian Association for Community Living would expand existing activities to 20 community-based locations across Canada, which would support new jobs for Canadians with developmental disabilities.

• (1335)

In addition to connecting Canadians with jobs and training, our government has once again proven that support for business, innovation, and trade are top priorities. Canada has become an increasingly attractive place to invest and to grow a business. Recently, Canada moved to second place in Bloomberg's ranking of the most attractive countries for business investment. This is as a direct result of our government's sound economic policies under our Prime Minister.

In economic action plan 2014, we continue to strengthen the Canadian economy by cutting red tape for small and medium-sized businesses. This will save valuable time and money. For example, we have eliminated the requirement for 800,000 payroll remittances to CRA every year for 50,000 small and medium-sized businesses. These eliminations would help business expand and thrive.

In addition to cutting the regulatory burden on small and medium-sized businesses, we have made landmark investments in research and innovation by investing \$1.5 billion in post-secondary research through the Canada first research excellence fund and by investing \$46 million in new funding for the granting councils to support research and scientific advances in Canada.

Strong families and communities are the foundation of a prosperous and safe country. Our government recognizes this and in economic action plan 2014 continues our strong record of strengthening families and communities.

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Families incur unique costs when they adopt a child, such as adoption agency fees and other legal costs. Our government recognizes these challenges. Therefore, we have enhanced tax relief by increasing the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000.

We are standing up for the victims of crime by giving victims a voice. We are giving hope by implementing the victims bill of rights and providing funding for a DNA-based missing persons data index. We have also renewed \$25 million over five years to continue efforts to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls.

Seniors do and will continue to have a very important role in communities across Canada. Through the enhancements to the new horizons for seniors program, the government will provide an additional \$5 million in annual funding to organizations that raise awareness of elder abuse and that provide means for seniors to benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their communities through social activities and active living.

Our government has also recognized that many Canadians make sacrifices to care for their family members. Therefore, we have launched the Canadian employers for caregivers action plan to engage with employers on cost-effective workplace solutions to help maximize caregivers' labour market participation.

Although Canada has experienced the highest economic growth in the G7 since the economic recession in 2007, the government recognizes that low-income families face constraints or have distinct housing needs that impede their participation in the housing market. Our government is committed to working with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and other stakeholders at the community level to ensure that low-income families and vulnerable Canadians have access to quality, affordable housing.

Additionally, this government has committed to ensuring that vulnerable Canadians who experience extended or repeated periods of homelessness have access to quality housing. Therefore, we have renewed the homelessness partnering strategy, as announced in last year's budget. We will continue to work with communities, provinces, territories, and the private and not-for-profit sectors to implement the housing first approach to homelessness.

I want to highlight how the budget and our government honours and respects the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. This budget introduces new measures to the existing measures in previous budgets to support the men and women who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. We have expanded the funeral and burial program by providing over \$800 million over three years to ensure that a veteran of modest means can have a dignified funeral and burial.

Finding meaningful work after leaving the Canadian Forces is a key factor in the successful transition back to civilian life. That is why this budget will make changes to the Public Service Employment Act and regulations to prioritize the hiring of veterans for federal public service employment opportunities.

To conclude, on this side of the House, our government is for all Canadians. From our youth to the elderly, business owners to apprentices, and young families to veterans, this government has invested in the prosperity, safety, and growth of all Canadians and their families. Through economic action plan 2014, we will continue

to do so. I can only hope that the NDP and the Liberals will finally recognize this and support this budget.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The NDP and I would like to know one thing. Bill C-31 does not renew the job creation tax credit for small business. The credit no longer exists. What answers does my colleague have for owners of small businesses in his riding or in his colleagues' ridings?

[*English*]

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** Mr. Speaker, as a former small-business owner myself, I am actually very pleased with all the work this government has done to support small businesses and to bring forward legislation that allows employers to not have to deal with so much red tape, especially our small and medium-sized enterprises. They have limited capacity at the management level to deal with some of these things, and there is an overabundance of burden placed on them by a lot of documents they have to bring forward.

As I mentioned in my speech, there are 800,000 pieces of documentation required by 50,000 small businesses across this country that need to be brought forward to CRA. We have eliminated that. We are taking a lot of the burden away from small and medium enterprises, allowing these entrepreneurs to focus on business development and job creation rather than on a mountain of paperwork.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will quickly respond to the comments on the infamous red tape. We cannot say often enough that the only thing on the table is “plus one minus one equals zero”. That is the only concrete initiative from the government and it has been talking about this for years. If we add one paper, we take away another: plus one minus one equals zero. There is no reduction in red tape. I will repeat that every time if need be. The people across the way need to understand that.

Another aspect of this budget was rather shocking. We have been saying for months that the transaction fees that credit card companies charge merchants are excessive. Finally, three small paragraphs in the budget acknowledge that this is a serious problem. However, absolutely no tangible solution was provided, something that was not well received by major merchant groups.

Can my colleague tell us whether his government will not be content just to realize that there is a problem, but in fact do what it takes and impose a regulatory framework to stop this abuse?

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• (1345)

[English]

**Mr. Lawrence Toet:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have worked very closely with business and have done a lot to support businesses so that they have been able to grow. We have seen, over the last number of years, as we have come out of this recession, that businesses have had the ability to grow and to progress. We have worked closely with them. We have done many things to support them. Again, as I say, I am a businessman myself. I have seen so many of the great programs we have brought forward supporting businesses and supporting their growth.

We will continue to work with businesses and with financial institutions to find solutions to problems and challenges. We will continue to always face challenges as a government and as an economy. We will continue to work through that process with our partners in a way that is conducive to job growth and to the growth of our economy.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by dealing with the budget implementation bill under three specific headings: general; what would happen to British Columbia, which is where I come from; and what it would do or not do for health.

The first thing I want to talk about is the budget in general.

I think this is the eighth budget tabled by a government that inherited a strong surplus of \$15 billion. When it came into office in 2006, it inherited the 10 balanced budgets posted by the Liberal governments before it. However, we are now seeing the current Conservative government posting its seventh deficit budget. I want to show where we came from and where we are today to defuse the talk about how wonderful things are.

How wonderful things are is based on not going down in the 2008 global recession because we had some very strong economic pillars that had been left behind by the previous Liberal government. It was also because the strong regulatory measures that had been put on banks protected us from going the way of the international community. I might add that the Conservatives opposed these measures when they were put in place under the Liberal government, but they are now taking enormous credit for them.

We should be doing much better than we are now. We should not be talking about deficits or about how all of the strong indicators and the strong system that was left behind were frittered away by the current government with very poor fiscal management measures.

I remember when the Minister of Finance tabled the budget bill. Everyone said that it was such a boring budget, and he said that was a compliment. One might say that the budget's flaw was not that it was uninteresting but that it was unclear, uncaring, and unhelpful.

There were a lot of vague promises in the budget. There were a lot of self-congratulatory parts in which the Conservatives talked about how well they had done. As I said, they cannot really take credit for any of that.

There are some things I want to talk about specifically with reference to my province of British Columbia.

I suppose we must all feel very relieved that the government plans to fix the Trans-Canada Highway running through Glacier National Park. However, it is a small consolation for those who care about British Columbia's natural landscape, since the Conservatives are also responsible for cutting regulations that once guarded 30,000 lakes and rivers and for reducing the number of protected waterways nationwide to fewer than 200. So much for building a piece of the Trans-Canada Highway, when there has been an absolute reduction of all of the measures to protect the wonderful ecosystem in British Columbia.

On the Conservative government's idea of conservation, let us look at fisheries, which are a big deal for my province. The government plans to protect recreational fishing, which is a good thing, because about 80% of our commercial fishing is recreational in B.C. However, there is little in the way of safeguarding our province's ecosystems as a whole or putting in place measures that came through the Cohen commission to protect the B.C. salmon population. When people say we are having massive salmon runs in B.C. this year, it means that they do not understand this is something that happens occasionally. The overall protection of B.C. salmon is still a big question. I wonder why the government did not use this budget and the budget implementation bill to put in place some of the Cohen commission's recommendations.

We can talk about ensuring public safety, which is something the Conservative government loves to talk about.

We are thankful for all of the volunteers who have contributed to the safety and security of the people in this country and who help the vulnerable. In fact, people who offer a minimum of 200 hours of volunteer service for search and rescue will get a nice little tax credit, but the fact is that a lot of people who volunteer are semi-retired or not working full time, and that tax credit would do little to help them unless it is a refundable tax credit.

To continue on public safety, it is interesting that while we are thankful for the volunteers, there is a lack of concrete action to increase the number of Canadian Coast Guard professionals and improve safety measures for both workers and ordinary Canadian citizens following last year's abrupt closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

The federal government is continuing its policy of soundly ignoring the professionals who work in maritime safety as well as the wishes of the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver. It is also ignoring the petitions that I have tabled here almost every week from British Columbians who are asking for this search and rescue station in Kitsilano to be reopened at a cost of \$70,000 a year. We are not talking about a lot of money here.

• (1350)

Those are the generic things I wanted to talk about.

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I also want to talk about the fact that very little has been done in the budget to address the real challenges facing middle-class Canadians. It does not do very much to help Canadian youth find jobs at a time of consistently high youth unemployment and underemployment. Today there are still 264,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians than before the downturn.

I want to go back in time to 1993. When the Liberal government came in, there was 24% youth unemployment. In three years, the Liberal government took steps to improve that and to give young people a chance at their first job. None of this has been happening.

There is very little to help middle-class parents and grandparents make ends meet and to tackle Canadians' record high levels of personal debt, which is now at \$1.66 for every dollar of disposable income.

The new Minister of Finance had an opportunity in the bill to chart a new democratic path that addressed some of these issues. Instead, what we see is another mammoth omnibus bill with everything but the kitchen sink in it, doing very little to deal with some of the issues we are talking about.

I want to congratulate the government on a couple of things it did do right in health care. It proposes to increase the support for service dogs to assist individuals with severe diabetes. That is very good. Also, there is the design of eligible individualized therapy plans. All of that is good.

However, what about post-traumatic stress disorder? Evidence now shows that persons with post-traumatic stress disorder benefit from having pets such as dogs. That has not been included. It was not included under veterans affairs, it was not included under defence, and it certainly was not included here among people who require dogs to help them work with their disabilities, mental or otherwise. I just wanted to point out some of the things the government had an opportunity to do and did not.

Also in relation to health, acupuncture and naturopathy would be exempt from GST-HST when practised by a qualified professional. That is very nice. There is the design of training plans for individuals with a disorder or disability. Some of these things are good, but they make one wonder about why there was this cherry-picking. Why is the government doing some things for some groups and not for others? We could look at issues like adding the GST-HST to parking that is provided by charities. I wonder why that happened? That was such a punitive little thing to do. It was not going to give the government a lot of money, but it did discriminate against the non-profit sector.

It is a puzzling budget, to say the least. The budget implementation bill does not deal with a lot of things that we think should have been there.

I also want to talk about something some of my constituents are complaining about a great deal, something that we very much oppose.

It is a fact that the government signed an agreement with the United States that will require U.S. citizens living in Canada to regularly file U.S. tax returns and report their property and income to the IRS. Also, Canadian banks must report to the IRS on accounts

held by clients with U.S. citizenship. We are creating a problem here. As we heard from other people, this measure brings up concerns about privacy and sovereignty. Constitutional law experts have been saying that this agreement violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet no one was consulted.

It is interesting that the government goes ahead patting itself on the back but not having discussed it with anyone who should know and therefore making mistakes. I would be generous and kind and say it is with unintended consequences, although I wonder if the government even understands consequences.

There is a very important piece I want to wind up with. That is the transfer of payments. Transfer payments have now been changed on a unilateral formula that would impose a per capita payment on provinces. We need demographic data if we are going to look at helping provinces. Now we have provinces with higher levels of seniors than anywhere else getting less money under the new formula than they ever had. This is going to create a huge problem in the future for these provinces, and they are beginning to complain about it.

• (1355)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is very passionate on the issue of health care. This year, we are experiencing a government that has demonstrated no interest in a national health care program and did not renew the health care accord.

I know the member is very opinionated on the importance of the health care accord. I wonder if she would provide the House with some thoughts on why the government should have renewed a health care accord that was originally signed under former prime minister Paul Martin back in 2004 and that expired just a couple of weeks ago.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague says I am opinionated. I think that might be a compliment, because I like to think I base my opinions on evidence. It is not an ideological thing I do here.

The question the hon. member asked is an important one. It is not whether or not we renew the health accord in the manner in which it was written in 2004 that is important, but the idea that the current federal government, which is the glue that holds this country together, has abandoned its leadership role in health care and refuses to co-operate and collaborate on health care changes that must be made in the system in order to ensure that medicare is sustainable.

The premiers have been begging for a meeting with the Prime Minister on health, and the Prime Minister is refusing. For eight years the Prime Minister has not met with the premiers on issues of health care and in fact has been imposing new formulas for health transfers that will make it more difficult for provinces to provide health care, especially health care for seniors.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Vancouver Centre for her eloquent remarks.

*Statements by Members*

I want to address the issue of search and rescue. There is a non-refundable search and rescue tax credit, which implies some commitment to this very important initiative on the part of the government, yet at the same time it has been acknowledged that almost \$50 million has been wasted by a set of false alarms that have wasted search and rescue's time and efforts over the last number of years. That situation, which has not been corrected by the government, could pay for the Kitsilano Coast Guard search and rescue base for years.

I would like the member's comments on whether the budget appropriately addresses a search and rescue base for her community of Vancouver Centre.

• (1400)

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, the member is fully aware of this issue because she is on the same coast as I am and she is getting the same complaints from Vancouverites about search and rescue.

I think it is good that the government has acknowledged the role of volunteers in search and rescue, but volunteers do not take the place of a professional search and rescue team headed by search and rescue people in the Coast Guard and with a facility there to deal with the problems.

Many volunteers work part time, as I said in my speech, so they need a refundable tax credit if the credit is to actually go toward helping them.

As the member pointed out so well, the ability to deal with search and rescue in an appropriate manner, with professionals and with an appropriate search and rescue facility in the most important and dangerous waters along the coast of British Columbia, is something that defies imagination. I can only put it down to stubbornness and ideology.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, small business is the powerful engine that is driving the economy in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora.

This is plainly evident from the excitement and activity taking place this week as our community gears up for this weekend's spectacular Aurora Chamber of Commerce home show. Some 150 local businesses are getting ready to pack the Aurora Community Centre for this annual event that will attract tens of thousands of residents.

Once again, I will be hosting my MP booth, talking to constituents and providing residents and businesses information on federal programs and services.

I am proud of our government's actions for small business. Cuts to the small business tax rate and increases to the small business income limit are providing \$2.2 billion in tax relief each year across Canada for this important sector.

I invite everyone to visit the Aurora home show this weekend, stop by to say hello, support small business. They will be glad if they do.

\* \* \*

### BLOOD SUPPLY

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it was not that long ago that tainted blood from a paid donor source infected 30,000 Canadians with HIV and hepatitis C. Thousands died and \$5 billion was paid out in compensation. We spent tens of millions on the Krever commission to find out what went so wrong and how to make it right.

Justice Krever set out five basic principles for the governance of the blood supply in Canada, the first two of which were that blood is a public resource, and that donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations. Yet in Ontario for-profit plasma clinics are on the verge of going into the business of buying and selling blood plasma.

The Minister of Health has the power to stop this before it starts. She is being urged to do so by many, including victims and survivors.

To Kat Lantaigne, Mike McCarthy, and so many others who have stuck around to finish this fight, to ensure that there shall be no more victims of tainted blood in Canada, I give my thanks and everlasting respect.

\* \* \*

### RENEWABLE FUELS

**Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to celebrate the work being done by Canada's renewable fuel producers.

In my riding of Leeds—Grenville, GreenField Specialty Alcohol's Johnstown facility produces over 260 million litres of fuel ethanol a year and returns over 154,000 tons of dried distillers grains to the feed industry.

Our Conservative government's renewable fuel strategy has provided the groundwork for the production of almost two billion litres of ethanol and 500 million litres of biodiesel in Canada. In doing so, the sector has reduced greenhouse gases by over four million megatonnes, the equivalent of removing one million cars from the road.

As a direct result of that strategy, we have seen companies in the renewable fuel sector grow to a \$3.5 billion industry and, from that platform, they are developing other sustainable products, making them the anchor tenants of the emerging bio-economy.

Our government stands behind the farmers and industry leaders who have pioneered this growth.

*Statements by Members***HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this national victims of crime awareness week, wherein this year's theme is "taking action" to ensure that the needs of victims are made a priority within the justice system.

While the government's proposed victims bill of rights offers some useful additions to Canadian law, it does not yet sufficiently address the importance of prevention and remedy, and resource shortages.

This year, victims week coincides with the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. As Rwandans mourn their dead in painful silence and quiet dignity, the overarching message of Rwandan remembrance is not only the horror of the genocide, but also that the genocide was preventable, that it was the silence, the indifference, the inaction of the international community in the face of genocidal incitement and mass atrocity that made the Rwandan genocide possible.

Our focus on domestic victims must not ignore the victims of mass atrocity abroad, particularly given the mass carnage that is taking place in the Central African Republic today, with incendiary violence, mass atrocity, and the killing of 140,000 civilians in the last year alone.

Canada should take the lead in sounding the alarm, in acting on the responsibility to protect obligation, in responding to the United Nations' urgent call for more blue helmets, and thereby to honour the legacy of Rwanda and the victims of genocide.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**CHARITY HOCKEY GAME**

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night, Conservative members of Parliament laced up their skates along with the Canadian Police Association for the second annual MP police charity hockey game in support of the Robert Warner Memorial Fund.

This fantastic charity helps to distribute immediate financial assistance to the families of officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Each year members of the Canadian Police Association travel to Ottawa to meet with elected representatives to talk about issues of concern to law enforcement and public safety, and this friendly game of hockey is a great opportunity to get to know each other.

I am proud to report that this year's game raised \$4,000, with the participation of 17 police officers and 19 Conservative MPs. A special thanks goes out to our coaches and the five federal cabinet ministers who participated.

Police officers are continually faced with diverse challenges while ensuring the safety and security of their communities. I would like to thank members of the Canadian Police Association and all officers for their outstanding service. They are some of our finest citizens.

**PAUL ROCHETTE**

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Sudbury, Nickel Belt, and northern Ontario are in mourning today because of the death of another miner from our community.

Paul Rochette was killed on the job on Sunday, while working in the casting and crushing plant at Vale's Copper Cliff smelter. He was 36 years old. Paul leaves behind his partner, two young children, family, friends, and co-workers. We offer our condolences, and grieve with all of them here today.

It is a stark reminder of how dangerous mining and mineral processing is and how important workplace safety is. We will let the police, the company, and the union investigate.

This is the fourth death in three years in our region. I welcome the comments of the chair of the Ontario Ministry of Labour on an ongoing review of mining health and safety. He said:

The death of a 36-year-old industrial mechanic at Vale's Copper Cliff smelter Sunday reinforces the need for a comprehensive review of the health, safety and prevention issues related to the mining industry.

We must work together to...ensure mine workers go home safe and sound at the end of every shift.

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**ST. JOHN AMBULANCE**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the second annual St. John Ambulance Day on the Hill. The Order of St. John is one of the world's oldest humanitarian organizations, and it continues its tradition of important work today by promoting the importance of first aid training. Representatives from St. John are meeting with members of Parliament and senators today. This spring they will be offering first aid and AED training to parliamentarians and their staff.

For their hard work in organizing this event, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of State for Science and Technology, and the members for St. John's East and Ottawa—Vanier, as well as Senator Mercer and Senator Meredith.

I encourage all members to attend the reception this evening, which will be hosted by both Speakers. We will recognize the important work of St. John Ambulance and present a life-saving award to a young Canadian who used first aid training to save a life.

St. John Ambulance plays a vital role in enabling Canadians to save the lives of their friends, neighbours, and family members. I hope that all members will join us in celebrating the lives that have been saved and will be saved, thanks to this important work by St. John Ambulance.

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**ROBOTICS COMPETITION**

**Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the past 14 years, high school youth in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming have been competing in robot competitions through the Near North Student Robotics Initiative. The competition has become a true passion for youth and their families in our region.

*Statements by Members*

Recently, North Bay hosted the first robotics competition in northern Ontario. Each team had six weeks to design and build a robot capable of completing challenges. Teams 1305 from North Bay and 5035 from Nipissing First Nation won two prestigious awards.

Youth with a passion in science, technology, and innovation have a bright future in our region. Canadore College has world-class aerospace and advanced manufacturing programs critical to establishing an aerospace centre of excellence. Our region is committed to creating jobs for these youth so they can continue their passion without leaving home.

I invite all colleagues to join me in a round of applause for these brilliant and exceptional technicians and engineers.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if tax havens are enchanted islands where the world's thieves and mobsters hide their treasure, then why are hundreds of Canadian companies doing business there, and why do Canadian banks have 75 branches there?

Some experts say that tax havens cost Canada between \$5 billion and \$7 billion per year in uncollected tax. With that much money every year, we could build four mega-hospitals or 8,500 social housing units, or we could increase old age pensions by 20%.

Wage earners have no choice but to pay tax on every paycheque. However, the very rich and the big Canadian corporations benefit from treaties the government signs with countries of convenience, treaties that enable them to legally evade taxes.

That makes no sense and I cannot figure out why it is legal. It is starting to look more and more like social fraud. The Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General need to take a close look at this.

As Victor Hugo would say: "One feels the place reeks of secret histories".

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[*English*]

### EAST COAST MUSIC AWARDS

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canada's best and brightest artists were recognized and celebrated on Sunday at the 2014 East Coast Music Awards held in Charlottetown.

As a Maritimer, I am very proud of our exceptional musicians. From Dave Gunning to the Barra MacNeils and Jenn Grant, their amazing talent is not only recognized and renowned in our neck of the woods, but also from coast to coast to coast.

I would like to remind the House that in budget 2014, our government committed to ongoing funding for Canadian music through the \$24.6 million Canada music fund. Each year, on

average, the fund supports the production of more than 400 albums and 1,100 marketing, touring, and music showcase projects.

On behalf of the government, I would like to congratulate all of the nominees, winners, and the many industry professionals involved in bringing our amazing east coast music talent to the forefront of Canada's music industry.

\* \* \*

### INDUSTRY

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, recently the member for Hamilton Mountain and I questioned the Conservatives regarding the situation facing retirees and current steelworkers caused by the uncertainty surrounding U.S. Steel Canada in Hamilton. Following the court settlement between the government and U.S. Steel, the Conservatives promised Hamilton that there would be an investment creating the next generation of quality, decent-paying jobs in our community of Hamilton.

Last month, when invited to a special City of Hamilton Steel Committee meeting to discuss the situation, representatives of U.S. Steel did not attend and, as well, they said they were "mindful" of their promises. I cannot imagine how the Conservative government can be satisfied with that U.S. Steel response, but it appears to be.

In the House, we have called for the minister to hold U.S. Steel accountable, in clear, unequivocal terms, for the promises it made to the current government and to Hamilton. To date, the minister has failed to do so.

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### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP has been caught with its hand in the cookie jar. Staff members paid for with House of Commons resources were working side by side with staff members working for the NDP party apparatus in an office paid for by the NDP and where a number of partisan activities are known to have taken place. The rules are clear that House resources can only be used for parliamentary or constituency offices. This arrangement was neither of those things.

The rules are also clear that the House resources cannot be used for any activity involving the administration, organization, and internal communications of a political party or the solicitation of contributions or memberships. These are the exact things that would have been done out of this political party office the NDP is operating.

This is one more example of the flagrant and consistent pattern of abuse exhibited by the New Democrats when it comes to using taxpayer money to forward their own partisan agenda.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### QUEBEC PROVINCIAL ELECTION

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal caucus would like to commend all those who exercised their democratic right in Quebec yesterday.

### Oral Questions

We want to congratulate the Liberal Party of Quebec and its leader, Philippe Couillard, on their victory. Their government is committed to creating jobs and expanding Quebec's economy within a united Canada, one that builds on the solidarity that binds all Canadians and gives them a strength that they would not otherwise possess.

It has been said that the deciding factor in this campaign was the fear of another referendum. In fact, this result was born of rational choice, not fear. It was a vote against separating from Canada and against the idea of a third referendum. It was a vote in favour of being both Québécois and Canadian, a vote against discrimination among Quebecers and a vote in favour of an inclusive Quebec.

Along with our leader, the member for Papineau, we invite all the members of the House to offer their full co-operation to those elected to Quebec's National Assembly and the new provincial government.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

#### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, National Volunteer Week is April 6 to 12, 2014, and for the 40th consecutive year, the Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec has declared a theme. This year's theme is "Volunteer from head to toe".

Many activities will be organized by the various volunteer action centres and by many community organizations in order to highlight the commitment of all volunteers and to honour a variety of achievements by people whose noble goal is to do good in the community.

In Quebec alone, there are approximately 2 million volunteers who devote 310 million hours to volunteering. What a wonderful demonstration of our collective generosity.

I would like to congratulate the federation on 40 years of outreach, as well as the 111 volunteer action centres in Quebec and everyone in Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière who helps improve the lives of those around them through their volunteer commitments and their generosity of spirit.

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#### DEMOCRATIC REFORM

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have launched repeated attacks on election experts under the guise of creating a fairer electoral system. Their sometimes veiled attacks culminated today in a direct attack on the Chief Electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand.

The very person who represents the integrity of a system in which all Canadians have confidence was attacked by the minister for democratic reform, the very minister who defended the fraudulent robocalls and the in and out scheme, two Conservative tactics that enabled them to take power.

Those who schemed to make it to the top want us to believe that we need to change the act to make it fairer, but I have serious doubts that this bill will benefit the public. As always, the Conservatives are putting the party and their friends above the country.

The experts are not the only ones this government is ignoring. The Conservatives are also ignoring the concerns of seniors, the visually impaired, students and low-income individuals. What is worse is that they are going to force people to pay to vote. If we can no longer use electronic bills as identification at polling stations and the Conservatives continue to allow big corporations to charge \$2 for paper bills, then the public is being forced to pay to vote. That is not right. Canadians deserve better.

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[English]

#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Vimy Ridge, a battle that marked the birth of our proud and modern Canada, it has been nearly 365 days since the inflammatory comments made by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie came to light in the House. He praised communists and remarked that World War I was purely a capitalist war on the backs of workers and peasants. It is shameful that the leader of the NDP has not only maintained silence on the member's take on communists and capitalist war but, in fact, named him the co-chair of the NDP's 2015 national campaign. While—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I will ask members to hold off on their applause until the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is finished.

The hon. member has a few seconds left to conclude her statement.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, while the NDP leadership rewards communist ideals, our government will continue working to provide world-class benefits and services for Canadian veterans.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

#### DEMOCRATIC REFORM

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, two years ago, I asked the Prime Minister if it was acceptable for any of his ministers to knowingly mislead the House. He said that it was not acceptable and that he expected his ministers to always tell the truth. Is that still the Prime Minister's position?

● (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Couillard on his victory last night.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

[English]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister has the floor. Order, please.



*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, I just spoke with Mr. Couillard. I congratulated him and noted that Quebecers have rejected having another referendum. They want a government that is focused on the economy and job creation. Those are our priorities as well, and we look forward to working with this new premier.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, in front of the unelected, undemocratic Senate, of all places, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform launched an all-out attack on Canada's Chief Electoral Officer. He accused him of making "amazing" and "astounding" false claims to derail the proposed elections act.

Will the Prime Minister stand in this House and apologize to parliamentarians and apologize to Marc Mayrand for that cowardly, baseless attack on Canada's Chief Electoral Officer?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while I will address that, I would like again to congratulate Mr. Couillard for his great victory last night.

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

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** I have spoken to him and congratulated him, and I think all of us in all parties have noted that Quebecers have rejected the holding of another referendum and want the government to focus on job creation and the economy. We will work with the government of Quebec to do that.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform claimed:

There are regular reports of people receiving multiple voter cards and using them to vote multiple times. That...can be found on the Elections Canada website.

The only problem is that it is not true. The minister was making up stories about alleged voter fraud, just as the member for Mississauga—Streetsville did just a while back.

If the Prime Minister still believes it is unacceptable for ministers to knowingly mislead Parliament, what will the consequences be for that false statement?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just last week when I was in the House, the leader of the NDP said that, under the fair elections act, all existing investigations would be cancelled.

That was yet another false statement by the leader of the NDP. I do not see him dealing with that particular issue.

On the fact at hand, it is a matter of fact that the voter ID card of Elections Canada is not a secure piece of ID. That is why we have, instead, allowed 39 other pieces of identification.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the one and only case of fraud that the Prime Minister can cite as an example is the *Infoman* gag. All the rest were invented by either the minister or the brilliant and talented member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Will the Prime Minister really disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of Canadians because of an *Infoman* gag? This is no longer funny.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is one of the problems: it is impossible to prosecute a secret voter. That is the problem with voting without identification. In our opinion, the integrity of elections and the democratic process requires that voters have identification. We are determined to ensure the integrity of elections.

• (1425)

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when Sheila Fraser was exposing Liberals, the Prime Minister admired her integrity and courage. As a former officer of Parliament, she now fears that the Conservative bill will undermine the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to do his job independently.

Why does the Prime Minister no longer respect Sheila Fraser? Is it because she is now helping expose Conservative dirty dealing?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we have a different view, which is that the voters who vote in elections need to establish identity. I do not think Canadians agree with the notion that elections should be decided by people who cannot indicate any form of identification.

In terms of Elections Canada, we have been very clear. Elections Canada has a job to do. That job should be done in such a way that the rules are applied consistently and that the organization itself, like all institutions of government, is held accountable for its actions.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives say that the new building Canada fund is open for business, Nova Scotia does not believe it. In fact, yesterday the provincial government wrote this to the municipalities in a letter:

Nova Scotia, like all other Provinces and Territories, was surprised by this announcement. The Province has not signed an Agreement with the federal government for the NBCF and no details have been released to us on the application process.

Did the Conservatives not learn anything from the Canada job grant fiasco? Why are they ignoring the provinces and promoting a program that does not even exist?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the hon. member is referring to.

What I do know is that the government has announced, with the support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and others, the largest federal infrastructure spending program in Canadian history: \$70 billion over the next decade.

Shamefully, that has been opposed by the Liberal Party. It is up to the Liberal Party to explain why it is so against this help for Canadian infrastructure.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that letter was from the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Secretariat.

Under the Conservatives' new building Canada fund, smaller communities must apply through the provinces for infrastructure funding, but the Conservatives will not release details on how it would work. In the meantime, no applications will be received and no money will flow.

With construction season coming, will the Conservatives stop playing games and start working with the provinces, so that infrastructure projects can move forward, and will they finally reverse their decision to cut infrastructure funding by 87%?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member has been. For many years, it has been the practice of our government to work on infrastructure priorities in collaboration with the provinces. That is how things are prioritized through the various infrastructure programs.

All I would ask is that the federal Liberal Party reverse its position and stop opposing federal infrastructure activities 100% of the time.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all congratulate the new Premier of Quebec, Mr. Couillard, who has promised to restore infrastructure funding in his province. Autoroute Henri-IV, for example, will qualify for the new building Canada program. Unfortunately, the federal government just cut the program by 87% this year, with no increase over 2013 funding levels until 2019.

Why is the government jeopardizing our country's infrastructure?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, with the support of the vast majority of the provinces and municipalities, we have announced the largest infrastructure program in the history of Canada. I am disappointed that the federal Liberal Party votes against these activities 100% of the time. That is the party that cut transfers to the provinces.

Obviously, we are a government of open federalism, and I look forward to working with Mr. Couillard on issues that matter to this government.

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[English]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Conservative ministers have repeatedly referred to non-partisan witnesses appearing at committee on this bill as both “self-styled” and “self-proclaimed” experts. One of those witnesses, Paul Thomas, was proclaimed as an election expert by yourself, Mr. Speaker. You appointed Paul Thomas to the riding boundary redistribution commission precisely because he is an expert.

Why is the Prime Minister now trying to undermine the credibility of the Speaker?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for being able to identify a

particular witness. We believe it is important that when voters go to vote that they be able to be identified. As I have said before, it is very important in democratic elections that those elections are decided by secret votes, but not by secret voters.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last night, the largest seniors organizations in Canada testified that this bill would make it more difficult for seniors to vote. Does that concern the Prime Minister?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear to seniors, who, of course, are very strong supporters of the Conservative Party, that the various ways that they can demonstrate their identity and vote are through a health card, an old age security card, a hospital/medical/clinic card, hospital bracelets worn in the case of long-term care facilities, statements of government benefits, a public transportation card or a library card, along with all other pieces of identification that are available to a broad range of Canadian voters.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, Canada's leading student association stated that this bill will make it more difficult in the future for students to vote. Does that concern the Prime Minister?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we want students to take part in elections. This is why a number of pieces of identification are acceptable. For students, these include student cards and public transit cards. There are 37 other possible pieces of identification that students and many others can use.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, Canada's aboriginal leaders testified that this bill will make it more difficult for aboriginal peoples to vote. Does that concern the Prime Minister?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would also note for that particular group that all status Indians in Canada have an Indian status card, which is also a valid piece of identification, along with some 38 other pieces of identification. I look forward to all of these people bringing their identification to the polls in the next election, and once again relegating the NDP to the opposition benches.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, Canada's leading association representing the blind stated that this bill will make it more difficult for visually impaired people to vote. Does that concern the Prime Minister?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out that, for the blind, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind card is an acceptable piece of identification, as well as 38 other pieces of identification. Clearly, I am looking forward to this vote and to the best result for the NDP: to be in opposition.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Preston Manning is also speaking out against this bill. He says that instead of putting a gag order on the Chief Electoral Officer, we should strengthen his powers to engage young people and promote voter turnout.

Does the Prime Minister dismiss Preston Manning, just like he has dismissed every single other Canadian who has come out against this bill?

• (1435)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would note with great interest that one of the important principles of the bill is that Elections Canada has the responsibility to ensure that all Canadians are aware of when, where, and how to vote, and there are multiple ways that people can in fact do that.

Once again, I look forward to seeing Canadians come out to vote and to give an appropriate verdict to the NDP.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister able to name a single witness who is not a present or past agent of the Conservative Party and who supports this bill?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our position is clear.

Voting is very important in a democracy. It is essential that voters establish their identity in order to ensure the integrity of elections. Our position is well known and is supported by Canadians.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada's top investigator has warned that if the bill is passed, it is more than one investigation that would be scuppered.

Why not give elections fraud investigators the power to compel witnesses to testify, just like the courts and the Competition Bureau, for example, already have? Is it because the investigators are investigating the Conservative Party?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the suggestion that there is anything that would prevent existing investigations from going forward is completely false. On the contrary, additional independence and powers would be given to investigators under this law, and all those powers are very consistent with what investigators have in normal such serious prosecutions.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, two investigations in particular will be affected by this bill: the investigation involving David Del Mastro and the investigation into the thousands of fraudulent phone calls,

which the court has concluded were made from the Conservative Party of Canada's own database.

Why is the Prime Minister trying to prevent those investigations from proceeding? Why does he want Canadians never to find out about the electoral fraud perpetrated by the Conservative Party?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, that statement is completely false.

[English]

When we are speaking about fraud, we do know that the NDP has used parliamentary resources across the country for activities that are clearly partisan in nature, clearly not intended, by any reasonable definition, to be the use of parliamentary resources. We not only expect the NDP to stop doing that, taxpayers expect the NDP to return those monies to them.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the issue of seniors and the inability for many of them to vote in the next election.

On the elections act, Pat Kerwin, who was one of the witnesses, said, "A senior in his or her late eighties is not likely to have a driver's licence...or a passport...". A health care card may have the photo, but no address whatsoever. Utilities bill will likely be in the name of their children or the assisted-living residence.

He also said this very important quote, "the removal of the right to vouch is a solution looking for a problem which has not been found".

Thousands of seniors will be unable to vote in the next election. Why is the minister letting this happen?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform),  
CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would direct members attention to the 39 different acceptable forms of ID that people can use in order to identify themselves and their residence when they vote. They include, for example, a hospital/medical clinic card, a hospital bracelet worn by residents of a long-term care facility, a Veterans Affairs Canada health card. They can also use the correspondence accompanying their old age security cheque. That is in addition to the possibility of a driver's licence, a health card, and numerous other forms of ID that together comprise the list of 39 that I have in my hand.

• (1440)

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, voter turnout among students and young people is the lowest of all age groups. Last night, student associations testified in Parliament about how Elections Canada had been helping them run educational programs to reverse that trend. Yet, the government's rigged elections act would not only stop Elections Canada from encouraging young voters, it would make it harder for them to vote.

Now, it seems to me to be a good thing to have young people participating in Canada's democracy. Why would the Conservatives want to block them? Is it because they tend to not vote Conservative?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously students do support the Conservative Party, and we are very proud of that. They will have an opportunity to vote in the next election, just like in the last one. They can use everything from a library card to a student card and, in order to determine their address, any correspondence they have received from their university, college, or school is acceptable. They can also take a letter from their student residence.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-23 is an absolute failure. In fact, it is anti-democratic, and, quite frankly, the Prime Minister should be ashamed of himself for the manner in which he is forcing this bill through the House of Commons today.

Today we witnessed the Prime Minister's democratic reform minister verbally assault the Chief Electoral Officer. How shameful it was. We are looking to the minister to do the responsible thing and to recognize that verbally assaulting the Chief Electoral Officer is wrong. He should apologize to all Canadians. When can we—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I stand by my testimony from this morning at the Senate committee.

One point I made there was in quoting the 2012 and 2013 annual report of Elections Canada, which said, “Since the creation of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada in 2006, when the Director of Public Prosecution Act came into force, the DPP acts as an independent prosecution authority...”.

Suggestions by the New Democrats and others in recent days attacking the independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions is demonstrably false, and I would suggest outrageous.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during the clause-by-clause examination of the grain transportation bill, we learned that the Conservatives did not include an actual timeline in their bill, despite a great deal of testimony regarding the major delays faced by farmers.

The Conservatives made sure that the bill's provisions are only temporary. A new crisis could arise at any time. What is the minister going to do to ensure that real action is taken in the long term?

[English]

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the key to longevity on this type of legislation is balance. There are more shippers out there than just grain. Everybody had a sad tale to tell about rail serviceability and reliability. Having said that, this is a very comprehensive piece of legislation. I want to thank the opposition members for the great non-partisan work that they did, and all of the witnesses who came forward. They helped us to strengthen that bill, and there are some amendments that have been passed. I look forward to it being put through the Senate as well, very soon.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that would ring true if indeed the Conservatives had accepted amendments rather than turning down every single one.

Clearly witness after witness said the opposite, which our amendments addressed, that the minister failed to ensure that farmers in all regions will actually get service, even though we suggested that the corridor did not get covered off. Western producers said that penalties should be collected and compensate farmers. We suggested that; they suggested no. We believe farmers are actually the ones who will suffer the losses. Yet, the minister refused to even consider that. He did not even consider the compensation in the bill itself.

When can producers expect additional action from the current government that does deal truly, once and for all, with this crisis? We would be willing to help this time, if only he would just listen.

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I like the admission that they sometimes listen; that is very helpful.

At the end of the day, of course, we have a balanced piece of legislation moving forward. There are numerous pieces to that, and not just the service level agreements but the information package, which will give us a lot more timely and on-point information from the railways, from the shippers, so we can start to coordinate, corridor by corridor, the specificity that is required to move grain, potash, coal, timber, and all those other commodities that need to be moved as well.

Come this August, when this legislation moves into the next phase, the Minister of Transport and I will sit down with all shippers and work out their surge requirements moving into the next year.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

[Translation]

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to deliberately change the rules so that regulatory changes do not have to be published in advance. As a result, the public will be notified of changes to safety regulations only once they have taken effect.

The Conservatives allowed railway companies to regulate themselves, with disastrous results. Canadians no longer trust the Conservatives' policies.

Why does the minister want to change the rules in a way that would reduce transparency?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the safety and security of Canadians is our top priority. What we are doing with respect to this is making sure that we can streamline and harmonize with the United States in a timely fashion instead of going through a pre-publication process. It will still be a cabinet decision as to whether or not we are going to go through a pre-publication.

I would remind the opposition as well that no government has taken more action, well before this summer, on rail safety than this one has.

[Translation]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is quite the statement.

[English]

Before the Lac-Mégantic disaster, few people realized how much dangerous cargo was being moved by train, but now municipalities and Canadians want to know about dangerous cargo being moved through their communities. Instead of being more transparent about disclosure rules, Conservatives are being less.

Why is the government being so secretive about rule changes for dangerous goods?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will just take this opportunity to read a quote from Claude Dauphin, who is the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. What he said is this:

The government's commitment to increase the safety of the transportation of dangerous goods, and to require shippers and railways to carry additional insurance, directly respond to calls from FCM's national rail safety working group.

We are working with the FCM. We are telling the railways that they have to provide this information to municipalities and first responders. We are getting it done.

\* \* \*

## HOUSING

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, housing first is simple. The greatest urgency when dealing with chronic homelessness is to get people off the streets and into a home, yet the Liberals oppose housing first, and the Westmount—Ville-Marie MP has expressed concerns that focusing on housing excludes other very important initiatives.

Well, today we have more proof that it works. A Mental Health Commission study found that 2,000 homeless Canadians with mental illness found stable housing through housing first. What is the government doing in ridings like mine to benefit homeless Canadians by putting housing first?

**Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Centre for that question and for her strong local support and interest in this issue.

We now have even stronger evidence that housing first is the most effective way to reduce homelessness. The Mental Health Commission report released today found that housing first rapidly ends homelessness, and it is a sound investment that can change lives. That is why today I am very pleased to announce the renewal of our government's homelessness partnering strategy, which reaffirms our government's commitment to putting housing first.

What is disappointing is that despite the evidence, the opposition frequently criticizes housing first and votes against it.

## Oral Questions

### HEALTH

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister would do well to check if seniors really are such strong supporters of his party, because they are pretty upset right now with his government's record. Even for those who can afford it, wait times can be up to eight months to get into long-term care. This leaves too many Canadians in limbo and their families struggling to cope.

Today a new poll by the Canadian Medical Association reveals that seniors' health care is a top priority for Canadians, so why are Conservatives yet again turning their backs and failing seniors on health care?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, the member knows full well that we are transferring more money to the provinces for health care than ever in the history of Canada.

Specific to seniors issues, since our government has taken power, it has invested \$650 million in research areas related to aging, including more than \$100 million just last year alone. Economic action plan 2014 also delivers a further \$15 million to expand patient-oriented research and to tackle the growing onset of issues like dementia and related illnesses. In fact, we are hosting a summit, with France, in September to honour our commitment, with our G8 partners, to find a cure for dementia by 2025.

● (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Conservative government should listen to seniors' groups, which are complaining about its cuts to health care funding. According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Medical Association, seniors' access to health care is a top priority for Canadians.

Needs are growing, but what is the federal government doing? It is making massive, unilateral cuts to health care funding. There will be 12% less funding over the next 25 years. That is a huge cut, and our seniors will suffer for it, even if the Minister of Health does not think so.

Will the government finally agree to work with the provinces to develop a pan-Canadian strategy for seniors' health care?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is categorically false, because our government has increased transfers, since we have been elected government, by almost 50% to the provinces and territories.

I would challenge the member to stop being so negative about the work the provinces are doing. They are doing their best to deliver health care. Many of them are doing a great deal of work on trying to manage some of the very difficult issues around inefficiencies in our health care system and they acknowledge that more money is not going to make a difference.

*Oral Questions*

I do work closely with the provinces and territories, specifically on issues around seniors, like dementia and Alzheimer's, and I will continue to do that.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is dragging its feet in another file. Veterans are still waiting to hear whether they will be compensated for their pensions, which have been eroded. The Federal Court sided with them years ago. However, they are still having to look to the courts to get the government to take action. This is another flagrant lack of respect for those who served our country.

When will our veterans get the benefits to which they are entitled? Why are the Conservatives making them fight this in court again?

[English]

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record when it comes to standing up for Canada's veterans.

Our government has voluntarily increased monthly financial benefits to veterans across Canada. More than 5,000 veterans will benefit from these important changes, which include more money each month in addition to more veterans being eligible for home-cleaning and grass-cutting services, and in addition, there is more money for medical, rehabilitation, and retraining programs.

What is more disappointing is the opposition. The NDP and the Liberals have voted against every single initiative we have brought forward.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what utter nonsense. What we are talking about is the earnings loss benefit that was wrongfully clawed back from disabled veterans from April 2006 to just the other day. Two previous Veterans Affairs ministers said very clearly that they would deal with this issue in an honourable way, but in the omnibus legislation, it only went back two years. It should have gone back all the way to 2006.

Why should disabled veterans and their families have to go to the courts to fight the government to get the benefits they so richly deserve?

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that the courts did not impose anything on Veterans Affairs on their programs. Our government voluntarily increased benefits for veterans receiving earnings loss, Canadian Forces income support, and the war veterans allowance.

This means thousands of dollars for veterans in addition to added benefits, such as snow removal, lawn care, home-cleaning services, and lower costs for long-term care.

I would encourage the opposition members to support the government, get on board, and help Canada's veterans.

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian doctors are on the Hill advocating for a pan-Canadian seniors strategy. The premiers' Council of the Federation is asking for the same thing.

The 2011 census shows five million seniors, due to increase to 29% of the population by 2013, but the government's new health formula is based on per capita and not on demographics. Provinces with high seniors populations, like the Atlantic provinces and British Columbia, get less money.

Will the Prime Minister agree to a specific strategy to assist provinces with the increasing cost of seniors' care?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier, we have increased transfers to the provinces by 50%, and we are funding health care to the provinces and territories at the highest level in Canadian history.

As I have said repeatedly, the inefficiencies we do see in our health care system are not going to be fixed by more money. They are going to be fixed by collaboration, co-operation, and sharing best practices, and that is the kind of work I am endeavouring to do with the provinces and territories, specifically on innovative technologies and other ways and models of care that we know will actually make a difference in creating not only a more sustainable health care system but a more cost-effective health care system.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Police Association informed MPs about the key cost drivers for policing. Simply put, police are being asked to serve as substance abuse counsellors, mental health advisors, marriage counsellors, and youth intervention officers as well as to maintain responsibility for community safety.

The minister certainly did not give any answers yesterday to the CPA, so could he be more direct today and state if he has any plans to assist police officers, including the RCMP, so they can prioritize their time for actual policing?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member should know well that this government has committed, with the provinces, for years, working hard on the economy of policing. He can get a crash course if he wants to.

*Oral Questions*

We believe that we can provide Canadian society with better services by improving the efficiency of our police services, streamlining our justice system, and finding ways so that policemen are not behind desks working with red tape but are serving our people.

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**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' last in, first out policy has meant that inshore shrimp harvesters are being asked to shoulder an unfair burden of the deep cuts to quotas off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. These fishermen and their families have been depending on the shrimp industry since the cod stocks collapsed. Now this decision could decimate the inshore shrimp fishery.

Will the minister now agree to rethink the last in, first out policy?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, allocation and quota decisions are never easy when stocks are in decline. Science must be respected. Stakeholders have recognized the need for catch reductions.

Last in, first out has been part of this fishery since 1997. When stocks increased, the inshore fleet received 90% of the increase, with 10% going to the offshore fleet. The decreases will be applied in the same manner, as has been consistent since 1997.

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what Newfoundland inshore fishermen and their families need to hear is a commitment to protecting their livelihoods.

Everyone agrees that the shrimp stock needs to be responsibly managed, but what DFO is proposing fails to do that and unfairly targets the inshore sector. It is not just fishermen and their families who will take a hit. It is also local processing plants that are supplied by their shrimp catch.

Will the minister commit to working with inshore fishermen to protect their industry, to protect what little they have left?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, these are not easy decisions when stocks are in decline. What is of much concern is the longer-term impact of the changes that are taking place in the ecosystem and the effects on shrimp, crab, groundfish, and other stocks.

I will give members an example in this fishery. In Area 6, for example, back in 1998, the offshore had a quota of 13,360 tonnes. Today they have one tonne less. The inshore had a quota of 29,840 tonnes. Today they have a quota of 31,360 tonnes, more than they had back in 1998.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for years I have been an advocate for drug safety and for making sure that Canadian families have the information they need to make informed choices on the medicines they are taking. With the numerous risks inherent in many drugs, we simply must do better at making people aware. It is imperative that drug safety information be available and

accessible not only for over-burdened doctors but also for patients and the parents of children.

Will the Minister of Health recommit today to ensuring that drug safety information is made available for those who need it?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in no area are confidence and transparency more important than in the decisions Health Canada makes that affect the health and safety of Canadians, so today I was pleased to launch the world-leading transparency openness framework and action plan for Health Canada. For the first time, very useful and relevant information about safety reviews of drugs will be posted online, transparently. The first posting today also added a new tool to assist in the prudent prescribing of Diane-35, based on the safety review I requested.

I will ensure that Health Canada continues to identify ways to be more open and transparent with Canadians each and every year.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard that the government is considering no longer accepting Somali refugees in Canada.

Can the minister tell the House whether or not the government will continue to accept Somali refugees, and does he agree with us that the Somali Canadian community makes an important contribution to Canadian society?

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada, under this government, will of course continue accepting refugees from all over the world.

What Somali Canadians understand, though, is that only a few years ago, among the top ten source countries for refugees coming into this country, half of them were safe countries. In 2011, 6,300 asylum claims came from the European Union. That was more than we had from either Africa or Asia, in spite of their being much larger continents with populations with much higher rates of conflict.

Thanks to our reforms, in 2013 we saw needy countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Congo, Egypt, and, yes, Somalia, back in the top ten—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Davenport.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, dozens of workers have lost their jobs at Pearson International Airport and have been replaced by temporary contract workers. Gate Gourmet is responsible for handling food for airlines. Its employees work in high-security areas. This work should be and has been done by full-time permanent employees who make a good wage. Now Gate Gourmet is contracting out 120 good jobs. This is another example of Conservative outsourcing gone wild.

Why is the government not standing up and protecting full-time permanent jobs in this country?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the example from the member opposite. As he would know, the airport authority has its own contracts with its own contractors. That is how it apportions employment within its jurisdiction and within its facility.

Anybody who works on the air side operations or on the secure side of the airport, of course, has to pass Transport Canada qualifications and regulations in order to respond to and receive a security clearance to work on that side.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding often express their frustration to me that our justice system far too often appears to put the rights of convicted criminals ahead of the rights of victims. Our government has continually passed legislation that puts victims first. One such example is the elimination of the faint hope clause, which allowed murderers extra parole hearings and forced victims to unnecessarily revisit their horrific experiences.

Last week we announced the Canadian victims bill of rights. Could the Minister of Justice please inform this House about how this legislation is being received by Canadians?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kootenay—Columbia for his long-time work as a law enforcement officer as well as an advocate for victims. I know that he and many others support the new Canadian victims bill of rights, people like ex-NHLer Sheldon Kennedy, who said, “Today was a great day for creating a balance within the justice system”; or Sharon Rosenfeldt, who heads up Victims of Violence, who said, “we are pleased that the victims of crime now have a federal Victims Bill of Rights”, calling it a “major step for victims in Canada”; or Yvonne Harvey of Canadian Parents of Murdered Children, who said the victims bill of rights is taking the lead on developing a consistent, equal, and accountable framework for national standards.

These are a few examples of the widespread support for the legislation.

[*Translation*]

**CANADA POST**

**Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the residents of my riding are concerned about the future of their mail system. Small businesses are watching their operating costs skyrocket.

Seniors and those with reduced mobility will have to walk long distances on ice, in the snow and in the rain to get their mail. The price of stamps has increased between 35% and 59%.

Why are the Conservatives attacking small businesses and the people of Laval?

• (1505)

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has actually outlined what the five-point plan is from Canada Post to ensure that it can deal with the loss of revenues with the amount of letter mail not being mailed as it used to be six years ago.

What I can say is this. Two-thirds of Canadian mailboxes are community mailboxes. Only one-third currently has delivery to the door. Canada Post is converting that other third into the two-thirds. I am sure it has been able to deal with the two-thirds already and will continue to deal with the cases that are of concern in the one-third that will be phased out in the next five years.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday night, Sister Gilberte Bussière, who is from Asbestos and taught in Victoriaville for a number of years, was abducted in northern Cameroon.

Someone who has dedicated her life to the education of African children is now in the hands of armed groups. Her family and religious congregation are concerned for her health and safety, especially since she needs to take medication regularly.

As time is short, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us what steps he has taken to find Sister Bussière safe and sound, and confirm that there is direct contact between his department and Sister Bussière's mother, family and community so that they get regular updates on this sad story?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are aware of this abduction in Cameroon. We are exploring all possible avenues to get more information, and we are in contact with the Cameroon authorities. I am prepared to work with my colleague on this very important issue. Our hearts are with her family.



*Government Orders*

[English]

**PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation, led by the Right Honourable Tricia Marwick, M.S.P., Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, during question period the Prime Minister said he was unaware of the letter I referenced in my question. Therefore, I would like to seek unanimous consent to table the letter from the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Secretariat, in which the province stated clearly that it has not signed an agreement with the federal government and no details have been released to it on the application process.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014, and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to speak to Bill C-31.

In my previous remarks on the federal budget, I focused on the \$117 million that was allocated to AECL to maintain operations at its Chalk River laboratories and prepare for the transition to a government-owned contractor-operated governance model.

Today, I intend to focus on the many other benefits of economic action plan 2014, as well as contrasting the difference between sound, Conservative, economic policy and the rash, disastrous policies being proposed by the opposition parties and their friends in the left-wing media.

The purpose of this legislation is to implement provisions of the federal budget of February 11, 2014, which in addition to the measures announced in our federal budget, amends existing legislation in order to carry out our road to balance, creating jobs and opportunities in Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the member for Whitby—Oshawa for his many years of service to Canadians as the federal minister of finance. Canada is recognized globally for our sound fiscal management. All Canadians owe a debt of gratitude for his fine work.

At the same time, I congratulate our new Minister of Finance, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence. Having worked with our finance minister in his previous role as minister of natural resources, I know

Canadians can continue to have confidence in the sound economic policies of our Conservative government.

It is important for Canadians to take note of who is providing economic leadership in Canada. Only a Conservative government, led by our current Prime Minister can be trusted with our nation's finances.

The wacky ideas of the loony left would quickly bankrupt our nation. Look how quickly the Liberal Party of Ontario turned the province that used to be the economic engine of Canada into a have-not province, reduced to begging Ottawa to pay for its bad decisions, like ORNGE, eHealth, and the billion-dollar gas plant scandal. By its own admission, it will be the year 2035 before there might be any improvements if things do not change in Toronto, like a change in leadership.

Yes, it does matter who is in control of the nation's finances. This act proposes to legislate key elements of economic action plan 2014, which commits to a return to balanced budgets in 2015.

Let me remind the House that we are balancing the budget without raising taxes. Raising taxes is what is demanded by the Liberals and the NDP. Their so-called pollution tax is just another name for a carbon tax. A tax is a tax is a tax. A tax is just a way for socialists to spend our money in a way we would never do voluntarily.

We have moved to a position where the federal budget will be balanced by reducing spending, which is what Canadians have told us needs to be done. Only a socialist thinks taxpayers should pay more. The average Canadian family pays \$3,400 less in taxes, thanks to this Conservative government.

The key elements in economic action plan 2014 include measures to help connect Canadians with available jobs and foster job creation, support families and communities, and invest in infrastructure, trade, and responsible resource development.

Let me be clear. Our economic action plan that was presented to Canadians on February 11 contains the provisions in this legislation that we have before us.

Budgets in modern, industrialized western nations are complicated documents. That the other parties do not understand the complexities of a modern economy only demonstrates that they are unfit to govern.

Canadians expect more than opposition for the sake of opposition. Unlike the opposition in Ottawa that opposes just to oppose before they even read the legislation, I encourage all Canadians to read what we have proposed. I am confident Canadians will understand and like what they see.

Canadians understand what it means to have a steady hand on the tiller of the ship of state. It means having a job and being able to afford to buy the products from the countries we sell to. That is called trade, and it is something our Prime Minister takes very seriously, because we know trade brings prosperity.

*Government Orders*

•(1510)

Highlights of the economic action plan act no. 1 include connecting Canadians with available jobs and fostering job creation by investing \$11 million over two years and \$3.5 million per year ongoing to strengthen the labour market opinion process to ensure Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs, providing \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing toward the successful implementation of an expression of interest economic immigration system to support Canada's labour market needs, and providing apprentices registered in Red Seal trades with access to interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training.

We would cut red tape for more than 50,000 employers by reducing the maximum number of required payments on account of source deductions.

Canadians recognize that people, not bureaucracy, create employment. When it comes to financing a G7 economy, it is not a matter of budgets balancing themselves, which is what Canadians hear from the trust fund child who relies on his name and not his ability to pursue power for the sake of power. His reliance on the former advisers of the disgraced Ontario Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty, is dangerous to the financial health of all Canadians. Their policy of forcing communities to accept industrial wind turbines that enrich the pockets of wealthy Liberal Party insiders like Mike Crawley has created a new term in Ontario: energy poverty.

Mr. Crawley went from being the president of the Ontario Liberal Party to being the president of the federal Liberal Party. He now sits, along with Gerald Butts, who co-authored the so-called Green Energy Act of Ontario that is causing electricity prices to skyrocket, as one of the Liberal Party's most senior advisers.

Mr. Butts is another example of replacing economic common sense with some wacky left-wing ideology. He was the principal adviser to the provincial leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario in Toronto. These Liberals use Hollywood accounting. Ontario electricity consumers paid over \$1 billion to American border states last year for them to take unusable electricity from industrial wind turbines. The money to pay for that foolishness is taken out of the pockets of seniors and others on fixed incomes, who are now faced with monthly electricity bills that are greater than their incomes.

Worst of all, Mr. Crawley received a \$475 million 20-year contract from the Liberal Party of Ontario, paid with taxpayer dollars, to build those wind turbines. They are wind turbines that nobody wants and that generate power we cannot even use the majority of the time because of when the wind blows.

That is Liberal economic policy.

We can be thankful there is a Conservative government in Ottawa and a firm, responsible hand on the finances of Canada. We use common sense in supporting families and communities by encouraging competition and lower prices in the telecommunications market through capping wholesale domestic wireless roaming rates, thus preventing wireless providers from charging other companies who may be their competitors more than they charge their own customers for mobile voice, data, and text services; introducing a search and rescue volunteers tax credit for search and rescue volunteers who perform at least 200 hours of service per year; increasing the

maximum amount of the adoption expense tax credit to \$15,000 to help make adoption more affordable for Canadian families; exempting acupuncturists' and naturopathic doctors' professional services from the goods and services or harmonized sales tax; expanding the list of eligible expenses under the medical expense tax credit to include costs associated with service animals that are specially trained to assist individuals with severe diabetes, such as diabetes alert dogs, as well as amounts paid for the design of an eligible individualized therapy plan; and enhancing access to employment insurance sickness benefits for claimants who receive parents of critically ill children compassionate care benefits.

•(1515)

We are investing in infrastructure, trade, and responsible resource development by reducing barriers to the international and domestic flow of goods and services.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for her simplistic and cut and dried speech that reminded me of a garish cartoon.

She praised the former minister of finance, whom she described as the best minister of finance in the known and unknown world. However, the gentleman who is now simply an MP expressed serious doubts about income splitting for couples because of his serious concern about the regressive nature of this measure.

Would the member like to comment on the position of the former minister of finance?

•(1520)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on about the many accomplishments of our former finance minister, such as this budget. He is supporting mineral exploration by junior companies through extending the 15% mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors for an additional year, eliminating tariffs on mobile offshore drilling units used in offshore oil and gas exploration and development, and doubling to 10 years, for income tax purposes, the carry-forward period for donations of ecologically sensitive land to conservation charities.

I recently had an apprentice welder come into my constituency. In his case, the high electricity rate in the policy of the Liberal Party of Ontario that caused the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector in Ontario had led him to seek employment in a different province. While he was certainly appreciative of the efforts of our government to assist him in his education, in his experience it was the artificial barriers between provinces—in his case, getting a different province to recognize his credentials—that represented the greatest challenge.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure exactly where the member gets her notes. I suspect it might be in part from the Prime Minister's Office, but there is no doubt she is definitely a cheerleader for the former minister of finance. This is the same minister of finance who took a Liberal multi-billion-dollar surplus and turned it into a deficit even before the recession came into being, the same minister of finance who took a healthy trade surplus and turned it into a trade deficit that cost tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario.

My question for the member is this: why does she not recognize that the Conservative government, because of its policy of standing back and not doing anything to support our manufacturing industry, has played more of a negative role in the performance of Ontario than any other federal government in the last 50 years?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, Canada is recognized as being among the top economies in the world because it recognizes the importance of trade. Just as our government has signed more international trade deals than any other government, it is also time for the provinces to start removing barriers so that they can bring greater prosperity to Canadians.

Since our government first introduced the economic action plan to respond to global recession, Canada has recovered more than all of the output and all the jobs lost during the recession. Since July 2009, employment has increased by over one million, is more than 600,000 above the pre-recession peak, and has the strongest job growth among the Group of Seven countries over the recovery.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the member was very pleased to note in her speech that the budget is providing money again to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. One would have thought that when this administration sold, at a bargain basement price, a crown corporation into which Canadians had sunk and lost tens of billions of dollars, that would have been the end of the sucking sound of money going down the drain to AECL. However, we see that over the next two years, \$117 million more would go to AECL.

I am wondering if she could tell us how that is of any benefit to the Canadian economy.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, because AECL has diversified and the commercial end is under the command of a company that has penetration in more countries throughout the world, the local Chalk River laboratory is better positioned to continue to provide jobs and to continue with innovation and the commercialization of that innovation.

Almost 90% of all jobs created since July 2009 are full-time positions. Close to 85% are in the private sector and over two-thirds are in high-wage industries, such as those jobs at Chalk River Laboratories.

**Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak today regarding budget 2015 and this new budget implementation bill because I think their significance is so easily understated.

In this budget, our former finance minister and our current Minister of Finance, with the support of a highly principled Prime Minister, a dedicated caucus, and a hard-working civil service, have

brought Canada within a hair's breath of a very significant goal. That goal, a balanced budget, will be achieved next year.

This has been accomplished with many tough decisions by our government, such as saying no to many requests for funding and ending programs that were not necessary. It includes a three-year wage freeze for members of Parliament, a change that will demand that civil servants pay half the cost of their own pension plan, and a demand that MPs, who serve an average of less than six years, also pay half their own pension plan moving forward in 2015. That means an additional \$1,733 will be taken off the paycheque of each MP every month at that time, so we cut our own benefits too.

My point is that balancing a budget requires sacrifice and principled leadership. It is very difficult to do. It is no fun. That is why most countries in southern Europe could not do it year after year for decades until their debts overwhelmed them. Every member of this House knows what happened there.

Economists who have never been in government say that balanced budgets are not that important. They themselves are a very well-paid group who can afford more taxes, but what about ordinary Canadians? What about the people who spend most or all of what they earn on daily life, because life is just expensive? They are trying to pay a mortgage or save for a house or a family vacation or save for post-secondary education for their children. What about them?

I do not think most economists, who work for banks that earn tens of millions of dollars on interest from loans to governments or for universities or corporations where they have generous pension plans, feel it so profoundly if their taxes go up year after year. It will not affect their lifestyle very much. For everyone else who is taxed out, three or four levels of government are taking too much, and no one believes most governments spend all that money wisely.

Balancing a budget means that the government is spending the same as it takes in. It is not creating more and more debt that working people will pay their entire lives, plus interest. Balancing the budget also means that the federal government can start paying back the \$619 billion it has borrowed in the taxpayer's name.

Bill C-31 is the track to this reality. It means that families can truly plan their own future with less fear that some future government will get its hands on more of their paycheque, before they even get it, for something that no one really needs.

Balanced budgets mean we are not mortgaging our children's future or saddling them with debt that they will pay for over their entire lives. Balanced budgets mean we pay our own way.

Balanced budgets mean investors worldwide want to invest in infrastructure in Canada because they know that they will get their money back with a return.

*Government Orders*

In February the Liberal leader, who has no economic policy to speak of, implied on a party convention video that the Government of Canada does not have enough debt and should take on more. That should get the attention of every Canadian, especially our young people, who will pay back any new debts created by a Liberal government, if elected, for the rest of their lives, and who will have a diminished quality of life because their paycheques are smaller because of high taxes.

The Liberal leader, who, as everyone knows, has always had the benefit of an inherited trust fund, is trying to convince the middle class that he is their new best friend. All he talks about these days is the middle class. It is as though he is trying to join it. He wants to help us. All of a sudden, ordinary working people are his priority.

On the other hand, we have a track record. Our government helped ordinary middle-class people and low-income people by reducing the GST by 2%, by enhancing the working tax credit, and by providing the universal child care benefit of \$1,200 a year for each child under six years of age.

● (1525)

We have also taken one million low-income people off the federal tax rolls and provided a whole raft of tax credits to help low-income people who work to keep more of their own money. Conservatives care about low-income people and the middle class and are acting to make their lives easier. Most Conservatives are in fact low-income and middle-class people.

In a video prepared for the Liberal convention, the Liberal leader said, “while the middle class is tapped out, the federal government has room to invest”. He also said that the government of Canada needs to step up. He supported a party resolution at the Liberal Convention that the Liberals should spend 1% of GDP a year, which would be \$18 billion that must be borrowed on infrastructure. Therefore, in four years, that would be \$72 billion plus interest that our children and grandchildren would have to pay back, for their entire lives.

The Liberal leader is preparing to convince Canadians, as his father did, a former prime minister, that debts do not matter. Someone else will pay, not them. We have lived through this before, in the 1970s, under that former prime minister. Since Pierre Trudeau resigned, subsequent governments have achieved operational surpluses of \$634 billion. Yet, during that time, Canadians have paid over \$1 trillion in interest, all due to the debt that Pierre Trudeau and the Liberals left us with.

I have a rhetorical question. Who said this:

We were caught in a trap of our own making – a vicious circle in which our chronic deficits contributed to economic lethargy, which in turn contributed to even higher deficits, and then to greater malaise.

That was the former Liberal finance minister and prime minister, Paul Martin, the last Liberal finance minister to balance Canada's federal budget, years ago. He was right, and the Liberal leader today wants to do it all over again: promote the illusion that borrowed money does not have to be paid back, at least not by them.

In 2015, we will begin paying down debt again. We will reduce the interest we pay out and get more for our money. Canada will increasingly decide its own fate and never be beholden to banks and

foreign leaders to direct our nation. We will never be ordered to cut back pensions, health care, or education funding by banks because we are near bankruptcy, like most of southern Europe has been. This is our solemn commitment to the people of Canada.

This budget is the step just before the top, the last step. We will get out of the borrowing paradigm. We will not turn around and head back down. Canada will control its own destiny, and this bill would take us one step closer.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulo, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Oakville for his speech. As they say, any pretext will do if you want to attack someone.

My colleague is giving random reasons for his clearly dogmatic position and criticizing economists, who are the ones who can explain what is happening with our economy and why.

Earlier, I asked my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke a question about income splitting. Unfortunately, she was clearly concentrating too hard on her notes and did not answer. Therefore, I will ask my colleague from Oakville the question.

The former minister of finance, who was supposedly so extraordinary, expressed serious concerns about the regressive nature of income splitting between spouses, which is a very expensive measure. What does my colleague think of the position of the member for Whitby—Oshawa?

[*English*]

**Mr. Terence Young:** Mr. Speaker, I am not the former finance minister or the current finance minister, but I knocked on doors in my riding of Oakville and promised income splitting for families with children under 18. I believe that is what my government is going to do. I would like to say why I support it. It is because of what I said earlier in my speech. It is extremely expensive to live, especially for people with children.

It is the greatest honour in the world to have children; I do not mean to complain. I am saying how costly it can be when children start the activities they do after school. For example, in Oakville there are 12,000 children and coaches in soccer. Soccer is not that expensive of a sport; it is a fraction of the cost of hockey. When children get into extracurricular activities, choirs, soccer, or hockey, it starts to bear on the finances of families. It is extremely expensive. Income splitting would give those families relief to give their children the opportunities that they so deserve.

*Government Orders*

• (1535)

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in what I just heard from the member for Oakville. I know him to be a reasonable person, but I am shocked at the extent to which he followed up hard on the heels of the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke with personal vitriol. I am shocked at the extent to which he is focusing on the leader of this party instead of focusing on the so-called benefits of his own budget. I am very disappointed in his conduct and his words.

I would like to ask the member two specific questions.

He calls himself a man of fiscal probity, of responsibility. Perhaps he could explain to Canadians why his government spent \$550 million on legal fees, and over \$600 million on advertising, \$42 million this year alone on economic action plan advertising. How does he justify that?

The Minister of Finance wrote to all the members of this House and asked for low or no-cost solutions. I wrote to him and said to eliminate this despicable and unjustifiable advertising. What does the member have to say about that?

**Mr. Terence Young:** Mr. Speaker, what we do in this House, and what we as members of Parliament do all day and when we go back to our ridings, is to try to communicate with people. It is two-way, and we do our best to listen. In my office, we get 1,000 emails, phone calls, visits, and letters a week, and we try to deal with that. We try to get messages back out, and it is a blur for people. It is extremely difficult to get messages to people.

Having a background in marketing, I can tell the member that people get home at the end of the day and they will have taken in a number of messages, from billboards, from things they have read on the GO train or the streetcar or whatever, and things they have heard on the radio. That is the way people get information. A lot of people do not sit down and go through all the letters they might have had from their member of Parliament. They do not read all the papers, and they do not watch all the news programs. Sometimes it is the only way to get important messages to people about our economy.

Arguably, the most important thing the government does is to advertise on television and tell them what the government is doing. If people do not know what the government is doing, how can they possibly vote as an informed voter?

**Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition to Bill C-31, the budget implementation act. My opposition comes on two fronts, content and process. The budget bill is not just about the budget; if it were, how simple and straightforward our opposition would be.

The bill is what is known as an omnibus bill. It contains everything but the kitchen sink. It is massive. It is more than 350 pages. It contains almost 500 clauses. It amends dozens of bills and includes a slew of measures that were not even mentioned in the former finance minister's budget speech. The bill touches on tax measures, veterans, railway safety, hazardous materials, temporary foreign workers, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, a new bridge for the St. Lawrence, new Canadians, and access to old age security and guaranteed income supplement. It goes on and on.

Oh yes, it also mentions the budget. The bill is all over the map. It is a monster bill that undermines Parliament because it denies members of Parliament like me with the ability to thoroughly study the bill and its implications. That is because it is so big, so far reaching and all-encompassing.

I cannot shake the feeling of *déjà vu*, as if I have stood in this very place before and made the very same point. That is because I have. I stood in this place in early December and called out the government for introducing an omnibus bill, the fourth omnibus budget implementation bill. That omnibus bill, back in December, amended 70 laws or regulations in a single bill. Ramming that much legislation into one bill is an easy way to get one past the electorate. It is also an easy way to make a mistake. It is irresponsible. It is bad governance. It is poor management. It is a slap in the face to democracy. We debate legislation in this chamber for a reason. It is to make legislation the best that it can be. We cannot do that with an omnibus bill. We cannot do that with the Conservative government.

Another point is that one day soon in the House, a Conservative member of Parliament will take to his or her feet and criticize Her Majesty's loyal opposition for voting against a particular piece of legislation. However, there is a good chance that legislation was rammed into an omnibus bill, which undoubtedly has some positives guaranteed.

For example, there is a measure within this bill that reverses the Conservative government's previous attempt to tax hospital parking, to tax the poor. That is gone. That is undeniably a good thing. However, the bill also includes horrible legislation that rips into the very fabric of Canada, and we will vote against it. Therefore, when a Conservative MP or minister accuses us of voting against a particular measure in a piece of legislation, there is a good chance that it was in an omnibus bill. There is no way that we can vote for those because they are horrible.

Let me quote columnist Andrew Coyne from the *National Post*. He had this to say, in 2012, about omnibus legislation, about transparency and accountability. The quote from two years ago is just as relevant today. He said:

Not only does this bill make a mockery of the confidence convention, shielding bills that would otherwise be defeatable within a money bill.... It makes it impossible to know what Parliament really intended by any of it. We've no idea whether MPs supported or opposed any particular bill in the bunch, only that they voted for the legislation that contained them. There is no common thread that runs between them, no overarching principle; they represent not a single act of policy, but a sort of compulsory buffet. But there is something quite alarming about Parliament being obliged to rubber-stamp the government's whole legislative agenda at one go.

Yes, it is quite alarming, but it is also old hat for the Conservative government. It is its go-to trick, its old reliable.

*Government Orders*

•(1540)

I will tackle some of the meat of this budget implementation act.

First, in terms of the economy, this is a do-nothing budget. It basically bides time until 2015, an election year, when the government purse will reopen and the Conservatives will attempt to buy the electorate with their own money. They will try to swing the election in their favour with the changes in the unfair election act and then use taxpayers' own money to sweeten the deal.

I am the official critic for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. It has been a very busy file, with more Conservative patronage than we can shake a stick at.

Where can one start to simplify the issues about patronage?

To simplify and to borrow a description from *The Guardian* about a story in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*: "...hiring rules at ACOA have been twisted into pretzels to accommodate Conservative Party loyalists".

Awful-tasting pretzels. Patronage at ACOA. And it has been blatant and it has been steady. Patronage at ACOA walks like a duck. It looks like a duck. It quacks like a duck. It even tastes like a duck. But the Conservatives, who use science more as a political art than science, say that the duck that has been feeding out of the Conservatives' hand right in front of us is a figment of our imagination. Maybe the duck is invisible to Conservatives, the same way that climate change is invisible to Conservatives, or the unemployed, or veterans.

While patronage has run rampant at ACOA, what would the budget implementation act do about it?

Let us see. Instead of increasing accountability and addressing patronage, the Conservatives are gutting it. The act would eliminate the need for the president of ACOA to table a report to Parliament every five years showing the impact of the agency's work on regional disparities. In other words, there will be no more report card. ACOA's board of directors would also be out the door. In theory, the board of directors could have blocked ACOA patronage. Only it did not do that.

I asked the federal Auditor General last year to investigate the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, a branch of ACOA, after it gave a \$4.8-million grant to build a controversial marina. The Auditor General agreed to investigate.

What did the Conservatives do in advance of that report from the Auditor General? They folded the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation into ACOA. How convenient.

So, to tackle the blatant, out-of-control patronage, the current government actually gives more power to itself.

The budget should have been about making life more affordable and reducing household debt. The budget should have been about making credit rates reasonable. It should have been about capping ATM fees, cracking down on abusive practices of payday lenders, and providing services that Canadians rely upon.

Instead, the budget is about sidestepping democracy with yet another omnibus bill, the Conservatives' fifth attempt to evade parliamentary scrutiny.

I will end with a series of two questions posed by the current Prime Minister in 1995 when the Liberals pushed through an omnibus bill:

...in the interest of democracy I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns?

We can agree with some measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse?

That is a good question.

So what is the answer?

The answer is that we cannot represent our constituents in dealing with such massive omnibus legislation.

What is the solution?

The solution is to show this arrogant, entitled, out-of-touch Conservative government, a government that has forgotten right from wrong, a government that is trying desperately to cling to power by changing the rules in its favour, the door.

•(1545)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments made by my colleague, and certainly his reflection on the approach the government is taking with the omnibus bill. Successive budget implementation bills have become worse and worse. They are like the *Police Academy* movies. The sequels are worse than the previous ones.

The member did reference ECBC and ACOA. The minister, when he arrived in Cape Breton to disband the office of ECBC, said it would enhance that community's ability to deliver programs. I am concerned about the lack of flexibility. I am concerned with the fact that the ECBC programs are considerably different from the ACOA programs. I am concerned that the money will lapse and am quite certain that it will be sent back and that programs will not be supported.

Is there anything my colleague sees in what the government has undertaken here that is going to enhance the economic development opportunities for the people in Cape Breton who have just seen their crown corporation closed?

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. I do not see any way that rolling the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation into ACOA will actually enhance the services for Cape Breton. I do not see that.

The Conservatives can spin it any way they want, but this is not a good thing.

Another point that I made in my speech is the fact that the Conservatives are taking the ECBC and rolling it into ACOA in advance of a report by the federal Auditor General of Canada on a controversial grant by the ECBC for a marina development. The fact that the Conservatives are getting rid of the ECBC in advance of this report is highly suspicious. I suspect that the AG will find the Conservatives guilty of even more patronage.

*Government Orders*

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from St. John's South—Mount Pearl for his speech. He was right to criticize this omnibus bill. It covers all sorts of things that we will unfortunately not have time to study in depth.

As I said last week, in Beauport—Limoilou, a group of parents whose children attend an elementary school near a railway has decided to take matters into their own hands because of the government's inaction. The Conservative government is busy adding secrecy to cabinet decisions on the rail transportation of dangerous goods, among other things.

Can my colleague comment on the government's very clear desire to operate behind closed doors and do everything to eliminate parliamentary oversight?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ryan Cleary:** Mr. Speaker, personally, I see this fifth piece omnibus legislation for a budget implementation bill as an affront to democracy.

The hon. member mentions the railway. Indeed, beside the parts of the bill that have to do with budgetary matters, the bill also has to do with the railway, hazardous materials, temporary foreign workers, ACOA, as I have already outlined, and a bridge for the St. Lawrence, and on and on it goes.

We are talking about a single bill that is 350 pages long, with almost 500 clauses, and amends dozens of other bills and has a slew of measures not even mentioned in the budget speech.

There is no way possible for us to do what we are tasked to do by our constituents, which is to keep an eye on these bills and an eye on the government. It is too big. It is too massive.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak on economic action plan 2014. This budget will bring enormous benefits to my riding of Prince George—Peace River and to all of Canada.

Natural resource development is critical to the economic prosperity of British Columbia, and a great deal of that is in my riding. We have an abundant amount of natural gas in the Peace River region and northern Rockies, coal deposits further south, and lumber operations spanning northeastern B.C. I am encouraged by our government's commitment to supporting responsible resource development, which will continue economic growth in northeastern B.C. and create jobs across British Columbia.

Our government is also working hard to encourage investment in other areas of natural resource development as well. There are vast coal and mineral deposits in northern B.C. and in the territories, and these projects need proper investment and a system that will ensure that those resources are extracted responsibly.

I am encouraged by our government's plan to extend the 15% mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors. This will further bolster investment in mining operations in the north.

The district of Tumbler Ridge has seen the benefits of proper investment incentives in the mining sector. In 2000, there were fears that the town would turn into a ghost town after the Quintette Mine closed. I had worked on the original site with my father and it would have been a shame to see Tumbler Ridge go, but it is still here.

For years, Tumbler Ridge has struggled with low coal prices, and low demand attracted little investment. That began to turn around in 2011 as market demand grew for the high quality metallurgical coal present in the southeast. Now Tumbler Ridge is once again a vibrant and prosperous community.

Mining companies in the area provide crucial financial support for mining activity, which has yielded significant archeological discoveries and ongoing research material on dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals in the southeast. The revival of the economy of Tumbler Ridge would not be possible without incentives to invest and the ability for mining companies to seize market opportunities. The motto for Tumbler Ridge is the Latin for "invitation to prosperity". That is a motto that we as Canadians need to encourage.

Through our government's investments in our budget, we are inviting continued prosperity for my riding and the rest of Canada. This budget invites prosperity by extending that 15% mineral exploration tax credit. This budget invites prosperity through \$40 million in strategic investments in northern economic development. This budget invites prosperity through investing \$90 million in the forest industry transformation program. This investment will advance cutting-edge technologies to enhance the competitiveness of Canada's wood products in the pulp and paper sectors.

In the B.C. interior, I believe we all appreciate how much the mountain pine beetle has hurt the forestry sector. New technologies will develop new uses for the wood and open new markets for Canadian wood products. This kind of investment is vital, as saw mills in the B.C. interior are being consolidated due to the spread of the pine beetle throughout the province.

This budget also invites prosperity by ensuring timely reviews for pipelines. Canada's natural resource sector supports 1.8 million jobs across the country, which is a massive number. It is a vital sector for our economic development and our position as an energy superpower. As the sector grows, it will create thousands of skilled and well-paying jobs.

However, in the oil and gas sector it is not a matter of if one builds it, they will come. Our resources need to be able to get out to port and form markets to meet demand. In emerging markets like Asia, we are not the only player in the natural gas game.

*Government Orders*

Lengthy delays and protracted environmental reviews can cost us valuable market share and hurt our reputation as a reliable supplier of energy. This is why our government's \$28 million investment in the National Energy Board is so crucial. I think everyone understands the importance of the environmental review process and how important it is to keep that independent. However, that process needs to be both timely and fair. I believe that these additional funds for the National Energy Board will do just that.

In order to invite prosperity, we as a nation must be prepared to supply the needs that prosperity brings. That is why our government has worked to invest in skills and trades training and is continuing on that path of developing the skills and jobs for the future.

Since 2006, our government's top priority has been job creation and economic growth. Canada has the best job growth record in the G7, but we must maintain that resolve in order to continually invite prosperity.

●(1555)

Our Conservative government's budget would create a new apprenticeship loan for Canadians working toward certification in 50 trades, including my own, which is carpentry. These trades range from carpenter to pipefitter, from electrician to millwright. Our government is making over \$100 million available for interest-free loans for Red Seal apprentices across Canada.

These trades are currently in high demand in my riding. Businesses in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, and Prince George are in constant need of these skilled tradespeople.

It could take weeks for a homeowner in northeastern B.C. to find a plumber or a roofer. The oil and gas industries are constantly hiring, as there is a constant shortage of people with the applicable skills.

There are many jobs in businesses looking for people who fit very particular skill sets. New graduates, on the other hand, are finding that the job market is more competitive than they expected. That is why our government is championing the new Canada job grant, which would create a new class of students who will graduate with skills tailor-made for waiting jobs. The employers would have recruits with the skills they need, and the students would be working toward secure employment.

While finding a job is important, finding the right job is equally important. Employees working in their fields have a better sense of job satisfaction and are more productive in the workplace. That is why we would launch an enhanced job matching service. This would allow qualified Canadians to find the jobs that suit their skills and experience and would allow employers to identify candidates who meet their needs. We would invite prosperity by facilitating an employment landscape that would make the most of a worker's ability and that would encourage students to train for jobs that will be in demand.

Another way to invite prosperity is to give credit where credit is due. Our government introduced a \$450 tax credit for volunteer firefighters, and in this budget, we would extend that credit to search and rescue volunteers. Search and rescue volunteers provide an essential service in rural areas across Canada. These services require expensive equipment and require volunteers to go into dangerous or remote areas to save lives and keep people safe.

I was proud to recommend this initiative to the Minister of Finance on behalf of my constituents and all search and rescue volunteers across Canada.

The reason we, as a government, work so hard to invite prosperity is to maintain our way of life in a financially responsible manner. We have fulfilled our promise to continually increase health care funding across the country. Despite what the opposition says, we have maintained that increase at 6% nationally and continue to work with the provinces in ensuring that health care dollars are spent wisely.

We have delivered on our promise to veterans as well. Our government has increased funding to nearly \$4.7 billion to enhance benefits, programs, and services for veterans and their families. We have expanded Veterans Affairs services to more than 600 Service Canada locations across the country so that rural veterans will no longer have to travel long hours to receive the service they deserve. In my hometown of Fort St. John, veterans can find a place to receive service, where they could not before.

We have invested heavily in rehabilitation for injured veterans and in transition programs for soldiers preparing for a return to civilian life. Unlike the opposition, we believe that our veterans remain skilled and capable people, even after a serious injury. That is why our government has committed more than \$3 billion per year in direct support for veterans, with a focus on physical and psychological rehabilitation and vocational training.

We continue to support our aging veterans and to help them remain independent and lead full and active lives.

Even as the number of veterans in Canada has decreased, financial support for veterans services has increased by \$1.9 billion since our government took power in 2006. We are working across all sectors to create new opportunities in Canada and to offer support for those who are willing to make the effort in order to succeed.

That is how economic action plan 2014 invites prosperity.



*Government Orders*

•(1600)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a couple living in a rural border town has to go for an emergency birth. They go to the nearest hospital, which happens to be in Vermont. The baby is delivered okay. Fifty years later, that baby, who is now a grown adult, finds out that she is considered an American citizen and that everything she has done in Canada is open to investigation by the IRS.

The protection of the rights of our citizens is a fundamental role of Parliament, yet the government has not talked to the families who are being affected by FATCA. In fact, it has pushed it into page 99 of this bill to slip it through the House of Commons without any proper consultation with the Canadian people.

I have been sitting here listening to my hon. colleague, with all of his spin notes that have come down from the PMO. I would like to ask him why it is that in a supposed budget implementation act, the government has used omnibus legislation and the shutting down of debate in the House to force through an act that is going to compromise the rights of Canadian citizens.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, the only part that is really relevant in that member's statement is in relation to health care. However, I will say that this speech was written by me. I am not sure where he gets the PMO notes and where his comments are from. That is the way the member across the way is, and that is just the way he is going to continue to be.

I would like to continue to speak about the increase of 6% per year in health care dollars we are spending. Often the opposition members say that there is a decrease in health care spending across Canada, and I tell my constituents that what they are saying is simply not true. There has been a 6% increase, and there will be increases well into the future. The fact of the matter is that we support health care, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I always find it amazing when Conservatives stand up and talk about supporting health care, when in fact, we have had record highs in health care expenditures going to our provinces because of an agreement signed by former Prime Minister Paul Martin. It was a 10-year health care accord. That health care accord expired just a couple of weeks ago.

This is a very important issue for Canadians. They want the national government to have that sense of commitment. The current Prime Minister has never had a first ministerial conference to talk about issues that are important to Canadians, such as health care and the importance of the health care accord.

Why does the member believe that his government has not taken the time or demonstrated the leadership to renegotiate a health care accord that would take us through the next 10 years or so?

•(1605)

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, an old saying is “the proof is in the pudding”. We believe in health care for all Canadians. We are continuing to fund it and have extended health care spending well into the future at 6%, and then beyond that, based on GDP. The fact of the matter is that we continue to fund health care. Despite what the

opposition members say, the simple facts are that we believe in health and we will continue to support it well into the future.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate today, and it is amazing that somebody could be here for so many hours in this place and not know exactly what he or she is talking about. It is unbelievable, but it does work.

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Right on.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking later and will be happy to answer his questions.

My question for my colleague is this. He talked about improvements through tax credits for mining and forestry, about supporting apprentices and training, and about matching people with skills sets to jobs. It is all about prosperity. Why is it important for the government to take action and not just talk about it?

**Mr. Bob Zimmer:** Mr. Speaker, it goes back to a simple principle. We see the opposition members making statements like “budgets will balance themselves”. The fact is that to have a prosperous economy, we need to be very deliberate in what we do, and that involves skills training. It involves tax incentives for corporations. It makes for a positive economic environment in Canada. It is a very deliberate act. Acts we have done and our budgets have all been very deliberate. They are far from accidents, as the opposition members would think they are.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak to Bill C-31, a budget implementation act. As always seems to be the case, the government, using its majority for purposes that are less than democratic, has limited debate on this bill. For the fifth time, the Conservative government has done its best to evade parliamentary scrutiny of what it puts forward as an economic agenda through time allocation.

I am lucky enough to get my thoughts on the floor today just before debate closes. My thoughts on this bill are not kind ones, and of course, the conduct of the government and its approach to the business of the House does not incline any of us to be particularly charitable. Some have described the budget and Bill C-31 as substantially irrelevant documents. That is not so. Parts therein are quite stunning. I am not sure whether they are stunning in their audacity or stunning in their timidity, but they are stunning nevertheless.

What Canadian could have imagined the surrender of sovereignty and betrayal of citizenship that is bound up in the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, FATCA, as it is known, buried deep among 500 clauses in over 350 pages? As I just found out from my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, it is on page 99 of a 350-page document.

What characterizes this bill as a whole is incoherence. One might argue that it is the nature of omnibus bills. They are certainly fundamentally undemocratic beasts, but I think there is something else going on in addition.

*Government Orders*

This bill betrays a government bereft of any understanding of this country in its complicated entirety in this century, much less in this year, 2014. It is eight years into power, and the government still does not see the urban fact of this country, the fact that over 80% of Canadians live in urban communities, from downtowns to suburbs and the places in between. It still governs like this is not true of Canada.

It does not understand the relationship of Canada's cities to the rural and resource economies that surround them and the opportunities that flow from that relationship. It still governs as if these are separate and unrelated economies, separate and unrelated environments, separate and unrelated societies. It still governs, in fact, as though urban economies, environments, and communities do not exist, much less have their own peculiarities and needs and present their own great opportunities for this country.

It has not grasped the relationship between our cities and the rest of the world to the global economy. It still governs as though the federal government is our only interface between Canada and the global economy, failing to grasp that what defines the global economy is a network of urban economies, a network into which our cities from coast to coast to coast are connected, and increasingly so.

This is a budget and a budget implementation act that contains no plan for Canada, through its cities, to succeed in a global economy.

Let me talk about what my city of Toronto needs to succeed, at a minimum. Toronto grows by 100,000 people every year. We add to the population of that city—and by “city”, I am speaking about the city region, not the municipality per se—a city the size of Calgary or Ottawa every decade. According to the Conference Board of Canada, an economic growth rate of 2.5% annually is required just to keep up with that pace of population growth, and that growth rate must also be distributed evenly, but it is not. Says the Toronto Region Board of Trade:

The 21st century city-region economy is creating a new kind of urban social structure. It consists on one side of well paid highly qualified professional and technical workers, and on the other, an increasingly precarious and growing proportion of low-wage service-oriented workers.

Recent studies by the United Way and McMaster University, the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, the Martin Prosperity Institute, and the Metcalf Foundation, all of which I have referenced in the House before, point to the growth of precarious employment in Toronto's labour market and confirm the emergence of this polarized labour market and consequent social structure in Toronto.

• (1610)

Even closer to my home and to my riding of Beaches—East York, a recent study entitled “Shadow Economies: Economic Survival Strategies of Immigrant Communities in Toronto” captured the extent of the shadow economy. Half of the respondents in that survey reported getting paid less than minimum wage. Over one-third of respondents did not get vacation pay, statutory holiday pay, or paid holidays of any kind.

We are witnessing a city once admired for its mixed-income neighbourhoods dividing into a city of low-income neighbourhoods and high-income neighbourhoods. In 1970, two-thirds of Toronto's cities were middle-income neighbourhoods. As of 2005, 29% were middle income. Extrapolating that trend out to 2025, it is the story of

a sharply polarizing city where less than 10% of Toronto's neighbourhoods will be middle income just over a decade from now.

Long before we get there—in fact, now—we now have a critical housing challenge that needs to be addressed. In those low-income neighbourhoods where the shadow economies thrive, such as some in my riding:

Inadequate housing and the risk of homelessness are almost universal among families with children living in high-rise rental apartments...

says a March 2014 study by Paradis, Wilson, and Logan for the Cities Centre at the University of Toronto.

Almost 90 percent face major housing problems that may place them at risk of homelessness. ... One family in three is facing severe or critical risk of homelessness.

says the study.

According to the Toronto Region Board of Trade:

The state of good repair bill for the city's housing units is \$750 million and growing by \$100 million a year. Meanwhile, the city's accumulated state of good repair backlog in 2012 was \$1.7 billion.

There is an enormous challenge here that the government is shrinking from, or is blind to, as it continues down the path of extricating the federal government from affordable housing in this country.

The same holds true of public transit. I asked the minister of infrastructure just yesterday why the government is refusing to invest in public transit. The answer, and I quote from *Hansard*, was that “our government respects the jurisdiction of provinces, and transit is under provincial jurisdiction”. That is the response of the government to the key economic challenge of Canada's global cities: it is not our responsibility.

Study after study points to the economic costs of underinvestment in transit in Toronto and the consequent stifling gridlock. The Toronto Region Board of Trade says:

...overstretched transportation networks are the most serious barrier to economic growth in the Toronto region, costing our regional economy \$6 billion per year.

The C.D. Howe Institute pegs the current economic costs at closer to \$11 billion.

Either way, the economic costs of underinvestment in transit are enormous. They compromise the competitive position of Toronto, and they are expected to go up. They are a stinging indictment of the government's blindness to the needs of cities and to the opportunity to grow our urban economies, an opportunity waiting there for a government alive to the urban fact of this country and the reality of a global and increasingly globalizing economy.

It is very simple: the success of our cities is vital to our national interest. Canada needs a national agenda that is alive to our urban reality, to how cities work, to their needs, their vulnerabilities, and their potential. Getting our cities right opens up the possibility that what we hope for—for ourselves, for our families, and for Canada—can be made real.

The only thing that is clear about Bill C-31 is that the government does not get that.

*Government Orders*

•(1615)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member did a good job in summarizing some of the issues related to the city of Toronto.

Many of those same principles in terms of need are there throughout Canada. I was reflecting, as he was talking about Toronto, on some of the needs of my home city of Winnipeg. There is a huge demand for infrastructure and infrastructure renewal as we try to move more to rapid transit.

We have been fortunate in the sense that our city has been growing. We hope to be able to sustain that growth and help facilitate it. In order to prosper, quite often our cities need to be able to look to Ottawa to assist with infrastructure dollars. Quite frankly, we have billions of dollars of infrastructure debt across Canada. It is into the billions of dollars. City coffers do not have the resources to be able to meet that need, so they are dependent on infrastructure dollars.

I wonder if the member might want to comment with respect to the fact that this year's budgeted line of infrastructure dollars has decreased by 87% from last year's. That will have a significant impact on all of our cities, including his city of Toronto and my beloved city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Mr. Speaker, indeed I focused on the city of Toronto as my case in point. It is where I am from, it is where my riding is, and it is what I know best.

However, much of what I spoke about with respect to the city of Toronto is true of cities across this country. In fact, the folks at what used to be called the Cities Centre at the University of Toronto who did the study mapping out income polarization spatially across the city of Toronto have done similar studies in other cities across the country.

What they are finding is that universally the predominant social fact that characterizes global and globalizing cities in Canada and around the world is this issue of income polarization. What it is doing is leaving in large communities in neighbourhoods with infrastructure deficits. Those include transit deficits, housing deficits, and food deserts. That is true.

What we find too is that the response of the government to that trend in our cities was to extract \$5.8 billion out of the infrastructure fund for cities across this country in this budget.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, Bill C-31 is yet another omnibus bill. It is 350 pages long and promotes a culture of secrecy and lack of transparency. My colleague also mentioned that there was no new funding for any sector really.

There is no job creation for young people, no investment in agencies that work with young people, such as cadets, which provide many social and engaging activities.

For example, Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps 2425, Air Cadet League of Canada 729 Squadron, Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps 329 and Cadet Corps 2698 Sieur de Beaujeu are not getting more funding. What is more, the Little League Canadian Championships

being held in my riding this summer did not receive any funding from the federal government, even though these activities provide young people with an opportunity to get some exercise and to develop their potential in a number of aspects in their lives. The federal government is doing absolutely nothing to help them.

What does my colleague think about that?

•(1620)

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Mr. Speaker, let me respond first to the issue of the omnibus bill.

It is the fifth time the Conservatives have tried to evade scrutiny of their so-called economic agenda, which I think betrays a fundamentally anti-democratic, authoritarian streak in the government. In fact, I think it betrays cowardice by placing something as profoundly important to Canadians as FATCA on page 99 of a 350-page bill, rather than having that debate out in the open in this House for all Canadians to hear and for us to participate in.

With respect to youth, let me take it back to Toronto, where we have an extraordinarily high 18% youth unemployment rate in Toronto. That is profoundly troubling. This is a government bill that offers no hope for youth in Toronto or across the country. The cancellation of the hiring credit for small business in this bill is a betrayal of youth in this country, and it is only going to make it increasingly difficult for them to find work and hope in today's economy.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Montcalm, Status of Women; the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, Aboriginal Affairs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-31, our government's economic action plan for 2014. I understand that the member for Burlington will be speaking after me, which I think is wonderful, because what I lack in eloquence and possibly content I am sure he will more than make up for.

There are a number of measures in Bill C-31 that would be of benefit to my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla and elsewhere in Canada.

One measure I am particularly proud of is further amendments to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. I know the member for Kootenay—Columbia spoke to this measure earlier. I am glad to have his support, as well as that of many other members of this place, for that amendment through my private member's bill.

*Government Orders*

This amendment in the budget implementation bill actually builds on the Free My Grapes movement, which was very important not just to my riding but to all Canadian wine-producing regions. It was passed unanimously by all members of the House, opening up new Canadian markets for Canadian craft brewers and artisan distillers. It will help both producers and growers.

We must not overlook that alcohol, in many cases, is a value-added agricultural product. For microbreweries in my riding, of which there are several, this is very exciting news. I am told that Saskatchewan and Ontario are also home to some very well-regarded craft breweries. However, let us not overlook our growing number of artisan distillers. These industries collectively support farms, provide direct and indirect jobs, and in many cases raise significant revenues that support important government services.

Bill C-31 also proposes a tax credit for search and rescue volunteers who perform 200 hours or more of volunteer service. Last fall I joined with a local group of volunteers in a search and rescue effort to try to locate a missing father. Sadly, we were not successful in our efforts. However, it was a heartening experience that so many citizens came together to help a family find closure. I also know from my activities, as do many members who often get an opportunity to speak with our constituents, that the people who participate in these activities often spend incredible amounts of time in training and then retraining, so it is important for the government to support this measure. We know these services are of incredible value to many of our communities across Canada. I am grateful that these individuals are being recognized in the bill.

Another measure in Bill C-31 that is important to my riding is the extension of a 15% mineral exploration tax credit, which was touched upon by the Conservative member who spoke previously.

There are mines in my riding that operate outside of Merritt and in Logan Lake. Mining remains a major employer and provides very well-paying jobs in my riding. In Okanagan Falls and in Penticton, there are employers that manufacture specialty mining equipment. Recognizing the importance of mining and supporting the mineral exploration tax credit is important to my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla and also to other resource communities across Canada.

There are many other reasons that I support Bill C-31. I would like to join the member for Vancouver Island North, who spoke so eloquently on the funding in budget 2014 that supports Lindsey's law. That is the creation of a national DNA-based missing persons index. I would also like to commend the member for Vancouver Island North for his work illustrating the need for such a DNA-based missing persons index from his work here in Ottawa.

On that same note, I would also like to recognize our Minister of Finance, who listens to the concerns of Canadians as represented by members of Parliament.

Here is another example of how our government listens to the concerns of Canadians in Bill C-31: the changes in how the GST-HST credit would be provided to qualifying Canadians. Those Canadians who qualify for the GST-HST grant but who neglect to apply would no longer be penalized for the oversight. Bill C-31 would ensure that eligible Canadians would automatically receive the GST-HST credit without having to apply.

● (1625)

That is a very good case of where this government recognizes that red tape should not prevent someone who is eligible for benefits to receive them. I think this will be warmly received in my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla.

I would like to commend the Minister of National Revenue for also supporting these changes that will benefit many lower income Canadians.

Before I close, I would like to give an example of why our economic action plans are important to Canadians. Back in 2011, I spoke in this House in full support of Bill C-13, which was our government's economic action plan for 2011.

One of the reasons I spoke in support of Bill C-13 was the fact that provisions in the bill would help the value-added wood sector. In my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla, we are very fortunate to have many value-added wood producers. In my 2011 budget speech, I referenced North America's first large-scale, state-of-the-art, cross-laminated timber manufacturing production facility. This new plant created many vitally needed, well-paying jobs in Okanagan Falls, and measures in our economic action plan supported this innovation and investment to make this plant a reality.

As we know, the opposition voted against the government's economic action plan in 2011, just as it voted against all our economic action plans since.

Why do I mention this? Imagine my surprise when the Leader of the Opposition visited my beautiful riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla back in February of this year, and while in my riding, the Leader of the Opposition visited this very same value-added wood producer in Okanagan Falls. What did he say after touring this facility?

This factory is a great example of something that is succeeding, and that's great to see.

It is rare that I agree with the Leader of the Opposition, but on this point, I certainly do. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition described this innovative, value-added wood producer as a way we could create good jobs here in Canada, and I certainly agree.

However, we also have to recognize that the Leader of the Opposition, like his party, voted against our economic action plan in 2011. Yet when he actually witnessed the result of our economic plan in action, first hand, what did the Leader of the Opposition say? I will repeat, "This factory is a great example of something that is succeeding, and that's great to see".

Our government's economic action plan, as the Leader of the Opposition himself observed, creates "good...jobs here in Canada". That is one of the many reasons I will be supporting Bill C-31. I hope the members opposite will join our government in supporting the economic action plan that was presented in budget 2014 and that will be implemented through this act, so we can continue creating more good jobs right here in this great country of Canada, and help support Canadians in the many areas of day-to-day life.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to questions.

*Government Orders*

• (1630)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from B.C. for his well-presented speech.

I have a question for my colleague across the way. We keep hearing about what the NDP voted against. The government presents the opposition with a budget bill that is thicker than a phone book for many municipalities and it buries in that phone book many bills that have nothing to do with the budget, but need to be debated on their own, and then on top of that, let us get to this bill, where close to 400 pages impacting hundreds of statutes are tabled, and even before the first speaker gets up to make a speech, a member on the government side stands up to say they will be giving notice of motion for time-limited debate.

How can I, as a parliamentarian, vote on a bill—or a telephone book of a bill—when I have not had the opportunity to debate it? Could the hon. member vote for something he has not had the opportunity to debate or listen to open debate on?

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from my colleague who is also from British Columbia. We are very proud of our province, and I know she speaks from that perspective.

Getting to the point, we all in this place will get an opportunity to express our democratic values in votes. Every member has the ability, either through the committee process or through amendments at report stage, to put forward amendments they feel are important and then to stand in their spot and say what side of the coin they stand on.

I have heard many criticisms about omnibus legislation. I will just point out that any time we seek to amend more than two pieces of legislation, that automatically creates an omnibus situation.

I have heard people ask what the Hazardous Products Act has to do with it. Well, part 6, division 3, amends the Hazardous Products Act to better regulate the sale and importation of hazardous products intended for use, handling, or storage in a workplace in Canada in accordance with the Regulatory Cooperation Council joint action plan initiative for workplace chemicals.

We are part of a global chain. We need to see action on these things, so in North America we can have a better regulatory position where trade can flow, but also we can have better harmonization of standards, so that Canadians and Americans are safer.

I appreciate the sentiment, and I look forward to the next question.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with the member in his answer a minute ago. It is not true that every member of Parliament has access to this massive bill in every committee where members sit.

Furthermore, last year in committee of the whole, when the then minister of finance appeared here to defend his past omnibus bill budget, he could not answer two-thirds of the questions himself. He did not know the details, he was not briefed, and he did not have officials with him from his own finance department.

It is unfortunate for the minister to speak this way, but I have a question for him on infrastructure and B.C. Instead of playing a shell game and trying to perform a card trick with Canadians, can he tell

us what share of the \$210 million is available for B.C. on April 1? We confirmed today with letters from the Nova Scotia government that all that is available is \$210 million for the whole country. What share does the member expect British Columbia to avail itself of, when it is such a minuscule amount of money?

• (1635)

**Mr. Dan Albas:** Mr. Speaker, I guess we will just have to disagree on some things.

The prior Liberal government had 13 long years to speak up and stand up for municipal infrastructure, and British Columbia received \$1.5 billion. In the seven years that this government has been in office, British Columbia has received \$4.5 billion.

The member voted against making the gas tax statutory so it no longer had to be voted in every year. We doubled the gas tax and indexed it to inflation. I find it incredibly interesting that the member would try to stand up for British Columbia after continuing to vote against important infrastructure, time and time again. However, I welcome the debate and I welcome further questions from the member.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years, I have always begun by saying what an honour it is to rise in this institution, and I am very honoured to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay.

However, I am not very proud of what I see in this Parliament, and I am not proud to see that the role of the Parliament of Canada is continually turned into an exercise in which we are the marionettes of some kind of dumbed-down political show. We see the use of time allocation again and again to limit debate, and we see the monkey-wrenching of committees, where reports are written by the government and basically brought forward, ignoring all manner of amendments. Traditionally, and when I was elected, the committees tended to work together as a general rule.

I see the relentless attack on the independent bodies whose job it is to give us the information we need, whether it is Statistics Canada or researchers. I see the vicious attack by the leaders in the Conservative government against the officers of Parliament whose job it is to maintain the integrity of the electoral system of Canada, and the absolutely shameful attack on Mr. Mayrand by the so-called minister for democratic reform.

The election fraud that is being perpetrated in the House with this act and the complete ignoring of every single expert makes everything that is happening in Parliament in 2014 a very unfunny joke. When the Prime Minister can stand up and not be able to name a single credible witness, yet he and his gang personally attack the witnesses who represent democratic integrity in this country, it is a shameful situation.

*Government Orders*

We have a piece of omnibus legislation that is being pushed through in this Potemkin Parliament. We will all stand up at the end of the day, and the Conservatives will say that democracy was heard.

However, what is not being heard is the analysis we need on the temporary foreign worker program, on hazardous materials, on railway safety, on the fact that people are going to have to pay at the Champlain Bridge in Montreal to go to work, and the fact that on page 99 of this bill, we learn that the government has signed a secret deal with the United States to share the personal data of tens of thousands of Canadians.

Canadians should look to Parliament to say that citizenship is something that is sacred, to say that the role of Parliamentarians is to stand up and defend the citizenship of Canadians. However, in this omnibus legislation that is being pushed through and this attempt to shut down debate, the Conservatives have decided to slip in the bill that will now make it possible and legal for the United States government to demand the personal financial information of Canadians who have lived their lives in this country, paid taxes in this country, and been excellent citizens in this country, all because they happen to have been born in the United States.

Is this the case for people who just came here a few years ago, moved here because they do not want to pay taxes? No, I will give a few examples.

In 1958, a family had to go to the hospital and their child was born in a hospital on the U.S. side of the border. Now, this person, in his or her 50s, finds that personal financial information is subject to whatever the United States government wants to do with it.

We see the case of a young woman who went to university in the United States almost half a century ago and had a baby. A year later, she returned to Canada and the baby grew up as a Canadian citizen. The baby paid taxes and is a proud Canadian citizen. She looks to the government and finds that it does not consider her to be a Canadian citizen. If the Americans want her personal and private information, they will get it.

An 80-year-old woman called me. She spent the last half a century raising her children in Canada. She is now being told that her life insurance, which she saved up and which is meant to be for her children, can be handed over.

What protection did the government bring forward when it negotiated the IGA, the intergovernmental agreement that allows this FATCA, or Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act? We do not know what it agreed to, because it is pushing it through. It is pushing it through without the scrutiny that belongs in Parliament.

What we are seeing is that the government is saying it will be compliant under the Privacy Act, but we see major problems with this. The United States government does not see itself as having any of the same commitments that the Privacy Act and PIPEDA are supposed to have to protect the personal information of Canadian citizens.

• (1640)

For example, under the Canadian Privacy Act, financial institutions that collect personal information must only collect it for the

purposes it was collected. The United States has not made any of those commitments.

Under the Privacy Act, we have businesses that develop systems, including technology systems and protocols, including the use of encryption. They have to use it to protect the data against outside scrutiny. We have no idea how this data would be used when it is handed over to the United States.

Principle 1 of schedule 1 of PIPEDA encourages accountability by mandating data collection responsibility for the personal information of a data subject, and the person has to be responsible.

There are no such provisions, that we know of, that were negotiated when the United States decided that it would come knocking on this compliant little government here to say, "We want to be able to gather information on any Canadian we want and you're going to give it to us", and the current government said, "Okay. We will. We'll just run it through omnibus legislation".

Finally, principle 10 of schedule 1 of PIPEDA declares that an individual may bring a challenge to the organization that has his or her financial information if it is being misused.

However, none of those provisions exist, as far as we know, under the agreement that was signed. The reason we do not know is that we are not allowed, as parliamentarians, to debate it, because the government is going to push it through.

I asked my hon. colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, earlier on, about this. She said we were making things up.

It is obvious that the Conservatives have not even read their omnibus legislation because they are happy to play the role of the marionette. They are happy to stand to read the dumbed-down talking points.

It is a disgrace what is happening in the Parliament of this country. In this Potemkin parliament, we still have features of parliamentary tradition. For example, it is perfectly okay for the government to come in and misrepresent, to be mendacious, to be malevolent with the facts. It is just unparliamentary to say it is doing so.

So, we are engaged in this little facade that we are all the honourable gentlemen and gentlewomen carrying on the business of this country, when time and again legislation is being forced through without scrutiny.

So, for the Canadian citizens who served this country, who raised their children, and who paid their taxes, they can look to the current government and ask, "Where were you to protect the basic notion of citizenship, to ensure that basic rules were in place?"

We do not know if there are any rules in place because these will not be debated in Parliament.

I think it is a very shameful day for our so-called democratic system that we have allowed Parliament to be so incredibly debased. However, we see that time and again in the way that time allocation is being used with omnibus legislation that has nothing to do with budget implementation.

*Government Orders*

We do remember, and Canadians remember, that it was omnibus legislation that stripped water and lake protection from 99.9% of the waters in this country, to help expedite pipeline expansion, without any overview of the potential impacts on the various lakes and river systems in this country.

The Conservatives just threw it out, just like they threw out the researchers and the scientists who stood in their way, and just like they attacked the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's role in this House of Commons was to provide parliamentarians with credible knowledge. I am embarrassed to tell the Canadian people how few facts parliamentarians are given about the implementation of budgets. These are pushed through.

Go to committee and ask a minister come to committee to talk about the budget and how it would affect his department. It is not going to happen, because the government is protecting the frontbench marionettes, and they do their job

However, the role of Parliament is to ensure that basic issues, like the spending of taxpayer money, are given proper scrutiny, that international agreements that would affect the rights of Canadian citizens are debated in the House, and that we ensure that our Canadian citizens are given the rule of law.

Yet that is not happening here. What we are going to see for the rest of the day are the pompom acts and cheery faces of the Conservatives reading their dumbed-down notes while avoiding every key aspect of legislative change that would happen with this massive omnibus bill, just like the previous omnibus bill, just like with the omnibus bill before that, and we are supposed to stand here and pretend that this falsehood is somehow a real parliamentary process.

It is a Potemkin parliament. I think Canadian citizens need to know that the government is using the legislative process to ram through changes that would fundamentally affect their rights.

• (1645)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on what the member was talking about regarding the magnitude of the budget bill itself. It is important that we recognize, and that we remind people, that since we have had the current majority government, there has been a change in attitude so that when a budget implementation bill is brought in, the Conservatives include changes to various other pieces of legislation. They use the budget bill to pass numerous changes to law here in Canada, many of which should have been stand-alone bills that would have, in essence, gone through the system of first reading, second reading, committees, and so forth.

What makes the matter even worse is that the Conservatives continue to use time allocation as the process. All of this takes away the rights of all members of Parliament to truly be able to stand in their place and provide the due diligence necessary for holding government accountable. The members of the current government have made a backward step in democracy.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. He spent many years in the provincial legislature and is seeing what is happening in this federal legislature. The

fundamental attack here is the attempt to treat Canadians as though they are stupid and deny them basic information.

The role of Parliament is to debate this so that the people back home can hear the facts and can see what is happening in committee. However, they cannot see what is happening in committee when committees are in camera, when everything is done in advance, and when there is a charade of talking points without actual debate on the issues of massive legislative changes affecting their lives.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for bringing us back to the egregious loss of democracy in this place. I said earlier today, speaking to Bill C-31, that it is like Bruce Cockburn's song, where he says, "But the trouble with normal is it always gets worse". Every year, we seem to accept less and less democracy.

Back in 2009 when my last book came out, the late journalist Jim Travers was commenting on my book release on CBC. In answer to Michael Enright, who asked if there really were a crisis in Canadian democracy, Travers answered that it was worse than that, that you could visit Ottawa but what you would see was a democracy theme park. All the building were there, but Parliament was no longer respected.

Does my hon. colleague not feel that we need to reverse these trends before we really lose democracy altogether?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond with the lyrics of Bruce Cockburn. He said:

See they paid-off local bottom feeders  
Passing themselves off as leaders  
Kiss the ladies shake hands with the fellows  
Open for business like a cheap bordello

And they call it democracy...

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his speech.

I asked two members of the governing party the same question about income splitting. The hon. member for Oakville practically suggested that this measure is used to subsidize the rich, more or less, while the highly esteemed former minister of finance, the best in the known and unknown world, expressed serious doubts about it before becoming just the member for Whitby—Oshawa.

What does my colleague think of the canned answers on income splitting that were provided by the PMO's puppets?

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, the real concern here is that we are not really debating the budget. What we end up having to do is to deal with bill that concerns itself with all manner of things other than the budget. The scrutiny required to ensure that we have accountability in this place has gone out the way, because these changes are being forced through a budget implementation bill with time allocation, and with things not being addressed at committee,

We count on our officers of Parliament to ensure accountability and we see the vicious and personal attacks against them. These are attacks on the institution of Parliament itself, because when Parliament stands in the way of this gang it will be attacked.

Canadians need to step back and say they expect more. Canadians need to say they expect a level of dignity in the House, that they expect all parliamentarians regardless of their party to stand in the House and participate, and to be able to participate in the review of legislation to ensure that it is of benefit to all Canadians.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in the House today to talk about the budget implementation bill and a little about the process for budget 2014.

It seems that the opposition members have talked a lot about process in regard to this bill. They have talked about the number of hours being allocated to it, the size of the bill, and so on. I think it is important for the public, if anyone happens to be watching, to understand what is actually happening.

As we have for the whole eight years I have been here—and I do not know if it was any different before I arrived—the budget is presented, but it is not actually a bill because the budget has to be implemented. We have two implementation periods, one in the spring and one in the fall.

We try to get as much of the budget implemented in the first budget implementation bill, because it takes a while to get the bill through the system and for whatever changes that will be happening to be implemented. It is important that we do as much as possible in the first implementation bill.

I am fortunate to be speaking to this. It will go to a vote. I think the last speaker will be at about 5:05 p.m. I am the 69th speaker on this item. There have been five days of debate.

Members can talk to their constituents and say that the implementation bill is at second reading, that it has not gone to committee yet, and that there were 70 speakers addressing it, with opportunities for the different parties to have their turn. The bigger parties, like the government, obviously have more turns to speak. Then the official opposition and then the third party get a shot, and it is all based on numbers.

There have been 70 speakers. Then, after it is voted on, assuming it passes, which I believe it will, the bill will go to committee. I am not going to say what will happen there, because I do not actually know. However, a number of past implementation bills were broken up and sent to different committees. Different sections would go to different committees.

When I was on the finance committee, the whole bill came to the committee. We have changed that process a bit over the last number of times, and let other committees do a review.

There is an opportunity for any member of Parliament to go to committee to discuss the bill and to hear witnesses. That will take a number of weeks.

Then the bill comes back to the House, back to this fine place and its elected members. It will likely have approximately five days of debate. There could be another 70 speakers on this bill. In fact, if I do the math correctly, almost half the people in here will have an opportunity to speak to this particular bill. Not only will they speak to the bill, but members can also go to committee and talk to specific items that happen to be in this piece of legislation.

When members talk about time allocation and so on, that does not mean we are ending the debate. I have had to explain this to people in my riding. Time allocation happens because the House leaders of all the parties could not come together in agreement on how many speakers will be put forward.

My understanding is that is because there are parties in the House that believe that every single member should say the same thing over and over again. If members have listened to the Debate, as I have in the House and to the television in my office, the same things are being repeated over and over again. They are important items.

I am not belittling the points that people on both sides of the House are making. However, the same things are being said over and over again. The time allocation motion allocates a certain length of time; it does not end debate.

In this case, our House leader allocated five days to speak to this bill, which allows 70 members to speak to this one bill at second reading. Then we go to committee. If I am interested in a certain section, such as that dealing with tax credits for people with diabetes, I know that I can go to committee.

● (1655)

I have diabetes. I am fortunate that I am able to control my diabetes through diet and exercise, but there are many people I know who are severely affected by diabetes. In fact, there is a tax credit in this bill that would help with the cost of services that go with severe issues due to diabetes. People would be able to use those tax credits to help pay their medical costs because the tax credit for medical costs has been enhanced in this implementation bill. As was mentioned and discussed in the budget, it is actually implemented through this bill. If the bill is sent to the finance committee and I am available, I may go to the committee to talk about that section and find out what people are saying about it. There will be witnesses available at the committee to talk about the different sections.



*Government Orders*

This bill is thick. Members in the House say that this is an omnibus bill. I looked it up, and it is about 486 pages. Let us round up, for arguments sake, because there are appendices and so on; let us say it is a 500-page bill. People have to understand that it is 500 pages in English and in French. It is actually 250 pages of English, and it may be a bit longer in French because the language has more words in it. In length, it may be a little longer in French than it is in English. That is not always the case, but I believe that is the case here. Therefore, it entails the reading of 250 pages. I know that Canadians have confidence in the members of Parliament they have elected to read 250 pages.

Let us be frank: we have a lot to do as members of Parliament. There is a lot of reading and information. At the front of every single bill, there is a summary. The summary itemizes different parts of the bill and then summarizes, in point form, what the different items are. I am not a lawyer, and some of this is legalese, but after eight years, I am getting used to the reading and understanding of it. Granted, at first, for people who are not used to it, it is a bit of reading. However, the summary in this 486-page bill is five pages long. That is in French and English. One side is French and one side is English, and we can read it.

There are some tax measures in here, like the mining tax credit that my colleague mentioned earlier, the flow-through tax credit. It is interesting to me. I happened to know about it from my previous days on the finance committee. I read in the budget that we were renewing that tax credit. I do not need to go to page 265 to see exactly what we are doing because the summary tells me. I understand what we are doing. I read it in the summary. We are implementing it. I do not need any more than that.

There are certain sections that I am not as familiar with, so I looked in the summary, found out which pages they are on, and read them. If I do not understand them, guess what else happens? On our side of the House, the minister holds an information session that is open to all members of Parliament and their staff to ask questions about specific sections. The minister goes clause by clause, not with political people there, but staff from Finance and the different departments, to explain the changes and why they are being implemented. The bureaucratic staff, who do an excellent job for this country, are not there to say whether they agree or disagree. They are there to explain what is being implemented in the budget implementation bill.

There are plenty of opportunities to discuss the issues and get information. What we need to do as a country to continue moving forward is to keep implementing change and the things we would like to do to see this country move forward from an economic perspective.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way seems to be saying that time allocation is normal in the House and that it happens simply because the parties cannot reach an agreement.

That being said, when I read a budget like this one, I think of my constituents, who are worried about the changes being made to the transportation of dangerous goods, the fact that the bill does nothing

for the environment, the fact that more and more businesses in my riding are closing and the fact that people are having difficulty creating high-quality jobs.

I would like to be able to talk about this, because it is my duty as an MP to represent them in this House and ask the government questions. I think it is only natural that if I feel like talking about my region in the House and my colleagues also want to talk about their respective regions, we should be able to do so. When time allocation motions are imposed on us, we are denied the right to speak.

I understand that the member finds this normal. How nice for him; he had the opportunity to speak. On our side, unfortunately, not everyone will have time to do so. There are 308 members in this House.

This seems to be how the government likes to pass bills and advance its own agenda faster, without taking the realities of all the regions into account. I find that unfortunate, and I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak to this. It is exactly to the point.

I challenge my colleague from the other side to go door to door in her riding and say that we are allocating 140 or maybe 150 people to speak to this item. In addition, we are going to go to committee to talk about it. We are going to get it through the House. When it is all done, in about a month, I bet the general public in Canada will say, "What the heck takes you guys so long to get anything done in there?"

Could members imagine if we allowed all 308 members a speaking turn on every single item? Does the member know how many bills we would pass in this place? We would maybe get three or four bills maximum passed through the House of Commons to move the agenda forward, whether that is on economics, the justice system, or the social system. It would bring us to a grinding halt, and that is what the NDP want us to do.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear my colleague from Burlington. When we knock on doors in my riding of Ottawa South, it is what we do here.

Is there anything in the budget with respect to housing? Is there any support for our seniors who are having a hard time deciding between bus passes and medication this month? Is there anything here for infrastructure? Are we seeing investments of a kind that we need for the next generation? Is there an innovation strategy for the country? The answer to all those things is, no, there is not.

I am not sure who the member for Burlington is speaking to in his riding, but the working people in my riding, the middle-class citizens, are looking, but they cannot find their priorities reflected in the budget.

• (1705)

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ottawa South, the hotbed of the middle class in Canada, I guess.

*Government Orders*

It is very interesting that he talked about the digital strategy in his question. Could members imagine the fuss? The minister introduced the digital strategy a few weeks ago, or maybe it was last week, and maybe we will not include that in our budget implementation bill. It is unbelievable. The fact is that not everything is in it.

The member is actually making our point. Not everything is in this bill or the budget. There is other legislation. That is why we have to use time allocation to get other legislation through. The fact of the matter is that the opposition is not supporting it.

We can go on with a list as long as this room on things that are not in the budget because we do not agree with them. We are not doing them. There are Liberal ideas that will never work.

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. I would say that it falls in line with my constituency.

I am an old carpenter. I was a registered carpenter back in the day and built a lot of houses. I can assure the members across the way that what would not be discussed at Tim Hortons would be to give the guys more time to discuss something.

I would like to ask the member if he thinks enough time has been allocated to discuss our economic action plan 2014.

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He made an excellent speech earlier this evening.

I actually think five days is enough. When I tell people that we spent five days on the second reading before it went to committee, they believe that is plenty of time to discuss the issue.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Ottawa South, I will let the hon. member know that we only have about seven minutes remaining in the time allocated for the debate this afternoon. I will allow him to at least get started and give him the usual signal before we are out of time.

The hon. member for Ottawa South.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seven minutes is an appropriate amount of time. I am reminded of my contracts professor at law school who once said that it is very important to remember, unlike my colleagues on the Conservative side, that verbosity is no substitute for content.

I am going to focus on two themes today, which I think are important for citizens right across the country. The first one is infrastructure. We know that we have to invest in the next generation of infrastructure, that we are standing on the shoulders of previous generations who invested heavily in our water and waste water systems, our road systems, and our bridges. We know we are going to be dealing with even more challenges on the infrastructure front because of the realities of adapting to climate change. That is something that the government still refuses to address.

On the infrastructure side, we know that the minister regularly talks about large sums of money being available. However, here are the facts. As of April 1, there is an 87% decrease between last year and this year in terms of the build Canada fund and the amount of money available for the entire country. The government is not denying that. It is exactly \$210 million for the entire country this

fiscal year. We are not talking about gas tax. We are not talking about HST rebates. We are talking about the build Canada fund. For example, when it comes to my hometown, the City of Ottawa would hope to receive \$65 million from the Government of Canada to help improve our water and waste water systems, so we can protect our incredible Ottawa River, the source of our surface drinking water. It would like to be able to invest in the system before the 2017 anniversary of the country, to be able to actually strengthen that infrastructure.

We know that by not investing in that infrastructure now we are compromising jobs. We are compromising giving rise to new technologies and processes for the global market that we ought to be able to do very well in. At the same time, by not investing in infrastructure, we are compromising the support for our middle-class families, who would benefit not only from the infrastructure investments, but the economic spinoffs that follow.

When the government says otherwise, we are hard pressed to believe it. Here is a letter dated yesterday, on Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Secretariat letterhead. Let me quote from it. These are the opening two paragraphs. It says:

You are no doubt aware that the federal government announced on March 28, 2014 that the New Building Canada Fund...is "open for business". Nova Scotia, like all other Provinces and Territories, was surprised by this announcement.

It goes on to say:

The Province has not signed an Agreement with the federal government for the NBCF and no details have been released to us on the application process.

It lends credence to the notion that it is a shell game; it is a card trick on the infrastructure side.

We know in the last instance of the infrastructure investments made by the government that it forced every municipality in the country to put up a total of 9,000 vanity billboards. Canadians recognize them because it infuriates them. Then it stuck the bill to the municipalities where the billboards were actually mounted. In the case of my home city of Ottawa, former mayor Larry O'Brien confirmed, in writing, that \$50,000 was spent by the City of Ottawa in putting up the vanity billboards for the government in different infrastructure settings across the region.

The second issue I want to raise is the transportation safety issue. We have seen in the budget a cut to road safety investments, marine safety investments, airline safety investments, and a marginal increase in rail safety of about a million dollars. This is a very important issue for Canadians in the wake of Lac-Mégantic. If we look at the real numbers on rail safety, we know that the government is spending more money on economic action plan advertising, \$42 million this year alone, than it is spending on rail safety in the entire country.

● (1710)

This is at a time when the Auditor General has told us that only 26% of the planned audits for rail safety were performed; that Via Rail has not been audited in three years, when it is carrying four million passengers a year; and that only nine inspectors are in place, when we need 20.

We are seeing massive increases in diluted bitumen being transported by rail. We are going to have one million barrels of excess oil that cannot go in pipelines in the next decade, but the government finds the money for the vanity advertising and the “24 Seven” show, which is a joke. It is a show of the Prime Minister at work, paid for with taxpayer dollars.

I look forward to coming back to these themes and others when my time comes for my next speaking opportunity, but I did want to get these two issues, infrastructure and transportation safety, on the record and juxtapose both against some of the foolish spending by the Conservative government.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill.

Earlier, my colleague across the way said that 5 days was plenty of time to read 350 pages. I think he is overestimating his abilities, because 350 pages of technical details adds up to something extremely complex. This is not something we can take lightly. If we focused on just a few pages or a single section, we would not be fulfilling our responsibilities.

Right now, we are being silenced. Because of this government, democracy is not working well.

Once again, looking at one issue in particular, rail safety, we can see that decisions will be made behind closed doors. Instead of giving additional information to municipalities that request it, such as Huntingdon, Valleyfield, Godmanchester, Dundee and Saint-Jacques-le-Mineur, all of which are in my riding, the Conservatives will reduce transparency.

I do not know what my colleague thinks of that.

[English]

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that the jig is up. Canadians know what is going on. They are really not stupid. They follow this. They are aware of the kinds of tactics being used by the Prime Minister and his front bench.

They know that things are being pounded together. They know that they are being jammed through the House. They know that we are not being given ample and reasonable opportunity to debate parts of the bill that ought to be seen in different committees. They know that parliamentarians, as a result, are not able to do the job they were sent here to do, which is to try to improve things for Canadians and improve the country.

These are the kinds of tactics that were developed in Ontario in a previous regime. They are unfortunate.

The Canadian people are catching on quickly, and I think they are going to speak loudly in 2015.

• (1715)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made Thursday, April 3, 2014, 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.

### Government Orders

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say ye.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Call in the members.

• (1800)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 98)

### YEAS

#### Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Genest-Jourdain	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)

*Government Orders*

Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Murray  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Patry  
Perreault  
Quach  
Rankin  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Saganash  
Scarpaleggia  
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Raynault  
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Scott  
Sgro  
St-Denis  
Stoffer  
Thibeault  
Tremblay

Shiple  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Trost  
Truppe  
Valcourt  
Van Loan  
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Warkentin  
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Shory  
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Stanton  
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Toet  
Trotter  
Uppal  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williamson  
Yelich  
Young (Vancouver South)

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy  
Adler  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chong  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Galipeau  
Gill  
Goguen  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Harper  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
James  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leef  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Maguire  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Miller  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
O'Neill Gordon  
O'Toole  
Payne  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Rempel  
Rickford  
Saxton  
Seeback

Adams  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Clarke  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Falk  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Holder  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Merrifield  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
Oliver  
Opitz  
Paradis  
Poilievre  
Raiitt  
Reid  
Richards  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shea

Nil

**PAIRED**

**The Deputy 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 Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1810)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 99)

**YEAS**

## Members

Ablonczy  
Adler  
Albrecht  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambler  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Baird  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chong  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra

Adams  
Albas  
Alexander  
Allison  
Ambrose  
Armstrong  
Aspin  
Bateman  
Bergen  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Clarke  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Falk

*Private Members' Business*

Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Genest-Jourdain	Godin
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher	Goodale	Gravelle
Galipeau	Gallant	Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Gill	Glover	Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Goguen	Goldring	Hyer	Jacob
Goodyear	Gosal	Jones	Julian
Gourde	Grewal	Kellway	Lamoureux
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Lapointe	Larose
Hawn	Hayes	Latendresse	Laverdière
Hiebert	Hillyer	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Hoback	Holder	Leslie	Liu
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	MacAulay	Mai
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Marston	Martin
Kerr	Komarnicki	Masse	Mathysen
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	May	McCallum
Lauzon	Lebel	McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Leef	Leitch	Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Lemieux	Leung	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Lizon	Lobb	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Lukiwski	Lunney	Murray	Nantel
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Nash	Nicholls
Maguire	Mayes	Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
McColeman	McLeod	Patry	Péclet
Menegakis	Merrifield	Perreault	Plamondon
Miller	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Quach	Rafferty
Nicholson	Norlock	Rankin	Rathgeber
O'Connor	Oliver	Ravignat	Raynault
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz	Regan	Rousseau
O'Toole	Paradis	Saganash	Sandhu
Payne	Poilievre	Scarpaleggia	Scott
Preston	Raitt	Sellah	Sgro
Rajotte	Reid	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Rempel	Richards	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Rickford	Ritz	Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Saxton	Schellenberger	Stewart	Stoffer
Seeback	Shea	Sullivan	Thibeault
Shipley	Shory	Toone	Tremblay
Smith	Sopuck	Trudeau — 125	
Sorenson	Stanton		
Storseth	Strahl		
Sweet	Toet		
Trost	Trottier		
Truppe	Uppal		
Valcourt	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	Vellacott		
Wallace	Warawa		
Warkentin	Watson		
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson		
Weston (Saint John)	Yelich		
Wilks	Young (Vancouver South)		
Woodworth			
Young (Oakville)			
Zimmer — 149			

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[Translation]

**EMPLOYEES' VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of 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), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Beauport—Limouilou has four and a half minutes to finish his speech.

**Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limouilou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would have been happy to take a few extra minutes to answer questions about my speech on Bill C-525.

I began my speech by talking about a philosophical approach to this bill. I will continue on the subject of the imbalance the government is creating in the labour market.

**NAYS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Fortin
Freeland	Freeman
Fry	Gameau

*Private Members' Business*

This imbalance began 30-some years ago. Rather than valuing individual and collective efforts and work, successive Liberal and Conservative governments preferred to disparage the contribution made by members of a large part of our society. These people work for public or private employers, and some are even self-employed. In exchange for wages, they offer their talents, their knowledge, and especially their pride in doing their work and contributing to our society.

Unfortunately, this key contribution to our society is acknowledged less and less. The Conservative government is not helping the situation by supporting this Trojan horse private member's bill, which allows the government to avoid making the significant changes that need to be made.

Luckily, common sense seems to have prevailed to some extent in committee. Amendments were made to this deplorable bill, so it has improved somewhat. However, in addition to making technical changes and changing the rules, this bill would significantly shift the way society views the contributions that workers make to society. Their contributions will become less and less important. Workers are basically considered disposable if they cannot meet the requirements set by a small group of people in our society who hold a great deal of power in their hands.

We must defeat this bill so that we can maintain the relative balance that still exists and that the government, unfortunately, does not seem to be aware of. This bill serves as a major warning, and members must not miss the vote. Government members need to listen to reason and help us defeat this bill.

•(1815)

[*English*]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is my last opportunity to speak to my bill. I want to acknowledge all the support I have received for my bill, not only from my caucus colleagues but from across the country where workers have reached out to me and expressed their appreciation for this.

I want to use my time to bust the myths that some of the people on the other side of the House have put forward insofar as claiming that my bill is not doing any service to the country.

I would first like to highlight that I will be talking about the claims that the employees' voting rights act is undemocratic, according to the New Democratic Party. Its members are saying that the rights of employees to vote in a secret ballot is somehow undemocratic. I will address that. There are claims that the employees' voting rights act is unfair, even though it has the exact same process for certification and decertification, whereas in the current legislation it is skewed heavily one way.

Some have complained about the process of using private members' bills to address these kinds of issues, which I would be happy to address, as well as the so-called lack of consultation. Even though we all know that it is a private member's bill, we consult with our constituents all the time. I will discuss that and some of the allegations that the legislative changes I am proposing are unconstitutional. I am more than happy to address some of these concerns.

Let us talk about the allegations that my bill on employees' voting rights is somehow undemocratic. I ask how it can be undemocratic to provide workers with a secret ballot vote. We know PSAC stated at committee that it uses secret ballot votes for internal elections and for collective bargaining agreement ratifications. Every member in this House was elected by a secret ballot vote. Members have not provided an answer to me as to why they think such a process would be considered undemocratic.

If we look at Justice Richards' ruling in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, where the same type of legislation was brought forward, on page 38 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.

Apparently, in NDP logic, that is undemocratic.

He further stated that, "The secret ballot, after all, is a hallmark of modern democracy".

I would argue that if it is good enough to serve in this House for members of Parliament to be elected by a secret ballot vote, would anybody not want the same kind of backup in his or her arguments and legitimacy to claim that he or she was put in place through a truly democratic process?

The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has mentioned in his comments on March 26 that employers engage in bullying, threats, and blackmail tactics. Anyone who operates under the belief that bullying, threats, or even blackmail is a mutually exclusive act operates under complete and wilful blindness.

If I were to shove a ballot in the face of a voter while I am campaigning, while I am out on the hustings during an election campaign, and say to him or her, "I think it's in your best interest to vote right here, right now, in front of me, and sign this ballot", the NDP and the Liberal Party of Canada would be absolutely outraged, and the Canadian public would be outraged at that kind of intimidation and electoral process. Yet that is exactly what they are defending on the other side of the House when it comes to union certification.

This process results in the creation of collective bargaining units whereby the union is able to collect union dues, a massive taxation power on the backs of workers. That is how it gets its funds to conduct its business. It is no different from any other process whereby we have taxation and representation. The difference is that there is no mandatory secret ballot. Therefore, it is absolutely ridiculous that the NDP thinks that a card-check system and the power of taxation, of union dues, is completely fine without any check or balance in the interests of workers.

My friend from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie also mentioned that signing a card was an important gesture. I submit that marking an *x* on a ballot is a more important gesture. I think of Castro, Stalin, and these kinds of people who would say that having one option on a ballot is an important gesture for democracy. I disagree. I think that a yes or no answer in a referendum question as to whether or not one wants to have a collective bargaining agent is a more important gesture than what is being proposed over there.

● (1820)

I would like to move on and talk about the allegations that it is unfair. What I proposed was 50% plus one. It is the same as what is currently there in the card check process, but has been amended at committee. I appreciate the committee's hard work on this, the thoughtful amendments being brought forward by Conservative members of Parliament, amending the bill and amending the current laws so that it will be the same process to enter as to exit a union.

Right now, under the current legislation, a 35% threshold is all that is needed to create a union in the federal jurisdiction. Yet a 50% threshold is what is needed to decertify a collective bargaining regime. Somehow the other side thinks that is fair, 35% to get in and 50% to get out, whereas my legislation would actually make it 45%. I proposed 45%. It has been amended to 40%, so it is 40% to trigger a vote either way, in the certification process and in the decertification process.

That seems fair to me. It is the same way in and out. I do not understand how that could possibly be construed as unfair.

I should note that it is not the job of any government to ensure that union certification is as easy as possible. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that paragraph 2(d) does not mandate any particular model of labour relations. This has been referred to by Justice Richards on page 37 of his ruling.

Currently in Canada, five provinces employ a secret ballot regime and the entire federal jurisdiction in the United States uses secret ballot voting. I am not convinced that using a secret ballot vote makes things unfair; in fact, I believe it solidifies the message of the employee group and actually provides a mandate for the collective bargaining agent, one that is unquestionable.

I would like now to move on to talk about some of the complaints about the process. Some members have complained about the labour laws being changed by private members' bills and that extensive consultation is required with stakeholders.

We are all members of Parliament and our stakeholders are the constituents we represent. What is being proposed by the member for Cape Breton—Canso is apparently to have Unifor and PSAC and FETCO and other big organizations coming to the table, completely bypassing the workers whose fate is actually determined in those kinds of negotiations.

I think it is completely acceptable that private members be able to use their private members' hour. There are already great restrictions on what private members can do. I am hoping that the member for Cape Breton—Canso is not suggesting that somehow private members' business be further restricted from areas of federal jurisdiction or federal legislation. We are all elected as legislators to come here to change, amend, put forth or remove laws that affect

### *Private Members' Business*

Canadians. To suggest somehow that we cannot use the private members' process is simply ridiculous.

When the member for Cape Breton—Canso was at committee, he went after me in his remarks for that process, and quoted FETCO to that effect, as FETCO did suggest that it did not like the process. However, what the member for Cape Breton—Canso conveniently left out was that when Mr. Farrell from FETCO was at committee, he stated his and FETCO's support for a secret ballot vote, and that FETCO would prefer to see a threshold to trigger a vote between 40% and 45%, which is exactly where the amendments are, conveniently left out in the other members' remarks.

There are limited opportunities for a member to bring forward legislation, and I would hope that the member across the way is not advocating limiting the scope of private members' legislation any further than it already is.

I can assure the House that virtually every one of us has received a complaint at some point in time from a constituent regarding labour issues. It is not unreasonable to think that a private member would bring forward these kinds of issues, using their private member's time.

I would like to talk about consultation. The member for Newton—North Delta spoke about the lack of consultation. My private member's bill was tabled on June 5 last year.

A number of unions came to the Hill. They had their lobby days. We did not even start debating my bill until later into the fall. After I tabled my bill, not one of these organizations picked up the phone, knocked on my door, or made any effort to contact me whatsoever. In fact, even during their lobby time here on the Hill, none of them even bothered to come to make their case to me.

I have not been able to address all concerns, but I would like to say before closing that the members of the House ought to know or should know that their task here is to represent their constituents. Poll after poll indicates that since 2003, support across Canada for secret ballot voting has rated between 83% and 89%, with some of the highest results coming from unionized or formerly unionized employees.

The bill is good legislation. It is good public policy. The other side should stand up for democracy and vote in favour of it.

● (1825)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to speak briefly to Bill C-525.

I have to say that if the mover of the private member's bill believes that this is so important and is worthwhile, then why does the government not introduce legislation to do what is clearly trying to be done through the backdoor? It is because the government does not have the courage to take its own action and clearly stand up to introduce legislation if it wants to see changes.

Previously we had Bill C-377. Now we have Bill C-525. If government members have some concerns and think that changes need to happen, they should do it the proper way and introduce legislation as a government.

*Private Members' Business*

I am happy to have a chance to speak to a bill that according to the government's sponsors is to help empower workers.

Specifically, Bill C-525 would amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Labour Relations Act to provide that the certification and decertification of a bargaining agent under these acts must be achieved by a vote-based majority through a secret ballot.

Members will forgive my apprehension, but as this bill does come on the heels of the government's last union-busting bill, Bill C-377, I have to wonder again about the real motivations behind it.

Bill C-525 would affect more than 1.2 million employees working as public servants or for an employer under federal jurisdiction. This would include everyone from my own staff to their own staff to the local postmaster to the teller at my local bank or credit union. This means we need to ensure that we get this right, because the bill would impact on real people every day.

The Conservatives have made it clear from the beginning of their term that they are prepared to smash unions at all costs, even when the cost would hurt middle-class workers. Liberals see this as unacceptable. We will be casting our votes in favour of middle-class workers and their families and in favour of fairness and full consultation. If the Conservatives want to change the Labour Code or anything in it, then they should sit down with the partners and discuss those things and make the changes.

My first concern with Bill C-525 is that it proposes to fundamentally change how a union can be formed and dissolved in the federal jurisdiction, yet the evidence shows there is no need, and the major stakeholders have neither asked for this change nor even agreed with it.

Despite the fact that the federal labour relations system is respected and supported by both labour and employers as a result of a genuine and proven consultative and consensus process that has been followed for decades for amending the Labour Code, the bill clearly ignores all the good work that has been done over the years through discussions between labour and the employer as to what changes need to be made. It seems Bill C-525 is again rooted in ideology rather than in sound policy based upon need.

There has been no proven need for the legislation. Those supporting the bill suggest that the rationale for Bill C-525 was a mountain of complaints regarding union coercion of workers. However, according to the Canada Industrial Relations Board, there have only been two founded complaints against unions out of 4,000 decisions in 10 years, so all of this is about just two serious complaints. Even the chairperson of CIRB stated in committee testimony, "It's not a huge problem".

For labour relations legislation to be effective, it must be developed and implemented by the stakeholders through pre-legislative consultation based upon evidence, not by backdoor government manoeuvring of private members' bills that are, again, based solely upon ideology. This is not the first time we have seen bills that are clearly based upon the ideology of the Conservatives rather than upon substance or science.

Bill C-525 ignores long-established processes and like its sister legislation, Bill C-377, would impose radical changes that are not supported by the stakeholders or by the facts. The result of the legislation would not be labour harmony or efficiency; it would be an upsetting of the balance and stability in labour relations in Canada. This may be what the government is attempting to spark, but it is not in the best interests of employers, workers, or the Canadian economy in the long term.

However, I am not here just to poke holes today. In fact, as someone who has a strong union base in my own constituency, I have seen the positive contributions made to my communities by organized labour over many years. Indeed, this kind of social benevolence is something that has long underscored the labour movement in Canada, and those of us in the Liberal caucus continue to support these middle-class workers and their families very proudly.

● (1830)

Kicking labour around is tantamount to an attack on our communities, and the government should be ashamed of the approach it is taking. Bill C-377 was bad enough, and now Bill C-525 has appeared on the scene. When will it stop?

The bill is neither about union democracy, nor balanced labour relations. Bill C-525 fundamentally changes the way that workers can unionize, without any consultation or support of the stakeholders, and based on zero evidence for its need.

Rather than this kind of knee-jerk approach, the Liberal Party has called for a certification process that, one, allows workers to make free and informed decisions about whether they want to join a union or not, and, two, that has been created through a fair and balanced consensus tripartite process that is based on fact, whereby the changes to be made come from the stakeholders themselves.

Bill C-525 is yet another example of the Conservative government abusing the private members' bill process as backdoor government legislation to promote its ideology, not the views and wishes of the stakeholders or their constituents that would be affected or when the facts at hand show it is not needed.

What are the Conservatives so afraid of? When they tried this very same thing with Bill C-377, their own senators admonished them for doing it. They stymie debate, curtail committee study, and act like their fingerprints are not all over the document.

For example, the human resources committee only studied this for two and a half hours, and almost every witness, including government witnesses, spoke out against the bill. Somehow it sounds a bit like Bill C-23. Specifically, the witnesses that were heard expressed concern over the bill.

George Smith, a labour relations expert, said:



...we are dealing with a private member's bill to amend a significant section of the Canada Labour Code without any view of how this change will impact overall labour relations policy in the federal sector, without any of the necessary due process and public consultation to examine the intended and unintended consequences to such amendments.

Dick Heinen, executive director, Christian Labour Association of Canada, a union that is often viewed as employer friendly, said this about the current card-check system, "It has worked, and I don't know what the problem is. I don't know why we need to change that".

Elizabeth MacPherson, chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board, with respect to the effectiveness of the current card-check system, said, "In our opinion, it is working well. With the board having the discretion to decide when a vote must be held, it works". Why do we need to change it? Why is the government refusing to listen? Is it anything else but clear ideology?

Conservative abuse of this process has been so terrible in the past that the Conservative member for Edmonton—St. Albert resigned from the caucus in disgust. I see that they have learned nothing from the past.

It has already been said that power over a person's wallet is power over their will. That is what Bill C-525 is really all about. As just one example, research has clearly shown that moving from a card-check-based system to a mandatory vote system reduces unionization rates. This is the true motivation behind the bill. Bill C-525 proposes to abolish the card-check model in favour of a mandatory representation vote in all certification applications. It is no more complex than that.

Labour unions have been defenders of employee rights, and they have a long-standing track record of helping our communities in many ways. Of course, unions are not perfect, and there have been many occasions when I have differed with them. However, I do believe in due process. Bill C-525, like its sister bill, Bill C-377, is a partisan attack on middle-class workers and their families. It is wrong, and as the Liberal industry critic, I will be voting for workers and against this sneaky backdoor legislation.

● (1835)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of all the members who have risen in the House to speak to this bill, whether they are in favour of it or not. It is another show of democracy.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-525, which would amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, specifically with regard to the certification and decertification of the bargaining agent or, more simply put, the union.

This bill would amend the Canada Labour Code and other legislation to provide that the certification and decertification of the union as a bargaining agent under these acts must be achieved by a secret ballot vote-based majority.

However, that already happens. That already happens when the authorities, in other words the Canada Industrial Relations Board,

### *Private Members' Business*

call for it. It seems that is not enough this time. The government does not trust the members of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Allow me to say a few words as someone who studied at Laval University in Quebec. To sit on the Canada Industrial Relations Board, one has to have certain qualifications, some experience in labour relations, in negotiating collective agreements, and in certification and decertification.

The secret ballot will be mandatory. This is a repudiation of the men and women who have spent most of their working lives maintaining good labour relations and ensuring that there is industrial peace in Canada. Does the government know what it means to have industrial peace in an industrialized country like ours? It means people who go to work, who represent all workers in Canada and ensure that the economy prospers. They co-operate with their employer and with the public service and Parliament. They ensure that we have healthy labour relations and a safe working environment where people are not afraid to get up and go to work in the morning.

I would like to point out that unfortunate actions are often the result of abuse. That is unacceptable in a modern society like ours.

This government seems to be saying that the system that was working before is no longer working. We have been hearing this for some time now. However, the government wants to act undemocratically and violate fundamental human rights and labour rights. As I was saying, a modern society that has respect for the role workers play in its economy must recognize collective bargaining rights and give democracy and protection of labour rights the weight they deserve.

I would remind members that the short title of this bill is the Employees' Voting Rights Act. These rights came out of the evolution of labour law and industrial relations in Canada. Generation after generation of workers fought to give the workforce a greater say and to create a balance of power, in response to employers and working conditions that were often abusive—and sometimes even deadly—as one of our colleagues pointed out recently. I repeat, this is unacceptable in a modern society.

You can bet that my colleagues and I will oppose this bill at report stage and at third reading.

This private member's bill is the sequel to Bill C-377, also a private member's bill. Its purpose is to severely undermine unions by fundamentally changing the certification and decertification process for unions under federal jurisdiction. I want to emphasize that we are talking about unions under federal jurisdiction.

● (1840)

That is where the Canada Labour Code applies. The CLC has been modernized and updated by generations of legislators. This bill goes against that tradition. It attacks a basic human right, the right to freedom of association and expression as embodied by unions. They are the ones who choose it.

*Private Members' Business*

This bill will make it harder for workers to unionize and will probably result in more unions being decertified. It will be easier to shut a union down than to start one up. It does not work, it is not fair, it is unacceptable, it is undemocratic, and above all, it is disrespectful.

This Conservative government is in power even though 60% of Canadians voted against it, and the Conservatives govern in what is sometimes a shameful and insolent manner. We can see that today with Bill C-525. It is highly unusual to use a private member's bill to address an issue as important to the exercise of democratic rights as this one.

At present, when a group of employees wants to be represented by a union and decides to form its own union or join an existing union, this union must file an application for certification with the Canada Industrial Relations Board. If the application meets the requirements of the Canada Labour Code, which is rather tedious, complex and demanding, and 50% of the members have signed a card indicating that they want to belong to the union, the union is automatically certified after the cards are checked.

It does not just happen. It takes a lot of hard work and discussions between the group of workers and the bargaining agent, who together decide to create a unit to improve the chances that these workers will have a healthier environment and can enter into agreements with their boss. Collective bargaining allows workers to represent a workforce that contributes to the prosperity of our country. It is a fundamental right in our modern society.

In many workplaces where there is a union, there are lots of projects to improve working conditions, whether in the automotive sector or the textile sector of the past. I say "textile sector of the past" because free trade agreements have unfortunately practically destroyed Canada's textile industry. However, it was because of the economic circumstances, and not because of unions. It is up to the government to put in place laws and infrastructure that allow companies to grow and develop and that encourage economic prosperity.

Thanks to the hard work of the NDP, particularly that of the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and the member for Newton—North Delta, we managed to get the Conservatives to back down and listen to reason on the most harmful part of this bill. They agreed to amend the worst parts of the bill in committee. At first, the rules put forward by the member for Wetaskiwin stated that anyone who did not participate in the certification vote would be counted as a vote against the creation of the union. However, if it were a question of decertification, anyone absent would be counted as a vote in favour of decertification. That was a brazen and appalling abuse.

• (1845)

[English]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak about Bill C-525, employees' voting rights act.

In bringing this bill forward, the member for Wetaskiwin has focused our attention on an important aspect of labour relations in

Canada, and that is the process of governing the certification and decertification of unions.

The amendments our government proposed to the bill, after consulting with key stakeholders in committee, would help ensure that unions remain relevant in today's evolving workforce by legitimizing union certification and decertification in federally regulated workplaces.

As members know, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities had the chance to study the bill clause by clause, and of course, we heard from a number of stakeholders, union members, employers, and academics. I think we can all agree that given the fragility of our national economy, it is important that we get this right for employees who are under federal jurisdiction.

After hearing from Canadians who will be affected by the bill, we have proposed a number of common sense changes that strengthen its democratic value and fairness. We have carefully reviewed them, and I believe that the bill is, overall, the better for it.

It is simple. These changes improve the bill's fairness and democratic values while they maintain the principle of the bill that all federally regulated workers should have a democratic right to a free and fair secret ballot vote when deciding whether or not to unionize.

I argue regularly that this is not about the employer and the employee and the union. It is really about the relationships among the employees. This is a very personal decision, and I think they have the right to have that very personal decision reflected through a secret ballot process.

I think it is important to note that the NDP members put forward an amendment at report stage to gut the short title, employees' voting rights act. Why have they done this? They do not want Canadians and the workers they claim to represent to learn that the purpose of the bill is simply to give them the democratic right to a secret ballot vote. Again, we have talked about how important that is for employee relations. There is the union and the employer, but we have to remember the individual relations.

The facts are the facts. We strongly oppose the NDP amendment, because we believe that the short title is exactly what this bill represents, an act that delivers voting rights to employees in federally regulated workplaces.

I would like to take a few minutes to highlight some of the common sense changes we have proposed in this bill.

The employee's voting rights bill would give all employees the opportunity to have their say about certifying or decertifying a union. As things stand today for federally regulated employees, this is not always the case. Again, that is very much undemocratic. Instead, if at least 50% plus one of the employees in a bargaining unit sign membership cards, an application for union certification can be filed automatically. This means that a significant percentage of the people in the bargaining unit may find themselves in a union, whether they like it or not and without the opportunity to have had their views heard.

*Private Members' Business*

I fundamentally believe that all employees should have the democratic right to have a free and fair secret ballot when considering whether they want union representation in their workplace. I would like to ask my fellow members if this is too much for workers to ask. Are free and democratic elections not a foundation of Canadian society?

In my humble opinion, not only would it appear to be a reasonable request, it is a basic right. This is exactly what the employees' voting rights bill proposes. It proposes to eliminate automatic certification and would require that a secret ballot vote be held before certifying or decertifying a union.

For a union to be certified or decertified, the bill originally required a majority of employees in the bargaining unit to vote in favour. In cases where members did not vote, for one reason or another, their unused vote would essentially be considered a vote against a union.

We propose instead that the majority be based on the number of ballots actually cast, like in most elections. With this method, uncast ballots would not affect the outcome of the vote.

Canadians take a great deal of pride in the democratic process. The right to vote and the right to be heard go right to the very core of what it means to be Canadian. When we vote, whether it is at the federal, provincial, and municipal level, we do so by secret ballot.

•(1850)

A secret ballot means the freedom to vote the way we want to, to vote for what we think is best for ourselves, our families, and our country. This is the essence of what it means to live in a democratic society.

A decision as important as whether to form a union should represent the employees' real intentions. The only way to guarantee that employees are free from pressure and that they can express their honest opinions the way they wish is to give them a free and fair secret ballot voting system. I think I can safely say that just like there are some Canadians who do not wish to reveal who they voted for in an election, there may be some workers who are not comfortable expressing their views on unionization publicly. Their reason for wanting privacy is their own and none of our business. It is as simple as that.

Subtle and sometimes not so subtle forces can come into play in these situations. The opinions and actions of colleagues and others have an effect on how someone might make a choice. If employees do not have the opportunity to vote freely for any reason, the results of a vote cannot truly reflect how the employees feel about union representation, and that is not fair. The concept is one that our government fully supports.

We also suggest lowering the minimum level of employee support required to trigger a certification and decertification from 45% to 40%. This number is much more in line with international conventions and the majority of provincial statutes. This approach is fair and will ultimately establish a level playing field for both supporters and opponents of the union.

I would like to take the opportunity to address the amendments proposed by the NDP during report stage. They propose to raise the

card-check threshold required to trigger a vote for decertification from 40% to 50%. In short, the NDP is proposing to undermine one of the basic principles of the bill, which is to ensure that certification and decertification rules are the same so that supporters and opponents of unionization are placed on the same level playing field. These amendments would give a clear and unfair advantage to supporters, and although we are not surprised by this bias, the government simply cannot support such a blatantly unfair proposal by the NDP.

Our government has also proposed amending the date on which the new bill would come into effect. Our amendment states that this bill would come into force six months after receiving royal assent. This would give labour boards sufficient time to make the necessary changes to the regulations and procedures. I believe these amendments have resulted in a stronger bill, one that is more democratic and fair, and one that serves the needs of Canadian workers.

With these amendments, we are pleased to fully back the employees' voting rights act. I would like to encourage all of my hon. colleagues to support the bill, and in doing so they would be showing respect for hard-working Canadians and the principle of democracy. Again, to me, this is an issue about employer relationships and what happens in terms of their workplaces. Being able to have a secret ballot vote is absolutely fundamental.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. member for Wetaskiwin for raising this issue and acting as a champion for the democratic rights of hard-working Canadians.

•(1855)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to comment on what my colleague said. One of the things she said was that the government is going to support this bill, which just goes to prove what my other colleagues have been saying about this bill. It is a private members' bill coming in through the back door. That is pretty obvious.

When he was giving his speech, the sponsor of this bill mentioned Castro and Stalin. What I thought of right away was the Prime Minister. Why did I think of him? It was because of what he is trying to do with the unfair elections act. He is trying to turn Canada into countries like Castro's and Stalin's. That is really shameful.

Let me tell the House a little bit about why I want to speak on this bill. I am going to tell members a little of my personal story. I started working at 18-years of age in a mine called Froid Mine. It was not the place where I really wanted to work. I wanted to get closer to home and go to Levack Mine.

I started as an apprentice machinist at 18. Because I started as an apprentice, it was not a job that paid very well. It was as low as it could go. Back in 1968, that was pretty low, so thank God for the union leadership.

The reason I am mentioning this is that when I had been at Froid Mine for about two years, it was scheduled to close. So I said to the guys I was working with that I was going to try to go to Levack. It was closer to my place. The guys said that I did not want to go there. When I asked why, they said that the supervisor there was a supervisor from hell and that I would get fired. I could not believe it.

*Private Members' Business*

Eventually, six months later, I ended up in Levack Mine. True enough, I ran into the supervisor from hell. I say that because he treated people in a very special manner. Back then, I was 20 years old. I had quite a bit more hair than I do now, but it was not very long. It was just a little bit long, like it was back in the 1960s. It was not shoulder length. As soon as I ran into this guy, the first minute I met him, he asked where I had been. He said he had been waiting for me all morning. Of course, I was in the first aid room getting my locker, and people were showing me around, where I had to go and what I had to do.

He asked where I had been and said that he had been waiting for me all morning. It surprised me, but I knew that he was the supervisor from hell. He said that my hair was pretty long and that I had to get a haircut if I wanted to work there. I did not think that my hair was very long, but he said to come back the next day with a haircut.

Back in those days, a person could be fired on Friday and be working on Monday. It did not really matter. I said okay. I finished my shift, went home, and went back the next day. I did not have a haircut. I went home that night and washed my hair. I combed everything really nicely because I wanted to impress him.

He said that I had not cut my hair. I said no, so he said I would have to and see the superintendent. I went to see the superintendent. I walked into his office and he asked what I wanted. What was I there for? I told him that my supervisor had sent me because I did not get a haircut and he thought my hair was too long. The superintendent looked at me and said there was nothing wrong with my hair, that I was to go back to work and tell my supervisor to see him.

I went back to the shop and told my supervisor that the superintendent wanted to see him. He was gone for several minutes. From the reports that I got back from the people who worked in that office, it was not pretty.

● (1900)

When he came back to the shop, where I was told to wait for him, if members think our member for Acadie—Bathurst is red when he speaks, they should have seen this guy. He was red. He just could not believe that he had been raked over the coals by the superintendent because of an apprentice. If I did not have a union back then, I would have been fired probably on the first day.

However, this bill is trying to prevent unions from organizing. I belong to the United Steelworkers, local 6500, a great union. It is the same union as the president of the international steelworkers, Leo Gerard, belongs to. He and I grew up in that union. We are just about the same age, and we were stewards together and committee men together. He became the president of the United Steelworkers international. He is a great guy. He gets to work with other steelworkers and unionized people. I became the MP for Nickel Belt, and I have to work with the current government. I cannot believe how lucky that man got.

Union workers do have well-paying jobs and they do contribute to the communities. For example, in Sudbury, if it had not been for the steelworkers, the CAW, and all the good unions, we would not have a cancer centre. It was because of the desire and drive of the union movement that we have a cancer centre in Sudbury. Everybody can

use that cancer centre; it is not just for union people. It is just that the union workers helped pay for it. The union workers also support the food bank. Every year, they collect thousands and thousands of dollars for the food bank. They can do that because they have well-paying union jobs.

The goal of the current Conservative government is to drive all the wages as low as possible, to the lowest denominator, so we can all have Walmart salaries and the companies can profit more.

I just want to reiterate the importance of unions. They supply well-paying jobs. They spend their money in the community. They buy in the community. They help people in need. Why would we want to drive their wages down? It just does not make sense. We should encourage more unions in this country, not discourage them. People discouraged unions in the place where Castro was president, and Stalin certainly did not encourage unions.

As the previous member said, the Conservatives are going to support this bill, obviously. It is a private member's bill and they have already decided they are going to support it. So it is just a backdoor way of bringing this bill to the House of Commons.

I am going to stop right there. I am not going to support this bill, obviously. I am really proud to be a steelworker and a union member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mississauga South will have approximately six minutes.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I stand to support my colleagues regarding our Conservative members' common-sense amendments to the employees' voting rights act. We believe that the employees' voting rights act deals with important issues that need to be addressed.

As mentioned in budget 2014, our government's top priorities continue to be creating jobs and opportunities for all Canadians. We know the most important way to foster a prosperous economy is through investment in Canadian businesses and Canadian workers. That means supporting businesses that have worldwide recognition, but also the smaller businesses that contribute more than five million Canadian jobs.

The formula for success also includes helping Canadian workers to achieve their greatest potential in the labour market. We made it through the global recession and continue to lead the G7 in job creation and economic growth, and we are on the road to a balanced budget in 2015.

The Canadian economy has more than recouped all the jobs lost during the last recession. Indeed, our government's policies have helped to create one million new jobs in the private sector, jobs that are full time and well paying. I am happy to say we are on the right track, and the future for Canadians looks good.

*Private Members' Business*

For example, a study released a few months ago by the employment website monster.ca shows that Canadian workers are among the happiest in the world, and that is something we can be proud of. Our government wants this trend to continue.

This employees' voting rights act is another step in the right direction. It would ensure fair, honest, and democratic workplaces.

Consider this: an online study released a few years ago by Workopolis found that a positive office culture was the most important aspect of a job for Canadians. A key element to creating a positive work environment and job satisfaction is adhering to the rights of workers that are currently in place in Canada.

Freedom of association, which includes the right to form or not form a union, is a fundamental right guaranteed by federal, provincial, and territorial labour laws as well as by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To help maintain high levels of jobs satisfaction among employees now and in the future, it is important that we all vote today to support the employees' voting rights act and the proposed common sense Conservative amendments.

The amendments would strengthen the democratic values and fairness of the bill, balancing and better protecting the democratic rights of federally regulated employees while maintaining the principle of the bill by ensuring that all federally regulated workers have the right to a free and fair secret ballot vote.

The employees' voting rights act would ensure that employees have the freedom to vote for or against a union, without feeling pressured either way. We have heard from the sponsor of the bill of a number of workers who are not comfortable with the informal card-check certification system for unions, because they do not have the protection of privacy when expressing their opinions.

We need to recognize that not every employee wants to be a part of a union and that it is a choice. We support the equal treatment of voters through a process that is fair and democratic, one that reflects our Canadian values.

The bill originally required a majority of all employees in the bargaining unit to vote for the union to be certified, whether or not all the employees in the unit actually voted. To fix this, we proposed amendments that a decision on union certification or decertification should be based only on a majority of the secret ballot votes that are actually cast.

We also suggest lowering the minimum level of employee support required to trigger a certification vote, from 45% to 40%. This number is more in line with international conventions and the majority of provincial statutes. This approach would establish a fair and level playing field for both supporters and opponents of unions.

The NDP has also put forward amendments that would defeat the purpose of the bill by creating two different criteria: one for supporters of unions and one for those who oppose. Of course, the NDP have not surprised anyone by giving the advantage to supporters of unionization by proposing to raise the card-check threshold to trigger a decertification vote, from 40% to 50%. This proposal by the NDP is blatantly unfair and undemocratic, and

would undermine the principle of the bill to create a fair and equal playing field for all parties.

● (1905)

Lastly, if the bill is passed in its original version, the legislation would come into force immediately after receiving royal assent. We feel it is important to allow more time for labour boards to adjust their policies and procedures to reflect the new system. Specifically, we would amend the bill to provide a six-month transitional phase after the date of royal assent.

We know that Canadian workers deserve a fair and honest democratic voting process that allows them to privately choose whether they want to support or oppose a union. Canadians believe in freedom of choice and freedom of association. These values are part of our Constitution and we should honour them in our workplaces.

To conclude, I am proud to support the member for Wetaskiwin and his bill, the employees' voting rights act, with the common sense amendments proposed by our Conservative colleague whom I just mentioned.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. It being 7:11 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 3 to 6.

[Translation]

The House should now proceed with the deferred recorded divisions at report stage of the bill. However, pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded divisions stand deferred until Wednesday, April 9, 2014, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on November 28, 2003, I raised a concern with the government that despite the fact that only 9% of Alberta children are aboriginal, since 1999, aboriginal children have accounted for a staggering 75% of children dying in care in my province. Similarly, high rates are reported for maltreatment of aboriginal children, including in welfare systems in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Increasingly higher rates of child deaths are occurring in first nation-run agencies.

Among the reasons given for this rate is that these federally funded agencies receive substantially less money than provincial agencies and consequently struggle to deliver adequate child protection services.

An Alberta judge has recommended that Alberta request the federal government to end this disparity. A complaint was filed with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on the issue of lack of comparable services provided for aboriginal children. Sadly, the process of this complaint has been fraught with delays and obstructions.

The federal government spent \$3 million opposing a request to provide information to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to assist in its examination of a complaint that aboriginal families and children are being denied comparable family services. The courts eventually ordered release of the documents to the tribunal. The monies wasted in fighting this review alone could have supported a number of first nation family service centres.

On any given day, 30,000 aboriginal children are placed in foster care. It has been pointed out, sadly, that more aboriginal children are being removed from their families now than during the time of the residential schools.

In 2008, the federal Auditor General called upon the federal government to work with the provinces, territories, and first nations to resolve these inequities to ensure that services essential to aboriginal children are provided.

The Conference Board of Canada this week called on the federal government to make addressing this inequity a priority and lead strategic action, saying that the issue is not new and that progress is slow.

For the sake of the children, will the government finally end its battle with the very individuals and organizations attempting to resolve this inequity, and will it finally grant the money needed to provide comparable care?

● (1915)

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the question from the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

The health, safety, and well-being of all children, including first nation children, is a priority for our government. The loss of a child is very tragic in any circumstances, and is even more alarming when a child has died while in protective care. It will take the ongoing and coordinated efforts of governments at all levels, as well as first nations governments, to make long-term progress.

That is why, since 2006, we have introduced a prevention-based approach to delivering child and family services on reserve. We have increased our investments through the family violence prevention program by 38%, and we have passed the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act.

Child welfare is an area of provincial and territorial jurisdiction whereby the provinces and territories have legislative authority over all child welfare and protection activities. Over the past 20 years, provincial and territorial welfare authorities have delegated program delivery on reserve to a growing number of first nation child and family services agencies. Currently there are over 100 first nations with this authority.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada does not deliver child and family services. All children are protected by provincial or territorial child welfare legislation. Our government provides \$627 million in funding to support first nation service providers and provinces and territories in delivering services to families on reserve, in accordance with provincial and territorial laws and standards.

We know that the numbers of aboriginal children in care across the country are very high. The latest figures are around 40,000. Over 9,000 of those children are first nations living on reserve, with funding provided under the first nations child and family services program. This means that over 30,000 children are receiving services directly from the provincial and territorial governments. Any and all solutions must be undertaken jointly with provincial and territorial governments, as well as first nations.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Our government began the reform to an enhanced prevention-focused approach for first nation child and family services in Alberta, in 2007. Our government announced an additional investment of \$98.1 million over five years, and ongoing, for first nation agencies in Alberta. Early indications from across the country show an increase in families who are accessing prevention-focused services, a rise in permanent placements of children, and an increase in the use of kinship care.

We will continue to work with willing partners to implement the enhanced prevention-focused approach to improve outcomes for first nations children and their families.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, this year the University of Alberta, my alma mater, is awarding its Community Scholar Award to Dr. Cindy Blackstock, in recognition of her long-standing work with communities, organizations, and governments to ensure culturally appropriate and equitable services for first nations children in child welfare, health care, and education.

Is it not time that the government stopped wasting taxpayer dollars opposing efforts to ensure the extension of comparable social and educational services to aboriginal children, as our country has committed to deliver under the Convention on the Rights of the Child? Is it not time to finally recognize the dedicated and constructive efforts by Dr. Blackstock and the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society on behalf of aboriginal children, to respect their experience and advice, and to start implementing the programs all and sundry have endorsed?

●(1920)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, our government is actively working to improve the life conditions of first nations children on reserve. Funding under the first nations child and family services program is provided according to several funding models across the country. Each model provides for the delivery of protection and prevention services to improve the safety and well-being of first nations children on reserve. That is why we continue to work with willing partners to develop and implement the enhanced prevention focused approach.

The current level of funding for first nations child and family services demonstrates that first nations families and children on reserve are a priority for this government. We continue to work in partnership with provinces, territories, and first nations to improve outcomes for first nations children and their families on reserve.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Montcalm not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

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 7:21 p.m.)

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