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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC CHEESEMAKER

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, the Morin family of Sainte-Élizabeth-de-Warwick transformed the old presbytery across from their farm into a cheese factory called Fromagerie du Presbytère. The fame of their cheeses has been spreading ever since.

The Fromagerie du Presbytère makes a cheese called Laliberté, which was recently selected from among 81 finalists as the grand champion of the ninth edition of the Canadian Cheese Grand Prix.

Here is how the jury chairman described it:

The exquisite, aromatic triple crème and tender bloomy rind combine to create an unctuous cheese with well-balanced flavours and notes of mushroom, grasses and root vegetables.

Does that not whet your appetite? The Fromagerie du Presbytère also won two other prizes for its Bleu d'Élizabeth and its Louis d'Or, which was the Canadian champion in 2011.

Sainte-Élizabeth-de-Warwick has become a not-to-be-missed destination on Fridays in the summer, when the factory serves cheese made fresh that day, as well as during the autumn fine food tour that attracts visitors from all over Quebec.

I am very proud to congratulate the Morin family and their employees because they are genuine ambassadors for our region and for Quebec who make it possible for us to enjoy outstanding cheese.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals cannot seem to see a tax without wanting to raise it. Their high-tax agendas would hurt hard-working families.

On this side of the House, we believe in helping families. The enhanced UCCB, for example, would put almost \$2,000 back in the pockets of parents with kids under 6, and \$720 back in the pockets of parents with kids between the ages of 6 and 17.

With under three days to go before the deadline to get the enhanced child care benefit payment in July, our government is urging the hundreds of thousands of families that have not yet signed up to sign up on www.canada.ca/taxsavings.

In Saskatchewan, there is an estimated 10,200 families that are not yet registered. That is an estimated 18,720 children who may not get the PM's enhanced benefit in July. There are almost 500 families in Prince Albert alone.

While the NDP and Liberals are focused on raising taxes, we are working hard to ensure that every mom and dad keeps more of their hard-earned money in their pockets.

* * *

• (1405)

ROYAL CITY MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to honour a very special group, the Royal City Musical Theatre Company, in the city of New Westminster, which helped celebrate the 65th anniversary of our venerable Massey Theatre with a lavish production of a classic masterpiece *My Fair Lady*. This company is unique and consists primarily of volunteer talent engaged in enriching our lives with spectacular success.

I saw this production with my family, and *My Fair Lady* was visually stunning: colourful costumes, opulent sets, talented players and singers, and a 22-piece orchestra that truly brought the fantastic score to life. It was a special experience, combining visual arts with singing, dancing, acting and musicianship.

The quality and professionalism of the productions of the Royal City Musical Theatre Company have earned this group the respect of musical theatre goers from all over British Columbia.

Bravo, a well earned ovation for the Royal City Musical Theatre Company for its artistic excellence, hard work and for its magic.

*Statements by Members***TAXATION**

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week we fulfilled our commitment to balance the budget and to introduce income splitting for families with kids.

I have polled my constituents and the vast majority support income splitting because it is fair and pro family, and it acknowledges the real value stay-at-home parents provide their families and society in general.

Do not be fooled by opponents who say it will only help the rich. They just want to keep taking the money of families.

I grew up in a family of 14 kids. My dad was a school teacher and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. Income splitting would have definitely helped my parents. In fact, it would have helped most families in my small town, and none of us were rich.

It will not solve every problem in the universe, and nobody said it would, but income splitting will help most two-parent homes. Unless people are in the same tax brackets as their spouses, or their family does not pay taxes at all, they will benefit from income splitting. Single parents will benefit from the other measures in our family tax program.

I am proud to keep this election promise as an important measure to bring justice and fairness to all families.

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PARA-SWIMMING

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Katarina Roxon, an exceptional athlete from Kippens in Random—Burin—St. George's.

Since taking up para-swimming, Katarina has built an impressive resume and continues to set personal bests as she breaks both Canadian and world records. In early March, she set two world and three national records at the East Coast Swimming Championships in Mount Pearl, which she followed up with two gold medals, two silver and one bronze at the Can-Am International Swimming Championships in Toronto. She has gained a spot on the teams that will be representing Canada at the IPC World Swimming Championships being held in Glasgow, Scotland and the Parapan Am Games in Toronto.

Katarina is a disciplined athlete and has her sights set on excelling at those two prestigious events. Given her determination, it is not surprising that she is a world-class swimmer. Katarina gives back to her sport, coaching the Aqua Aces Swim Club in Stephenville and preparing yet another generation of swimmers to reach their potential.

I ask members to join me in congratulating Katarina Roxon on her remarkable achievements in the sport of para-swimming and wishing her continued success.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the retirement of two significant role models who have served the city of Sault Ste. Marie: Mr. Joe Fratesi, the

outgoing CAO and Mr. Bill Freiburger, outgoing commissioner of finance and treasurer.

Joe served as city counsellor for ward 6 for three terms, from 1976 to 1982. He has also worked as the longest serving mayor, from 1985 to 1996, and as the city's longest serving CAO, since 1996. Joe is someone I have worked alongside in my capacity as a city counsellor and in my role as an MP. It has been a privilege.

Under Bill's watch, over 30 years in the finance department, the Sault's city services have been among the highest and taxes among the lowest in northern Ontario. For that, I am grateful.

Cheers to their retirement. I thank them both for their great advice and service throughout the years.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by bringing down a budget that favours the wealthy, the Conservative government missed a great opportunity to show some compassion towards critically ill people who have to stop working for treatment, as Ms. Monette had to do.

This resident of Rivière-du-Nord is fighting cancer, while also leading the fight to change the employment insurance rules.

After she paid into the system her whole life, her benefits were cut off after 15 weeks. This single mother, who had the foresight to put some money aside for her retirement, is not eligible for last resort assistance.

The government decided to help the rich, instead of helping the thousands of sick, unemployed workers who are struggling to survive. I wish Ms. Monette and everyone fighting that terrible disease all the best. We stand with them. They can count on me and the NDP to form a government that is more compassionate and sensitive to the suffering of Canadians.

* * *

●(1410)

[*English*]

THE MEMBER FOR OKANAGAN-SHUSWAP

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although I will not be a candidate in the 2015 election, I feel a sense of accomplishment as I prepare to leave this place.

It has been an honour to be a small part of a government that has provided new direction for Canadians, moving from the past Liberal government focus on “I am entitled to my entitlements” to our government's focus on taxpayers and accountability.

Whereas the Liberals focus on minority interest groups, our government has focused on Canadian families and seniors. Our justice system is focused on victims of crime, not only the offenders. Our government has supported provinces and expanded health, education and social transfers, not cutting the transfers as the Liberal government did to balance the budget.

Our government's economic action plan is providing jobs, growth and prosperity for Canadians and a balanced budget, in contrast to the Liberals that have no plan for Canada's economy, just more taxes and more programs. Our budgets have invested in infrastructure by partnering with communities and provinces.

I have the comfort of leaving this place knowing I have had a small part in making a difference for Canadians and the constituents of Okanagan—Shuswap.

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SCARBOROUGH CENTRE

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 28, I had the opportunity to join the Armenian Family Support Services at the Habitat for Humanity construction site in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

To commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the Armenian genocide, the Family Support Services was holding a faith build to both honour the victims and to give back to the community. It was doing this by challenging 100 youth to don hard hats and pick up hammers at the construction site.

On this day, I also had the great honour to meet Eugenie Yerganian Papazian, a survivor of the Armenian genocide. I had the opportunity to hear her story and to celebrate her 100th birthday.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Holy Trinity Armenian Church, the Armenian Family Support Services and Habitat for Humanity for all of the good work they do in our communities.

* * *

[Translation]

350TH ANNIVERSARY OF LOUISEVILLE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute to talk about a great moment in the history of my riding.

In 1665, the Carignan-Salières regiment landed in New France, which is what led to the founding of the Town of Louiseville, the town at the heart of my riding, Berthier—Maskinongé. This year, the town is marking an important chapter of its history by celebrating its 350th anniversary. It is one of the oldest towns in Quebec.

Many activities and festivities will be held throughout the year for the people in my riding and all across Quebec in order to honour Louiseville's rich history. For example, from April 30 to May 2, seven local actors will be putting on the play *Il était une fois... en*

Statements by Members

1952. This play is one of many activities commemorating some of the town's defining moments.

I want to congratulate the organizers, including the chair of the organizing committee, Doris Scott, and the countless volunteers and partners, for making this a special time for the Town of Louiseville. They are truly helping to promote our beautiful region throughout Quebec.

Happy anniversary, Louiseville.

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[English]

LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS CEREMONIES

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the liberation of the Netherlands, in which Canada played a crucial role, was an important part of the allied effort to free the people of Europe from tyranny and oppression.

Our government recognizes the importance of commemorating the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands and will be sending an all-party delegation, led by the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Over 60 veterans who helped liberate the Netherlands will be participating.

Unfortunately, one veteran, Mr. Art Boon, who was invited as a guest of the Dutch government, is unable to be accompanied by his son, a teacher. This is because the Avon Maitland District School Board has refused Rick Boon's request for unpaid leave to travel with and provide care for his father. This is absolutely shameful. I once again call upon the school board to do the right thing and reverse this decision.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a UN Women report was released on Monday. This report shows that governments have responsibilities they must assume in order to achieve true equality.

I would like to quote a passage from the report: “The divisions between economic and social policy are artificial; connecting the two is key to the realization of rights.”

Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen that the Conservatives do not listen to the experts. It is always the same whether the issue is gender equality, the environment or the economy. Since 2006, Canada has not been governed by knowledge, expertise or science. Canada has been abandoned to the inept and dishonest Conservative ideology.

Canadians have had enough. In October they will act accordingly.

*Statements by Members***TAXATION**

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition described our tax cuts as “gifts”. We on this side of the House will not apologize for letting Canadians keep more money in their pockets.

That is why we are helping middle-class families in Canada with our new family tax cut and the enhanced universal child care benefit. These measures will help 100% of families with children and will allow all of those families to keep more money in their pockets.

The NDP and the Liberals have one thing in common: they both think that taxpayers' money belongs to them. The NDP and the Liberals would take that money away from Canadians and put it towards big government.

It is clear that the members of the NDP and the Liberal Party do not really care about standing up for the interests of Canadian and Quebec families. Voters will remember that.

Only a Conservative government lets Canadians keep money in their pockets.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks International Dance Day. Thus, let us express, show and tangibly demonstrate our support for dancers, choreographers and producers, who on the world's stages selflessly and spectacularly remind us that dance is a wonderful activity and an incredible art that we as legislators need to encourage and support. What else than dance better connects human beings with their bodies and souls, emotions and energy, and in some ways with the whole universe?

[Translation]

All of us here will take part in the upcoming election dance. We know that practising politics is like dancing on eggshells and the slightest misstep, the slightest poorly executed pirouette can result in a big mess. Let us commend our dancers and show our support and admiration for these individuals, who are far more graceful than we are.

[English]

Let us dance today and for that matter, every day.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has always stood up for the protection of Canadians. We have taken strong action to ensure that law enforcement officers have the tools they need to do their jobs. This includes passing over 30 new tough on crime laws, and making record investments in crime prevention and law enforcement.

Interestingly, new Liberal candidate Bill Blair supported our Conservative government's Safe Streets and Communities Act, saying, “This new legislation responds to today's needs and will

allow police to improve their ability to protect the communities we serve”. This is in stark contrast to the Liberal leader who voted against this bill and in fact went so far as to say he would repeal all minimum prison sentences.

While Bill Blair and the Liberal leader contemplate which dangerous criminals belong in jail and for how long, our Conservative government will continue to take strong action to protect our fellow Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General delivered another scathing report. First nations are being forced to seek health care in substandard clinics with undertrained staff. There has been mismanagement at the office of the Canadian Forces ombudsman. Conservatives are not even evaluating the impact of tax giveaways to the wealthy. Year after year, these audits reveal the same sort of things.

Despite all their rhetoric and self-promotion, when it comes to actually governing the country, keeping Canadians safe, managing the finances, Conservatives are just incompetent. It is not just their incompetence; what is worse, no minister ever takes responsibility for that incompetence.

Canadians do not expect government to be perfect, but they expect a government that will take responsibility for its mistakes. In a few months, when Canadians turf these Conservatives for a principled New Democratic government, that is what they will get.

* * *

● (1420)

TAXATION

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I have some good news for hard-working families in the riding of Miramichi.

Our Conservative government is reducing taxes on middle-class families. As we announced in the balanced budget tabled by the Minister of Finance last week, our government has expanded and extended the universal child care benefit to provide more money to 100% of families with children. Regardless of their income or the form of child care they choose, parents will receive almost \$2,000 per year for every child under the age of six, and \$720 per year for every child six to seventeen years of age,

There are still nearly 200,000 Canadian families who are eligible to receive this benefit from our Conservative government, but who unfortunately have not signed up. I strongly encourage all families in Miramichi to go to Canada.ca/taxsavings to ensure that they receive all the money they deserve.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of Canada is clear, straightforward and precise when it comes to Senate appointments. A senator “shall be resident in the Province for which he is appointed”.

What did the Prime Minister do when Mike Duffy told him that he was a resident of Ontario and not Prince Edward Island?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really a shame that the NDP is trying to make a victim out of Mike Duffy right now. This government will continue to provide every possible assistance to the crown in its case against Mr. Duffy, but it is Mr. Duffy's actions that are in front of the court.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, of course, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on evidence before the court.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Actually, Mr. Speaker, he just did comment on the evidence before the court, because he just told us that the government is helping in the Mike Duffy trial with evidence before the court, but why is the government not helping to put evidence before the court in the case of Carolyn Stewart-Olsen? Oh, I know, because she was never brought before the court, because she is still very close to the Conservatives. It is only when someone falls out that the person gets into trouble.

Here is the government's response. It actually put out a memo saying that anyone who owned property in a province could say that he or she was a resident of that province, even if he or she did not actually live there. That is the government. Why did it tell senators they could lie about where they live?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a constitutional practice on this that has been clear for almost 150 years.

Speaking about misrepresenting the truth, how about the NDP which has 68 members of Parliament who, contrary to the rules of the House, paid for partisan political offices in Montreal. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition himself owes the Canadian taxpayer more than \$400,000. He refuses to pay that money back. He broke the rules. He and the 67 other members of his party ought to pay that money back to taxpayers.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Dean del Mastro, real court; Conservatives and Liberals, kangaroo court.

The government wastes \$100 million of taxpayers' money every single year to pay senators' salaries and expenses; \$100 million. Canadians do not know how much of that is being plundered by the likes of Mike Duffy and Mac Harb, and the government is doing everything it can to make sure we never find out.

Oral Questions

Conservatives are setting up yet another kangaroo court, this time to protect senators who charge fraudulent expenses. If they have nothing to hide, why are they covering it up?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I completely reject the premise of that question.

It is actually New Democrats who are in front of the courts. They are in front of the courts because 68 of their members illegally used the resources of the House of Commons, of taxpayers, for illegal offices in Montreal. They owe \$2.7 million to the taxpayers of Canada. The Leader of the Opposition owes some \$400,000 and 67 other of his members owe the rest of that money.

I would encourage him to do the right thing for taxpayers and pay the money back.

* * *

• (1425)

THE BUDGET

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we will actually know the seriousness of that the day the member has the courage to go stand out there and repeat out there what he just said here. He will learn the difference between a real court and a kangaroo court.

[Translation]

In their advertising this year, the average income of a Canadian woman has dropped by \$40,000, to fit in with what they put in their budget.

Can they explain why it is that in their analysis this year, the average Canadian woman earns \$40,000 less than last year?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about this. This government has brought forward a budget that is a low-tax budget that will build this economy and create jobs. On the \$42,000 that the member talks about, the member and his party want to take away all measures from that individual because they believe they are the wealthy of Canada. Half of all tax-free savings accounts are held by those who earn under \$42,000. They believe they are the Canadian wealthy. They want to tax high-income Canadians. We will not let it happen.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only time that member has ever been right was last week when he stood in this House and screamed, “Shame on the government”.

Oral Questions

The government's failures on tax policy show incompetence, but its failure on first nations health care show contempt and neglect. First nations communities in Ontario and Manitoba lack basic health services from their federal government. There is no guaranteed access to clinical care. There are major health and safety problems at nursing stations. Only 1 out of 45 nurses evaluated had been given proper training courses.

This is the responsibility of the federal government. Why such neglect for first nations communities?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that Health Canada is well on its way to addressing all of the issues that the Auditor General has raised.

Our number one priority is ensuring aboriginals on first nations reserves have access to health care providers. We are ensuring that we have nurses on reserve. We are encouraging more practitioners, whether they be nurses or doctors, to work on first nations reserves, so we are giving them Canada student loan forgiveness.

We also have a new recruitment and retention strategy that has been very successful. We have over 250 applications. No matter what, if anyone is sick, we will, of course, use our emergency—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to let other members know that we have moved on.

Some members seem to be carrying on conversations from the previous line of questioning. If they need to do so, they can exit the chamber to do that, but not while other members have the floor.

The hon. member for Beauséjour.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy himself was so concerned about not complying with the constitutional requirements for being a senator for Prince Edward Island that he asked the Prime Minister to appoint him as a senator for Ontario. That makes sense, since Mr. Duffy had been living in Ottawa for 40 years.

Is the Prime Minister so out of touch with reality that he thought he could ignore the Constitution and appoint Mike Duffy as a senator for Prince Edward Island and then claim to be surprised that Senator Duffy had been living in Ottawa for 40 years?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals are trying to make a victim out of Mike Duffy. We know why they are doing this.

The NDP, of course, has to answer for the fact that 68 of its members illegally used the resources of this House, pretending that it was hiring people in its Ottawa offices but sending them to Montreal, against the rules of this House.

The Liberals and the NDP together account for almost \$45 million in illegal House of Commons and taxpayers' resources. They

promised to pay it back. They never did. They are in front of the courts. Both parties want to create a coalition.

My gosh—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauséjour.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even Mike Duffy himself was so concerned about not meeting the constitutional residency requirements to be a senator from Prince Edward Island that he asked the Prime Minister to appoint him from Ontario. It makes sense since Mr. Duffy has lived in Ottawa for over 40 years.

Is the Prime Minister so out of touch that he thought he could bypass the Constitution, appoint Mike Duffy from Prince Edward Island, just for the chance to get up and feign indignation that he recently discovered that Mike Duffy has lived in Ottawa for 40 years?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the constitutional practice on this has been clear for almost 150 years.

At the same time, when we were fighting very hard in order to bring accountability to the Senate, it was the NDP and the Liberals who were trying to make victims out of these people. Disgraced former Liberal Senator Mac Harb, who represented Ottawa with that member of Parliament in this House before becoming a senator, is accused of taking \$240,000 of taxpayers' resources. Liberals have to answer for that.

Of course, we cannot forget the senator from Puerto Vallarta who was appointed by Prime Minister Trudeau. Can the House imagine the coalition that we would have, that pretend leader and deputy prime minister who is the leader of the opposition—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, exams are almost done and students are struggling to find summer work. The Conservatives think that promoting themselves through government advertising is actually more important than helping young people find summer jobs.

The Conservatives have slashed the number of positions created by the Canada summer jobs program by more than half. Meanwhile, the cost of just one ad during the NHL playoffs could help pay for 30 summer jobs.

When will the Conservatives stop wasting tax dollars on these ads and start helping more students find summer work?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are creating jobs through tax cuts, training and trade. We are advertising these benefits to Canadian families and Canadian youth.

In fact, Nina Widmer learned about the grants that we are providing for apprentices. She always wanted to be a stone mason and with that grant she was able to get accredited with her red seal. She has now won the national skills competition, is graduating debt-free, and is on her way to starting her very own masonry company.

The Liberals do not want Nina and others to know about the apprenticeship grant because they would take it away.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very skittish about clarifying whether or not Mike Duffy acted as a conduit between Enbridge and his office. We know that both the Prime Minister and his chief of staff were in direct communication with Duffy about Enbridge. Enbridge is now saying it thought these exchanges with Duffy were inappropriate and warned the Prime Minister's Office.

Will the Prime Minister confirm whether or not Enbridge did speak to him and whether or not he took any steps to tell Duffy that this supposed case of reverse lobbying was inappropriate? What steps did the Prime Minister take?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, I reject most of that question, but these are matters that are before the court. I am not going to comment on evidence that is before the court.

However, I have been accused of being too partisan, but last night when I got home to my condominium apartment in Ottawa Centre, how excited I was to get the 2015 tax tip for families from my member of Parliament here in Ottawa, chock full of 14 pages of tax savings for the people of Canada thanks to this government.

I want to thank the NDP member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre for highlighting all of these great tax savings that we have done on this side of the House. I hope he will continue to vote for them in the next budget. Congratulations.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. It's such a nice moment, let's not spoil it.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague might believe that the House of Commons is the place to act out a farce. We believe it is a place to express what Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Charlie Angus: Here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. If Enbridge did indeed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor. Members need to come to order, so we can hear the question.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

• (1435)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here is the thing. If Enbridge did indeed warn the Prime Minister, then why was the Prime Minister asking Mike Duffy for a briefing on Enbridge on February 17, 2012?

Three days later, when Duffy sent Nigel Wright a note that was also sent to Enbridge executives, what was in that note?

Why was the Prime Minister still speaking with Duffy about Enbridge on April 4, 2012, if these negotiations had indeed been red-flagged with his office as inappropriate?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I completely reject that question. As I said, we are not going to comment on a matter before the courts. It is Mr. Duffy's actions that are before the court.

I do not think it is a farce to talk about the tax cuts that this government has brought in, as highlighted by the member for Ottawa Centre. He highlighted things like the apprentice tax credit, income-splitting and the universal child care benefit. It was 14 pages of tax cuts that this government had brought in and he was taking credit for it.

Unfortunately, the member for Ottawa Centre voted against all of those, but good news for the people of Ottawa Centre, in a few days that 14-page guide is going to be 16, 17 and 18 pages of even more tax savings.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's silence on those meetings is really troubling. The Prime Minister's former chief of staff had ties to Enbridge. Mr. Duffy was talking to Enbridge, and the Prime Minister met with Mr. Duffy to discuss Enbridge, and yet we get nothing from across the aisle: radio silence, as if nothing had happened.

Do the Prime Minister and his team have something to hide regarding their role and the senator's role in the Enbridge file?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered this question, but there is another issue before the House. Why did that member use over \$25,000, in violation of the rules of the House, for an office in her riding?

[*English*]

This member owes Canadian taxpayers almost \$30,000 because, as opposed to supporting her own constituency with the resources provided to it, she funnelled money to an illegal office in Montreal and she ought to pay it back.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is supposed to defend the interests of all Canadians, not just the interests of an oil company.

Enbridge is claiming that at no time did it ask Senator Duffy to further its interests with the federal government. Mr. Duffy, however, thought that those meetings were important enough to send a note to the Prime Minister's chief of staff on February 20, 2012.

Did the Prime Minister receive that note? What was the subject of his meeting with Mr. Duffy on April 4, 2012?

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, I am not going to comment on matters before the court. It is Mr. Duffy's actions that are before the court now.

[Translation]

At the same time, why did the member for Québec, for example, use up to \$30,000, in violation of the rules of the House?

[English]

The NDP member of Parliament for Quebec redirected resources for her riding from Quebec to an illegal office in Montreal. She was one of 68 members of the NDP caucus who broke the rules, took money meant for their constituents and funnelled it to an illegal office.

They ought to pay it back.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been serious allegations of sexual misconduct and assault in the military for some time, and a failure to properly address complaints.

The Chief of the Defence Staff initiated an investigation last year after horrible incidents involving sexual assault were revealed in major media reports.

Can the Minister of National Defence confirm that the report of Madam Deschamps will be released tomorrow? If not, when, and will it be made public in its entirety?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one who has chosen to serve Canada as a member of our armed forces should be subjected to this kind of disgusting and unacceptable behaviour. As we have already said, allegations of sexual harassment in the armed forces are truly disturbing.

That is why the Chief of the Defence Staff ordered an external independent review into how the Canadian Armed Forces deals with sexual misconduct and sexual harassment. He has already directed the establishment of the Canadian Armed Forces strategic response team on sexual misconduct to develop a detailed action plan to address the report's recommendations. This action plan, along with the report, will be released soon.

● (1440)

[Translation]

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General exposed some serious problems at the office of the ombudsman for National Defence, the only office that members of the Canadian Armed Forces can turn to if they have a problem. This is particularly troubling considering the horrible series of incidents of sexual abuse that came to light last year.

It is critical that these allegations be taken seriously and that appropriate action be taken. The investigation is now complete. Can the Minister of National Defence confirm that the entire report will be released tomorrow and that the necessary changes will be made?

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, the report and action plan will be released soon.

As to the Auditor General's report, National Defence accepts all the recommendations from the Auditor General's investigation. The lack of accountability for taxpayers' dollars was unacceptable.

Steps have already been taken by the Department of National Defence and the Office of the Ombudsman to strengthen accountability; specific measures, including a new agreement to better manage employees; and processes for better financial accountability.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we still have not received an answer.

Another area in which the Conservatives have proven incompetent is health care services for aboriginal people. As the Auditor General reported, those services leave much to be desired in remote communities in Manitoba and Ontario. Only one of Health Canada's nurses passed all five mandatory training courses. That is one in 45.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning remote communities in northern Ontario and Manitoba?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada supports 734 aboriginal health facilities across the country, including investments of \$30 million annually to ensure that those are maintained, and it has just built another five facilities across the country.

However, most importantly, any aboriginal Canadian living on a first nations reserve, even if it is for a routine appointment, has access at all times to emergency transportation and that is available to anyone at all times should there be any concerns on a first nations reserve.

One of the biggest issues is recruitment and retention. We have launched a recruitment and retention campaign for more nurses and it is going well.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every year the Conservatives spend billions giving tax credits and making tax loopholes available to the wealthy. This government's tax spending has gone up consistently for the past 10 years. The Auditor General is concerned that the Conservatives are refusing to tell us how much those gifts cost and who they benefit.

Will the Conservatives release the Department of Finance internal reports to shed light on these tax loopholes?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in keeping taxes low, but we also believe in ensuring that all corporations and Canadians pay their fair share of taxes. That is why, since 2006, we have aggressively moved to close over 85 tax loopholes. The loopholes we are closing amount to billions of dollars annually. That means lower taxes for all Canadians, not just a select few.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have gone from hiding their finance minister to hiding the facts of their budget. Give them credit. The Conservatives have been focused like a laser on giving away billions to the wealthy and the well connected. We now learn from the Auditor General himself that Conservatives have not even bothered to count all the money going out the door. Conservatives did not have the decency to track all the money or whether any of their programs were actually working. They must be borrowing the accounting manual from the Senate over there.

They say good news sells itself. Is that why Conservatives are having to spend millions more selling their bad budget to Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say one thing here but exactly the opposite in their ridings. They call our tax breaks “giveaways” when they are on Parliament Hill, but the NDP member for Ottawa Centre actually takes credit for them in his tax guide. Here he has the children's fitness tax credit, which he voted against. Here he has pension splitting for seniors. Here he has the pension amount increase. These are not giveaways, as the NDP member for Ottawa Centre understands. These are tax cuts, if only they would actually vote in favour of them when they come back to the House of Commons.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our young people are wrapping things up at school and are already worried that they will not have a job this summer.

Instead of helping our students, the Conservatives prefer to spend taxpayers' money on partisan ads. What is more, they cut most of the jobs from the Canada summer jobs program.

Dropping just one ad from the National Hockey League playoffs would allow 30 young people to find a job this summer.

Why do the Conservatives keep spending taxpayers' money on partisan ads instead of helping our young people find employment?

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals used ads in the sponsorship scandal to give money to their Liberal friends.

We are using ads to inform Canadians of tax cuts and benefit increases. We are running ads to explain the tax cuts for families, which will save them \$2,000, and the increase in the universal child care benefit, which will give \$2,000 to families for every child under 6 and \$720 for every child 6 to 17. We are giving money directly to taxpayers by lowering their taxes.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives spent \$750 million on self-promotional advertising while clawing back more than \$900 million from Environment Canada. Apparently self-promotion is more important than species at risk, or more important than toxic spills in Vancouver, or more important than that elephant in the room, climate change.

Will the current government advertise its \$12-million cut for species at risk? Will it advertise its \$188-million cut from climate change?

Is it not ironic and tragic that Environment Canada funds are being used to bankroll Conservative Party advertising?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no federal government has done more for the environment than this government in the 2015 budget. The budget is investing funding for federal contaminated sites, public transit, meteorological navigational warning for the Arctic, and the chemicals management plant.

The president of the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association said:

We see the renewal of the plan as a continuation of Canada's world-leading initiatives...

What would the Liberals do? They would increase taxes on Canadian consumers and middle-class families.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budgets are about priorities. Tragically, about 25 police and firefighters die in the line of duty, on average, every year. A compensation package for these heroes would be less than half of what the current government is spending on bogus, crappy, partisan ads. Seven million dollars is what we are talking about.

My question for the Prime Minister is, how does he justify wasting 14 million tax dollars?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, we will not take any lessons from the third party on support for our police and first responders across this country. In fact, it was the Liberal Party that closed down the RCMP training depot when it was in power, because it refused to pay for new recruits.

In contrast to that, we are supporting law enforcement and security agencies across the country by giving them the tools they need to actually keep Canadians safe, including an investment of \$300 million in budget 2015.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General informed us today that only 38% of departments and agencies have submitted their safety plan. These plans became mandatory after the Conservatives passed national safety legislation in 2009. This 38% participation rate is bad enough. Worse yet, these plans were due two years ago.

Before passing another safety bill that will encroach on our rights and freedoms as Canadians, would the Conservatives have the decency to stop mismanaging public safety?

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the opposition party, the NDP, is off base with these types of questions. It has not supported a single measure this government has brought forward to keep Canadians safe.

In fact, just recently in committee, we had Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism legislation. It is truly unfortunate that such misinformation, either intentional or because of a pure lack of understanding on behalf of the official opposition, has pushed such bad information about that bill, when at the very heart of Bill C-51 is the national security of this country and the protection of all Canadians.

• (1450)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-51 is so detrimental to our rights and freedoms that thousands of Canadians have come out to protest against this one piece of legislation.

Now Stephen Toope, former dean of law at McGill, former UBC president, and currently the director of the Munk School of Global Affairs, has called Bill C-51:

...so badly drafted, so expansive in scope, and so open to abuse that one must wonder how a responsible political leadership could bring it forward.

Will the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness now listen to the chorus of Canadians who are speaking out against Bill C-51 and withdraw this bill immediately?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the official opposition has not supported a single measure to keep Canadians safe.

When I talk about the misinformation that has been pushed out by the NDP, whether it is intentional or because of a lack of understanding, it is clear that it is probably the latter, because in committee, in clause by clause, with the very first amendment the member put forward, the officials who were there had to explain to him that he was incorrect.

On this side of the House, we are going to stand up for the security of this country and the safety of all Canadians.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the violence in Surrey has reached crisis levels, with another shooting last night. This is the 25th shooting in the last eight weeks. People in my community are worried for their safety and the safety of their neighbours.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives' 2015 budget does not even mention the words "crime prevention", "gangs", or "Surrey", for that matter, and Conservative cuts have left the RCMP unable to manage crime databases and forensic services.

Will the Conservatives stop making excuses and make funds available to protect the people in my community?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the member that, in fact, we have invested \$2.8 million in crime prevention in Surrey since 2006.

However, having said that, Canadians will not tolerate being held hostage in their own communities by thugs and criminals who are members of street gangs. Our government has been clear that this sort of illegal activity is completely unacceptable, and that is why we have passed more than 30 tough-on-crime bills, including harsh mandatory prison sentences for those involved in drive-by—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that kind of response gives no comfort to the citizens of Surrey. Empty words are simply not good enough.

The Conservatives are abandoning our community in the middle of a crisis. Lives are at risk. People deserve to be safe from violence. They need real action, not excuses from the minister.

I have stood in this House and called for more RCMP to deal with the violence in Surrey. The mayor of Surrey is asking the federal government to approve 100 more RCMP. Will the government commit now to approve this without delay?

Oral Questions

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly have good news for that member. Budget 2015 includes new funding for our security agencies across the country, including the RCMP, of \$300 million.

I would also reiterate that it is this government that has passed more than 30 tough-on-crime bills to keep Canadians safe, including in that member's riding.

Last, we recognize that crime prevention is necessary to keep Canadians safe, and that is why, in Surrey, B.C., since 2006, we have provided \$2.8 million for crime prevention.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of commemorating the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands. Unfortunately, one veteran who was invited as a guest of the Dutch government is unable to be accompanied by his son, because the Avon Maitland District School Board his son works for has refused his request for unpaid leave.

Can the minister please update this House on this specific case?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank that member, who served himself in uniform.

I spoke with Art Boon this week, an inspiring 90-year-old veteran who wants to return with his comrades to the Netherlands, a country Canadians liberated 70 years ago.

I am truly hopeful that the school board, which I also spoke with this week, will look at this issue and try to find an outcome to let Mr. Boon go on this excursion with his comrades and with his son.

* * *

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

NEPAL

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Nepal is in the throes of a terrible tragedy.

The government has a duty to do everything it can in such circumstances to ensure the safety of Canadian nationals. It is very sad today to hear the accounts of Canadians who feel abandoned by the government.

Can the minister tell us what he plans to do to help all the Canadians who are now stranded in Nepal as quickly as possible?

[*English*]

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): First, Mr. Speaker, this is a tragedy, and we join the rest of the world in mourning the tragic loss of life that has occurred in Nepal.

We have deployed additional consular staff to help deal with this crisis. We have sent hundreds of emergency travel documents. A Canadian consular service point has been established, and the first C-17 plane has left for New Delhi with evacuated Canadians.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the midst of this tragedy, there are oh so many Canadian families who are desperately worried about their loved ones, and many have expressed frustration with the response of the Canadian government. These families say they are having difficulty getting clear answers from the Department of Foreign Affairs, and unlike other countries, Canadian evacuees are being told they will have to find their own way home from New Delhi.

Canadians need answers as to how the government is going to address these concerns.

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have deployed additional staff to assist the people dealing with the crisis. In fact, 11 additional staff are already there in Kathmandu, while another four just arrived today on the RCAF C-17 Globemaster, and we have evacuated Canadians. The first C-17 has just left for New Delhi, and we are pleased to be of assistance.

I commend the Canadian consular officials and everyone else involved who have helped make this happen.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians depend on first responders to keep us safe, and we owe them our full support in return, but across the country, firefighters are experiencing an increase in post traumatic stress disorder and are not being given the resources they need to deal with it.

We have also seen the Liberals and the Conservatives vote against the NDP bill that would have protected volunteer firefighters while they did their job of protecting Canadians.

Why is the government failing our firefighters?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that firefighters across this country do not fall under the jurisdiction of federal governance. They are municipal, provincial, and so on.

I appreciate that question, but I would also like to point out that I am actually married to a firefighter, and I certainly thank all firefighters across this country, especially my husband, who works in the city of Toronto, for keeping Torontonians safe.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, Canadians are working more and more, but still cannot manage to save any money.

Despite record profits in the billions of dollars, Canadian banks are now going to charge new bank fees. After making customers pay for paper statements, they are going to be double-dipping on their customers' mortgage payments.

Oral Questions

Are the Conservatives going to give in again to pressure from their banker friends, or will they finally stand up for the middle class?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are the only party in this House that has consistently stood up for the consumers. Unlike the opposition that would raise taxes on middle-class consumers, we have lowered taxes and put more money into the pockets of middle-class consumers.

Our government has taken initiative to improve low-cost bank accounts and expand no-cost banking options for more than seven million Canadians. We introduced the debit and credit card code of conduct. Sadly, the Liberals and the NDP voted against all these measures.

We are here. We support Canadians.

* * *

• (1500)

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General slammed the Conservative government for failing its responsibility to mitigate risks posed by the spread of antibiotic resistance in Canada, which the World Health Organization calls a major global threat to human health.

While the Minister of Health, as usual, blames the provinces, the AG blames her for shirking federal leadership.

In 2009, the Conservative government cut funding for the Canadian Committee on Antibiotic Resistance. This pattern of callous mismanagement of public health and safety puts lives in danger.

Will the minister stop blaming others and commit to lead a meeting with provinces on antibiotic misuse and resistance?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member could not be more wrong.

First of all, we are working right now with the World Health Organization to develop a global action plan. We are also working with the World Bank to study the economic impact of antimicrobial resistance. We actually have a national action plan on antimicrobial resistance. When I sat down with the provinces, I encouraged and continue to encourage them to work with us on our plan. I hope after the AG's report, they will be more open to that.

We also have an education campaign that targets health professionals and the veterinary community. For the first time in history, we got the human health side and animal health side together to work on antimicrobial resistance.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General produced a damning report on the government's neglect for public safety with its prison policies.

There were 1,500 inmates released cold turkey, without reintegration programs, and therefore at greater risk to reoffend.

Cutting incentives for skills training leaves inmates on release without the skills to be gainfully employed. Holding low-risk offenders longer, adding \$26 million to correction costs, has no real gain.

This issue is about public safety. Why is the Conservative government putting Canadians at risk?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, our Conservative government is committed to keeping Canadians safe, and that is why we are pleased with the Auditor General, who found that our truth in sentencing measures have worked, because more prisoners are staying behind bars where they belong.

We are talking about ending the two-for-one credits. Most Canadians believe that if someone commits a serious crime, and we are talking serious crime not light sentences, with sentences in federal penitentiaries for two years or more, that if they are going to do the serious crime, they should do the time. That member should get on board with that particular principle.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, a constituent called me and said that Canada Post had decided to put a community mailbox right beside the fence between the street and her day care.

All the parents called Canada Post to say that they were worried about the increased traffic and also about safety. They do not want to see all kinds of people approaching their children. Canada Post responded that there was no problem, everything was okay and it would not change its plans.

Does the minister consider that normal? Does she not understand that Canada Post's changes go against peoples' needs?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, Canada Post has delivered 1.4 billion fewer letters than it did in 2006. As a result, it is converting the remaining one-third of houses to community mailboxes.

In that process, every single person affected by this change is sent a survey. People are asked to fill it in and asked what they want and what they do not want in terms of a community mailbox. That is taken back, taken into consideration, and there is a 90% satisfaction rate.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, Canada Post announced the closure of the post office in Chicoutimi-Nord.

For months, people in my riding have been clear: closing the second most profitable post office in the region is unacceptable. Over 2,500 people from Chicoutimi-Nord sent letters to Ottawa asking to keep the post office open. Canada Post's response this morning was shameful.

The minister responsible for Canada Post needs to reconsider that decision. Will she do so?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has indicated that to deal with the fact that it is no longer self-sufficient and is continuing to see its mail delivery erode, it has put together a five-point plan. As a result, one aspect of this is to ensure that consumers can actually receive their postal services at places they normally frequent, like a Shoppers Drug Mart or another facility where they can do so. It is contracting out in order to ensure that there is best value for the Canadian taxpayer, and we are indeed supporting its plan.

* * *

• (1505)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians well know the government's role in defending victims of crime and being appropriately tough on serious offenders. This is why I was proud last week when my bill, fairness for victims of violent offenders and the victims bill of rights, received royal assent.

The NDP and Liberals have been clear that they do not support our agenda whatsoever. Therefore, when Bill Blair announced that he would run for the Liberals Canadians found this most bizarre. Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on the measures the Conservative government has taken to crack down on crime?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for that question. It is true. Our Conservative government has passed over 30 new measures to crack down on dangerous and violent criminals, including tough new prison sentences for drive-by shootings.

Shockingly, but not surprisingly, the Liberal leader has said that he would repeal all mandatory minimum sentences in the entire Criminal Code. The Liberal leader should instead listen to his new candidate, Bill Blair, who said that when we have minimum sentences and we keep criminals in jail and they're incapacitated, "our streets are safer".

There seems to be a little conflict within the Liberal Party.

Oral Questions

NEPAL

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Steve and Natalie Wheeler, from my riding, are in Lucknow, Nepal and are trying to leave. Here is what they said:

We have limited communication from the Canadian government on what to do. We try to keep them up to date with what little progress we've made trying to leave... And what do we get? An email from the gov saying we have updated your file accordingly!!! We have received more support, communication and reassurance from our insurance company.

What can Steve and Natalie expect and when can all Canadians outside the capital expect some real help?

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges presented by terrain, weather and congestion at the airport, we are working hard. We are working around the clock. Our consular officials are working very hard. We have deployed additional consular staff. We have sent hundreds of emergency travel documents.

A Canadian consular service point has been established at the American Club. I am encouraging Canadians please to contact the emergency watch and response centre for further information.

* * *

MARINE ATLANTIC

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Marine Atlantic is a critical link between Newfoundland and mainland Canada, but for weeks now there has been an outstanding question of whether the budget would be gutted, as the main estimates indicated. The minister said to wait for the budget, but then there was not a word, not a whisper, about Marine Atlantic in the 518 pages.

Now, Marine Atlantic is referring all questions to the minister's office. Will the minister finally stand in her place and tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what is happening with their ferry service?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that Marine Atlantic will receive the funding it needs to continue to provide the frequency of service Atlantic Canadians are accustomed to.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, the NDP and the Liberals have actually insulted families with older children by saying they do not have child care costs. Of course, on this side of the House we understand that is not true. Residents of Calgary Centre understand that is not true. All families with children, with older children—we are talking kids over six here—have child care costs and deserve our support.

Could the Minister of State for Social Development please tell the House what our government is doing for families with older children?

Points of Order

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Centre is correct. We do know that families who have older children do incur costs in raising those children, that is why we want to give them their money back and put it back in their pockets.

Recently, I was in Newmarket, Ontario. I met with high school students and their parents. Those parents were thrilled about the expanded universal child care benefit. It will give them \$720 for each one of their children who is in high school, which is a huge benefit for them. They are also thrilled that we have doubled the children's fitness tax credit and have made it refundable, because a lot of those kids are involved in sports activities.

We are giving money back to parents. They want to raise taxes.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Montreal Canadiens fans are looking forward to round two.

[English]

I am sure that Calgary Flames' fans are just as excited.

[Translation]

However, hockey is yet another casualty of Conservative Bill C-377, which is anti-union and purely ideological.

The National Hockey League Players' Association has indicated that the bill could jeopardize trade agreements regarding video games made in Canada, hockey cards and international competitions, among other things.

Does the government understand that its botched bill will have a negative impact on the contribution of our national sport to the country's economy?

• (1510)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that workers should have the right to know how their mandatory union dues are spent. This is something Canadians have been asking for. That is why we continue to support Bill C-377. It is a reasonable bill to increase transparency.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, everyone was entirely justified in condemning the way that banks and fast food restaurants abused the temporary foreign worker program. Now the government is penalizing employers who follow the rules. Not only must seasonal businesses, such as restaurants, hotels, food processors and landscapers, struggle because of the new employment insurance rules, but they will also bear the brunt of this.

Will the Minister of Employment and Social Development abide by the Canada-Quebec accord on immigration and postpone these measures while the federal government negotiates with Quebec,

which is what the Government of Quebec, the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are calling for?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe that Canadians should get priority when it comes to Canadian jobs. That includes Quebecers. Quebecers should get priority when it comes to jobs in Quebec. The data show that Quebecers are available to meet employers' needs. Employers should offer higher wages and work harder to recruit Quebecers.

We will always protect Quebecers' jobs. That is why we implemented these reforms.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while I am glad the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister read my householder, during question period he said that in it there was information about income splitting, which of course has not been passed by Parliament and is not in the document.

I give him the opportunity to actually clarify the record, because I do not put in things that are not accurate in what I put out to constituents, unlike the government that puts out advertising about things that actually have not been passed in Parliament yet.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this point of order, in fact, among the many Conservative tax cuts that the NDP member did highlight was income splitting. It is right here on page 12, pension splits. Pension income splitting is a form of income splitting, and he did trumpet it as a positive policy. We agree with him. He was right. He is wrong now, though.

The Speaker: I know members are not asking the Speaker to make decisions on terminology. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre is rising, but I am very concerned we are getting into an area of debate, and we are well past the end of question period.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I respect my friend, of course, same city and all, but was directing my comment at the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. He used to have the job, but he no longer does, which is unfortunate, I guess. The point was income splitting.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to defend the member for Ottawa Centre and correct him.

He actually has, on two occasions, already voted on the income-splitting measures. They have been before this Parliament in two ways and means motions. It would be appropriate for him to promote the new measures in his householder. Having voted against them, it might not be appropriate politically for him to promote it. However, the House has deliberated on the matter, and he voted against them.

The Speaker: I would encourage members that if there are any other points they want to raise on this question, they do so tomorrow at the same time, in question period.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, done at Marrakesh on June 27, 2013.

I want to thank the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and all those Canadians who have worked so hard for so many years to ensure that on this treaty Canada would be the first G7 country to assent to the Marrakesh Treaty, which will help tens of thousands of Canadians who have perceptual disabilities and blindness to get access to books and works, so they can have full dignity in Canadian society.

* * *

●(1515)

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 21 petitions.

* * *

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Right Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald, founding father and Canada's first prime minister. Born 200 years ago this year, on January 11, 1815, in Glasgow, Scotland, Sir John A. Macdonald's story is the story of Canada.

Sir John A. Macdonald left Glasgow, Scotland when he was just five years old and emigrated to Kingston, Ontario. The child of a hard-working family, he grew up under somewhat stressful financial circumstances and by 15 was out working and soon after was articling at a law firm. He became a successful lawyer and businessman, but most notably a wise and skillful politician.

Astute observers will conclude that John A.'s greatest work was done before Confederation. Through his organizational skills and keen understanding of people, he was able to rebuild, modernize and unify a Conservative Party that was struggling. It is a feat that

Routine Proceedings

Conservative leaders have been compelled to repeat from time to time since.

However, that was only a prelude to his life's greatest achievement, Confederation and the creation of Canada.

Macdonald appreciated the threats facing British North America at the time: an expansionist and determined neighbour to the south, with hundreds of thousands of battle-hardened soldiers, many looking for new adventures; a British homeland which increasingly saw its North American outpost as a liability, costly to defend; and finally, a section of domestic society which increasingly looked to the American model with admiration, cloaking a desire for annexation in the rhetoric of Republicanism and modernization.

In this environment, Macdonald stood out as a leader who understood that the survival of a Canada distinct from the United States depended upon a new assertiveness and unity. It required the building of a sovereign dominion of Canada to be master of its own destiny. It required vision, judgement, but most of all, strong leadership.

[Translation]

Sir John A. Macdonald was a gifted nation builder. His vision was of a country where people could live together as citizens with a common future, sharing values in common, without regard for whether they were French or English, east or west, new Canadians or long-time citizens, city or country. It was a vision of a country of prosperity, generosity, tolerance and accommodation. His vision of Canada's possibility and opportunity for the future remain without parallel today.

[English]

He captured it well when he said in the House of Commons, toward the end of his life:

—if I had influence over the minds of the people of Canada, any power over their intellects, I would leave them this legacy—“whatever you do, adhere to the Union—we are a great country and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it; we shall sink into insignificance and adversity if we suffer it to be broken.” God and Nature have made the two Canadas one—let no factious men be allowed to put them asunder.

[Translation]

This vision, achieved by his remarkable skill at bringing people together, was consecrated in Confederation—built on the framework of the British North America Act, which was overwhelmingly personally penned by John A.

The proof of its genius is the success of Canada. While Canada is one of the youngest great countries of the world, our Constitution—the British North America Act—is one of the oldest operating constitutions. The framework has served well for almost 150 years, guiding Canada as it grew from four provinces to ten provinces and three territories—and as we have grown from 3.5 million people at Confederation to close to 35 million today. Its wise balance and structures serve us well today.

Routine Proceedings

• (1520)

[English]

John A.'s passion for Canada and his wisdom in politics served to drive him and his ambition for the country at a remarkable pace. During his years as prime minister, Canada experienced unprecedented growth and prosperity. Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia all entered Confederation. The Canadian Pacific Railway's transcontinental line was completed with great speed, quite an accomplishment in 1885, for the first time linking Canadians together from coast to coast.

Sir John A. Macdonald established the North-West Mounted Police, later renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He also created the first Canadian national park in Banff, Alberta. Sir John A. Macdonald bound this country together against impossible odds.

There is a story from the 1871 negotiations on the Treaty of Washington while they were under way. Macdonald was one of three on the imperial delegation and perhaps the only one who was really looking out for Canada's interests. The others seemed more anxious to try to improve British-U.S. relations.

At a social event during those negotiations, an American senator's wife struck up a conversation with a charming Canadian who was present.

"I guess you are from Canada", she said.

"Yes, ma'am", he replied.

"You've got a very smart man over there, the Honorable John A. Macdonald", she commented.

"Yes, ma'am, he is".

"But they say he's a regu'ar rascal".

"Yes, ma'am, he's a perfect rascal".

"But why do they keep such a man in power?", she asked.

"Well, you see, they cannot get along without him."

At that moment, the American senator arrived on the spot and said, "My dear, let me introduce you to the Honorable John A. Macdonald".

As the woman looked mortified, John A. quickly set out to put her at ease, "Now, don't apologize. All you've said is perfectly true, and it is well known at home".

I like that particular story because it captures so much about the essence of John A., his strengths, his weaknesses, his understanding of humanity and its frailties, including his own, and it is part of that understanding that made him such a great leader.

Not only was Sir John A. Macdonald an economic visionary, he was ahead of his time as the world's first national leader to try to grant women the right to vote.

In 1885, Sir John A. Macdonald brought forward an electoral reform bill that proposed to extend the vote to both women and aboriginals. As a House leader, I would observe that the Liberals so fiercely opposed, obstructed and delayed these changes—they

thought the changes were partisan and that they would benefit the Conservative Party—that they held up the bill for the better part of two years.

The bill only passed when Sir John A. and the Conservatives reluctantly removed the provision for votes for women. As a result, it delayed the vote for women until Prime Minister Borden's Conservative government completed John A.'s initiative.

However, aboriginals did win the right to vote in Macdonald's 1887 bill. Sadly, Laurier's government would remove that vote for aboriginals in 1897, an injustice that would not be corrected until Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker restored aboriginal votes in 1960.

[Translation]

In addition to that visionary approach, Sir John A. Macdonald was a fierce defender of both our values and our borders. He ensured that Canada was a country that was distinct from the United States. He also sought to avoid what he considered to be flaws in the American model. He recognized that we were a big country geographically, a diverse country in terms of the types of people we had, and that it took a special approach to bring them all together.

Macdonald's great achievements as a politician and as prime minister seem to be all the more admirable when one considers the great challenges he experienced in a private life filled with tragedy and heartbreak—the death of his first wife, a son who died in infancy and his only daughter born with a debilitating illness.

[English]

The visionary leadership of John A. Macdonald for his Dominion of Canada, when he rendered the blueprint for what has proven to be the best country in the world, has indeed become a reality today. We can be amazed at his foresight and thankful for his legacy.

Two hundred years after the birth of our first prime minister, let us all remember that the Canada we love today was made possible by what our current Prime Minister has recently said was an ordinary man of whom little was expected but who, given the opportunity, did extraordinary things.

Let us reflect on the tremendous success of Sir John A. Macdonald's dream of Confederation, a truly personal project of global consequences of a country that is today the envy of the world.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak this afternoon on behalf of the official opposition. Perhaps I was asked to do so because Sir John A. Macdonald was the member of Parliament for Victoria, a little-known fact, between the years 1878 and 1882, although I am told he did not actually visit the riding until considerably after that.

Routine Proceedings

It must be said at the outset that Sir John A. Macdonald was truly a product of his time. He was a complex man. His contribution to creating Canada cannot be overstated. On the one hand, it is inconceivable that we would have a country without Sir John A. He had an amazing amount of what people today might call emotional intelligence. That intelligence shone at the Charlottetown and Quebec Conferences. Together with his friend, Sir George-Étienne Cartier, he forged alliances that resulted in what today we call Canada. On the other hand, contemporary Canadians must contextualize, not condone, certain beliefs and actions that history has rightly condemned.

Driven by the impossible dream of threading the world's longest railway through some of the world's most inhospitable land, Macdonald transformed a young nation into a continent-spanning dominion. Yet, he did so by what Professor James Daschuk called in a recent book "clearing the plains", starving indigenous communities until they traded freedom for food and made way for the railroad.

He did so by importing Chinese labourers by the thousands for the hardest and most dangerous jobs. Hundreds died to unify Canada. Yet, with the railway nearly finished, the House passed laws to deny Chinese people the vote and to set a punitive head tax on immigrants from China.

Believing Chinese and Caucasians to be inherently different, Sir John A. Macdonald defended his xenophobic policy in the language of racial purity and political expediency, warning that Chinese Canadian MPs from British Columbia might foist on the House "Asiatic principles, immoralities and eccentricities which are abhorrent to the Aryan race".

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Macdonald was well known as a skilled mediator with a unique ability to strike a balance between competing interests, bring people together at the negotiating table and bring together huge groups of settlers from different backgrounds and different faiths.

When Mr. Macdonald learned that the last spike had been driven into the Canadian Pacific Railway, he declared that the railway united us as a nation. A week later, however, Louis Riel was hanged in Regina, creating a new division in the country.

Mr. Macdonald created a country that was different from its powerful neighbour, America, and that left behind its British imperial origins. He blazed a completely new trail, one that was unprecedented in modern western history, proving that a colony could become an independent country peacefully.

[*English*]

Yet, within this nation, he established a system of residential schools to remove aboriginal children "as much as possible from the parental influence...and to assimilate the Indian people in all respects...as speedily as they are fit for the change". The last of these schools closed within our lifetime, and their legacy of neglect, abuse and death haunts us, as it should, to this very day.

Macdonald was a product of his time, and yet in some ways he was ahead of his time. He extended voting rights to aboriginal men, a remarkable and short-lived reform that would not be reinstated

until 1960. He advocated women's suffrage decades before it finally became law. His Trade Unions Act of 1872 recognized the legal rights of unions in Canada for the first time, and by intervening in a strike by Toronto typographers, he won the support of Canada's emerging working class in an election where, for the first time, the industrial future of Canada was the chief issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Macdonald's personal life was no less complex than his public life. At his peak, he was extremely popular, charming and charismatic. He was a clever and empathetic politician and an unrivalled negotiator. At other times, he would be consumed by despair and frustration. He was of course a man who enjoyed his drink, and had to be carried out of the House on more than one occasion. Fortunately, there were no cameras here at the time.

[*English*]

He was very funny. One of the witticisms that he made when he was asked to provide his occupation for a hotel ledger book, he wrote "cabinet maker". At home, he cared deeply for his severely disabled daughter, Mary, with whom he spent time every evening telling her stories of the day's drama in Parliament.

These details and many others have emerged from recent scholarship that give us a finer portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald as we mark the bicentennial of his birth. I pay particular tribute to Professor Donald Creighton and Mr. Richard Gwyn for their remarkable works on Sir John A.

When we speak about him today, we do so neither to praise him nor to bury him. To simply chastise him and to lay the legacy of discriminatory policies against first nations or Chinese Canadians entirely at his feet would be to absolve ourselves of our obligations to right these wrongs, and to overlook an opportunity to build a better, fairer Canada that we know is possible. If we can instead be honest about our past and about this key figure who played such a central role in it, we can begin to tell a more inclusive story about our country, one that inspires us all to better it.

The problems of Macdonald's days are still alive in Canada and they deserve the attention of the House. More than a century ago, John A. Macdonald spoke about the inevitable recognition of women's equality, yet still today that equality is not recognized with equal pay or a national effort to stop the violence that threatens Canadian women every day. More than a century ago, Macdonald was the architect of xenophobic laws, yet still today we struggle to live up to our image as a multicultural nation, to welcome new Canadians to our social and economic life, and offer a haven to families fleeing violence and persecution. More than a century has passed since Macdonald built residential schools, yet still we have not closed the shameful gaps in health, housing, income and freedom from violence that separate aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

●(1530)

[Translation]

The 200th anniversary of the birth of Sir John A. Macdonald will not make the debate on his legacy any less polarized, but it does give us the opportunity to take stock and reflect on the progress we have made as a country and the obstacles we still have to overcome.

[English]

If by taking stock we can take any inspiration from Canada's first prime minister, I hope that it will be from his visionary spirit. He believed in overcoming obstacles that others thought insurmountable. The obstacles that we face today are not mountain ranges or rivers; they are in our cities and small towns, in workplaces and on reserves, but they are no less daunting.

As we approach a milestone for Canada, let us remember that the project Sir John A. Macdonald began is not finished. Let us still dream big dreams, and as we seek to make them real for all Canadians, let us move forward with the wisdom that can only come from an honest and complete understanding of our history.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise today as the member for Kingston and the Islands on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada to honour on the bicentennial of his birth, Sir John A. Macdonald, a Father of Confederation and our first prime minister.

[Translation]

Sir John A. was an immigrant, a man with an immigrant's sense of hope and vitality, who was also determined to play a public role in building his new country. In 1844, he was first elected as the member of Parliament for Kingston, the seat he held in this House at his death, 47 years later, in 1891.

[English]

In Kingston on June 6, the anniversary of Sir John A.'s death, people still gather annually for a memorial ceremony organized by the Kingston Historical Society. It takes place at Sir John A.'s very modest gravesite located in Catarqui Cemetery.

In 1891, the outpouring of grief was anything but modest. Ten thousand people greeted the funeral train as it arrived in Kingston from Ottawa. Kingston continues to keep alive for us the memory of Sir John A. Macdonald with place names, events, historical markers and buildings, including his bar, the Royal Tavern, which still stands today.

Arthur Milnes and Jim Garrard of Kingston led the charge for a national celebration of the Sir John A. bicentennial.

Sir John A. Macdonald, with his political, interpersonal and constitutional skills and his determination, was likely the only person who could have brought together the provinces and colonies of British North America which formed the new nation in 1867. Sir John A. understood and was a most powerful advocate for the idea that despite the differences, a federation of united provinces would be stronger, better governed, more secure and more prosperous.

●(1535)

[Translation]

Indeed, our federation has allowed us to preserve our differences. We embrace our differences and we are thereby enriched and strengthened.

[English]

Confederation was not simply a political solution to a problem. Sir John A. Macdonald had an ambitious long-term vision for a big Canada stretching from sea to sea. Sir John A. the statesman believed that a strong government should lead in realizing that vision. Sir John A. the political leader won six majorities, allowing him to begin the building of this new Canada.

After 1867, Sir John A. welcomed three more provinces and the Northwest Territories into Confederation. He built the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 1873, he planned the North-West Mounted Police, forerunner of today's RCMP, and in 1885 created Canada's first national park, Banff.

[Translation]

I do not believe we will ever stop building and improving Canada, and we will never stop being inspired by the man who put his talents for politics and statecraft to work in our nation's early years.

Sir John A. Macdonald was human and a man of his times. He and his family suffered personal tragedies. He was a man of many faults, who made mistakes and held indefensible and damaging positions, notably those regarding the treatment of indigenous peoples, damage that we must still work to overcome today.

[English]

Yet, perhaps these faults render the man more accessible. I ask members of the House, who among us do not have faults and failures and have not committed errors? Our faults are on display in the public square as we conduct the nation's business. That is part of politics. We can allow them to dominate our legacy, or we can pursue the politics of purpose.

Like Sir John A. Macdonald, we too at times are frail, but his accomplishments and his legacy can inspire us to be just as determined, to envision, to hope and work for a better Canada.

Happy 200th birthday, Sir John. A.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

PRIVILEGESTATEMENTS BY THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE REGARDING
CANADA'S MILITARY ENGAGEMENT AGAINST ISIL—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before we continue with routine proceedings, I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 2 by the hon. member for St. John's East about alleged misleading information provided to the House by the Minister of National Defence prior to the House's decision regarding the expansion and extension of the Canadian military engagement in Iraq and now in Syria.

I would like to thank the hon. member for St. John's East for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Minister of National Defence, the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the House Leader of the Official Opposition and the members for Winnipeg North and Vancouver Quadra for their comments.

[English]

In raising this question of privilege, the member for St. John's East explained that on Monday, March 30, 2015, the Minister of National Defence told the House that Canada was the only coalition partner, other than the United States, currently engaged in Syria using precision-guided munitions to strike targets dynamically. He acknowledged that the minister later admitted that that information was erroneous, that in fact every state currently engaged in air strikes in Syria is using precision-guided munitions. The member for St. John's East spoke to the minister's sacred duty to ensure the accuracy of statements, particularly when it informs members' decisions on such critical issues as whether or not to send Canadians off to war. He contended that the minister's misleading statements constituted a serious breach of privilege.

The Minister of National Defence confirmed that he had indeed provided the House with information from military officials that, at the time, he believed to be true, but that ultimately proved to be inaccurate. Accepting ministerial responsibility, he expressed his regret for conveying false information, even though he did not know it to be so at the time. He also stressed that when new information became available to the military, steps were taken to correct the record by the military and by him as soon as was possible. Together, he claimed, this proved that there was no deliberate attempt to falsify or withhold information or mislead the House.

[Translation]

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued that the minister established beyond any doubt that he did not intend to mislead the House. Thus, he believed that from the outset, the requisite conditions for a finding of breach of privilege had not been satisfied. Finally, he concluded his remarks by challenging the validity of the hon. member for St. John's East's contention that members needed to rely on that information. He argued that it was already clear how the member would vote.

● (1540)

[English]

At the core of this matter is the fundamental need for members to offer and receive correct and truthful information at all times,

regardless of the topic or proceeding. Members rely on accurate information to fulfill their parliamentary duties and represent the interests of all Canadians to the very best of their ability. There can be no second-guessing or pre-determination or ranking of the need for or use of particular pieces of information. Members individually judge the importance of information as they receive it.

[Translation]

In his ruling of February 1, 2002, at page 8581 of the Debates, Speaker Milliken reiterated the importance of the need for accurate and truthful information in Parliament:

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House. Furthermore, in this case, as hon. Members have pointed out, integrity of information is of paramount importance since it directly concerns the rules of engagement for Canadian troops involved in the conflict in Afghanistan, a principle that goes to the very heart of Canada's participation in the war against terrorism.

[English]

In this instance, the minister has acknowledged that he relayed inaccurate information to the House; on that there is no argument. The minister rose in this House on April 1 to correct the record and subsequently tabled a later from the Chief of the Defence Staff in this regard. But is this, in and of itself, a sufficient basis for a finding of a breach of privilege? Has it met the three conditions defined by parliamentary practice?

[Translation]

For the benefit of all members, the Chair would like to remind the House that first, the statement needs to be misleading. Second, the member making the statement has to know that the statement was incorrect when it was made. Finally, it needs to be proven that the member intended to mislead the House by making the statement.

[English]

Perhaps the most useful precedent in this case is that of Speaker Jerome from 1978. A careful reading of his ruling of December 6, 1978, tells us that, in that case, while a Minister also relayed erroneous information from officials to the House, the finding of *prima facie* was based squarely on the testimony of a former RCMP commissioner, which led the Speaker to conclude that a deliberate attempt was made to obstruct the Member and the House. Without such an admission of deliberate wrongdoing by military officials in this instance, the same conclusion cannot be drawn today.

In fact, the Minister made it very clear on April 2, 2015, page 12714 of the *Debates*, that officials had not, in his view, purposely misinformed the Minister when he stated:

I can absolutely assure the hon. member that neither I nor the military, I believe, at any point purposefully or deliberately misled this place or the media. I have absolutely no doubt that the military believed the veracity of the information I was given, and I accepted the source credibility of those briefing me in conveying that to this place and to the public.

The minister also stated:

Routine Proceedings

It is regrettable that inaccurate information was provided, but that was not done with any mala fides, with any deliberation, or with any intent to falsify information.

With no evidence presented to the contrary, the conventions of this House dictate that, as your Speaker, I must take all members at their word. To do otherwise, to take it upon myself to assess the truthfulness or accuracy of Members' statements is not a role which has been conferred on me, nor that the House has indicated that it would somehow wish the Chair to assume, with all of its implications.

Furthermore, as Speaker Milliken stated in his ruling of April 16, 2002, on page 10462 of the *Debates*:

[*Translation*]

If we do not preserve the tradition of accepting the word of a fellow member, which is a fundamental principle of our parliamentary system, then freedom of speech, both inside and outside the House, is imperilled.

[*English*]

Based on a thorough assessment of the information brought forward, in my view there is no clear evidence that would lead me to conclude that the necessary conditions concerning misleading statements have been met, nor can I conclude that the Member for St. John's East was somehow impeded in the performance of his parliamentary duties. Therefore, I cannot find that there is a prima facie question of privilege.

That being said, the Minister did indicate that the Chief of the Defence Staff will soon be appearing before the Standing Committee on National Defence and, in addition, that he and other officials would also be willing to appear. It is my sincere hope that Members will be able to use that opportunity to find answers to any outstanding questions that they may have about this important matter.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

* * *

• (1545)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe respecting its participation at the fall meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Geneva, Switzerland from October 3-5, 2014; and at the election observation mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Chisinau, Moldova on November 30, 2014.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, in relation to Bill C-625, An Act to amend the Statistics Act (removal of imprisonment).

The committee has studied the bill and decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, in relation to Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

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

* * *

MINISTRIES AND MINISTERS OF STATE ACT

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-672, An Act to amend the Ministries and Ministers of State Act and the Salaries Act (limitation on the number of ministers and ministers of State).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in this House and table an act to amend the Ministries and Ministers of State Act and the Salaries Act.

Its purpose is to limit the number of ministers and ministers of state to 26. The number 26 was chosen because statutorily there are 20 federal government departments plus six federal agencies whose statutory heads are all ministers.

When this government assumed office in 2006, we had a lean cabinet of 26 members. In the words of the Prime Minister, "Designed for work, not for show; more focus and purpose; less process and cost".

Besides saving taxpayers an estimated \$12 million to \$15 million annually, reducing the size of cabinet would address the much larger problem of imbalance between the executive and legislative branches of government.

Making cabinet smaller reduces the mathematical probability that any member will ever be asked to serve. This would force MPs to take their responsibilities as legislators seriously, placing the interests of their constituents above their own career advancement.

Fewer rewards to be distributed means less control over the backbenches and ultimately a more functional Parliament.

Accordingly, I ask all members to support this important democratic reform legislation.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents, who are calling on Canada Post to improve its services. They denounce the loss of service as a result of privatization and the decision to install community mailboxes that people do not want.

We want to see an improvement, and that is what these petitioners are demanding.

• (1550)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first one is from Canadians who say that without small family farms and peasants who perform the labour-intensive task of preserving seeds, biodiversity and the future of food is threatened.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada and the House of Commons, therefore, to adopt international aid policies that support small family farms, especially women, and recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty.

IRAQ

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from many Canadians who are very concerned about the violence Yazidis and other minorities are enduring in Iraq.

The petitioners are deeply grateful for the actions of the Government of Canada to date, and ask further that this House, among other things, provide military cover and equipment to help Yazidis stranded on Mount Sinjar and increase with the greatest possible urgency our Canadian efforts to help Yazidi people, as well as Baha'i, Chaldo-Assyrians, Christians, Mandaean, Shabak, Turkmen and others against ISIS attacks.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from St. Thomas à Becket church.

The petitioners ask that the Government of Canada and the House of Commons adopt international aid policies that support small family farmers, especially women, and recognize their vital role in the fight against hunger and poverty.

They also ask to ensure these policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farmers and that they they protect the rights of small family farmers in the global south to preserve, use and freely exchange seeds.

SOUTHERN RESIDENT KILLER WHALES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present two petitions.

The first is primarily from residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands, although it is also signed by some residents of Victoria and Edmonton.

The petitioners are calling for urgent action from the House of Commons to prevent the extinction of the southern resident killer whale populations of the Salish Sea. The petitioners note that these populations are endangered and are particularly vulnerable to disturbances, both acoustic and physical in their critical habitat.

Routine Proceedings

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from over 1,343 petitioners from many provinces, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario, calling on this House to reject the anti-democratic and anti-constitutional Bill C-51.

I hope the petitioners will be well-received on this critical issue.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition calling on the government to respect the rights of small family farms to store, trade and use seed. This petition is signed by a few hundred people from my region.

SHERBROOKE AIRPORT

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by a number of Sherbrooke residents last Saturday. They are calling on the members of the House of Commons to support my Motion No. 553, which we will vote on this evening, because economic development in Sherbrooke is at stake.

If this motion is adopted and is acted on by the Conservative government, it will certainly help Sherbrooke acquire the tools it needs to develop the Sherbrooke airport. The petitioners urge all members to vote in favour of Motion No. 553 this evening.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): At this time I wish to inform the House that, because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 22 minutes.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to economic action plan 2015, a balanced-budget, low-tax plan for jobs, growth and security.

Our government is balancing the budget while taking prudent action to lower taxes, create jobs and economic growth, while providing security to Canadians.

A balanced budget allows the government to cut taxes further for hard-working Canadians across the country and putting money back into their pockets. It is money they can use to either choose to go on vacation, pay down their mortgage, and ensure their children have access to more activities and sports.

The budget support small businesses and entrepreneurs: first, by reducing the tax rate to 9%; and second, by expanding the services offered by the Business Development Bank of Canada to help small and medium-sized businesses.

Entrepreneurs are supported by our investment of \$14 million in Futurpreneur Canada to allow young entrepreneurs to excel, and also investing in women, an action plan for women entrepreneurs to help women business owners succeed.

This economic action plan is helping families and communities by increasing the tax-free savings account annual contribution limit to \$10,000, effective for 2015 and subsequent taxation years. It is an opportunity for people to create a tax-free nest egg for the future.

We are supporting seniors and persons with disabilities by introducing the home accessibility tax credit to help with renovation costs, so that they can live independently in their own home longer, which is exactly where they want to be.

I have a great friend, Geoff Ball, who is a full-time wheelchair user. This will be outstanding for Geoff in ensuring that he can stay in his own home as long as possible into the future. These measures are what matter most to Canadians.

In my role as Canada's Minister of Labour and Status of Women, I also want to talk about some of the good initiatives in this budget for federally regulated workplaces.

•(1555)

[Translation]

We are very proud of economic action plan 2015. It responds to the evolving realities of the 21st century, while supporting our mission to create safe, fair and productive workplaces.

[English]

As mentioned at the beginning of my speech, our priority remains the same: keeping Canada's economy strong. A strong, healthy economy depends on strong, healthy and diverse workforces.

Amendments to the Canada Labour Code and the Government Employees Compensation Act, as well as measures to increase the number of health and safety officers, will help ensure safe and healthy workplaces and contribute to a greater number of employees being healthy. It will contribute to their wellness and productivity long-term.

[Translation]

Our government recognizes that supporting and protecting employees is a sound decision for the well-being of workers, their families and communities across Canada.

[English]

It is also a key driver of business productivity, economic growth, and long-term prosperity.

That is why economic action plan 2015 introduces amendments to strengthen Canada's Labour Code and to simplify its administration and enforcement. The proposed amendments would give employees more flexibility to balance work and informal caregiving, would strengthen and streamline employer provisions for preventing and dealing with sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, and would ensure that interns working in the federal jurisdiction are protected.

Our government recognizes that supporting and protecting employees with informal caregiving responsibilities is good for the well-being of families. That is why we are proposing to increase flexibility for employees through new short- and long-term unpaid leave for families who have to take on certain responsibilities. We would expand the EI compassionate care leave as well so that families could take care of those they care about the most in their time of need. That could be a federally regulated worker who has a child with cancer and could spend more time with that child when she or he needs a parent the most. We would create that flexibility to ensure that moms and dads are with their kids or that moms and dads are with their parents in their time of need.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and are protected from harm in the workplace, including from violence and sexual harassment. This is a basic right for all Canadians. No woman, no Canadian, should feel unsafe at work, and all that is needed and what we would do is create an efficient mechanism to enforce this protection to make sure that particularly women, but all Canadians, are safe at work.

We are also listening to Canadians' concerns about the potential for abuse and the lack of protection offered to unpaid interns and other unpaid individuals, and we are responding.

The Budget

[Translation]

The proposed amendments would ensure that all interns under federal jurisdiction, regardless of pay, will receive occupational health and safety protections. The proposed amendments would also clarify the circumstances under which unpaid internships can be offered.

• (1600)

[English]

Claire Seaborn, the president of the Canadian Intern Association, has actually welcomed this. She states, “We are thrilled that the Government of Canada has agreed to strengthen interns’ workplace protections”.

Internships can provide important work-based learning experiences and support youth, as well as other Canadians, in making a successful transition from school to work or a transition for new Canadians into the Canadian workforce. Young people working gain valuable job experience and should not have to worry about their safety or being treated fairly in the workplace. In fact, no Canadian should have to worry about this.

[Translation]

Our government wants to make sure that federally regulated employers have the information and support they need to adhere to health and safety provisions under the Canada Labour Code. We also want to better promote and enforce health and safety measures in areas of federal jurisdiction. To do this, we need more people.

[English]

That is why our government would invest to increase the number of health and safety officers responsible for promoting compliance and for ensuring that the Canada Labour Code is enforced.

Our HSOs are educators. They are advocates for fair, safe, and healthy workplaces. Not only do they investigate accidents, but more importantly, they work with employers and employees to help prevent them. Funding to support the hiring of additional health and safety officers would ensure more protective coverage of workers in areas of federal jurisdiction, especially in remote and high-risk areas. This would help to prevent workplace accidents and fatalities and would contribute to greater employee safety.

Building on the government’s commitment to maximize wellness and productivity for federal employees, we are also proposing to modernize the Government Employees Compensation Act. The proposed amendments would simplify and accelerate workers compensation claims processing so that employees would receive their compensation faster and could return to work in a safe and timely manner. Most importantly, they would get the care they need as quickly as possible.

Economic action plan 2015 builds on the government’s track record of support for women’s economic empowerment in Canada. The good news is that the economic action plan would expand and extend the universal child care benefit. For every child under the age of six, a family would receive \$2,000, and for every child six through 17, in an expansion of the universal child care benefit, a family would receive \$720. That is regardless of the family’s income or the child care it chooses. This means that individuals who have

two children under the age of six would receive up to \$4,000 per year, and they would be able to choose the type of child care they need. People going to work at 7 a.m. would still receive this benefit. It would not be just a 9-5 scenario, which some of the other parties may be advocating.

[Translation]

Earlier this week, the government announced an action plan for women entrepreneurs, which will be put in place to help connect women with the tools they need to succeed in business.

This action plan includes a series of initiatives targeted at supporting women entrepreneurs through mentorship, networking opportunities and increased access to financing and international markets.

[English]

The key initiatives in this action plan include an online platform for networking. It is called “It Starts With One—Be her Champion”, a campaign just recently launched to encourage mentorship and championing, which I hope all members of Parliament will participate in. It focuses on women under the age of 35 and making sure that they are successful.

There are enhanced trade missions for women entrepreneurs, including one to Brazil, and others in the future. There is a \$700-million investment by the Canadian Business Development Bank over three years to finance women-owned businesses and national forums.

Our government is focused on making sure that we have opportunities for women and for workers. In fact, our economic action plan is good for Canadians. Most importantly, it is good for women, good for Canadian families, good for the Canadian economy, and great for Canada.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of her speech, the minister spoke about measures such as the reduction of the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%.

She also could have mentioned the measure to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for businesses, particularly those in the manufacturing sector.

In February 2015, the official opposition moved a supply day motion in the House that the Conservatives and Liberals voted against.

Could my colleague tell me how she can stand up today and boast about the measures in the budget when she rose in the House to vote against those same measures when we presented them?

The Budget

[English]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I would like the Canadian public to look at the track record of the opposition. We put forward tax reductions in the past, like the GST. In fact, there have been more than 160 tax reductions. The opposition voted against them all. It is fine for them to have a conversation about what they might do in the future as they continue to raise taxes on Canadians.

This budget would reduce taxes for small business from 11% to 9%. We would augment benefits for families. The universal child care benefit would be augmented to \$2,000 for children under the age of six, and we would create a new benefit for children aged six to 17 of \$720 per child. There would also be income splitting for families as well, as other benefits.

We encourage the opposition parties to vote for these things that would benefit Canadian families. However, we are pretty confident that they will vote against them all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that is not fair to Canada's middle class or those aspiring to become a part of Canada's middle class. We do not stand alone in saying that. I know that the member was quite close to the late Mr. Flaherty. Mr. Flaherty, as the Conservative finance minister, said that the income split was a bad idea. She will be fully aware of that, yet under the new Minister of Finance, the government would have the income split.

Who is going to foot the bill for that multimillion-dollar annual bill? It is going to be the middle class of Canada that is going to have to pay the bill on that commitment.

My question for the member is twofold. First, why does she believe that Mr. Flaherty was wrong? As the Liberals have articulated, it is not a fair tax. Second, could she explain why the current Minister of Finance refuses to stand in his place to answer questions during question period?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, what Mr. Flaherty was about was reducing taxes and making sure that Canadians had money back in their own pockets. He reduced taxes in the House multiple times through multiple budgets. I am proud to say that I was part of a government with him.

What we are doing is putting yet more money back into the pockets of Canadians. The opposition would like to have the government bureaucracy have that money. They believe that it is their money. We believe that money belongs to Canadians. Whether it is augmenting the universal child care benefit for children under six or creating a new benefit for parents for children age six to 17, or making sure that we provide income splitting for seniors, something the opposition Liberal Party has said it would take away from seniors in the country, we are focused on making sure Canadians have their money back in their pockets to spend on the things they care about.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak about economic action plan 2015 and to draw my community's attention to the various opportunities in this budget that will help my constituents in Winnipeg South Centre. There is something in this budget for families, seniors, and young people. It is an absolutely outstanding budget.

I am very proud of our government for fulfilling its promise to balance the federal budget. Thanks to responsible management by our Prime Minister, we have projected a budget surplus of \$1.4 billion this year and \$1.7 billion next year. Just like hard-working Canadians who have had to make choices to live within their means, so have we.

Before the recession, our government chose to pay down \$37 billion in debt and positioned our country to survive the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. We responded very quickly and effectively to that financial crisis with a historic stimulus program and have emerged from the great recession faster and stronger than virtually any major advanced economy, and certainly the best in the G7.

When the crisis passed, our government set out the goal of balancing the budget. We have now done this, first, without raising taxes, and second, without cutting transfers for education and health care. We all have vivid memories of the slashing and gashing the previous Liberal government did to health care and education transfers in the 1990s.

Third, and perhaps of most interest to many of my constituents, while putting money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and businesses, we actually cut taxes as we balanced the budget.

Economic action plan 2015 builds on our government's record of support for Canadian families by keeping taxes low and helping them to save. Since 2006, the government has introduced measures to make life more affordable for families. They include reducing the personal income tax rate and increasing the basic personal amount. We have actually taken 380,000 seniors right off the federal tax rolls. We have cut the GST from 7% to 5%. That helps every Canadian every time he or she purchases anything.

We have introduced pension income splitting for seniors, which can really help seniors on fixed incomes. We have established tax credits to support low-income individuals and families, public transit users, first-time home buyers, and families caring for disabled relatives. We are providing additional support for families with children through the children's arts tax credit, the fitness tax credit, and the adoption expense tax credit. Most recently, the government has proposed a new family tax cut and enhancements to the universal child care benefit and child care expense deduction; 100% of families with children under 18 would receive benefits.

The Budget

Canadians of all income levels are benefiting from tax relief introduced by our government, but it is low- and middle-income Canadians who are receiving proportionately greater relief. This year Canadian families and individuals will receive \$37 billion in tax relief and increased benefits as a result of the actions our government has taken since 2006. For example, a typical family of four will receive tax relief and increased benefits of up to \$6,600 in 2015 and every year going forward, thanks to measures such as the family tax cut, the universal child care benefit, the goods and services tax reduction, the children's fitness tax credit, and other new credits.

Tax rates are lower now than they have been for 50 years. By reducing taxes year after year and enhancing benefits to Canadians, our government has given families and individuals greater flexibility to make the choices that are right for them.

• (1610)

Additionally, while we have been busy cutting taxes to help families, we have in turn made sure that federal transfers continue to grow to our provinces and territories. That is important, because they help pay for the social programs Canadians cherish.

In fact, major transfers including the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer will amount to almost \$68 billion in 2015-16, an all-time high. In Manitoba, Manitobans will receive \$3.4 billion in federal transfers this year, and that is an increase of 26% from the previous Liberal government.

Economic action plan 2015 would introduce new measures. It would give seniors more freedom and flexibility when it comes to managing their retirement funds. For example, our government would be reducing the minimum withdrawal amount for registered retirement income funds. I think this is very important, and this would help a lot of people out. One size does not fit all and every retiree has different needs at different times.

I am very pleased that our government would be introducing the new home accessibility tax credit. This proposed 15% non-refundable income tax credit would apply on up to \$10,000 of eligible home renovation expenditures per year. Eligible expenditures would be for improvements that allow either a senior or any person who is eligible for the disability tax credit to be more mobile, safer and functional within their home.

We would also be providing up to \$42 million over five years to help establish the Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation.

We have allocated \$37 million annually to extend employment insurance compassionate care benefits from the six weeks to six months as of January 16, 2016.

Our government has fulfilled our commitment of doubling the tax-free savings accounts contribution limits to \$10,000. This would be very helpful to all Canadians, including the young and the old. First, we created the TFSA and now we have doubled it. TFSAs can help Canadians at every stage of life, whether in retirement, starting a business, buying a car, buying a first home or just putting some money aside because that is what we do in Canada.

By doubling TFSA limits, we would be empowering Canadians to save even more for their own priorities. Of the nearly 11 million

individuals who have already opened a TFSA, and these stats are from the end of 2013, close to 2.7 million of them were seniors. Of those 11 million Canadians who hold TFSAs, 75% earn less than \$70,000, and about 50% of those 11 million Canadians who hold TFSAs earn less than \$42,000. These are not wealthy people, these are responsible Canadians who are putting a bit by and taking charge of their own economic future. They should be supported not condemned as they have been by the opposition.

I am extremely proud of economic action plan 2015 and, more specifically, the continued commitments that our government has made to help Canadian families and seniors. There is something in this budget for everyone in Winnipeg South Centre, and I am very proud to be part of the government that put together such a thoughtful, responsible and fiscally prudent budget that all Canadians will benefit from.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I said that I was searching for the term “income splitting”. Unfortunately, no one had any answers for me as to where it might be found.

Take, for example, how the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification carefully avoided using that term in her 10-minute speech, even though she tried to respond to me by saying that this was not a taboo term. This mystery remains unsolved. The term “income splitting” was widely used by the Conservatives several months ago to boast about a new government achievement. However, that term has vanished completely from the budget. Some ministers now never use that term.

I would like my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre to explain to me why Conservative members are no longer allowed to use the term “income splitting”.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member very much for that question. Maybe next Christmas, I will buy him a thesaurus, because there are a lot of ways to frame these various opportunities that we have placed in the budget for Canadians.

I will proudly say that this Conservative government created income splitting for seniors. The opposition would take that away. There are a lot of seniors in my constituency who benefit enormously from income splitting.

Very soon, there will also be some young families who have one of the parents staying at home for a short period of time, making big investments in their family. They will now be on a more equitable footing so that their tax consequence will not be as punitive. That benefit will be up to \$2,000.

Again, that is not for the rich, that is to help people make a contribution to Canada.

The Budget

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many questions that the Liberal Party would love to see the Minister of Finance actually answer during question period related to the budget, the so-called bogus balanced budget—something that the Conservatives have not really been able to achieve—and the unfair taxation policy that is going to come at a great cost to Canada's middle class and those wanting to become a part of Canada's middle class. They are working hard to do so.

The question that I have for the member is why does she believe that the current Minister of Finance has completely refused to answer any questions since he delivered the budget? Is it because he tried to pass off the flaws of his budget, saying that it is going to be the Prime Minister's granddaughter or our grandchildren who are going to have to pay the price of the cost of this particular budget?

Why is the Minister of Finance not answering any questions related to the budget during question period?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I find it so interesting that the member is referring to this as a bogus budget. Maybe it is a bogus budget because it does not balance itself.

It has balanced itself because we have made prudent, responsible choices, just as hard-working Canadians have to with their own budgets. We have made those decisions over the past number of years, and we are back in balance. We were very responsible with the stimulus program when it was required for the economy and, as a consequence of those investments, we came out ahead of all of the countries in the G7.

Now, we are back in balance. There is nothing bogus about it.

To my hon. opponent's comment about the middle class, the middle class is benefiting from TFSAs. Some 11 million Canadians are benefiting from TFSAs. Just under 50% of them make less than \$42,000 a year. I believe that \$42,000 a year is a living wage, but it is not grand wealth.

The Liberals would take that away from people who are being responsible and who are saving. That is help to the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and privilege of sharing my time with the talented and passionate member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

From the outset, I would like to say that I am biased. I love young people. I love their energy, their curiosity and their enthusiasm. I love their ideals, their desire to build a more just society and a greener planet where they can achieve their full potential, a society in keeping with their aspirations. I love young people because I was young once and I identify with their desire to build a fair society where no one is left behind.

I am rising in the House today to speak to budget 2015, which was presented with great fanfare last week. Nevertheless, this budget does not include an overall vision to mitigate the ills of our society, transform our economy into a successful economy worthy of 21st century or deal with climate change and the growing inequality in our society.

While greenhouse gas emissions in Canada are increasing and inequality is growing, an OECD report indicates that the gap between Canada's rich and poor is continuing to grow. According to the OECD's analysis, Canada had the fourth-largest increase in inequality over the past two decades. Budget 2015 and the budget before that will only make matters worse.

• (1625)

[*English*]

The OECD report is not the only analysis of Canada's growing income gap. A study published in September 2014 by The Conference Board of Canada found that income inequality has been rising more rapidly in Canada than in the U.S. since the mid-nineties. This research in 18 countries found that Canada had the fourth largest increase in inequality between the mid-nineties and late 2000s.

[*Translation*]

In July, I organized an informal meeting with young leaders in LaSalle—Émard. They shared their concerns about their future, the challenge of balancing work and school, limited job options, and especially the instability of those jobs. They talked about the big issues, such as protecting the environment, inequality, the international situation and the need for electoral reform. They admitted to having little interest in politics because the message does not resonate with them. The recently tabled 2015 budget will do nothing to spark their interest. I hope that it will arouse their indignation.

Let us look at what our young people are facing. According to Statistics Canada, in 2013, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 24 was 13.7%. That puts Canada behind other developed nations and is double the unemployment rate among workers aged 25 to 54, which is 5.4%.

In 2014, we had 387,000 young people who could not find jobs. That situation represents only part of the problem, particularly if we consider the fact that these statistics do not include people who are underemployed or young people who have become discouraged and stopped looking for work.

In my riding, LaSalle—Émard, the numbers are even more disturbing. In 2013, the youth unemployment rate was 15%, well above the national average of 8.2%.

The high rate of unemployment and underemployment is the result of a complex social problem that has to do with things like the lack of training to meet labour market needs, mobility challenges, the lack of subsidy programs for employers, the shortage of paid training, and the lack of high-quality, well-paying jobs, among other things.

Some of the measures in the budget reflect the NDP's wishes, but far too few. For example, we support the renewed funding for young entrepreneurs through the Futurpreneur Canada program, even though that funding has been reduced.

We are pleased that the government listened to the NDP and extended basic workplace protection to unpaid interns, and we look forward to finding out more about that.

The Budget

Some other measures are a step in the right direction, but do not go far enough to alleviate student debt or give students the opportunity to be debt-free.

We are seeing a growing gap between the generations, and as the NDP leader said, we are leaving a growing economic, ecological and social debt to future generations.

The budget does not respond to the request by student associations, which called on the government to take action to reduce the massive increase in student debt, except for the announced reduction in the expected parental contribution under the Canada Student Loans needs assessment process. This does not provide any direct help to students, and no details have been provided.

• (1630)

[English]

According to the Canadian Federation of Students, the federal budget will “put nearly 200,000 students into deeper debt”. An article in *Maclean's* magazine says, “measures will mean larger Canada Student Loan amounts awarded to borrowers. For kids in lower income families...it’s unlikely this change will do much to encourage them to think about higher education”.

[Translation]

Faced with a mortgaged future, young people between the ages of 18 and 35 are looking for ways to fully participate in society in keeping with their aspirations.

The role of the federal government is to create favourable conditions by making strategic investments to diversify the economy and create 21st century jobs in growth sectors, such as the green technology, high-tech and research sectors.

Young people must also be able to count on public policy to reduce intergenerational inequality so that they can be assured of a dignified retirement and accessible, universal health care. If we do nothing to change the situation, future generations will have huge challenges to address, including the aging population, climate change and increased inequality.

Budget 2015 and the austerity budgets of the past 20 years have only served to reduce the public sphere's ability to mitigate the negative effects of an unbridled market economy. Canada's young people will need all of their imagination and creativity to clean up that mess.

The NDP is the only party that is proposing practical solutions to make life more affordable and reduce inequality through progressive public policies. We believe that the government has a role to play in building a more just, greener and more prosperous Canada where no one is left behind and future generations can thrive.

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech, which I listened to with great interest. Given that we are talking about the budget, she focused quite a bit on youth employment. However, the Conservatives' budget mostly favours the rich, and even the Minister of Finance was unable to say how many jobs this budget will create.

My colleague also spoke about the high youth unemployment rate. Whether we are talking about her riding of LaSalle—Émard, my riding or other areas of Canada, the youth unemployment rate is extremely high.

What does the member think about the fact that the Conservative Party is spending millions of dollars on partisan advertising when it could be using that money to create jobs for young people?

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the member acknowledged that youth underemployment and unemployment are a tragedy for Canada. We are losing a human resource because it is not achieving its full potential. It is a great loss for Canada.

To spend millions of dollars on advertising is frivolous. This government has done this a number of times. That is unfortunate. That is not a strategic investment in job creation across Canada. The federal government represents all regions of Canada and must put in place conditions that foster job creation in every sector of activity.

We are lucky because our economy is diversified, but we need to create the jobs of the future and be innovative and determined so that Canada becomes a leader in the fight against climate change and in research and development. We can do it because our youth are well educated, and they have to be able to contribute to our society.

• (1635)

[English]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gave a rounding speech, saying only the NDP could deliver. It is clearly not happy with our budget.

Would she comment on the fact that federal transfer payments have reached historic levels under this Conservative government, nearly \$68 billion right now? That is a 62% increase since we formed government. All of this was done while we balanced the budget, while we cut taxes for families and businesses and while we were being responsible. What is wrong with that? We are helping Canadians and cutting taxes.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that we have an infrastructure deficit and that we have fallen far behind in adapting to climate change. We are seriously behind. This budget will make it even harder for governments to tackle these challenges.

We have huge health-related challenges, such as the aging population. My colleague mentioned transfers, but the government has actually rolled back those transfers. There are huge challenges. The government and this budget are making it harder for our country to tackle these challenges.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague for LaSalle—Émard is a phenomenal representative in the House. It is an honour to work with her.

It is my pleasure to speak to Motion No. 18, the 2015-16 budget.

The Budget

With rising income disparity, the Canadian government is faced with clear choices: to implement fiscal measures to address that disparity, or not; and to choose to genuinely support economic diversification, or not. Disappointingly, based on the budget bill, it is clear the Conservative government has chosen the later path in both instances.

There is some good news for middle-class Canadians in this budget. As recommended by the NDP, there will be a gradual small business tax cut from 11% to 9%. Also recommended by the NDP is the extension of the EI benefit to care for sick or dying relatives, from six weeks to six months.

It is commendable that the government does sometimes listen to the opposition. Still, unfortunately, there is no willingness to restore the right to claim OAS or GIS benefits at age 65, as CARP, the NDP and many others have sought, and no action on the requested increase in CPP benefits.

While some appreciate the non-refundable tax credit for renovations for seniors and handicapped, according to the Canadian Alliance of United Seniors, only those with the means to pay upfront for renovations will benefit the most, meaning more would have benefited from a refundable tax credit. Those seniors fortunate to have invested in RRSPs and then converted to RRIFs will benefit from the lessened duty to withdraw amounts per year. Unfortunately, many have no RRSPs or RRIFs.

Bad news for struggling families is that the budget provides grossly inequitable tax benefits, including raising the annual limit for tax-free savings account deposits to \$10,000 a year, which clearly will assist only those with that scale of surplus income. While many managed to contribute \$5,000, doubling that is doubtful for the many facing record household debt. The Parliamentary Budget Officer projects the cost at \$1.3 billion this year alone and by 2060, a loss of almost \$15 billion a year to the Canadian revenue. Thus there will be a loss to programs meeting the needs of most families.

According to Rob Carrick of *The Globe and Mail*, the national conversation on personal finance has been hijacked by the tax-free savings account offer. Rising household debt, in his view, is the bigger issue. He has reported that while government is lauding its balanced budget, a record number of households are sinking in family debt. The growth in debt is exceeding salary and wages by a 163% ratio. The opportunity to contribute even more to a tax-free savings account is a luxury prospect for far too few.

Among the clearest evidence that the Conservative government chose to reward the wealthy is the spousal income splitting measure, a multi-billion dollar windfall for the 10% wealthiest Canadians. This year alone, \$2.4 billion will be diverted from federal revenues for this privileged group. In each of the next five years, \$2 billion more will be lost from revenue, with a grand total of a \$12 billion loss from programs that benefit all Canadians.

What potential programs are lost or promises broken? There will be no new money for home care; no new national pharmacare program; no national senior strategy on health care supported by the Canadian Medical Association; no national housing strategy; and despite a decade of promises, zero dollars to create critically needed, affordable child care spaces.

Despite the great hullabaloo, actual delivery of the monies for many programs is being delayed for up to two to four years, well past the next election, which is perhaps not a minor factor in enabling a balanced budget this year. The government is simply delaying major expenditures into future parliaments, despite the critical need and in face of the fact that the cost for delivery will inevitably rise, particularly for infrastructure.

Ninety-five per cent of Canadians think investment in public transit is important. Commitments to long-term transit funding was called for and then welcomed by the FCM and the mayors. However, an increasing number of municipal leaders are now expressing concern that no clear monetary commitment has been made to entrench a permanent transit fund or a proportion of federal dollars transfer. Far more is needed to address the critical and growing need for public transit. The government is forcing cities to pursue private financing agreements through P3s, whether they like it or not.

• (1640)

Concerns with infrastructure funding are even greater, as funds over the next three years will be cut by 87%. Only 25% of the money is to be allocated to cities before 2019. No new money is budgeted to assist municipalities in complying with the new federal regulations on wastewater and therefore, there will be implications for the environment.

The \$150 million announced for mortgage relief for social and co-operative housing will enable repairs. That is welcomed, yet over the next 25 years, \$1.7 billion in housing funding will expire, putting social housing in jeopardy. No new money is committed for new affordable housing and there is no commitment to a long-term stable funding program for housing.

Economic diversity is the major topic in my province these days. The government has a clear choice to make in the path it chooses to diversify our economy. For manufacturing, the budget offers some limited support, including extended accelerated capital cost write-offs for another 10 years. Astoundingly, the Conservatives are decreasing transfers for western economic diversification despite widespread calls in my province of Alberta to end the over-reliance on the oil-based economy. Many long-tenured oil workers seeking assistance for work are saying they want out of the boom-and-bust roller-coaster ride of the oil sector.

The Budget

EI claims in Alberta are 72.9% higher than last year. There is a 30% increase in EI claims the past two months straight. Alberta is experiencing the highest unemployment rate since 2009, projecting almost 20,000 jobs lost alone in drilling activity.

Limited immediate support is offered to our universities, colleges and technical schools for science, research and education, despite the contribution they make not only to direct employment, including for students and in creating our workforce of the future, but also as contributors to the economy in advances in science, research and education.

As with many programs, the budgeted \$46 million new funds for the granting council budgets will not actually flow until 2016 or 2017. There is a continuing trend to limit federal research and innovation dollars, including the NSERC grants to those who garner matching industry partners or for projects that create long-term economic advantages.

That undervalues the contributions of the universities and technical schools in my riding to pure scientific research, to breakthroughs in combatting disease, including diabetes, to addressing pollution, and to developments in physics, chemistry, and so forth. The \$1.33 billion for the Canada Foundation for Innovation research is spread over six years, and is delayed again until 2017-18. As this fund simply keeps being reannounced under new names, it is not clear how much of the money is actually new money.

Only \$3 million is assigned to the Council of Canadian Academies, which has done stellar work on our behalf. Preference is given to innovative enterprises garnering endorsements from favoured major corporations. For example, western economic diversification has favoured the defence industry over support to the burgeoning renewable sector.

So many apply each year for support to provide summer employment for students, including many university research jobs. So many are turned down. A small increase could provide valuable work experience for our youth.

Other concerns voiced to me about how the government is delivering a balanced budget include the decision to withdraw \$2 billion from the contingency fund. People ask me what happens if there is another major flood or record forest fires in Alberta or other provinces or territories. There is a decade of cutting front-line services. More bad news, not clearly revealed to Canadians, includes the imminent cuts to health care transfers starting in 2016-17, moving from the 6% escalator to 3%.

In the brief time remaining, I want to mention there are no new benefits for veterans, no money for missing and murdered women, and no new money for aboriginal education or benefits.

Despite the continuing claims of responsible resource development balancing development and environmental protection, there is zero money to support the participation of Canadians in major resource project reviews. Climate change is not even mentioned in the budget. That is absolutely reprehensible. Even the oil and gas sector is asking the government to step up to the plate and address our climate issues and to address the fact that it has not dealt with first nations claims.

Why is there no support for any businesses, communities and first nations wanting to pursue a cleaner, more affordable, sustainable future? It is a matter of choice.

• (1645)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen develop over the last number of days after the Minister of Finance actually tabled his budget a lot of assertions in terms of this being a bogus balanced budget.

There was the sale of GM shares in order to get a balance and dipping into the contingency fund, for example. We have seen a great deal of unfairness in terms of the TFSAs and income splitting. Both are very controversial.

There are many controversial issues related to the budget, yet since the minister actually tabled the budget, he has refused to stand in his place during question period to answer any questions whatsoever related to his budget. This might be a first in Canadian history.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on the responsibility the Minister of Finance has in terms of being held accountable here inside the chamber for presenting his budget, and why she believes he does not have the political courage to actually answer questions related to this budget.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the member's focus on the Minister of Finance, to tell the truth, I spread the blame across the cabinet and the backbenchers, including the backbenchers and the cabinet ministers from my province of Alberta. The responsibility falls on all the members on the government side of this place for failing to deliver on these important matters. They stood by and allowed the government to balance the budget by simply not transferring money now, but in two to four years from now, to address the most critical needs faced by my constituents and theirs, such as transit, health care, opportunity for education, giving our aboriginal Canadians equal opportunity within our country.

Yes, the Minister of Finance should defend his budget, but it is just as important that the other ministers defend how they are underspending in their portfolios and going in the wrong direction when it comes to priorities for our country.

• (1650)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the member opposite talk about how critical health care is.

The Budget

If we think about the fact that our health care dollars and the federal transfers have just been increasing constantly, the dollars that are being spent in Alberta are actually going down. How could the member, coming from Alberta, speak about that, trying to perpetuate this myth that is coming from the NDP that health care in Alberta, or throughout this country, has not been increasingly improved because of our Conservative government and our not doing the types of things that the Liberals did, which was to balance budgets on the backs of our communities?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member from Alberta raising that question. Absolutely, for my constituents and likely my colleague across the way's constituents, health care is top of mind in Alberta. There has been a lot of fear for quite some time, because of the Conservative government in Alberta, that they might have privatized or two-tier health care. It is very clear, and the government has said so in its own budget, it is going to be reducing the escalator from 6% to 3% into the future. That is a reduction in transfer any way we cut it. It is going to be based on the GDP growth. That is a threat to potential transfers.

The concern is our health care costs are rising. Yes, the government has been increasing the transfers and so it should, so any government should. However, where is the support for innovation? We keep doing all these pilot projects. Let us give some support to actually implement those innovations. Let us bring together the federal, provincial, territorial and first nations health ministers, and have a dialogue on bringing back an overall national plan on health care, a health accord like we used to have, long-term commitment with everybody's input on the future of our health care.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the very distinguished member for Macleod. I look forward to his remarks.

It is a pleasure today to rise to speak to budget 2015.

As members know, I chair the Standing Committee on Finance. Each fall we engage in prebudget consultations. This past year we received submissions from 430 Canadian individuals and organizations. We heard from about 100 organizations and individuals at committee in the fall. We submitted our 47 recommendations to Parliament in December, and we are very pleased to see that many of these recommendations made their way into this budget.

The budget has three themes: supporting jobs and growth, helping families and communities prosper, and ensuring the security of Canadians.

I want to take this opportunity to try to address as many of the specific measures as I can, starting with supporting jobs and growth. The first thing I want to mention is that we have provided manufacturers a 10-year tax incentive to boost productivity-enhancing investments. This was very welcomed by the manufacturing sector and Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters. Jay Myers has done an outstanding job leading that organization and fighting for that sector. Many of us go back a long way in this House. I am going back to the industry committee that was studying that sector in 2006-07. We tabled our report in 2007. It recommended a five-year period for a 50% straight-line depreciation. It was put in the 2007 budget for a two-year period and kept being extended for a two-year period.

However, the government has very wisely put in place a 10-year window so that manufacturers across this country can build on that.

I want to quote from Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, which applauds the Government of Canada's budget initiative. It states:

New investment in the manufacturing sector is expected as a result of a long term tax credit announced in the Government of Canada's 2015 Budget. Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association commends this initiative. The program provides long term certainty to industry and helps boost Canada's global competitiveness to attract new investment.

That is very good news for that sector.

The second item I want to highlight is supporting world-class advanced research. The previous member spoke about this. I do not know what budget she is reading if we read all of the budgets presented by this finance minister and the previous one. In this one there is an additional \$1.3 billion over six years for the Canada Foundation for Innovation, an additional \$46 million per year to the three granting councils, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, providing funding for basic research, for researchers to do what they do best in terms of supporting that basic research at the university and college level across this country.

Other initiatives in the research area is partnering with Mitacs in support of graduate level industrial research and development internships. A lot of this is geared to supporting the National Research Council so that we not only generate good basic research here in Canada, but we can actually commercialize it. We can translate that good idea into a commercial success, which has been a challenge for this country in the past.

The next area is supporting small businesses. We have reduced the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. This builds on the reductions in the tax rates we have done for businesses of all sizes. We have reduced the small business tax rate already from 12% to 11%. We have increased the amount that a business can earn from \$300,000 to \$500,000 before it pays the higher tax rate of 15%. We have encouraged provinces across this country to adopt a 10% rate. The larger businesses pay a 25% rate, but for small businesses the rate is 9%. That is exceptionally good news for these generators of jobs.

The second item I want to highlight is that we are providing \$14 million over two years to Futurpreneur Canada in support of young entrepreneurs. Going back to the work of our finance committee, this was recommendation 46.

The Budget

In terms of training a highly skilled workforce and focusing on students, there are two policies I want to highlight. We are making the Canada student loans program work for families by reducing the expected parental contribution, and we are eliminating in-study student income from the Canada student loans program needs assessment process. This is based on recommendation 13. I want to commend the student organization CASA for bringing this forward year after year as a policy idea to our committee and to the government.

The previous speaker spoke of a lack of investment in public transit. Again, I am not sure what documents the member is reading, because this budget provides an additional \$750 million over two years starting in 2017-18, and \$1 billion per year ongoing thereafter for a new and innovative public transit fund. The mayor of Edmonton, Don Iveson, has pushed for this for years and was very pleased to see this recommendation in our budget.

• (1655)

The next item I want to mention is something that was actually identified before the budget. It is providing accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for assets used in facilities that liquify natural gas. Obviously, this is very important for our colleagues from British Columbia, but it would have benefits across the country if we were able to competitively locate some of these facilities here in Canada.

The next item is extending employment insurance compassionate care benefits from six weeks to six months to better support Canadians caring for gravely ill family members. This is an excellent idea and there is an excellent policy in place, but the government recognizes that this needs to be extended for people in this situation. Therefore, I am very pleased to see this in the budget as well.

The next item I want to mention in this area is the proposed change to reduce the minimum withdrawal factors for registered retirement income funds. I did a town hall in Edmonton with about 150 seniors who all raised this with me. It is a fact that Canadians are living longer. It is a good news story. Canadians are living longer and if they do not need to they should not be forced to withdraw at the rates they are currently forced to withdraw. Right now, they convert their RRSP to a RRIF at age 71 and start the mandatory withdrawal rates at age 72. All of the RRIF has to be converted at age of 94. The proposed change was based on finance recommendation no. 11. This would allow seniors, if they are in a position to, to preserve more of their income in that form if they are living longer and to better enable them to care for themselves in their retirement. This is a good news policy. It was proposed by a number of organizations at the committee, so this is something we recommended. We are very pleased to see it in the budget as well.

The next item would introduce a new home accessibility tax credit for seniors and persons with disabilities that would help with the cost of ensuring their homes remain safe, secure and accessible. This is another excellent policy.

I want to move on to the issue of health care. The health care issue has been mentioned by some members on the other side. I am very pleased to see the mandate of the Mental Health Commission of Canada would be renewed for another 10 years. This is a very positive item. We heard in committee from various witnesses about the importance of the commission. Dennis Anderson, who very

much works on the commission, lives in my riding. He does excellent work. He was obviously very pleased as well to see the extension.

As a member who sponsored a motion on Alzheimer's, I was very pleased to see the next item. The budget would provide up to \$42 million over five years, starting in 2015-16, to help improve seniors' health through innovation by establishing the Canadian centre for aging and brain health innovation. I was very pleased to see that, and I want to thank the Minister of Health for that action item as well.

In July of last year I had the opportunity, with the hon. member for Markham, to tour Ghana with Engineers Without Borders. It is an organization that does an outstanding job in its development work. We had such an educational period there. I commend all the, primarily young, people who dedicate so much of their lives to all types of international development. Whether financing initiatives, helping a local government or helping a property tax reform, we spent a very impressive time there. One of the recommendations this organization has been making is to establish a development finance initiative to support effective international development by providing financing, technical assistance and business advisory services to firms operating in developing countries. It was the idea of Engineers Without Borders. It was an excellent idea, and I am so pleased to see it in the budget. I have to say, my colleague from Markham was an excellent travelling companion as well.

In terms of balancing the budget, this was something we committed to back in 2009. The then-finance minister, Jim Flaherty, said the government was committed to balancing the budget over the medium term. That is exactly what we have done this year by balancing this budget. We have done so while increasing funding for provincial governments, for health care, education, social assistance, seniors benefits and family benefits. We have done so by reducing discretionary federal expenditures of \$70 billion, between 5% and 10%. We have done so in a very responsible way.

I want to encourage members on all sides to support the budget and I look forward to their questions.

• (1700)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my friend opposite, but one of the things that his finance minister said, and I am quite alarmed by it, is that in fact it will be our grandchildren who would have to suffer the consequences of this very short-sighted budget. In fact, they will be able to fix the problems, I guess is what he said.

The Budget

The question for the member opposite is, given that this budget would in fact short-change the federal treasury by some \$17 billion in the next 20-25 years, how does he propose to recoup that money given that, in addition to short-changing the budget by \$17 billion, it would also continue the Conservative and Liberal trend away from taxes on capital gains and on corporations and over to taxes on working people, on ordinary, middle-class people? That is how the current government sees the tax system increasing. If we need another \$17 billion, where is it going to come from?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I have to tell the member that is not what the Minister of Finance said, at all, and he knows that. He knows that very well.

The reality is this government is committed to reducing taxes. This government has reduced taxes for businesses, for families, for seniors, for individuals. We have reduced taxes because we believe Canadians work very hard and deserve to keep more of their own income for their priorities, whether it is raising their family, whether it is providing for an education, whether it is saving for their own retirement. That is a fundamental, philosophical distinction between this side and the other side of the House. We are very proud of the fact that we have reduced taxes for Canadians in all forms.

The other thing I want to point out, though, is that in terms of balancing the budget, we did not do what previous governments did. We did not reduce health care funding. We did not eviscerate certain departments. Funding for provincial transfers has gone up markedly: 6% year over year for health care, 3% year over year for education and social assistance. Family benefits have gone up, seniors' benefits have gone up, and we continued that, at the same time, and frankly during a period of modest economic growth, we have balanced the budget. That is a true achievement and something of which I am very proud and of which everybody in this House should be very proud.

• (1705)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this concept of the Prime Minister's grandchild being worried is alleviated because the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that so few people would be able to avail themselves of this \$10,000 that it would not be such a burden upon the government. However, that is just a sign that it is catering quasi-exclusively to the rich.

On a more positive note, I would like to agree with my colleague that we really admired Engineers Without Borders. He said the people were relatively young—he is younger than me, but I think every single one of them was under 30—and doing fantastic work over there, and I am pleased that the budget would be able to support them.

Finally, I understand his city is sometimes referred to as “Redmonton”. Is he not a bit nervous that his whole city, at the provincial level, seems about to be overwhelmed by the NDP?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure if that relates to the matter at hand, but I will go to the member for Edmonton—Leduc.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the relevance of the last question. I will leave it to the voters of Alberta, next Tuesday, to decide what colour our city shall be.

With respect to tax-free savings accounts, my friend and I have some very strong disagreements. I think this is the greatest innovation, in terms of retirement savings, since the RRSP was introduced. I think, in some ways, it is even better than the RRSP, in the sense that it encourages savings. It is not a tax benefit right up front, but people pay the tax. It is after-tax income, which is often not mentioned by the other side of the House. It is after-tax income. Canadians pay the tax. They put some money away in investments. Those investments generate innovation jobs because it is in all sorts of companies.

It is interesting that they say only one in three Canadians have these. I actually heard a member on the opposite side say that. Eleven million accounts have been opened. Eleven million Canadians. One out of three Canadians is actually a very high number, a very good number. We certainly hope that number goes up. Again, it goes to that philosophical difference. This allows Canadians to keep more of their hard-earned money after they pay the tax, to prepare for their own retirement, to prepare for an education upgrade, to prepare to move into a bigger home for their family. That is what governments should be doing.

I just want to finish up by saying that I completely agree with my hon. friend that Engineers Without Borders is an outstanding organization. I was so impressed by these young people who could be in Canada, making an awful lot more money, but who are dedicating so many of their productive years to helping those who are less fortunate than we are. I would certainly agree with him on that point.

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to rise in the debate on the federal budget, economic action plan 2015. Today, I am going to focus the bulk of my comments on the benefits that this budget would have for Canadian families.

First, though, I want to note that our government made a promise to Canadians. I made a promise to the residents of Macleod. Our government promised Canadians that we would balance our budget by 2015, and I am proud to stand in the House today and say that under the guidance of the Prime Minister, we have fulfilled that promise. Economic action plan 2015 is a balanced budget. This is the result of hard work, commitment and a prudent fiscal approach to government.

The Conservative approach has reduced the deficit from \$55.6 billion at the height of the global recession to a projected surplus of \$1.4 billion in 2015-16. Canada is the first country in the G7 to be able to balance its budget since the global recession in 2008.

The Budget

Balancing the budget is essential, not only because it instills confidence in our economy and allows us to turn our attention to paying down our debt, but, perhaps most importantly, it is what Canadians have told us that they wanted. They want sound fiscal management and they want assurance that the tax dollars of hard-working Canadian families are being spent wisely. Canadians are confident that our Conservative government is utilizing tax dollars in the most effective manner.

How are we doing this? We are doing this by balancing our budget, ensuring vital social and infrastructure programs are funded and, most importantly, by leaving more tax dollars in the pockets of those who know how to use it best: hard-working Canadians. Our economic action plan is built on smart, long-term fiscal planning and, as a result, we can not only table a balanced budget, but we can provide funding for communities in need. These are funds such as the new building Canada plan, the longest and largest infrastructure program in Canadian history. I am very proud to say that there is also the \$750-million annual contribution to the innovative public transit fund, something that municipalities across the country have been asking for for years. It is something that they are very impressed to have in this budget.

All Canadians, including my constituents in Macleod, would benefit from this budget. I am sure that many of the people here share a similar story, but my wife and I both work very hard. To be honest, we have often struggled just to make ends meet, especially when we were raising a young family. Families across the country share this story. They can find it difficult paying for their children's activities, child care, or the other necessities of life. It is with this in mind that I am proud that our economic action plan includes various tax credits geared toward helping hard-working Canadian families make ends meet. These tax credits would help 100% of Canadian families with children.

Among these tax credits is the enhanced universal child care benefit. This means almost \$2,000 per year for each child under 7, and \$720 per year for each child between 7 and 17. The universal child care benefit provides families with the flexibility that they need to meet their child care needs, whether they are families on shift work, those who have family help or those who are in communities where traditional day care is not always easily accessible.

Families can choose how to use these funds to address their child care needs how they see fit. Unlike what the NDP would have us believe, child care is not a one size fits all issue, nor is it best served by a multi-billion dollar bureaucracy that would only benefit 10% of Canadian families.

Another program of which I am very proud is the expansion of the child fitness tax credit. I recall quite vividly when the fitness tax credit was first introduced and how much it helped my wife and I pay for our kids' sports, including volleyball, soccer and hockey. It made a big difference to my family. It is critical to keep our kids healthy and active and now, by doubling the child's fitness tax credit to \$1,000 per child and making it refundable, it ensures that even more families will be able to keep their kids healthy and happy.

As I said earlier, I have three children, and I understand the costs of post-secondary education. Speaking with my own kids and with students, they expressed the importance of making student loans

more accessible. In budget 2015, we have also included several initiatives to improve student grants and loans. These initiatives include expanding eligibility, reducing expected parental contribution and an important change of removing the financial aid penalty for students working while studying. This would allow students to have some hard-earned and much needed spending dollars while they are attending school without impacting their student loans.

● (1710)

We have expanded the eligibility for the Canada student grants, made significant investments in post-secondary education to remove financial barriers and to streamline the Canada student loans program. We have also expanded the eligibility for low and middle-income Canada student grants.

In addition, one program which is going to be very successful is the Canada apprenticeship loan program. Canadians participating in the apprenticeship loan program will be eligible for \$4,000 in an interest-free loan per training session. They can use these dollars to help pay for a mortgage, put food on the table, buy tools or anything that they may need while they are attending school.

This will ensure Canadians have the financial support they need as they pursue a red seal trade. This is an important initiative because these trades address the critical need for the skilled labour we need across Canada.

We have also made it a priority to pass along the benefits to Canadian seniors. We recognize they have put years into supporting our communities. After all, they have built this country. It is our turn to give back and make their lives more comfortable.

In meeting with seniors over the last few months, one issue arose again and again. Thankfully, they are living longer, but as a result, they need the savings they put away to last.

Again, our government listened and we are reducing the minimum withdrawal factors for registered retirement income funds, RRIFs. This, in combination with pension income-splitting, is enabling seniors to preserve more of their retirement savings.

We have introduced a new home accessibility tax credit for seniors and people with disabilities.

This credit will help seniors with the costs of ensuring their homes remain safe, accessible and tailored to their needs. This will allow them to stay in their homes, in their communities close to their friends, family and that important social network.

The Budget

Over the past few weeks I have had the opportunity to meet with residents across southern Alberta to discuss our family tax credits, financial assistance for students, seniors and veterans, enhancing the tax-free savings account, extending the compassionate care benefits and our small business tax reductions.

The response I have had from Canadians could not be clearer. They are ecstatic with the programs our government is implementing and it helps them to cover the costs of raising a family.

I must admit I am disappointed with the opposition members and how they have misrepresented some of these tax credits. For example, they have called enhancing the tax-free savings account and reducing taxes to small business as gifts for the wealthy and tax handouts. I want to make this very clear. The benefits of budget 2015 are not rhetoric. As much as they like to deny it, they are a reality.

Since 2006 our government has implemented changes that will provide tax relief and increased benefits of up to \$6,600 in 2015 for a typical two-earner family of four. These are a result of initiatives such as the family tax cut, universal child care benefit and the cut in the GST, which have reduced the federal tax burden on Canadians to its lowest level in 50 years.

Canadians at all income levels are benefiting from the tax relief introduced by our government with low and middle-income Canadians receiving proportionately greater relief.

For example, in this budget, we have increased the limit for the tax-free savings account from \$5,500 to \$10,000.

There are 11 million Canadians who have a tax-free savings account and 60% of those who had maxed out their TFSA were earning \$60,000 or less per year and of those almost 25% earning between \$20,000 and \$40,000 annually. Do we really consider that a gift for the wealthy?

On the contrary, I see that as making a choice. I look at that as saving for my first house, maybe putting some money away for my child's education or ensuring I have funds set aside for my retirement. It is their money. It is not the government's money. They should be able to spend it or save it.

It was taxed when they earned it and unlike the opposition, I do not believe we should be taxing them again when they choose to save it.

Simply, I urge all hon. members of the House to support economic action plan 2015. It is built on sound financial planning which will allow Canadians to keep more money in their pockets, right where it belongs, right where it will help drive our economy, create jobs and ensure continued growth and prosperity for all Canadians.

● (1715)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Macleod for his speech.

I would like to correct one thing. He said that 60% of people have maxed out their TFSAs, but the real number is 16%. That is important, because it shows that just 16% of those who currently contribute will be able to contribute beyond the current \$5,500 limit.

I think we should be accurate here. I am sure he said what he did in good faith, but 60% of people do not max out their TFSAs right now; it is just 16%.

Furthermore, my colleague from Macleod, like most Conservative members, obviously boasts about having balanced the budget. However, it should be noted that this was largely achieved by selling GM shares and using the surplus in the EI fund.

I would like to quote the current Minister of Finance's predecessor, Jim Flaherty. This is what he said in *The Globe and Mail* and other media outlets in 2013:

[English]

We do not take EI funds and use them to balance the budget. That's what the Liberals did.

Why is the government now using the EI fund surplus to actually balance the budget?

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, first, I will clarify the TFSA. There are 11 million Canadians who have invested in a TFSA and of those 11 million, 60% of them have maxed out their TFSAs or 60% are making \$60,000 or less. I want to ensure that is very clear. That is definitely not something that is going to benefit just the wealthy. If we are talking about wealthy families as those making \$60,000 or less, that is quite disingenuous.

We balanced this budget by making smart choices. We made long-term, prudent financial decisions. We decreased discretionary spending between 5% and 8%. Those are the things we have done to make these decisions possible, not only by balancing a budget but also being able to provide these critical tax credits to Canadian families, tax credits that are going to benefit 100% of Canadian families with children, a tax reduction for small businesses that will create jobs and ensure long-term prosperity for Canadians and Canadian businesses, and continue to drive our economy.

● (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg North is a very hard-working, middle class community and many aspire to get into the middle class. The member made reference to the TFSA and there is one question that I believe many of my constituents would put to the member based on his comments. There may be one individual making \$45,000 to \$50,000 and a second person in the same home may be making \$30,000. They would not have \$10,000 at the end of the year to put into a TFSA.

What percentage of individuals does he believe is going to be able to take full advantage of this tax option in this current budget who have incomes of less than \$45,000 a year? How many does he believe will? What percentage? What is his best guesstimate? I am telling him it is a very low percentage who will be taking advantage of it the 2015 tax year.

The Budget

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Liberals keep bringing up the TFSA and continue to make the argument that this will be a benefit just for the wealthy, but the statistics are quite obvious. Close to half of the 11 million Canadians who have TFSAs are making less than \$60,000 a year. This is an option for them. Whether every Canadian takes advantage of it or not, the fact is that the option is there for them to make this investment.

Like I said, we have taxed these dollars on people's incomes. Why should we be taxing again when they are trying to save these dollars? This is an opportunity for them to put money away for their first home, a car, their child's education or to ensure that their retirement is going to be as comfortable as possible.

This gives Canadians the option and unlike what the opposition is saying, that this is just for the wealthy, the stats show that this is something that all Canadians are taking advantage of.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member of Parliament for York South—Weston.

I begin my speech on the Conservative budget, my critique of the Conservative budget, by highlighting the fact that there are only five mentions of Newfoundland and Labrador in the entire 518-page document. As a representative of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, one of Newfoundland and Labrador's seven ridings, my priority is my riding and my province, and five mentions, one in a graph of crude oil prices, another in a statistic about pensions and the other three off-hand mentions is not near good enough.

My critique is both good and bad, but make no mistake, there is more bad. There always is with these Conservatives.

Not so much bad news as wrong Conservative priorities that are wrong for Canada. They are Conservative priorities that are changing the face of Canada. These are the Conservative priorities that put the wealthy first, the more affluent and influential first, and that is not who we are. It is not who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is not who we are as Canadians. It is not who we are, but it is who the current Conservative government wants us to become. We cannot let that happen. We will not let that happen.

First, I will go to a piece of good news for Newfoundland and Labrador, or what would appear on the surface to be good news.

In its budget, the Conservative government announced \$5.7 million over five years to help secure new markets for Canadian seal products. That is good news. It is welcome news on the surface. Let me put that news in the context of where the sealing industry is today.

We have a \$5.7 million pot to help secure new markets for seal products when, under the current Conservative government, we have seen the biggest collapse of world seal markets in our history. Under the current Conservative government, seal products have been banned in Russia, the European Union, Belarus, Taiwan and Kazakhstan. Therefore, that \$5.7 million for seal marketing is just a little late coming.

That money is also a little late coming when we consider Carino, a Newfoundland and Labrador company that is the largest buyer of

seal pelts in Canada. Carino is not buying any seal pelts this year. Instead, it is going to rely on its inventory.

That \$5.7 million is also a little late coming when we consider that the Canadian Sealers Association shut the doors of its St. John's office recently to reorganize because it was broke.

Better late than never with the \$5.7 million for the sealing industry, I suppose. However, it is clear that the current Conservative government has no right to bill itself as a champion of the seal hunt because the facts do not support it.

Moving on, the Conservative budget is also incredibly worrisome from Newfoundland and Labrador's perspective because of what it does not mention. Red flags waved all across Newfoundland and Labrador in February when the government released the main estimates. As members know, the main estimates lay out the expected spending of the federal government in the coming fiscal year. The red flags were raised because the subsidy for Marine Atlantic, the crown corporation that runs the ferry link between Newfoundland and mainland Canada, has had its budget slashed.

Marine Atlantic's budget for the this fiscal year, according to those main estimates, has been set at \$19.3 million, which is a massive drop from the \$127 million last year and \$154 million the year before that.

I asked the minister in this House before the budget was announced whether Marine Atlantic would receive full funding. The minister's response was to wait for the budget, only there was not a word mentioned about Marine Atlantic in the budget. There was not a whisper.

A gulf ferry link is guaranteed in Newfoundland's Terms of Union with Canada. If Marine Atlantic's budget is indeed set at \$19.3 million for this fiscal year, it will amount to the lowest amount of funding the corporation has received from the federal government going back at least 15 years.

● (1725)

If Marine Atlantic's budget is indeed slashed, ferry rates are sure to rise. Why is that incredibly bad news, besides the obvious? It is incredibly bad news because 60% of all freight going into or out of my province does so on a Marine Atlantic ferry. Slashing the federal subsidy will jack up the rates, and increasing the ferry rates will drive up the price of everything.

What is the score? Is the government preparing to punish Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? Is the government preparing to ignore the spirit of the terms of union?

The leader of the government once described Atlantic Canada as having a culture of defeat, but it is the present government that has a defeatist attitude toward Atlantic Canada. The government has turned its back on Atlantic Canada, but not before spitting in the eye of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is maybe payback for Danny Williams' "Anyone but Conservative" campaign. It is like we do not matter. We are only 32 seats in Atlantic Canada.

The Conservative government is not good for Atlantic Canada. The Conservative government is not good for the country.

The Budget

Canadians who will most benefit from this budget are the wealthiest 15%. The wealthiest 15% are the ones who will qualify for income splitting. They are also the ones who will be able to put \$10,000, cash, into a tax free savings account, which the Conservatives would almost double from \$5,500 to \$10,000 in their budget. What typical family will benefit from the Conservative budget?

The typical family, as outlined on page 6 of the budget document, is a family of four, a couple with two children. The man, according to the example, earns \$84,000 a year, while the woman earns \$36,000, for a total household income of \$120,000 a year, which puts that typical Conservative family in the top 15% in terms of income. That is the Conservatives' example. It is not my example. There is nothing typical about that household income. That tells us who the Conservative target group is. It is the wealthy.

The difference between a typical family in this Conservative budget and a typical family in previous Conservative budgets is that the man of the family now makes a lot more. In all previous years, all previous Conservative examples, the woman was the biggest breadwinner. In the income-splitting year, this year, the man suddenly has the biggest income. It sounds like the old boys' club.

Let me quote my party's finance critic, the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He said that this Conservative budget's family example is all about politics. It is not about fairly illustrating tax policy.

The Conservatives' imaginary "typical family" doesn't reflect the reality of Canadian families: they make almost twice as much as the real average Canadian family.

They benefit from boutique tax credits that most real families don't make enough to qualify for....

There is an expression worth repeating: boutique tax credit. I would go so far as to call this a boutique budget, only most Canadians, most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, cannot afford to shop at boutiques. If I can cut to the chase and summarize what Canadians, what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, should take away from this Conservative budget is that we cannot afford to vote Conservative in the next election.

As for the Conservatives' boast that this is a balanced budget written in black ink, I disagree. This budget is written in Conservative blue ink, whereby balancing the budget means raiding the EI fund and robbing the emergency contingency fund. Balancing a budget by creating such an imbalance in incomes and directed tax breaks is nothing to boast about. It is shameful.

• (1730)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise something that troubles me about this budget. Unfortunately, I was not able to present a full speech on the 2015 budget due to the difficulty of finding a speaking slot that did not interfere with the national Holocaust remembrance.

Had I had the opportunity, what I wanted to say was that we have lost track of a fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy, which is that Parliament must control the public purse. Increasingly, budgets have become big thick brochures for a government in power, particularly under the current Conservative administration. We no longer have the index at the back of a budget that actually shows us

what each department gets to spend, how it compares to the previous year, and how it compares to years going forward.

We have absolutely no idea for this budget what the funding would be for international development assistance, what the funding would be for Fisheries and Oceans, or what the funding would be for Parks Canada. Indeed, no departmental spending is detailed here, so parliamentarians are essentially voting on a pig in a poke.

If we respected the principle that Parliament controls the public purse, none of us should vote, because none of us have accurate information.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, before I became the member of Parliament for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, I was a journalist. I was an editor of a newspaper. At one time I was a political reporter. I was locked up in more than one budget lock-up analyzing provincial government budgets in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What I find different about this budget and the 518-page document we have with this Conservative budget, versus budgets I covered as a journalist in the past, is exactly what this member pointed out. It is the absence of detail.

Marine Atlantic is an example. I was told, as I outlined in my speech, that we would find out what was going on with Marine Atlantic's budget in the budget document. It is nowhere to be found. I was told today by the minister that it may be included in some estimates that will be released in May. That is not good enough. There should be more detail.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, his passion and the points he made, which make eminent sense.

I too was surprised and disappointed by the example that was given because, as we have shown once again, the wage gap between men and women in Canadian families continues to grow. I also mentioned this in my speech.

I would like to know how the member sees the future in terms of these inequalities and what an NDP government would do to reduce those inequalities and gender-based wage gaps.

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen is that there is going to be a change. The change will be that we will have a new federal government. We will have a New Democratic government, and we will have a new Prime Minister of Canada, and the priorities will change.

If I can return to the speech, the typical family, as outlined in the budget on page 6, makes \$120,000 a year. That is an example, from the federal Conservatives, of a typical family in Canada, where \$120,000 for a family income represents the top 15% wealthiest in the country.

I guess I should not call it out to lunch. It just shows what the Conservatives' priorities are. The Conservatives' priority is not the real, typical Canadian family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:37 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 18.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

• (1815)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 382)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergén
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeschen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Eglinski	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Koramicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon

Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 153

The Budget

Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Opitz
Paradis
Perkins
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chan	Charlton
Chicoine	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseauit	Easter
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May

Private Members' Business

McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Sims (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau — 123	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SECURITY AUTHORITY

The House resumed from April 23 consideration of the motion as amended.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 553 under private members' business.

● (1825)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 383)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Barlow
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Benskin
Bergen	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Boughen	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie

Casey	Cash
Chan	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crockett
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dechert
Devolin	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Easter
Eglinski	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gill	Glover
Godin	Goguen
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Lauzon	Laverdière
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	Obhrai
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Papillon
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Péclet
Perkins	Pilon
Plamondon	Poillievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Raïtt
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan

Private Members' Business

Reid
Richards
Ritz
Sandhu
Scarpaleggia
Scott
Sellah
Shea
Shory
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
St-Denis
Stoffer
Sullivan
Tilson
Toone
Troost
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga

Rempel
Rickford
Rousseau
Saxton
Schellenberger
Seeback
Sgro
Shiple
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
Sopuck
Stanton
Stewart
Strahl
Sweet
Toet
Tremblay
Trottier
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 276

Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Dusseault
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Lamoureux
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Tremblay

Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinity
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Stoffer
Toone
Trudeau — 122

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

VIA RAIL CANADA ACT

The House resumed from April 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-640, An Act respecting VIA Rail Canada and making consequential amendments to the Canada Transportation Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-640 under private members' business.

• (1830)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 384)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Angus
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Chan
Chicoine
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen

Allen (Welland)
Ashton
Aubin
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Charlton
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Barlow
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Eglinski
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hillyer
Holder

NAYS

Members

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Gougen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James

Private Members' Business

Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Perkins	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

NATIONAL ANTHEM ACT

The House resumed from April 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-624, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-624 under private members' business.

● (1840)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: Is the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville rising on a point of order?

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like my vote to be recorded as no.

Mr. Rob Anders: Mr. Speaker, I think there was some confusion. Obviously I was meaning to vote no, and to keep the traditional wording of the national anthem.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, I voted twice, but I want my vote to be registered as no.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, vote early and vote often. I intend my vote to be a no.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, you have people on the other side voting twice. Normally, it would be their first vote that counts. The second vote is dismissed.

The Speaker: I believe the opposition House leader is incorrect. As long as I have been in the House and as long as I have been Speaker, when members have found themselves in circumstances of standing both for the yeas and nays, the House calls on members to clarify, and once they do, the record is amended accordingly.

We will hear the results from the clerk in a moment and then we will move on.

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 385)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chan	Charlton
Chicoine	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Jones	Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Lavertière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McQuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu

Private Members' Business

Scarpaleggia
Scott
Sgro
Sors
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Stewart
Sullivan
Tremblay
Young (Vancouver South)— 127

Schellenberger
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis
Stoffer
Toone
Trudeau

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Williamson
Wong
Woodworth
Yelich
Young (Oakville)
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 144

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6:45, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) the unemployment rate in Canada has remained high since the 2008 recession; (b) the quality of the Canadian job market has reached a 25-year low; (c) the government should redesign its economic policy to support the middle class and help small-business owners and the manufacturing sector to create new jobs by (i) immediately lowering the small- and medium-sized business tax rate by 1% and by another percentage point when finances permit, (ii) establishing an innovation tax credit, (iii) extending the accelerated capital cost allowance in order to create good middle-class jobs, (iv) working with the provinces, territories and First Nations to train Canadians to occupy well-paid jobs.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to speak today to open the debate on Motion No. 585, which I am moving today to boost job creation in Canada.

In the 10 years the Conservatives have been in power, they have massacred the middle class, its jobs and its prospects. After 10 years under the Conservatives, the future of the middle class is in the past. In 10 years, the Conservatives' great economic achievement is that Mr. Parent, a technician at Pratt & Whitney in Longueuil, and Ms. Johns, an automated manufacturing engineer at GM in Windsor, now have jobs working the cash at Burger King and Tim Hortons.

Every week, middle-class people in my riding tell me they are worried about the future. I can only share in their anxiety. Recently in Quebec, 275 jobs were lost at Resolute Forest Products in Shawinigan, another 737 jobs were lost at Mabe in Montreal, 300 were lost at Bell Helicopter in Mirabel, and more than 1,300 were lost at Electrolux in L'Assomption. Across the country we have seen the closing of Mexx, Jacob, Sears, Target and now Future Shop.

Although Quebeckers and Canadians are working harder than ever, they are having more and more difficulty making ends meet. In 10 years, precarious jobs have become the norm, and the quality of jobs has not been this low in 25 years, according to the CIBC index released on March 5. After 10 years, 400,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector, there are 200,000 more unemployed workers than there were before the recession, and the youth unemployment rate is 13.4%. Under these conditions, how can we expect middle-class families to make a living and pay for schooling for their children?

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Armstrong
Barlow
Bergen
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Dykstra
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
James
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Opitz
Paradis
Perkins
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Seeback
Shipley
Sopuck
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Aspin
Benoit
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clement
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Egliniski
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Miller
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sorenson
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson

Private Members' Business

Small and medium-sized businesses, which make up the economic fabric of our country, are also suffering. Even the most dynamic of them are having a hard time coping. I recently met with the owners of Quintus Marketing, a small business in my riding that works in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. They agree with us: the government has abandoned them.

Instead of offering an economic development vision for our country and giving our businesses and workers a development horizon, this government cannot see beyond its outdated tax mantra. The Conservatives have based their entire economic policy on the idea that tax cuts for big businesses are good for growth because they give companies the flexibility they need in order to invest and hire people. That same economic notion led them to cut taxes for the rich in the 2015 budget in the hope that the rich would invest in real activity.

That concept is outdated, as shown by reality. When the tax rate was lowered from 22% to 15%, did big companies hire people? No. Did they invest in better means of production? No. Did they invest in research and development to innovate? Not at all. Did they channel the money back to their shareholders? Not even a little bit. What are they doing with the money? Nothing at all.

A report released on January 27, 2015, by the Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques entitled "Portrait de la surépargne des entreprises au Québec et au Canada" shows that corporations have accumulated savings and are just sitting on them. Some \$575 billion is being kept out of the real economy. That represents 32% of the GDP. With that money, we could build 164 new Champlain Bridges.

For all of these reasons, the NDP, led by the member for Outremont, is fighting for the middle class, fighting to defend the interests of most Canadians, fighting to spur economic activity and fighting so that all Canadians can give their children a better future. That is our priority.

To achieve that objective, the NDP has developed an economic recovery plan after consulting with workers and the middle class in recent years. The NDP economic plan announced by our leader on January 28 and my motion here today were the result of that consultation. Our goal is to support the warp and weft of our economic fabric, the sectors that will define our economy of the future.

•(1850)

First, we have the manufacturing sector, with a workforce of 1.4 million that generates 11% of our GDP. Then we have SMEs, which provide 7.7 million jobs and produce 40% of our GDP. From 2002 to 2012, they created 78% of new jobs in the private sector.

These two sectors have serious problems created by the Conservatives' economic policies. Owners of SMEs in my riding whom I meet with every week are all telling me the same thing. They are finding it increasingly difficult to compete against large corporations and they blame the Conservatives. Because corporate taxes have been lowered to 15%, compared to 11% for small business, the tax advantage for SMEs is only 4%. I would remind members that it was 17% in 2000.

That is why the NDP is asking the government to lower the small business tax rate to 10% and not to wait until January 1, 2017, as outlined in the 2015 budget tabled by the Conservatives. The small business tax rate should be reduced to 9% as soon as possible. This would represent \$1.2 billion in assistance to SMEs and would stimulate activity at a time when growth is stagnating.

They are suffering from a lack of support for innovation. In 2014, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce established that this problem was one of the 10 main obstacles to the competitiveness of our economy.

That is why we are asking the government to introduce an innovation tax credit for the manufacturing sector for companies that invest in machinery, equipment and goods and in research and development, which spurs innovation.

This measure will allow Canadian manufacturers who make these critical investments in research and development to reinvest \$40 million per year into this activity. This measure will also make it possible to repair the damage caused by the Conservative cuts to tax credits for scientific research and experimental development and will encourage innovation in Canada.

With regard to the manufacturing industry, we are calling on the government to immediately extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment. This \$600 million measure will allow manufacturers to update their equipment and machinery.

Finally, labour is the other major concern of SMEs and the manufacturing sector. When they do manage to fill their order books, they are having difficulty finding skilled workers to hire.

This shows that the Conservatives have failed with regard to training. It also explains why the NDP makes skills development a priority in its economic action plan.

In order to boost our economy, make the transition to the greener economy we desire, develop new sources of energy, and in short, build the economy of tomorrow, we need to make sure that young people and unemployed workers receive training and develop their skills.

Here is an example: before long, increasingly available 3D printers will revolutionize production methods for small and medium-sized manufacturers. We need to train people to use them right now. Nevertheless, companies are spending less and less on training precisely when they should be spending more.

In its October 2013 report entitled "Upskilling the Workforce", the Canadian Chamber of Commerce showed that even though companies say skills development is important, they have cut their spending in this area.

Worse still, according to the report, we are falling farther behind our closest competitor, the United States. For every 64¢ Canadian companies spend on training, American companies spend \$1.

Our companies will not be capable of preparing for the next generation of jobs. That is why the NDP has made skills training a priority in its economic action plan.

Private Members' Business

The Conservatives have once again chosen shortcuts and short-sightedness, to disastrous effect. Whereas we need to plan, develop and invest, the Conservatives have only three watchwords: cut, cut, cut. They chose a \$300 million cut to the budget for skills training and a year of bitter battling with the provinces over labour market agreement renewals. The result? A Canada job grant that does not meet the needs.

That is why we are asking the government to increase the number of Canadians participating in skills training by immediately facilitating access to skills training programs funded by labour market development agreements.

•(1855)

This is what the NDP is proposing to Canadians: to boost our economy in a balanced manner that provides immediate support to our main job creators and innovators, which are SMEs and the manufacturing sector. This economic recovery requires a voluntary skills training policy that allows businesses to find skilled workers and allows everyone to find their place in our economy and our society.

Despite its self-congratulatory speeches, when faced with our proposals to boost the economy, the Conservative government sees how badly it has failed. It is no accident that the budget it presented on Tuesday, April 21, includes most of the proposals the NDP made in January. On February 16, the Conservatives voted against the measures proposed by the NDP, but they are now proposing those same measures. They changed their minds and now they like our plan to boost the economy. That is a good thing.

Simply implementing these measures and improving the situation of middle-class families counts. However, we have to be careful. Most of the measures announced by the Conservatives will not take effect until 2017, while this motion calls on the government to implement these measures immediately. Canadians are suffering as a result of our faltering economy. They need the government to provide immediate support for the real job creators.

That is why I am asking the Conservative members to show that they are serious about their intentions. They have the opportunity to immediately take practical measures to boost the economy by supporting this motion. All they have to do is vote in favour of it and thereby support the middle class.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that interesting speech.

The New Democrats talk about debt, but their high-tax and high-spending schemes would hurt all Canadians. We know that. It would burden them with even more debt for our children and grandchildren who would have to pay. Moreover, they would hurt jobs and small business with their payroll taxes.

The Liberal member thinks that budgets balance themselves.

Why does the member opposite oppose the plan for middle-class Canadians that is written in black ink for the first time in a number of years? Is it because the New Democrats are too busy writing the NDP plan in red ink? Could the member please explain that for us?

•(1900)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, it is very disappointing to hear my colleague begin his question like that, especially since, as I said, we should give credit where credit is due.

In order to truly boost our economy, we need SMEs and the manufacturing sector. We presented this economic recovery plan in January 2015, so we certainly will not take any lessons from this government.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for moving this wonderful motion, which reiterates our priorities and once again calls on this uninspired government to take action. Fortunately, the government's lack of inspiration led it to use NDP measures in the recent budget. Unfortunately, though, the Conservatives' measures are not even half-measures.

My colleague talked about the problem of underemployment. In fact, the latest Bank of Canada report clearly indicated that the most active category of workers, those aged 25 to 55, had a very low participation rate. It was comparable to what it was nearly six years ago, as we were coming out of the last crisis.

I wonder if she could talk about the government's poor record, which, I think, is the result of its failure to act.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

It is important to remember that it is because of this government that jobs today are precarious and part-time, for the most part. If the government really wanted to help economic recovery, it would create real jobs. To boost job creation requires a dynamic that only the NDP has; for one thing, it would allow wages to be assessed properly.

We have put forward our proposal for a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage. To help the middle class and stimulate the economy and job creation, it is crucial to be able to go ahead with bold principles and action that will allow SMEs to create good jobs and the manufacturing sector to stimulate the economy.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation. I certainly agree with her. Modernizing equipment in the manufacturing sector, equipment for manufacturing certain products, increases a company's productivity. That is something Canada should do in order to be innovative and more productive.

As far as job creation is concerned, some people say that modernizing our plants and manufacturing sector comes with the risk of eliminating jobs because people will be replaced by machines. I do not necessarily agree, but I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say about that.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Private Members' Business

There is no doubt that the manufacturing sector must be modernized. It is about being competitive internationally, with everything that is available on the market right now. The manufacturing sector needs to have the means to innovate and create jobs that will ensure that our industry is competitive both today and in the future. That cannot happen without modernizing.

● (1905)

[English]

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saint-Lambert for giving me this opportunity to once again highlight the extraordinary success we have enjoyed, thanks to the leadership of our Prime Minister.

I stand here somewhat perplexed by the hon. member's insistence that we need to improve our economic record and that we take action with measures we have already taken. To paraphrase the motion, it says that the government has not done enough to create jobs, so we should reduce small business taxes. We just committed to lower taxes by two percentage points, which is about 18%, for small businesses, from 11% to 9%. This is on top of our government's cut from 12% to 11% previously.

The motion goes on to say that we need to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers. This just in: we have extended it for 10 years and have continually extended it since we formed government. That is good news for small business. That is the same NDP that has repeatedly voted against this exact measure.

There is more. The NDP continues to ask for some completely undefined innovation tax credit. It must have had some eureka moment when it decided it liked the words "innovation" and "tax", so it put them together and sold it as a plan. However, our government has introduced something called the SR and ED credit, which helps companies invest in innovation across Canada.

There is also the capital cost allowance if one wants to invest in innovation-enhancing machinery. We have also given more than \$1.33 billion, just in budget 2015, to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. Again, the NDP must be confused, because it is asking for things that already exist.

It then asks us to invest in labour market training, something we have done to a record degree.

Ultimately, this is perhaps the most bizarre motion I have ever been asked to debate in the House. Perhaps this is simply another case of the opposition not even taking the time to read the budget.

Allow me to explain to the member opposite just how well our plan has worked. I thought it would be helpful, therefore, to list a few of these truths for the benefit of the entire House. The facts are clear. Canada's economic action plan is working. Consider the following.

Canada has demonstrated one of the best economic performances among the G7 countries since the recovery. The International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development expect Canada's growth, already ahead of its peers during the recovery, to continue to be strong.

Canada has posted one of the strongest job performances in the G7. Over 1.2 million more Canadians are working now than at the end of the recession. The majority of these net new jobs have been full-time positions in high-wage, private sector industries. Perhaps more importantly, we have achieved this while balancing the budget and keeping taxes low for all Canadians.

Allow me to go into a bit more detail. The task of creating jobs is not a solitary duty. That is why our government works regularly with the provinces and territories on programming to enhance training and education and to improve labour market participation. It is also important to remember that Canada ranks well internationally in developing and educating its workforce at a time when the labour market is shifting toward high-skilled employment.

Canadians are among the most highly educated in the world, placing at the top of all the members of the OECD countries in terms of post-secondary educational attainment. Canada's labour force participation rate also compares very favourably with that of the other OECD member countries.

Through our labour market development agreements, \$1.95 billion per year in funding is made available to the provinces and territories to design, deliver, and manage skills and employment programs. We have been actively working to retool the labour market development agreements with provinces and territories so that we can continue to ensure that the skills of Canadians respond to the needs of the labour force. Our government also provides provinces and territories with additional funding in support of labour market programming, including \$500 million in 2014-15 through the Canada job fund agreements, which include the Canada job grant.

● (1910)

Collaborating with provinces and territories makes good sense, particularly in areas where interprovincial harmonization can improve job prospects for hard-working Canadian tradespeople. That is why economic action plan 2015 extends further support to the provinces and territories to facilitate the harmonization of apprenticeship training and certification requirements in targeted Red Seal trades. For example, jurisdictions will work towards adopting common sequencing for technical training curriculum content and similar total hours of training, both in class and on the job.

Overall Canada saw a 20% increase in registrations in apprenticeship programs between 2006 and 2012, and the demand for skilled trade workers continues to grow. Job vacancy rates in the skilled trades have surpassed pre-recession levels and are currently above all occupations. In fact, Canadian employers are experiencing increasing difficulty hiring skilled trades workers.

Private Members' Business

To support entrepreneurial tradespeople, budget 2015 will provide \$1 million over five years to Employment and Social Development Canada's Red Seal Secretariat to promote the adoption of the Blue Seal certification program across Canada. Blue Seal certification recognizes business training among certified tradespeople. Currently offered in a few provincial jurisdictions, the certification can help increase the chance of business success for entrepreneurial tradespeople.

We are also providing funding for aboriginal labour market programming, including the skills and partnership fund. We will provide \$215 million over five years, starting this year, and \$50 million a year thereafter to this fund to help equip aboriginal peoples for jobs in high-demand sectors of the economy, including high-skilled occupations.

I hope I have made plain that our actions to date, focused on helping Canadians find new and better jobs, are by no means insignificant.

Let me quickly touch on our record for small business.

Our government very early on recognized that small businesses make up over 90% of all Canadian businesses and employ two-thirds of all Canadians, which is why we have reduced the small business tax load by almost 50% since we formed government. The NDP has resisted us every step of the way, which makes today's motion all that much more strange.

Economic action plan 2015 improves access to financing for small businesses and reduces red tape for small business owners. This is on top of years of support, such as the small business job credit, which the NDP voted against, increasing the small business limit, which they voted against, and launching the venture capital action plan to help companies grow and create jobs, which again, they voted against.

My time is limited today, but I could speak all day about how absurd this motion is from the NDP, who have zero record of supporting actual job-creating measures, like the ones we have already introduced. We know that all they want to do is raise taxes on Canadians, especially the middle class. That includes small businesses, families, manufacturers, and seniors, and the list goes on. On this side of the House, we know that this is definitely not the way to create jobs.

I hope the hon. member will continue to give us the opportunity to recite even more of the good things we have done to help create jobs. It is truly music to all of our ears.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak to Motion No. 585. First I would like to thank the member for Saint-Lambert for introducing this motion. I share many of her concerns about the weak state of the Canadian economy.

Too many Canadians are being left out of the economy altogether. There are now more Canadians who have been unemployed for a year or longer. Young Canadians face a very weak job market. There are 160,000 fewer jobs for Canadian youth than there were in 2008, for example.

CIBC economists recently issued a report showing that the quality of jobs in Canada is at a 25-year low. Growth prospects are weak,

and the Conservative government lacks a plan for stimulating jobs and growth.

Policies such as income splitting and a massive increase to the TFSA limit do nothing for jobs and growth. It shows that the current Conservative government has abandoned the middle class in favour of the wealthy and has absolutely no plan to create jobs and growth for Canadians.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

The Liberals, however, are committed to supporting the middle class and those who are struggling to be part of the middle class.

[*English*]

The motion before us attempts to address these economic concerns. I support some of these measures, however, I have some concerns with others. On balance, we support the motion.

I want to address four main components of the motion, first, the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturing. The Liberal Party has been calling for this measure as an incentive for manufacturers to invest in productivity-enhancing machinery. For years, in fact, we have been calling upon the government to extend the tax credit for a significantly longer period of time because we recognize that businesses need more certainty to be able to plan ahead and make the smart investments they ought to, to create jobs and growth.

Second, I want to address the innovation tax credit. The Conservatives have diluted and pulled back and weakened the SR&ED tax credit. Smaller companies that are involved in R and D and commercialization have told us, as have larger manufacturers, that the government's cuts to the SR&ED program have hurt their capacity to create new technologies and grow. We have been critical of the government's actions to dilute and weaken the SR&ED program. While the proposed innovation tax credit is a small measure, it could potentially undo some of the damage rendered by the cuts to the SR&ED tax credit.

I would like to discuss the small business tax cut proposed by the motion, calling for the tax rate for small businesses to be lowered by one point immediately and another point in the future.

Every Liberal, and I would suggest everyone in this House, understands the importance of small business and the importance of supporting the small business sector. Liberals recognize the importance of small business and helping small businesses grow and we favour policies that encourage small businesses to grow and to hire more Canadians.

Private Members' Business

We proposed, in fact, an EI premium holiday that was targeted to companies that actually hired new employees. Our proposed policy, an EI premium holiday for two years, was endorsed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters and Restaurants Canada. It was a way to correct some of the flaws in the Conservatives' so-called small jobs credit.

The government's tax credit actually created a disincentive to growth for small business and provided, perversely, an incentive for employers to fire workers instead of crossing the \$15,000 EI premium threshold.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer calculated that the Conservative gimmick would actually cost \$700,000 for every job it created. We recognize the importance of a targeted approach to tax measures based upon evidence. That is what the Auditor General's report actually indicates that the Conservatives have not done their homework to actually identify what measures are working, what could work better, and what types of tax measures have the capacity to create jobs and growth.

This why we have some reservations about an across-the-board cut to the small business rate. We absolutely support cutting taxes on small business, but we believe that it is important that we target tax cuts in areas where we are doing one of two things, or preferably both. One is creating jobs and growth and the other is, of course, to help support middle class families.

Some of this benefit would not flow to actual operating small businesses, but could in fact flow to wealthy professionals who incorporate their small businesses but actually do not have any additional employees. It could support, for instance, small holding companies that simply invest in publicly traded securities and are not active in terms of having employees and the kinds of businesses that we associate with small businesses in our neighbourhoods and communities.

They may actually be operating a business as a tax shelter, for instance. Targeting measures at actual operating small businesses to provide incentives for those small businesses to grow and hire more people is what I would believe that the NDP, Conservatives and Liberals would all agree on. I raise that concern.

Jack Mintz, a tax policy expert at the University of Calgary's school of public policy believes that this tax measure proposed by the NDP and endorsed by the Conservatives, most recently, could be a significant tax benefit to wealthy Canadians. He wrote that, "It's something to make the rich richer".

There are other economists, including Armine Yalnizyan, an economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, who actually agreed with Mr. Mintz. She said, "It's a little bit weird to say that we are looking at a way of benefiting small businesses when small businesses can also be tax shelters".

I want to be clear. We support the move to cut the taxes on small businesses, but we think that government and, in fact, all parliamentarians ought to consider ways to target these cuts to operating small businesses that actually will grow and invest more as a result of this and hire more Canadians.

That is something that I am certain my NDP colleagues would agree with, that we ought to define the application of this tax cut in a way that would generate the most growth, the most jobs and the most hiring. That is something that we can look at in the details of implementing the public policy.

We are clearly supportive of cutting taxes on small business, but we believe it is better public policy to target those cuts toward operating small businesses that would grow and hire more Canadians.

Finally, the motion before us calls on the federal government to work with the provinces, territories, and first nations and aboriginal Canadians to ensure that first nations and aboriginal Canadians get the skills they need to enter the workforce and get good jobs. I wholeheartedly endorse this recommendation.

There are 400,000 young aboriginal and first nations Canadians entering the workforce over the next 10 years. If they had the skills required to get a job and to support themselves, that would be a really good news story for the Canadian economy because a young, skilled workforce is a source of economic growth for any economy. The fact is they do not. That reflects a failure of government to invest in young aboriginal first nations Canadians.

We have to close the gap, as an example, between the funding of aboriginal and first nations schools and non-aboriginal, non-first nations schools in the same provinces. We need to ensure that we invest in young aboriginal and first nations Canadians as early as possible to ensure we build an educational foundation for them to develop and then to get the skills they need for work.

A Liberal plan for jobs and growth would prioritize investing in learning and in people, so that they get the skills they need. We feel that nowhere is that need more acute than with aboriginal and first nations Canadians.

● (1920)

We would invest in infrastructure, innovation and in trade relationships. Investing in people and skills, infrastructure, innovation and trade reflect a Liberal plan for jobs and growth. We would also provide support for middle class families and those Canadians who are working so hard to join them.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to debate Motion No. 585 moved by my colleague, the member for Saint-Lambert. I would like to thank her for moving this motion. The reason I am thanking her, and what members need to understand, is that the motion was tabled well before the budget, which was tabled last week.

Private Members' Business

Interestingly, the wording of this motion is very similar to the wording of the motion the NDP moved in February on an opposition day. That motion referred to an economic recovery plan that included a reduction of the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%. We proposed, as does this motion, immediately lowering the tax rate by 1%, from 11% to 10%, and then lowering it to 9% when finances permit. This part of today's motion was also in the motion moved on our opposition day in February.

These two motions share another element: extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for the purchase of goods, such as machinery, in the manufacturing and processing sector. I am comparing the two motions because, in his speech, my colleague from North Vancouver seemed quite amazed and surprised that we were moving a motion like this one. In fact, the Conservatives voted against the motion we moved on our opposition day. They voted against a reduction in the small business tax rate and against extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for the purchase of machinery, for example. What a surprise we had when the budget was tabled last week and we learned that it included these two measures.

The third element that was also in that motion is the innovation tax credit, and it is an important element. The hon. member for Kings—Hants correctly pointed out that the changes that were made in the SR&ED, the scientific research and experimental development tax incentive program, have been negative. I recall testimony by a representative of *Manufacturiers et exportateurs du Québec* who told us how bad this measure was, because this tax credit would no longer apply to the capital expenses of businesses that did research and development. However, it was crucial to development, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The Conservatives ended this tax credit. It was one element in the motion we moved on our opposition day, and it is in Motion No. 585 moved by the hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

Both motions reintroduce these elements that are found in the budget—at least the first two—but which the Conservatives voted against. We often hear the Conservatives say that the opposition parties voted against one measure or another. Often, of course, that happens in budget votes when we can only vote one time on 600 pages of budget. In the case at hand, the most difficult thing, and perhaps the most ironic, or even cynical, is that the Conservatives voted against this measure two months before they put it into their budget. That is the height of cynicism.

Finally, I come to the motion by the hon. member for Saint-Lambert. She points out that the unemployment rate in Canada has remained high since the 2008 recession. Indeed, it is high. We have over 150,000 more people unemployed now than before the recession. That is a huge problem. Job quality in Canada is at a 25-year low. We had a debate in the House on this issue, on a question raised by the NDP. Perhaps hon. members will recall the CIBC report that indicated that job quality, as measured by comparing the number of full-time and part-time jobs and long-term and less stable employment, was at a record low level and that the trend was toward increasing weakness. The government has not really responded to these concerns and appears to be completely ignoring the conclusions of this report, even in its budget, which we were debating earlier today.

I am especially curious about what it is that pushes the Conservatives to act the way they do.

• (1925)

Our motivation in proposing such measures and ideas is, of course, to help the middle class and to help stimulate the economy. The Conservatives seem to be living in a world where the opposition parties are insisting on a carbon tax, which we cannot see anywhere. I remember very clearly that in 2011 we proposed a carbon market, not a carbon tax.

We are living in a world where the Conservatives think we want to get rid of the TFSA, which is not true, of course. We want to reverse the increase in the TFSA contribution limit, which is one of the proposals in the budget. The TFSA is a popular vehicle that helps all Canadian investors save, depending on how much money they have available to them. However, increasing the contribution limit to \$10,000 will benefit the wealthiest investors more than others.

In the Conservatives' world, they believe we are going to raise taxes. I am the deputy critic for finance. If we wanted to increase taxes, I would be the first to know. The hon. member for Outremont, the leader of the official opposition, has clearly stated that we will not touch personal income tax and we will not touch sales taxes. I do not know what world the Conservatives are living in, when they introduce highly controversial budgets apparently favouring the rich. Our concern, here on this side of the House, is for the middle class, workers and small business.

As for lowering the small business tax rate from 11% to 9%, our proposal is different from the one in the budget. The Conservatives—the government—would have this decrease begin in four years, like many other measures in their budget that will not actually take effect until 2017, 2018 or 2019. The small business tax reduction would only be fully implemented in four years. The hon. member for Saint-Lambert proposes, as did our opposition motion in February, that this measure come into force more quickly. We could even do it in two years, with an immediate reduction of 1% and another 1% next year, if finances permit.

This motion makes good sense. I know there are some concerns. I heard the hon. member for Kings—Hants ask who would benefit from this measure. We are talking about two different things here. We are proposing that the tax rate on small business be lowered from 11% to 9%. This tax rate has only dropped by one percentage point since 2000, while corporate taxes in general have dropped from 28% to 15%, a 13-point reduction. There is a gap of only 4%.

Private Members' Business

Some economists have criticized this measure on the basis that the tax might potentially be abused. For instance, some people who might not otherwise have done so might incorporate and benefit from it. Their concern is justified and can be addressed to eliminate tax avoidance. It is one of the measures that we could in fact adopt, but the measure itself to reduce the business tax is totally justifiable, particularly at the present time, when small and medium-sized businesses are the ones that are creating the most jobs. However, they are having difficulties that are due to the current economic climate.

• (1930)

These elements are found in the motion and are totally necessary. They are a good step forward for Canada's economic growth. These are suggestions that the NDP has made and is still making, and we are continuing to insist that they be wholly integrated in the government's plans. Otherwise, we are going to keep on reminding the government that the measures that it opposed in the past and that it has now included in the budget are NDP measures that we have been promoting for a long time now.

I would like to thank my colleague from Saint-Lambert for this excellent initiative, which I would like to point out was put forward before the budget was tabled. Therefore, if there are any questions from Conservative members about why we are now dealing with proposals that appear, at least timidly, to be in the budget, this is the reason why.

I can consider this motion a prelude to other motions and especially to other presentations that we on the official opposition side are going to make, in order to set out our economic program, which, I am sure, will be advantageous to the middle class, workers and small and medium-sized companies and will receive the approval of all Canadians in the next election campaign.

• (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address my colleague's motion acknowledging the government's actions to create jobs, a record of jobs, economic growth and putting more money back in the pockets of families and businesses. Or did I read this motion wrong?

In all seriousness, Canada has demonstrated one of the best economic performances among G7 countries over the recovery. Canada has recovered both more than all of the output and all of the jobs lost during the recession. However, far more than that, we have created over 1.2 million net new jobs since the depths of the downturn. In fact, more Canadians are working today than at any other time in our history.

The hon. member may not recognize this, but as a result of our government's efforts, Canadians have maintained a high level of labour market participation despite global economic difficulties, and Canadians are wealthier for their work. In fact, the Canadian middle class is among the richest in the developed world.

Canadians are not just wealthier, they are benefiting across the board from economic improvements introduced by our government that allow them to make the most of their wealth and support further jobs and growth going forward. Canadians can be confident that the

foundations we have laid over the past seven years have set us on the right course. Economic action plan 2015 is no exception.

Economic action plan 2015 renews our government's promise to Canadians that we will continue to do everything we must to ensure Canada's future is secure and prosperous.

First, our government has fostered an environment in which businesses can grow and contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity.

To help small businesses grow and create jobs, the government has delivered substantial ongoing tax relief to small businesses and their owners. On September 11, 2014, the government announced further action to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity with the introduction of the small business job credit. This credit is expected to save small businesses more than \$550 million over 2015 and 2016. This measure builds on previous measures, such as lowering the small business tax rate to 11 % from 12% and continuing to increase the lifetime capital gains exemption.

Economic action plan 2015 goes even further than that, and introduces the largest tax cut for small business in 25 years. We will be lowering the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% by 2019. Almost 700,000 small businesses will benefit annually from this lower rate. It is estimated that this one measure will reduce taxes for small businesses and their owners by \$2.7 billion over the 2015-16 to 2019-20 period.

To help illustrate for the hon. member how much small businesses are benefiting from the actions of this government, consider the example of a business with \$500,000 of taxable income. As a result of the actions taken prior to this recent announcement to reduce the small business tax rate and increase the amount of income eligible for that rate, the amount of federal corporate income tax paid by this small business would be 34% lower in 2015 than in 2006.

When the proposed reduction in the small business tax rate takes full effect in 2019, the amount of federal corporate income tax paid by this small business would be 46% lower than in 2006. In other words, for this small business with \$500,000 in taxable income, our government's measures provide an annual tax reduction of up to \$38,600 that can be reinvested in that business to fuel its growth.

The second opposition concern I would like to address is helping Canadian manufacturers create new jobs. Canada has not been immune to external developments, with weak external demand growth weighing on Canadian exports. Fortunately, Canadian manufacturers have taken the necessary steps to secure long-term success, and our government is there to help them every step of the way.

• (1940)

Since its creation in 2008, we have allocated \$1 billion to the automotive innovation fund to support major new research and development projects and long-term investments.

Building on that success, economic action plan 2015 will provide \$100 million over five years, starting this year, for the creation of an automotive supplier innovation program to help Canadian automotive suppliers gain a competitive edge through new innovative products and processes. This program will help reduce the risks involved in bringing research and development projects to commercial viability by supporting product development and technology advancement on a cost-shared basis with participating firms.

At the same time, we must give manufacturers the tools they need to invest in the products and the jobs of the future. This is why our government introduced substantial support for this sector in economic action plan 2015 in the form of an accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery and equipment used in manufacturing and processing.

This new 10-year tax incentive will result in a deferral that is expected to reduce federal taxes for manufacturers by \$1.1 billion for the period from 2016-17 to 2019-20. Providing this new incentive for a 10-year period gives businesses greater planning certainty for larger projects that take time to fully realize, including those with multiple phases.

Today and in the years to come, this low-tax environment will play a crucial role in supporting economic growth and enabling businesses to invest more of their revenues back into their operations.

With economic action plan 2015, our government has earned an international reputation for responsible economic and fiscal management. We are creating growth and lowering taxes, all the while following through on balancing the budget. We will secure lasting, long-term economic prosperity, prosperity with which even the opposition members cannot disagree.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome debate on true job creation in this country because there has been a lot of rhetoric from across the aisle for a long time, but I see every day in my riding of York South—Weston that job creation just is not happening.

The city of Toronto's unemployment rate currently sits around 9% and for youth it is around 15.4%. That is an enormous increase over what it has been and it is something that the government has not managed to do anything about. In fact, it has gotten worse over the period of time since the Conservatives were elected in 2006.

Let me provide an example of an individual who, until recently, was employed at the airport. He is a trained lawyer who came to Canada as a refugee and could not practise law here because he did not have the language and got himself trained as an accountant. He worked for a while as an accountant, but the manufacturing company he was working for went belly up. Then, just to do anything, he was a valet at the airport making \$14.35 an hour, which he thought was enough. Guess what? The airport authority contracted out his job to another company, which fired all of the workers and hired people back at \$11 an hour.

Those are the kinds of jobs that the government has managed to create over the past nine years that it has been in charge. In the words of a McMaster University study, nearly one-half of all the jobs in the

Government Orders

GTA are precarious jobs. Those are jobs that are low wage, part time, temporary and contract. They do not have security and do not have the amount of money required to raise a family in this country.

Manufacturing jobs, the kinds of jobs that small and medium-sized enterprises might be able to create, have been disappearing at a rate that is perhaps even faster than the rate that the ethics have disappeared in the other place. Over 450,000 jobs have disappeared in the past few years and even the low dollar and low oil prices have not kick-started a resurgence. The government has managed to give away tax money to large enterprises that have not done the job of creating work.

The Bank of Canada suggests we are 270,000 jobs below full employment. That is not 100%; that is full employment. Those 270,000 jobs are a lot of jobs in this country that Canadians could use, as well as better quality jobs. A recent CIBC study suggests that we are now at an all-time low in the quality of employment in this country. Most, if not all, of the job creation has been in low-wage, precarious work.

• (1945)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I assure the hon. member for York South—Weston that he will have his remaining time of seven minutes for his remarks when the House next takes up consideration of the question before the House.

The time for consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, April 27, 2015, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 19 under Government Business.

[*English*]

I do now leave the chair to go into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ONGOING SITUATION IN UKRAINE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 19, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That this Committee take note of the ongoing situation in Ukraine.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

[*Translation*]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, April 28, 2015, members may divide their time with another member. The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Before we begin the debate, I will remind hon. members that as we are in committee of the whole, members have the choice of where they wish to sit in the chamber. They will be recognized, of course, from whatever seat they may choose. Due to the informality of such debates, it often assists in the tenor of the debate if members can sit closer to each other in the course of the debate, on either side of the House.

We will now begin tonight's take note debate accordingly.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Chair, I remember very clearly being in Moscow on a parliamentary mission in the mid-1980s as Gorbachev's perestroika got under way. This process had the potential to set the people of Russia free, as they were trapped in a fundamentally defective, undemocratic system, and to finally allow them to express their industriousness and creativity in service of their values and interests. That is what the potential was back in the mid-1980s. Russia was facing serious challenges but looking for ways to meet them. There was reason for optimism in Moscow in those years.

What followed in the 1980s and 1990s was a turbulent period for Russia, one marked with great opportunity but also great risks, and sometimes great losses. Despite the difficulties, Russia made democratic strides and had the potential to leave those difficulties behind, as the growing pains of a real democracy, with a strong economy. How different things are today.

Putin has done his utmost to put the genie back in the bottle. He is restricting his people's freedom at home and offering them false promises of global greatness through actions that, in truth, undermine Russia's status both in the region and on the broader international stage. Putin has even refused to take the steps necessary for the Russian people to enjoy a long-term prosperity. Instead, he has rewarded his friends in the hope that high oil prices will allow them to bankroll his regime.

Today, the Russian people are paying the price for this cronyism and short-sightedness. The Russian economy is in no position to cope with the new economic realities, including the low price of oil. The Russian people are hurting.

• (1950)

[Translation]

In the meantime, the sanctions imposed by Canada and its partners in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine are being felt. The Russian government itself has recognized this.

[English]

The Russian regime lives in the past. It is trying to preserve Russia's outdated political system and its unreformed economy. It has little to offer the Russian people and it is trying to hold the Ukrainian people back.

In addition to its military activities, the regime is waging a propaganda war, using everything from state-controlled media to Internet trolls to convince us that the Ukrainian government is

fascist, that Russia has no troops in Ukraine, that the Crimea voted to join Russia, and other falsehoods.

Russia is hoping to use the democratic freedoms it curtails at home, and in particular its chokehold on the freedom of the press, to spread disinformation and weaken Ukraine's resolve to defend its core values. It sees anyone's attachment to these freedoms as a weakness. This tells us all we need to know about how poorly Putin understands democracy and the power of democracies.

[Translation]

Russia depends on propaganda, because it knows its actions are indefensible.

[English]

There is nothing left in the Putin government that represents the spirit of perestroika that I witnessed in Red Square all those years ago.

This is the second assault by the Putin regime on an independent country in barely over five years. We must not forget the attack on Georgia in 2008.

Russia's actions in Ukraine call for a robust and sustained response by Canada and its partners. It means supporting Ukrainian people to exercise their sovereignty. It means supporting European security in the face of the Kremlin's attempts to change borders by force. It means imposing costs on the Putin regime in the Kremlin for its actions.

Defending Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression means defending pluralistic democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law. It means building transparent and democratic institutions where bullies and thugs are held to account.

Lasting peace and prosperity in Ukraine is dependent on having the capacity, through democratic and transparent institutions, to balance values and interests.

[Translation]

It is a disciplined and determined approach that will be Canada's best contribution to the people of Ukraine.

[English]

We know that \$400 million in economic stabilization is important in terms of supporting the incredible list of civil societies. We know that the contribution of non-lethal military equipment and training is vital to pushing back the oppressors. We know that the support of our professional monitors and what they provide is essential.

For me, though, it is the investment that we provide in bilateral development to advance reform, democracy and the rule of law that is most important. Only with sound governance on much needed democratic reforms will Ukraine prevail from the strength of its ideals and its belief in independence and self-rule. Contrast this with Putin's cronyism and his determination to undermine the Ukrainian people's sovereignty over their own government. It is, in other words, precisely what Russia aims to prevent.

Government Orders

When it comes to supporting the people of Ukraine, Canada will not relent. Whether by sending hundreds of observers to support free and fair elections, by training judges to improve the independence and transparency of the judiciary, or by working directly with Ukrainian cities to enhance their ability to analyze their economies and to plan, Canada is helping to build up the Ukrainian state.

In recent days, we have spoken about moral clarity in this place. We have to allow the people of Ukraine to emerge from this crisis with the power, the will and the intellectual and moral impetus to shape their country in accordance with their own values.

The Ukrainian people will not be intimidated. Last year, they took to the streets to ensure that their country would stay on the European path, and paid for it in blood when the Yanukovich regime cracked down. However, they persisted and prevailed. Today, they face a similar challenge as the Putin regime attempts to intimidate them into submission. This tactic failed for Yanukovich and it will fail for Putin.

Canada and the international community stand with the people of Ukraine. Today and tomorrow, the Ukrainian people can count on us standing shoulder to shoulder with them as they work to secure their country's future as a secure, stable and prosperous democracy.

● (1955)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Chair, surely, we are all united in wanting to see a better future for Ukraine.

I would like to quote from the minister of finance for Ukraine, who said recently:

International support can only be effective if the Ukrainian government is also effective and diligent in its efforts to reform the country, fight corruption, improve transparency and accountability, improve the rule of law and create the conditions for the return of economic growth and prosperity.

The minister mentioned building democracy. He mentioned election observers. I have been one on four occasions. Could he be more specific about what kind of specific support is Canada offering Ukraine that would address the very real and serious concerns raised by the Ukrainian finance minister?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, strides have been made within the country, and we are very supportive of the presidency of President Poroshenko. One of the elements that he and the members of his government are committed to is the kind of reform that the hon. member mentioned in her comments.

Yes, Canada has provided considerable assistance. Just the fact that the member was an observer on four different occasions is part of the assistance that Canada has always contributed to this part of the world.

One of the things that we have done is provide \$35 million in bilateral development assistance to advance democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to support civil society. We are working closely with individuals and NGOs in that part of the world to ensure that Ukraine stays on the right track.

However, they are the ones who are being oppressed. They are the ones who are being bullied. They are the ones who have been threatened, and we have to give every benefit of the doubt to them and ensure that they continue to have the support that they so richly deserve.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for his comments this evening, for the motion that is before the House and for the opportunity to discuss this matter. It is not the first time. I remember when we gathered in December, I think two Christmases ago, to talk about what was going on in the Euromaidan. There has been some movement since that time, but there has also been a great deal of tragedy.

I would like to ask the minister about measures that Canada can take to be strong and forceful in this situation, apart from the training. That matter will be commented upon in detail by our foreign affairs critic. I think it is already a matter of public record that we support the government in this initiative. It is important to make those resources available.

I would like to ask the minister particularly about some economic measures that could be helpful in bringing a resolution to the situation. I know it is an extremely complicated matter. It is easier said than done, but I would like to know what discussion has been held among foreign affairs ministers or finance ministers within NATO or among others of our allies about the SWIFT financial system, which of course is the system that facilitates international banking. Russian commerce is facilitated by SWIFT. If Russia's participation in SWIFT were in some way interdicted, that would have a very powerful impact. I realize it is a complicated matter and as I said, it is easier said than done, but I would like to have the minister's reflections on the extent to which this measure has been discussed among foreign ministers or finance ministers within NATO or otherwise.

● (2000)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, the hon. member quite rightly raises the whole question of the economy. The measures we have taken on sanctions against entities and individuals is in effect applying economic pressure on those who are oppressing the Ukrainian people. We have the toughest regime in the world. Two hundred and seventy entities and individuals are on that, so that is part of that. On the other hand, we have been providing loans assistance to Ukraine, because we believe that extending financial assistance to it will help it develop the economy and stay on track.

The hon. member mentioned the SWIFT network. It is a private entity under Belgian law. Such action would require a significant multilateral effect in terms of cutting Russian banks. That being said though, we will continue to support Ukraine on an economic level, which is what we have done in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars. We have made it very clear in our discussions with Ukraine that our support is for the long term. It is not just for the next five weeks or five months. Ukraine can count on us for as long as it takes. We are going to stand with Ukraine.

I agree with the hon. member that it has to be done on every level. Sanctions are a part of it. The assistance we are providing, with the 200 troops we are providing for training, is all part of the efforts Canada is taking, and that certainly will continue.

Government Orders

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for all his support and help, both as the Minister of Foreign Affairs now and in his previous incarnation as the minister of national defence. There is no one who has been stronger on this file. I am very grateful for the fact that in his name I was able to announce 238 state-of-the-art night vision goggles, which Canada recently sent to Ukraine to help those soldiers.

My question has to do with the ceasefire between Ukraine and the Russian-backed rebels. They have signed the Minsk agreement, but I have tremendous concerns about the conduct and execution of the agreement. I wonder if the minister would be kind enough to comment on that.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, I would be glad to do so, but first I want to thank the member for all his efforts in this particular area. He has continually taken an interest and has been very supportive of all our actions in this area. Indeed, he has shown leadership on that. I want to publicly thank him for that.

The member asked me to comment on the ceasefire between Ukraine and Russian-backed rebels. We are having a look obviously very closely at what has happened since the February 12 Minsk agreement. We have been very clear that we will judge Russia on its actions, quite apart from any agreements it says it is supporting, and we are prepared to take further action against Russia should it fail to implement this agreement.

We remain committed to supporting Ukraine to be a democratic, stable and prosperous country. Canada has a great record on this. I was a member of Parliament in the early 1980s when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was the first world leader to step forward and recognize the independence and freedom of Ukraine. I remember how proud I was to be a member of that government.

What we are doing here is certainly consistent with the actions we have taken as a government and the actions of the government of Brian Mulroney. I am very proud we are doing this and making very clear to Russia that it has to live up to these agreements because our position and I believe the position of many of our allies is going to be continuously with Ukraine, because we believe ultimately in Ukraine's prosperity, freedom and security.

• (2005)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Chair, all parliamentarians in this House stand with Ukraine. We continue to want to send a very strong message to Putin to get out of Ukrainian territory. We appreciate that.

I do want to raise the issue of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. We know that there are more than one million people in Ukraine who have been displaced. There is tremendous concern about the economic well-being of people in Ukraine with the hryvnia, the currency, having dropped by more than 70%.

I know the minister talked about offering some loans to Ukraine, but given that it is so highly indebted, and the conflict is costing it \$5 million a day, I am wondering what specific humanitarian aid is being offered to help people in their desperate need, those who have been affected by this conflict.

Given the desperate financial situation, can we do more to help the economy of Ukraine and to help its indebtedness?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, quite apart from the loans assistance that I referred to in a previous question, Canada has a very impressive record in this area. We have committed more than \$568 million in assistance to Ukraine since January 2014. Yes, it does include humanitarian assistance, in fact on every level. I do agree with the hon. member that as important as our support is for the military of Ukraine, and the soldiers that are there for training and the exercises we have participated in as part of NATO, ours has to be a complete package, which it is.

We are supporting Ukraine on every level, whether it is the democratic institutions or economic institutions. We are helping Ukraine on the humanitarian side. We are providing millions of dollars in that particular area, and rightly so. We want to have a complete package to assist Ukrainians. That is exactly what we are going to continue to do.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: We are going to go to resuming debate, but before we do, I have a note for hon. members in respect to the period that we have for questions and comments.

During the usual time when we are chairing when the House is in session, if whoever has the floor at the time goes on too long, the Speaker or whoever the chair occupant is can stand and that usually interrupts whoever is speaking. The microphone is cut off, and we then carry on to the next speaker.

We do not have that same advantage when we are chairing from the table here. We will try to give you a hand signal to let you know that your time is just about up, but I would certainly appreciate the co-operation of hon. members through the debate this evening to think about a roughly one minute question and response. That will keep things running and it will help other hon. members who may wish to pose questions and to participate in this evening's take note debate.

With that, we will resume debate with the hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Chair, I appreciate your comments and that we only have 10 minutes. That is not very long, so I will try to cut right to the chase.

I first want to agree with my colleague from Parkdale—High Park that we stand here in solidarity with the people of Ukraine as they struggle to confront the many problems they have and at the same time deal with the fact that the Russians are trying to undermine the stability that we thought they had achieved. What is frightening in a way is how quickly the situation deteriorated from a year and a half ago to what we are dealing with today.

Originally, this debate was going to be about the subject of Canadian support to help train and build the capacity of Ukrainian military personnel, but it has turned to a more broad point about the conflict situation in Ukraine. I guess people can talk about whatever aspect of it is important to them.

Government Orders

I want to talk about the current situation that we have, with the UN human rights office recognizing that since last April, only one year ago, more than 6,000 people, military and civilians, have been killed and some 15,000 wounded, and that conditions in eastern Ukraine, particularly those areas held by anti-government forces are extremely difficult. In northern Donetsk and Luhansk, water and electricity supplies are frequently disrupted by shelling and rocket attacks and the number of people internally displaced has now reached some 1.2 million. That is an astonishing situation in about a year.

We know how this started, with the instability in the government and the actions by Yanukovych. The path that Ukraine was on to make a close economic arrangement with Europe was stopped by the then prime minister. That led to a protest, which eventually led to a civil war after he was deposed. How quickly that turned into the situation we have now is really an indication of how much instability there was in Ukraine that could be fomented into the civil war so quickly.

Who can forget the shock in July 2014 when Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down and the loss of 298 lives? All of us were shocked to know that such a thing could happen. A civilian airliner with innocent rights of passage over Ukraine was shot down in that situation. That was followed by the horrific scenes of preventing rescue personnel and international relief efforts from trying to remove the bodies and bring them back to loved ones. It was a shock to all of us that this could happen so rapidly in a country that we thought was on the road to a relationship with some harmony, with some conflict and dispute, yes, but with an opportunity at least to have a relationship with Europe as well as hopefully continuing a relationship with Russia. That turned out not to be possible, and we are where we are today.

A lot of work has been done. I want to talk about some of the military side of it, because this debate has been prompted by the recent decision by Canada to send 200 troops to Ukraine to help in training and building the capacity of the Ukrainian military, which is very important for the stability of Ukraine and for the ability of the Ukrainian people to maintain their territorial integrity. We know there are serious problems in the Ukrainian military. When we tried to deliver non-lethal weaponry, we actually had to build up our own supply lines to ensure the goods got to where they were supposed to, because of ongoing problems with corruption within the Ukrainian military.

Something has to be done about that, and I think NATO has stepped in to do that. There are five trust funds set up by NATO to make that possible: the logistics and standardization trust fund; command, control, communications trust fund, to which Canada has contributed \$1 million; the cyberdefence trust fund; the military career management trust fund; and a medical rehabilitation trust fund. These are funds that were set up by NATO to build on the medium term professionalism and growth, and the ability of the Ukrainian military to do a proper job.

• (2010)

Canada has also contributed to the NATO reassurance mission. We need to put that in the right perspective. What was the purpose of that? The purpose of that was to show, first of all, the Russians and

Mr. Putin, in particular, but also to show our allies, particularly in the Baltics and the neighbouring states of Russia that NATO means business, that article 5, the special and most important clause of the NATO treaty where one country is attacked, all other countries would come to its defence.

It was particularly concerning to the Baltic states: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. They felt very vulnerable and as a result NATO stepped up the efforts, called the reassurance package. Canada participated quite dramatically in that with aircraft, with naval vessels and with training missions both in Poland and contributing for the first time to Baltic air policing that had been going on since 2005. That was an important contribution.

As a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I have been to Riga, Latvia and Vilnius. We do learn from these experiences how important NATO is to these countries, which are recently part of NATO and were part of the former Soviet Union. It is extremely important for them to know that NATO is there to help them.

NATO played a very significant role and Canada, being a part of that to provide that assurance, is there. It is indirectly helping Ukraine. The government has overplayed that a little and said this was a direct support to Ukraine. It did support Ukraine because Ukraine was aware that NATO and the allies would ensure Mr. Putin did not go any further than he has and these sanctions are a very important part of that. That was indirect assistance to Ukraine.

The direct assistance we are talking about now with 200 troops to provide some training is important as well. I imagine the Minister of National Defence will speak in a little while and talk about the exact role. These are some of the questions that we wanted answered. We wanted a debate in the House and wanted to have a vote on this. We wanted to know what exactly has happened.

We do know that Ukraine needs a lot of help not just on the military side but as the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, we have to talk about the long-term stability of Ukraine. I will end by reflecting on the statement made by the minister of finance of Ukraine who was quoted by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park because it is a role for the Ukrainian government to play and people to play. There needs to be a lot of institutional changes.

I know from talking to people from Ukraine that the whole issue of corruption is extremely important and has to be fixed. Canada should be able to make a bigger contribution to that specific aspect than it has so far.

Natalie Jaresko, Ukrainian minister of finance, said in March of this year:

International support can only be effective if the Ukrainian government is also effective and diligent in its efforts to reform the country, fight corruption, improve transparency and accountability, improve the rule of law and create the conditions for the return of economic growth and prosperity.

Government Orders

We know that the European Union has put up \$11 billion euros to assist in economic development and \$5 billion of that has already been advanced in loans and grants. That is a considerable and significant effort. There is a strong international effort to help the Ukrainian people and Canada should be, and is, a part of it.

We do have some issues about that and I think the foreign affairs critic for our party and other colleagues will make some comments on that in the debate as we go forward.

● (2015)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments from my colleague from St. John's East. I think it is going to be a fairly constructive, collegial, mutually supportive debate in the long-term. This latest effort by Canada to train Ukrainians and help them become better equipped to withstand whatever Putin may be throwing their way may seem like a small amount, but it will be added to by NATO and the rest of our allies.

I would like my colleague to perhaps get inside Putin's head. It may be a pretty scary place to determine the ultimate aim of what he is doing. He has taken Crimea and there is a long stretch of territory between Russia and Crimea.

What does my colleague think Putin's aim might be with respect to forming a land bridge by force, if necessary, and gradually, if necessary, between Russia and Crimea and joining the two?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Centre for his question. It is one that gives rise to a lot of discussion.

I mentioned the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. I have attended several meetings over the last number of months and the topic of discussion is about the intention of the strategy that Mr. Putin is following. Some of the strongest experts have said that he is operating tactically and not strategically, that there is no grand plan, that the taking of Crimea was in fact opportunistic, and that all will depend on the reactions from the west and from how resolute the support is for Ukraine, for example, in terms of the kinds of things that NATO was doing. I think the NATO reassurance package has made a difference.

I am not sure there is a master plan. Mr. Putin is opportunistic, I think is the consensus of some the experts, and not predictable in that sense. However, it is important that the sanctions that are there are kept up and kept strong, but also conditional on what Putin might or might not do. I do not think that we will have sanctions forever, regardless of what happens. We may have to start putting some conditions on the sanctions, so that they may change behaviours and make it work.

● (2020)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as most members have mentioned this evening, over the many months that this topic has been discussed on the floor of the House of Commons or in our parliamentary committees, it has largely been a non-partisan discussion with all parties representing the vast majority of Canadians wanting to do everything conceivable and reasonable to support freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Ukraine, and to assist the Ukrainian people in facing the interference that they are facing from Russia.

The training mission in that regard is important. We indicated very quickly after this announcement was made by the government that we would be supportive. I take it from what the defence critic for the NDP has said tonight that his party as well is supporting the training mission that Canada has sent to Ukraine.

I wonder if he could elaborate upon that support.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, we have considered the situation with the military support that is being offered. We do have questions about whether it is effective in dealing with the major problems that the Ukrainian military is having. We know that they have serious problems. They have been criticized by the international crisis group for very serious problems at the senior levels, lack of transparency, and some corruption at the senior levels. We wonder whether this will help solve those problems and what other plans Canada has.

However, what has been proposed in terms of providing training to individuals to deal with improvised explosives, to provide medical systems, to provide training in the NATO facility, we do not have a problem with that at all. We are just not sure it is the most effective thing we could be doing, but obviously we think that the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian military need a lot of support to have a more effective opportunity to defend its sovereignty.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for his very cogent remarks. I thank those who suggested this debate tonight. Those who have people of Ukrainian-Canadian heritage in their community know that this is an important matter, front of mind.

One cannot grow up in our community without either having Ukrainian-Canadians in one's family or having those as close friends, so this is obviously near and dear to the hearts of many of us here tonight who are taking our time to try to bring this forward. As the colleague across the way said, this is a collegial debate. We all want to support Ukraine.

I notice that our country has just come out of a donor conference which started as a donor conference and became, as I understand, an international support for Ukraine conference. It just ended yesterday in Ukraine. The Europeans and the Americans are being very clear. They want to continue to support Ukraine, including the military assistance and training, but on condition that the country generally starts moving toward rule of law, democratic governance and more equitable sharing of the resources.

I am wondering if my colleague could speak to what additionally Canada could do. We have tended to focus on military assistance, but can I suggest we go back to the report that came out of our mission that I joined in Ukraine in 2012, where our recommendations included ensuring that Ukraine moves to a more democratic, rule of law nation. What can we do additionally to ensure it moves in that direction and that we not abandon it?

● (2025)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for her comments and recognition of the importance of the Ukrainian population in Canada.

Government Orders

I went to law school in Edmonton and I know that a lot of fellow students were Ukrainian. One of my former colleagues in the House of Commons in 1987-88, the hon. Ray Hnatyshyn, became the Governor General of Canada, the first Governor General of Ukrainian descent. Everybody in the Ukrainian community was very proud of that, and rightly so. Ukrainians play an important role.

Canada also has an important role and a potentially significant role to play on the governance side. We are a federation and have an understanding of how federations work. There has been a suggestion that one of the solutions within Ukraine to keep the country unified is to develop some sort of regional participation in governance to help bridge some of the differences and problems.

That is where Canada can help. Where is that in this equation? I would like to hear something from the government about that and what plans it might have to help in that way.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the intervention from the NDP defence critic and the work that he and I have been able to do together on national defence issues, including Ukraine.

I want to go back to the question that came from the member for Wascana. He specifically asked where the NDP is on the greater need of assisting the Ukrainian military. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress is supportive of this training mission, of having Canadian soldiers there to provide the doctrine and much-needed training at both the unit and individual levels to deal with tactics and operations.

Beyond that, where does the member feel we need to be going in assisting Ukraine's military, as has been suggested by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which is also advocating for more kinetic and non-kinetic military aid?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for his question, although it is a question that he has not answered, nor has his government, in terms of the best way for Ukrainians to be helped. It is a matter of great debate in Europe as to what the next steps might be. What we are doing now in terms of assisting the Ukrainian people to have a more effective and professional military is the first step, an important step, and the kind of training that we are providing will help to do that.

Anything beyond that is a very difficult question. Where does it go from there and what does it lead to? I do not think we are ready to answer that question. Talk is cheap and tough talk is easy to say, but when we look at the situation we are dealing with, and the Europeans are very conscious of this because of their history, we have to avoid a situation which goes further than we see the full consequences.

We do not want to start a new cold war and we do not want to start a hot war. We want to manage the situation in such a way that Mr. Putin and the Russians are well aware of the consequences of what might happen and that we are able to manage the situation without leading to a hot war.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the Liberal Party and I welcome this take note debate. Canada has been involved in a significant manner in support of Ukraine in a number of different ways over the past year. It is a good thing for us to meet tonight to discuss the latest involvement, which

is the provision of training for Ukrainian soldiers, a measure that we in the Liberal Party have said quite clearly we support.

Speaking very candidly, I would also like to point out, and I am very proud of this, that if we go back to December 2013, it was, in fact, my colleague from Wascana who first brought the need to come to the assistance of Ukraine to the attention of the House. We have done quite a bit since then and I commend the government for it, and we will, of course, be continuing to do that.

● (2030)

[*Translation*]

It is important for us as members to express why Canada has taken the position it has to provide assistance to Ukraine.

[*English*]

Let me begin with some fundamentals.

We in Canada recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine. It is important to say that. It is a country which is totally free to chart its own destiny. It does not matter one bit that it is a country which at one time was part of the Soviet Union. The past is irrelevant, if I can put it that way. History cannot be allowed to dictate the future. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been an independent and sovereign country. That is a fundamental starting point of this discussion.

[*Translation*]

Let us start with Crimea. Crimea is part of Ukraine. More than 50 years ago, the Soviet regime under Nikita Khrushchev ceded Crimea to Ukraine, except for the Sevastopol naval base. Crimea belongs to Ukraine, period. I would also add that Ukraine got rid of its nuclear weapons in the 1990s, an act that was supposed to guarantee Ukraine's territorial integrity. It is clearly a commitment that has not been respected by Russia.

I repeat: Ukraine is a sovereign country that includes Crimea and all its territory, including the eastern part of the country, even though there are people of Russian ethnic origin in this country. No foreign power has the right to violate Ukraine's territorial integrity.

[*English*]

Ukraine made the decision to turn to the west for economic reasons in order to seek greater ties with Europe. It is perfectly free to do so. These are the decisions that sovereign countries make. President Putin is not entitled to protest such a decision for the simple reason that it might create more competition for Russian exports. Nor is he allowed to invoke the historical past and argue that Russia somehow has a say in such a decision. Nor is President Putin entitled to say that he is coming to the rescue of those Ukrainians who want to remain closely allied to Russia, whether for ethnic or other reasons.

To put it bluntly, it is simply none of his business, and for anyone to invoke historical ties or previous dominance is unacceptable. It is a matter for Ukraine to decide its future destiny because it is a sovereign state.

It is important for a country such as Canada to stand up for Ukraine. That is what we have done with various measures in the past year.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Canada decided to act to show Russia that its actions, beginning with the invasion of Crimea, were completely unacceptable. We all support this decision.

Let us now take a look at the details, beginning with the economic sanctions. Like other countries, including the United States and a number of other European countries, Canada decided to impose economic sanctions on certain Russian citizens, in particular those who were close to the president. These kinds of sanctions may have an effect over the long term, but we must be patient and persistent. Ultimately the sanctions will prove effective, and we have already noted that there have been a number of consequences for Russia. Combined with the drop in the price of oil, Russia's major export, sanctions are beginning to have a negative impact on the Russian economy.

However, we must continue to be patient and keep Russia isolated. As we know, the value of the Russian currency has fallen on financial markets. President Putin himself recently announced that Russia's GDP has dropped about 4% this year.

● (2035)

[English]

Economic sanctions work. Look at Iran, for example. However, we have to be patient and we have to ramp them up over time so that their effect becomes more and more constraining. No amount of bravado on the part of President Putin can disguise the fact that economic sanctions are having a negative effect on Russia. Eventually, it will become hard to hide from the majority of Russian citizens.

Before leaving the issue of sanctions, it is important to point out that it is not so much the number of people who are sanctioned as it is who is sanctioned. It is for this reason that the Liberal Party of Canada has been for asking for a long time that Igor Sechin, possibly the second most powerful person in Russia after Putin and an extremely close confidant of the president, be added by Canada to the list of sanctioned people. The United States and other countries have done this, and we simply cannot understand why Canada has not yet done so. The same applies to Vladimir Yakunin.

We need to follow our strong rhetoric with strong action. Other measures taken by Canada include the following military and security-related measures: contributing to the NATO reassurance mission; providing Ukrainian forces with non-kinetic military equipment; and what we are discussing today, which is the recent decision that the Liberal Party supports of providing training to Ukrainian soldiers at bases in the west of the country over the next two years.

Some have raised the issue that Canada could end up providing training to soldiers of questionable loyalty. Having spoken to a DND official recently at the foreign affairs committee on this matter, I am not concerned about that risk.

Finally, Canada is also making available RADARSAT-2 satellite data to Ukraine in order to provide it with greater situational awareness of what is happening on its territory.

[Translation]

In addition to all this, Canada made a commitment to providing moderate economic assistance, a loan of \$200 million, and we have also opened the door to discussions leading to a possible free trade agreement. The Liberal Party believes it is also important for Canada to eliminate, for the time being, certain tariffs on Ukrainian exports in order to help stimulate Ukraine's economy.

Furthermore, it is important for Canada to become involved in the process to democratize Ukrainian institutions, particularly in order to help Ukraine get rid of corruption, which is a major problem. We must remember that Ukraine does not have a long-standing democratic tradition.

[English]

Before I conclude, let us talk about diplomacy.

While the Prime Minister's strong words to President Putin at the G20 Australian summit may have made us feel good, it is important never to lose and never to close the door to diplomacy and negotiation. This is what has effectively happened between Canada and Russia. While our position may be clear, solutions are never found without diplomacy and discussion, even if those discussions are difficult. Angela Merkel and François Hollande understand this and they continue diplomatic efforts.

I hope that we in Canada will also be part of future discussions. Otherwise, we remain somewhat on the sidelines in helping to find any possible solution.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Chair, I listened carefully to the member's speech. He referred to negotiations and international relations between Canada, Europe, Russia and Ukraine, and the importance of these negotiations and talks. I would agree that we need to be able to talk to one another.

My concern, and I would like his opinion on this, is with regard to the situation with Russia and its motives. Is it willing to negotiate? Is it willing to dialogue and is it able to? We have seen a very strategic plan that comes out of Russia through its media. It is not an open media. It is controlled by the state.

Angela Merkel has met with Putin. Every time the president meets, it is almost like starting from the beginning. Does the member believe Russia is open to dialogue, or is Putin using dialogue as a stalling tactic to move his forces further into Ukraine?

● (2040)

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I will agree with my colleague that so far there does not appear to have been any progress whatsoever on the diplomatic front. Nevertheless, I asked in committee recently whether Canada was still trying to keep the door open for bilateral discussions with Russia.

At the Australian G20 summit, Angela Merkel spent four hours with Mr. Putin. She continues to try to engage him on the Minsk agreements and things like that, so far with no success, but she continues to keep that door open.

Government Orders

In diplomatic situations that are as difficult as this, if people like Angela Merkel and François Hollande, who have also put sanctions and have a lot at stake in this situation, are able to keep the door open, there is nothing to prevent us from doing what we have done so far and yet still maintain that ability to actually speak to the Russians.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie a question concerning the role of sanctions.

I know he mentioned the diplomatic efforts of François Hollande and Angela Merkel, and the lengthy and ongoing, 18 hours I think, negotiations to get the Minsk agreement, which was denounced by the Conservative government. It at least provided a framework where the tone was turned down a little, with the question of the sanctions for the ceasefire holding perfectly still at large.

On the point of sanctions, have there been enough sanctions and have they been specific enough on whether they are conditional? Will these sanctions be there forever, as long as Crimea is in the hands of Russia, or are they sanctions such that some are there forever until that happens and others may be conditional upon the behaviour of the Russian federation in what it does in eastern Ukraine? Would the member care to comment on the value of sanctions and what they actually are for?

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I and the Liberal Party believe that sanctions in a phased manner, progressively being applied more and more strongly, are a way to deter somebody from taking certain actions, as in the case of President Putin in eastern Ukraine, in Crimea.

The thing about sanctions is that they do take time to have their effect felt. We have to be willing to increase the amplitude of those sanctions, which is why my colleague for Wascana asked the question about the SWIFT measures, which are very powerful and difficult sanctions to implement, but certainly are very powerful on the economic front.

If we begin the process of putting sanctions in place, we have to be prepared to continue to strengthen them over time, and all countries that believe the same thing as Canada must be prepared to be consistent and continue to apply those sanctions.

I will repeat something I said in my speech. It is not necessarily how many people we sanction, it is who we sanction. Again, I would like to ask the government why Igor Sechin and Vladimir Yakunin are not on that list when they are key people who are very powerful and very close to Mr. Putin.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I hope we will hear from the Minister of National Defence this evening about the precise details of the training mission that is now under way, exactly the role being played by Canadians and his forecast for how that mission will unfold.

Now that Canada is committed to that mission, and as he indicated, the Liberals are supportive of that measure, would it be useful for Canada and for this Parliament, in what is likely to be a rather busy political season in Canada in the months ahead, for a committee of Canadian parliamentarians to have the opportunity to visit the training sites in Ukraine in the period immediately ahead so

we can all better inform ourselves of the exact nature of that training mission that is now beginning to get under way?

● (2045)

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I think that would be a very good idea. I have to repeat the fact, as I have done on many occasions, that I complimented previous foreign minister Baird for inviting me and the member for Ottawa Centre to go to Iraq last September. That was very much appreciated, because big decisions have been made, in the case of Iraq, and for all the parties to have at least one person who has some understanding on the ground of some of the more important details is certainly appreciated.

If the government chose to follow up on what my colleague has said, that would be an extremely good idea, because I think we are here for the long haul, and a multi-party delegation going to the training installations in western Ukraine would allow all parties to have a good sense of what our 200 troops are going to be doing over there for the next couple of years at least.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Chair, I was listening to my colleague, and I wonder if he could comment on the Budapest Memorandum. He is probably aware that when Ukraine became independent, it signed a memorandum and gave up its nuclear weapons. That was so the countries that signed on to this respected its boundaries. Russia signed on to this, and obviously it has not respected Ukraine's boundaries. I wonder if he could comment on whether Russia is really serious when it wants to talk about negotiations, given its previous behaviour. Could he comment on his position on that?

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, thank you for the question, and with great respect, I said it in French, but I did not call it the Budapest treaty. I said in the 90s, Ukraine rid itself of its nuclear weapons on the understanding that its territorial integrity would be protected. The member is quite right. It has not been protected. We have seen that very clearly.

Make no mistake about it. Mr. Putin is totally guilty, 100 per cent, of violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine. I think everyone in this room is in agreement with that part. The Budapest treaty is another glaring example of an undertaking that was not respected.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Chair, thank you to you and members of the committee for their participation in this important debate about Canada's ongoing and forward leaning leadership role in supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine against the aggression planned and executed by Russian president Vladimir Putin and his support of violent extremists, who are responsible for the loss of thousands of lives in Ukraine over the past many months.

The Government of Canada believes that the ultimate responsibility for the terrible crime and disaster of the Malaysian Airlines flight being shot down over eastern Ukrainian territory rests with the Kremlin and President Putin. We join with all free and civilized peoples in demanding accountability for that terrible crime.

I am pleased to contribute to this important debate concerning our ongoing response.

Government Orders

[Translation]

When Russia launched its attack on Ukraine last February, resulting in the illegal occupation of Crimea, Canada acted quickly, in a show of solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We continue to take action today.

[English]

As the Prime Minister has made clear, “Canada continues to stand with the people of Ukraine in the face of the Putin regime’s ongoing aggression”. As he said face to face with President Putin at the margins at the G20 in Melbourne last fall, “I’ll shake your hand, just so I can tell you that you need to get out of Ukraine now”.

● (2050)

[Translation]

On April 13, the Prime Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Lawson, and I announced enhanced support for Ukraine in the form of a training mission that will start later this year.

This is in addition to the long-standing training opportunities already offered by the Department of National Defence through its military training and cooperation program. The training will be held in western Ukraine, primarily at the NATO Partnership for Peace Training and Education Centre in Yavoriv.

I should add that Canada and the United States helped the Ukrainians build this training centre a few years ago. There will also be training on improvised explosive devices at the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence Demining Centre in Kamyanets-Podilskyk, in southwestern Ukraine.

[English]

Our contribution will consist of approximately 200 personnel who will provide training assistance until March 21, 2017. That is the decision of the government, of course. The government at that time will make a decision as to whether or not to expand or extend the training mission.

It will do so in the fields of first, individual and unit tactics training, which most lay people would understand as conventional military training; second, military police skills and procedures; third, explosive ordnance disposal; and fourth, flight safety training, combat and combat first aid, and logistics systems modernization.

Let me assure members that the Canadian Armed Forces will only train units from the Ukrainian armed forces, not from individual militias, contrary to some inaccurate media reports in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

[Translation]

We will work closely with Ukraine’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, which will conduct a thorough investigation of everyone who participates in this training.

We will also continue to share satellite images and information with the Ukrainian government, to help it stay on top of the situation.

[English]

Sharing satellite imagery with Ukraine has no negative effect on Canada’s ability to use RADARSAT-2 for supporting the defence

and security of Canada, again contrary to inaccurate and misleading reports that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

I should point out that when President Petro Poroshenko visited us in Ottawa last autumn, his number one ask of Canada was the sharing of these RADARSAT images to assist Ukraine in having a better situational understanding of the Russian threat posed within its own territory.

I am pleased to say that within days of becoming Minister of National Defence, we signed the memorandum of understanding and began sharing those images on a regular basis. They have been enormously helpful to the Ukrainians.

Canada’s contribution has been fully coordinated and synchronized with the efforts of the United States in the region through the United States-Ukraine Joint Commission. This support to the Ukrainian people exemplifies Canada’s commitment to work with our international allies and partners to help build Ukraine’s capacity and to preserve and promote a free, democratic, and peaceful region.

We are helping Ukraine with the resources available. This past August, Canada provided non-lethal military supplies to Ukraine, including a range of targeted protection medical and logistical equipment, such as 7,000 helmets, 30,000 sets of ballistic eyewear, 2,300 protective vests, 300 first aid kits, 100 tents, and 735 sleeping bags.

When he spoke to this very place, where you are sitting, Mr. Chair, this past September, President Poroshenko said:

As a commander-in-chief, as a Ukrainian, and as a father of a soldier, I thank Canada for each life that is being saved today in the Ukrainian Donbass by the helmets and bulletproof vests you gave us.

Since that time, we have made further commitments. Canada committed to a further contribution of non-lethal military supplies. From that commitment, Canada has delivered 30,000 coats, 70,000 pairs of Gore-Tex boots, and other equipment.

I have been told by Ukrainians who have contact with the troops that this Canadian equipment was, throughout the last winter, the most desired equipment in the Ukrainian military. In fact, it became known as *Kanadki*, basically Canadian wear, a very popular expression of solidarity.

Once manufacturing is finalized, Canada will also be sending 22 Harris high-frequency radios, 238 pairs of PVS-7 night vision goggles, 1,100 tactical medical kits, a mobile field hospital structure, and a yet to-be-determined amount of explosive ordnance disposal equipment.

Let me add a word of appreciation for the enormous contributions made, charitably, by Canadians, many but not all from the Canadian-Ukrainian community, who have contributed millions of dollars to support first aid kits, and indeed, for medical doctors who have flown to Ukraine to act as medical volunteers. We salute them for their contribution.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In addition to this commitment, in January 2014, the government announced a contribution of more than \$578 million in assistance to Ukraine.

This assistance includes initiatives to promote stabilization and economic growth in order to strengthen security and foster civil society.

I should add that Ukraine is the only European country with which Canada has a humanitarian development program through which it receives this assistance. Furthermore, in August 2014, we donated non-lethal military supplies to Ukraine, such as medical and logistics supplies, including helmets, goggles and ballistic protective equipment. In November, Canada also committed to providing additional supplies, as I mentioned.

● (2055)

[English]

The following month, Canada signed a declaration of intent with Ukraine for joint military training and capacity building in response to Russia's belligerence. In January, we formalized the provision of military assistance to Ukraine by joining the U.S.–Ukraine Joint Commission and agreeing to co-chair with Ukraine that commission's military police subcommittee.

I would also like to speak to the strong role we are playing in NATO assurance measures. We have made robust contributions to strengthening security in central and eastern Europe by providing \$1 million to the NATO trust fund for Ukraine, with a focus on improving its command, control, communications, and computer capabilities. We have contributed to three NATO-accredited centres of excellence in the Baltic region on cyberdefence, energy, security, and strategic communications. There is, of course, the deployment of Canadian military personnel and assets in central and eastern Europe as part of Operation Reassurance, including CF-18s, which have participated in Baltic air policing patrol; the HMCS *Fredericton*, which is participating in patrols in the Black Sea; and more than 200 Canadian infantrymen, who are present in Poland as we speak.

[Translation]

The Canadian army is deployed on the ground in central Europe, as I said, which is giving confidence to the countries in eastern Europe.

[English]

All of this constitutes a robust response by Canada. Let there be no doubt, with this further military training operation, that Canada, Canadians, and the Canadian Armed Forces stand side by side with our Ukrainian friends and partners in sending a message of strength and resolve to a bully in Vladimir Putin, who only understands the language of deterrence. We continue to stand by the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Minister of National Defence for his comments and take this opportunity, since we are focused on the military aspects of Canadian support, to assure those following this discussion and debate that we in this House, and the NDP, stand in solidarity with

the people of Ukraine and fully support the efforts of the NATO assurance package in which Canada participated in a large way.

We acknowledge the positive support of Canada to the three centres of excellence NATO has in the Balkans, as well as our contribution to Baltic air policing and the provision of non-lethal equipment and support to the Ukrainian military. I am glad to hear from the minister that it was much appreciated and recognized as a Canadian contribution by those who received it.

I am reliably informed that to ensure that the equipment we are talking about actually got to the place it needed to go, Canada had to set up its own supply chain to make sure that happened, partly because of difficulties at the senior level of the Ukrainian military. This has been not my criticism but a criticism of the international crisis group and others. Some aid coming from the U.S., for example, ended up on the black market very quickly.

That indicates some serious problems within the military. Is there something Canada is doing and can do to assist at that level in improving the professionalisation of the Ukrainian military?

● (2100)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his thoughtful question, and the answer is yes. There is something we can and should do, and that is incorporated into the training mission. One of the specific training functions will be in logistical training for supply chains and the management of inventories. These sound like boring subjects, but in fact, no military operation can be effective without very strong logistical systems. That is why one of the areas of emphasis in our training operation will be logistics training.

I would point out that we are not aware of any confirmed reports of Canadian equipment in Ukraine going on the black market, but obviously, there are concerns in this respect. I would note that President Poroshenko has ordered and led a process of lustration of disloyal members of the Ukrainian armed forces in its officer corps to try to remove those who might have been seeking to profiteer from the conflict.

I give credit to my parliamentary secretary. On the second large shipment of Canadian equipment to Ukraine, he and a number of civil society volunteers actually participated in tracking the delivery of the equipment directly to Ukrainian troops. We have done our best to ensure the delivery of the equipment, on our part, and we will assist them with logistical training in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I must say at the onset that I do truly appreciate the opportunity we are having here this evening to talk about a very important issue. There is a high level of interest with in excess of 1.2 million to 1.3 million people of Ukrainian heritage but also others who are so much concerned in terms of what is happening in Ukraine and how Russia is intervening, unjustifiably, against international law into the territory of Ukraine.

Government Orders

The benefits that I have been able to derive from the member for Toronto Centre, my colleague from Wascana and our foreign affairs critic have been immense as they tried to get a good understanding of what is happening in Ukraine. Through my leader, I have had the opportunity to visit and be an observer for both the presidential election and the parliamentary election, which has been a great experience, given the representation that I think is so critical on debates of this nature.

Earlier this year, the Liberal Party had asked whether the government was looking at or considering the possibility of military support.

I would like to, again, ask a similar question. Is the government giving any consideration or having any dialogue with the United States or our allied forces with respect to the banking industry, in particular, with respect to SWIFT and what might be done in that whole area?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, I beg the member's indulgence. I am not entirely clear on the question. Certainly, we will be willing to receive advice from the member and appreciate his support for the training mission.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Chair, I listened intently to the minister's presentation. He mentioned the *Ottawa Citizen* and I am seeking some clarification.

A few weeks ago, the Minister of National Defence claimed that the HMCS *Fredericton* was flown over by Russian fighter jets while on a NATO mission in the Black Sea. I just want to know if this *Ottawa Citizen* reporter wrote that no such encounter took place. That is what appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Would the minister provide us with clarification on that issue?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, Mr. Chair, I certainly can. The media report to which he refers was wholly and entirely inaccurate. It was repeated by the leader of the Liberal Party, in this place, a couple of weeks ago.

I have here a declassified advisory maritime interaction event report from the commander of the HMCS *Fredericton*, dated 6 March 2015, which indicates that during an under way replenishment at sea, two Russian war planes closed *Fredericton's* position and operated in air space in the vicinity of the *Fredericton* for approximately 30 minutes. The aircraft closed *Fredericton's* position one at a time, at medium altitude, conducting manoeuvres to demonstrate they were not carrying weapons. Thereafter, the aircraft continued to operate in the vicinity of the *Fredericton*, flying at low and medium altitudes at distances that ranged from over top to several miles from the *Fredericton*. The Russian aircraft were not in communication with the *Fredericton*.

I would be happy to table this report, which comes from the commander of the *Fredericton* and demonstrates the precise veracity of what I said.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for his comments. Tonight's take note debate is important. It is the first step in finding out what Canada can do to help Ukraine.

Unfortunately, we have already seen that Parliament and Canadians were misled with regard to the mission in Iraq and Syria. I would like to know what measures the minister is going to take to ensure that parliamentarians and Canadians are properly informed of our soldiers' activities during the new deployment of troops that was announced recently. I would also like to know how we are going to be informed of what progress is being made and whether the objectives of the deployment are being met.

I simply want to know how the minister plans to keep us abreast of any developments.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, with regard to Canada's mission against the genocidal terrorist organization known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, we are likely being more transparent than any other country. We are posting reports of all Canadian Forces air strikes in that area on my department's website. Every two weeks, Canadian Forces officers provide public updates or briefings on the situation there.

I am quite prepared to provide similar information regarding the training mission for our Ukrainian partners. It will be a very open mission. It is not a secret. We provide similar training programs in countries all over the world. The Canadian Forces specialize in these programs. This is not a closed mission. It is transparent. I will be pleased to share information about the progress of our training mission in Ukraine with the House and the general public.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I was wondering if the hon. minister could tell us why Igor Sechin is not on Canada's sanctions list.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, that is a question I would refer to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am here to discuss the Canadian training mission.

As a general rule, we have listed more individual Russians on our sanctions list than the United States or the European Union. We are demonstrating leadership. However, we would encourage those jurisdictions to follow our example when it comes to sanctions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, as we know, Ukraine is caught in a very difficult situation. We have talked a great deal about it in this debate. Its situation is very difficult from a geopolitical point of view and in terms of defending its territory, as well as from a human point of view.

I would like to take some time to talk about it at greater length, so that we do not forget that after all these are human beings who have been caught in this situation. We must not forget that since April 2014, according to the UN and the World Health Organization, more than 6,000 people have died and more than 15,000 people have been wounded. The situation in the eastern part of the country is still extremely difficult. North of Donetsk and Lugansk, there have been many disruptions in water and electrical services. In the Donetsk area alone, 10,000 residential buildings have been destroyed. A large number of factories, roads and airports have also been destroyed, and the electrical power infrastructure has been completely wiped out.

Government Orders

The number of people displaced by the conflict has now reached 1.1 million. I see my colleagues all around me here. I come from the greater Montreal area. The number of people who have been displaced in Ukraine is the equivalent of half of the greater Montreal area. In addition, tens of thousands of people are trying to leave the country by all sorts of means and are seeking refuge, trying to emigrate, and so on. In short, it is a very harsh human and humanitarian situation.

The economic situation is also very uncertain. In the last year or so, the value of the Ukrainian currency has dropped by about 70%. Here again, we must always think about what this represents. We have seen Canada's currency drop, but imagine if it suddenly dropped to 25 or 30 cents U.S. Imagine the impact that this would have on our daily lives. In addition, in 2015 Ukraine must pay back an \$11 billion debt. We know its risk of defaulting on the payment is quite high.

According to the Ukrainian minister of finance, the country spends \$5 million every day on the conflict alone. That is huge for a country that is facing enormous economic problems.

At this time of great need, Canada must stand with Ukraine and we must be true to our friendship with Ukraine. There is a great deal that we can do.

For one thing, we can continue to put pressure on Russia. Moments ago, the Minister of National Defence once again told us that Canada has sanctioned more individuals than any other country. Is he serious? What matters is not the number of people sanctioned, but the people being targeted. Tomorrow we could decide to add all of the veterinarians in Moscow to our sanctions list. That would probably add a few hundred names to the sanctions list, but it would have no impact at all unless Vladimir Putin has an animal he is very fond of and they decide not to treat Vladimir Putin's dog or cat or whatever. This is not about numbers. It is about targeting the right people.

There are two key players: Igor Sechin with Rosneft and Vladimir Yakunin with Russian Railways. They are close confidants of Vladimir Putin. They are on the Americans' list, but for some strange reason, they are not on Canada's list. That is certainly one thing we could do: impose tougher sanctions. The first thing to do is to stop saying that it is the number of people sanctioned that matters rather than the individuals being sanctioned.

• (2110)

We could also help reduce Ukraine's susceptibility to a form of blackmail by offering our expertise in the area of energy efficiency. That may seem odd, but I think this approach could be interesting. Given that we have a great deal of expertise in that area, this assistance could help alleviate some of the pressure being put on Ukrainians and help reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, which Vladimir Putin's Russia is exploiting.

Another aspect, and perhaps the most important, although the others are also important, has to do with helping Ukrainians build the society they aspire to. In that regard, democratic development is key, and Canada must absolutely be a partner to Ukraine and support that country in the area of good governance.

I was very interested to hear what the representatives of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress had to say when they appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which I am pleased to be a member of. Their remarks were so poignant, that I would like to quote part of their evidence. They said:

Canada can help foster NGO sector development, especially groups working in the areas of human rights, education, and law reform, as a vibrant civil society is one of the best guarantors of Ukraine's long-term democratic evolution.

I personally feel very good about that. I firmly believe that we must build civil societies because they support good governance and a truly democratic society.

Earlier we were talking about the fight against corruption, even within the army. Reports indicate that supplies provided by the U.S. were diverted and ended up on the black market. Ukrainians themselves, including those I have talked to, are saying that there is corruption at various levels of society. This is another area we can help them with.

As long as there is corruption, there cannot be fair and sustainable economic development, good governance or rule of law. This remains a major challenge in Ukraine, and I think that we could do a lot in that regard, in addition to providing financial support. We have to be there and stand with Ukraine.

In short, as we said earlier in the debate, there is much to be done. This is a friendly debate because we agree on the substance of the issue. The government has already engaged in the areas I mentioned. We encourage it to continue its efforts and to really focus on the issues of ensuring good governance, fighting corruption and strengthening civil society, among others.

Ideally, the government could play an important role in urging other countries to provide assistance. For example, to date, the Ukraine humanitarian response plan, established in February 2015 by the UN, has only received 12% of the funds required.

In 2014, the level of funding was good. However, in 2015, funds are not being collected as quickly as in 2014, probably because there are so many crises in the world. In my opinion, Canada could have a role to play in advising other countries to listen, not to forget Ukraine, to support it, to be present and to continue helping it.

I cannot help but say that had we not burned bridges with so many countries, it would be even easier to participate in the diplomatic efforts that are so vital, but we could at least try.

• (2115)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Chair, my colleague spoke very passionately. I think Canadians watching this tonight would like to know a little more about their role, what they can do to help out.

Government Orders

Recently in Oshawa we had a fundraiser, and the member for Etobicoke Centre and the member for Selkirk—Interlake were there. Members of the local Ukrainian-Canadian Congress, Walter Kish and his volunteers, helped raise \$23,000 to help the organization Help Us Help The Children, children of war project. This organization focuses on providing counselling, rehab and humanitarian aid to children and families displaced by the war in eastern Ukraine.

Could my colleague explain how important it is for Canadians to become educated about this and how important this humanitarian aid is to the families and kids displaced by this horrible intervention by Russia?

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I sincerely thank the hon. member for his sensitivity about the issue I want to bring to the debate today, the terrible situation in which the humanitarian, economic and development aspects all come into play. We must help the Ukrainian people solve their problems.

I know there are fundraisers going on everywhere. Organizations are getting involved. Ukraine and Canada are closely linked. We have a very large Ukrainian community in Canada. Individuals and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress are getting involved. People can contribute in various ways. They not only can give money, but also simply talk about the situation and make sure the issue is kept alive in public discussions and dialogues that speak to our collective conscience.

That is what we are doing here this evening, but all Canadians can do it, anywhere in the country.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I appreciated my colleague's remarks. She emphasized the importance of helping Ukraine in various domains, including the economy.

That is certainly one of the positions the Liberal Party has taken. We could help kick-start the Ukrainian economy if we decided to sign a free trade agreement. We could even grant preferential tariffs for some of their export products, in order to get their economy moving. We know there are huge problems in this area. I think the government agrees with us.

I would like to hear what the NDP thinks of this issue.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question. Like me, he is a member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

It is an interesting idea, but, as always, there is no magic solution. I said in my speech that sustainable and fair economic development rests on a foundation of good governance, and corruption must be eradicated. We have discussed the reinforcement of military capacity, but other areas also need to be strengthened, for instance the ministry of finance and the entire government structure. There is no magic bullet. Simply saying that we will sign an agreement and do business will not suddenly make everything right. The situation is more complex than that. I believe the Ukrainians themselves are asking for Canada's help in all these sectors. There is also a need to construct

the infrastructure on which a fair and sustainable economy can be built.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, based on my colleague's extensive experience in foreign affairs and working in many countries, I know she knows all of the pieces that need to be put together to assist a country in distress, such as Ukraine is, and I really appreciate her guidance.

There is one thing I would like to share. The response that my colleague gave to a question put by a Conservative member was to the credit of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which has established a Canada Ukraine Foundation. I am hearing from Canadians. They are listening to this debate. They are concerned, and I encourage them to donate. That may be one place they can channel their donations through.

I very much appreciate the fact that my colleague has raised this issue about working with civil society, because it is ultimately the one that will work with the government to become less corrupt, to establish democratic foundations and to establish the rule of law. It is the one that must hold its government accountable. It is our job to give that civil society those skills. I am pleased to hear that just this week, Canada finally committed some dollars for civil society, apparently through the FCM, which is interesting.

Could my colleague speak to that, about experiences overseas and aid being given to help civil society to become a better monitor and watchdog over governments?

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I hope that my answer will be useful. When I was in Senegal, the country was holding a democratic election that involved a turnover of power and no violence at all. The whole process was fully transparent. It was a democratic process we could have been proud of.

The following day I got phone calls from Senegalese people who were thanking me for the election. I asked them what we had done. Their answer was, "the journalism school". Journalists had been trained in Canada, and in turn they had become good reporters and were able to hold their government accountable and bring issues into the public sphere. For the Senegalese people, this was one of the main factors that had enabled the country to have such a flexible and peaceful transition to democracy.

That is one example of many, but I think that is the key point. It is not a matter of Canada going into a foreign country to tell people what to do or what not to do. It is a matter of developing local tools and resources to force the government to be accountable and to have a fully democratic system. This process first and foremost includes civil society.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Chair, the member made a comment something along the lines that if Canada had not burnt so many bridges, it would be able to talk better. Would the member give some specific examples of how Canada has burnt bridges, and how she thinks that if it had not done that, we would be able to talk more effectively with the Russians in the case of Ukraine?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Chair, I do not think I have enough time to give all of the examples.

Sometimes during conferences I attend abroad, a foreign representative will ask me if I think people still have confidence in Canada. I know this goes back a few years now, but the fact that Canada was not re-elected to the Security Council is telling. The people who supported us before no longer support us because we have a black-and-white approach to diplomacy, with the good people on one side and the bad people on the other.

That is not how diplomacy works, and now we are seeing the results.

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

As we discuss Canada's ongoing and expanded contribution to NATO and Ukraine, it is vital that all members of the House understand that the many steps taken by Russia over the last few years have brought us to this point in time where we are now in a period of conflict, steps which now threaten the safety of the Ukrainian people, a key ally of Canada, and indeed a people integral to Canadian society.

Russia has used force to change borders in Europe, violating international laws and damaging Russia's relations with the west. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea is a violation of the 1994 Budapest memorandum, which provided assurance for Ukraine's territorial integrity. Whether it takes 5 months or 50 years to liberate Ukraine, we will never recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory, including Crimea.

In response to this challenge, Canada has provided assistance worth \$578 million, including loan guarantees, for economic stabilization, humanitarian aid, non-kinetic military equipment and other support, including developmental assistance. We have also led the way in economic sanctions against over 210 individuals and entities in Russia. We now propose sending Canadian Armed Forces personnel to Ukraine for training purposes.

Last month, the leader of the NDP stated that his party would not support the expanded mission, since it was not led by the United Nations or NATO. Our government does not plan to go along to get along. We will do what is right, with or without the support from the opposition.

The crisis in Ukraine is simply the latest and most visible in a series of trouble provocations and actions taken by Russia, all of which have demonstrated the Putin regime's blatant and dangerous

disregard for international law and the security of Europe. In fact, we now call into question Russia's willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue on issues of European security or the de-escalation of aggression against the Ukrainian people.

Vladimir Putin makes no secret about his disdain for the post-cold war security architecture, making a series of provocative anti-western statements in the press. In recent months we have seen Russian bombers flying through controlled airspace without transponders. We have seen bombers over the English Channel. Right here at home we have seen a sharp increase in Russian activity and aggression in the Arctic in an effort to challenge our Arctic sovereignty. While our military is ready to respond to any and all threats to our northern borders, we have seen a rapid increase in the frequency and size of Russian military exercises in the north. Although the battle rages far away, the effects and consequences are felt right here at home.

Canada hosts a proud Ukrainian community of 1.2 million strong. It is one of Canada's largest ethnic communities, and has been vital in contributing to our social and economic progress. Through hard work, dedication and perseverance for over 100 years, Ukrainians have established themselves at the highest level of government, business and sport and culture throughout the whole of Canadian society. Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Canada was also the first western government to recognize the genocidal nature of the Holodomor, the famine genocide imposed by the Soviets from 1932 to 1933.

In support of democracy and transparency, Canada sent the largest election observer missions in the last two Ukrainian elections.

The record is clear. Our government has been, and remains, steadfast in our commitment to stand with the people of Ukraine. It is therefore vital that we continue to stand together as allies, the Euro-Atlantic security.

I am proud to support the government's ongoing commitment to the alliance and Canada's expanded bilateral support to Ukraine.

● (2130)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Chair, listening to the minister speak is a good example of what my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie was saying about the government's black and white attitude, its failure to understand what is going on. In fact, I think that, as a colleague of mine used to say, instead of the minister being on receive, he is on transmit. He did not listen to what was said on this side of the House and he persists in saying that the NDP does not support the military activities in Ukraine by the government or the Operation Reassurance mission. He clearly does not listen.

To characterize some of the things that he has as an attack on our sovereignty in the Arctic by the Russians really seeks to inflame something that is non-existent. People constantly go before the defence committee saying quite clearly that there are no military threats to Canada in the Arctic and yet he persists in talking as if there were.

Government Orders

I would ask the minister if he would be a little more nuanced in his comments. We obviously stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and support the efforts being made there. That is not in question and I do not know why the minister wants to persist in suggesting that it is.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Chair, one thing is for sure. We have not buried our heads in the sand. Some of us happen to know what is going on and we are happy to understand, realize and admit that there are some issues that need to be addressed and the challenges are there. I should also enlighten the hon. member that it is not only about what I have said, but it is also about what the Canadian government has done.

Certainly, Ukraine is a top priority of ours. It is critical that Ukraine seize the current opportunity to undertake deep and lasting reforms. It cannot do that on its own. It cannot do that with a gun to its head, and it certainly cannot do that with people avoiding dealing with reality. It is a threatened country by a very determined, aggressive foe, an adversary, and denying or ignoring that does not solve the problem.

• (2135)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would make reference to the fabulous work that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has done in terms of supporting members of Parliament on all sides of the House. The information that it provides to us is quite substantial and of great benefit.

In my home province of Manitoba, in particular, the Manitoba Provincial Council of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and Oksana Bondarchuk have been very helpful. I have had a great deal of correspondence on some of the issues, for example, that have been raised.

I would ask the minister to provide some comment on a particular issue, which is the reality that 7,000 people have died, it has been estimated, and about 19,000 have been wounded.

Does the minister agree with what has been espoused by many that there is a need for weapons?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Chair, the aid that Canada has been providing is that which will enable the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian military to elevate their ability to deal with a very aggressive and brutal regime that is endeavouring to take over not only Crimea but that whole area of the world in terms of their actions. The aid that we provided is what we feel is appropriate at this time. Certainly it has been helpful and in fact very much appreciated. We will continue to stand with the Ukrainian people going forward in whatever needs are identified as appropriate under the circumstances.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is indeed an honour to be in the House to discuss the situation in Ukraine. As someone of Ukrainian heritage and as someone who has a riding that has a large percentage of people who are part of the Ukrainian diaspora, this is an issue that is not only near and dear to us as Ukrainian Canadians, but it is of great concern to all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

I have to thank the Prime Minister. His leadership on this file is head and shoulders above that of most other world leaders. He had a strong role in making sure that we were there to support Ukraine and its people as they got rid of a very corrupt president in Viktor Yanukovich. The Prime Minister spoke with clarity. He was there at the inauguration of the new government and has been there every step of the way, whenever we met with President Poroshenko, and making sure that we provide the aid that Ukraine has requested of Canada.

When we started this discussion tonight, it was about the training mission that the Canadian Armed Forces are going to be undertaking. I can tell members that I am so proud of our brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces for the outstanding work they do day in and day out here in Canada and around the world. It is their capabilities and expertise that they are bringing to the table in Ukraine, which are desperately needed.

When we think about Ukraine under Viktor Yanukovich, he allowed the Ukrainian military to atrophy. A country of 54 million people only had a standup army of 5,000 troops. After the Maidan, after the elections, the invasion, occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea by the Putin regime in Russia, and then ultimately the fighting that we are seeing now in the Donbass in eastern Ukraine, Ukraine does not have the capabilities or the individuals to be able to go out there and fight. It may have a fighting force today of 40,000 to 45,000 troops, but we have to remember that these are all fresh recruits. These are new volunteers and they have not had the basic training that most people in the military get here in Canada. Even though they are battle hardened, they still lack those tactical skills at an individual and unit level. Therefore, it is great that our armed forces are going over to provide this much-needed training and that they will be able to do it a battalion group at a time.

We are doing this in collaboration with the United Kingdom and United States at the Yavoriv base in western Ukraine, which Canada helped build several years ago. It is only a few kilometres from the Polish border and 1,300 kilometres away from the fighting that we see in the Donbass. Our men and women in uniform who are going to be over there doing the training are relatively removed from harm's way.

I know that the opposition has brought up the issue of corruption and the concern that it is taking place. I would remind all members in the House that we have a situation where Canada has signed on with the United States and the United Kingdom to the Ukraine Joint Commission on Defence Reform and Bilateral Cooperation. We are leading the subcommittee in that commission on military placing to deal with the exact problem of corruption within Ukraine's military.

As the Minister of National Defence has already pointed out, President Poroshenko has been doing lustration and has been trying to remove what they call the fifth column from the Ukrainian government and from the Ukrainian military. We have to be there to support him. That is what the military police are doing and it is what some of the \$578 million has gone toward. It is helping with lustration, best practices, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and removing corruption.

Government Orders

I also want to say regarding the military equipment we delivered that I was fortunate enough to go there to ensure that it was handed over in a formal fashion from Canada to the Ukraine armed forces. We also have people over there who have done great work, such as Lenna Koszarny, who is a Canadian living in Ukraine. She is an accountant. She is working with our ambassador, Roman Waschuk. She was there to make sure that all the aid got delivered. There are other volunteers to track its movement as well.

• (2140)

I want to give a big shout-out to them for making sure that our great military equipment is getting into the right hands and is being well-used.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Chair, I know that the member has been personally engaged in issues around Ukraine and is very committed to that.

I want to raise one question with him with respect to sanctions which I know has been raised with him before. We all agree that sanctions are important, but I want to make the point that quality matters more than just quantity. Our foreign affairs critic has led the way in calling for tough, coordinated, targeted sanctions. In fact, he was banned from entering Russia because of his call for tough sanctions.

We have demanded that Canada target close friends of President Putin. We think that would be effective. There are a couple of key people who are on the American and European lists, such as Igor Sechin of Rosneft and Vladimir Yakunin of Russian Railways.

I would like the member to clarify something. There was a time when he said we want to be careful with respect to Canadian interests. I presume that he does not mean that we would not sanction people because of the impact on the Canadian economy. Perhaps he could just clarify that.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I would just say that we have 270 sanctions in place. We have the strongest sanction regime against the Ukrainian and Russian individuals, entities and sectors responsible for the aggression we are seeing from the Putin regime in eastern Ukraine. Rosneft, Igor Sechin's company, is sanctioned, so I do not know why the member keeps bringing this issue up.

I was a little concerned when the member for St. John's East, the NDP defence critic, said that he is scared that we will start a new cold war. It is not us starting a cold war; it is President Putin. It is the Russian aggression. That is the start of a new cold war. We have to remember that Putin is always provoked by weakness. We have to take the correct steps to show that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine to stop Putin's aggression not only in Ukraine but also the fear that he is going to spread this throughout eastern Europe.

• (2145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as I have indicated, I have had the opportunity to receive a considerable amount of feedback as I have asked individuals to provide me some of their thoughts and opinions.

The Liberal Party has been very supportive of the government's initiative in sending in 200 Canadian Forces personnel to provide training and to assist, which I must say has been received quite well

by the public. One of the issues that has been brought to my attention is, to what degree the government is considering entering into dialogue with the United States or any of our allies with respect to where we could go from there. Has there been any dialogue with respect to military trucks or anything of that nature? Has the government had any such dialogue?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the member for Winnipeg North that when Angela Merkel was going to meet Putin she made sure to talk to President Obama and the Prime Minister before she entered into those meetings. She very much wants to see that there is this type of strong relationship with Canada, the United States, France and Germany as we move forward. We are talking to all of our NATO allies to look at all of the options to bring about peace, security and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty by all members and make sure that Putin gets out of Ukraine.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am a member of Parliament with a large Ukrainian population and therefore, this is of interest to me and my constituents. Being of Czech extraction, I do remember the Prague Spring of 1968 when I was part of the Czech community in Winnipeg. It is something I will never forget.

I want to address quickly some of the comments from the member for St. John's East. He told us to be nuanced. We on this side of the House believe in right and wrong. It is because Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul believed in right and wrong that they brought down the Soviet Union. This idea that we can deal gently with the Soviet Union, or Russia, which is actually the same thing these days, is the reason Lenin called the western left, the western liberals, useful idiots.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary what his view is of what Vladimir Putin's end game is in Europe.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I do not believe Putin is done yet. He is waiting to see how the west reacts. I believe the stronger our position, the slower he is going to move. If we start to try to appease his position, we are going to see him continue to push on, right down to Crimea, right through Mariupol, which we are already starting to see.

The Minsk peace agreement is starting to fall apart. There is going to be a spring offensive, I fear. That could also lead them to try to connect right over to Odessa and Transnistria.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, I just want to say at the outset that I will be sharing my time with the terrific member for Parkdale—High Park.

Tonight, we have heard a lot of debate and comments around the government's recent announcement. That is important. I want to thank my colleagues, in particular my colleague from St. John's East, our defence spokesperson, for laying out some really important questions, and for a good back-and-forth with government to clarify some points.

Government Orders

I want to focus a little on the sanctions regime. It is really quite important that we talk about this. We all have the same goal, and that is to help the people of Ukraine. It is important to keep that in mind. The actions we have seen, the aggression we have seen and the posturing we have seen from Putin and from the Russian Federation are clearly unacceptable.

It is a question of how we respond, and how we can be effective in our response. I want to reassure, from our side of the House, the people of Ukraine that we are there to help the people of Ukraine. We are there to help them become more independent, obviously, to look at strengthening institutions, to strengthen their economy, to make sure the people, particularly in the east who have been most adversely affected by this aggression, are going to get the support that we can provide to them. Of course that means helping the government in general.

One of the tools that we have been very focused on on this side of the House, and I know the government has engaged and has made mention of sanctions, is to talk about sanctions and what they are intended to do, and how sanctions can be used to attain the goal. I am going to lay that out. The goal should be paramount. It is not just sanctions for sanctions' sake. It is not just to say we are doing something. It is to say we have sanctions for a clear delineated goal.

It is interesting that I have to go over our position that we have been reiterating. There has been a little change on the other side, thankfully, on the sanctions that we think are missing from the government's list that are incorporated, frankly, by the EU and by our friends in the States. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park just raised this question, but it bears repeating.

With regard to Igor Sechin, the government did, and I acknowledge, put Rosneft, the oil company, on the list. Just so members know, Rosneft owns about 30% of an oilfield here in Alberta, Canada. Rosneft is now on the sanctioned list by our government, and I want to acknowledge that, but not Sechin.

I would really like to hear from the government why Igor Sechin is not on the sanctions list. As I said, I acknowledge they did put his company on the list, but if we are actually going to be effective and use sanctions as a clear tool to effect change, to have an impact, we need to coordinate it with our allies, obviously, and we have to put individuals like Sechin on the list. First, because it sends a message; and second, because it will actually affect and hurt Sechin, and of course Putin and the people around him.

We have also asked for Rostec, the state-owned defence and industrial firm, to be on the list. The CEO, Chemezov, has been on the list. He is the chairman of basically an arms export agency. He was a leader in the United Russia Party. His company was sanctioned in the U.S. in September 2014. In this case, we sanctioned the individual but not the company. This is an inversion of what we have seen.

What we have in some cases is we are putting companies on the sanctions list and not the individual, and in this case, looking at Rostec, we are putting the individual on the list but not the company. What requires an explanation here is the incoherence of the government's approach, which is not in keeping with that of our allies.

Yakunin has been mentioned before. He is the CEO of the Russian railways. He is a long-time friend of Putin. He was sanctioned by the U.S. in March 2014. He is involved in Russian rail projects, joint venture agreements with Canadian companies.

We have these individuals who are not on the list and some companies that are, and it lacks coherence.

• (2150)

I want to just highlight those individuals and those companies because, in the case of Igor Sechin, we will not find someone who is closer.

I would just end with this. Sanctions will be ineffective unless they target significant economic relations. The U.S. and the EU sanctions are what brought the Russians to the negotiating table. Canada's make-believe sanctions have deprived it of any role in these talks. Russians, no strangers to deception, can recognize a ruse when they see it. That was by Michael Byers, who is a professor of law. He pointed this out. I am pointing it out. We have a problem in our approach with sanctions, and I want to lay that on the table.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, we appreciate that most members in this House are supportive of the government's position and we need to do more in the areas of ensuring we have all the diplomatic levers at our disposal.

There is the potential that the Minsk peace agreement completely falls apart and the possibility that we see increased activity by Russia-backed separatists. We know that it is Russians in there and I am hoping that the member for Ottawa Centre will concur that it is Russian soldiers, Russian equipment, Russian command and control, along with some mercenaries who have been hired in, who are actually doing the push toward Mariupol now, trying to grab more territory in eastern Ukraine.

In light of this, I want the member to shed some light on where he would go from a diplomatic lever standpoint, but also how he feels about Canada's continued support for the Ukrainian armed forces.

• (2155)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I would actually strengthen the sanctions, as I just mentioned.

While I am on that, I wanted to add something. I had the opportunity yesterday to meet with Vera Savchenko, who is the sister of Nadiya Savchenko. Nadiya Savchenko is being imprisoned in Russia. She is a Ukrainian woman pilot who was abducted by the Russians and is from eastern Ukraine. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and international governments have urged her release from this precarious situation she is in. I want to put on the record that we should be putting sanctions directly related to her case on Russian officials. I hope the government takes this seriously.

There are two particular individuals. There is the director of the Federal Security Service, an individual who was Putin's director for the FSS before becoming prime minister and president; and finally, the head of the Investigative Committee of Russia who was involved in the abduction, we believe, of this individual.

Government Orders

That is my response for my colleague. Strengthen the sanctions and call for the immediate release of Nadiya, as I know the government wants to do and has done.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am going to operate on the assumption that the New Democrats support the military training mission. There are no ifs or buts about it, but they in fact do support it. If I am wrong in my understanding, please do correct me on it.

I want to pick up on the issue of economic sanctions. The member made reference to Igor Sechin, someone we too agree should be on the list. In addition to that is Vladimir Yakunin.

My point is not necessarily about the number of people who are on the sanction list, but more who is on it. While some nations have already put those two individuals on the list, Canada has not. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I had little time and I am sharing my time so it was something that I intended to do, but I laid out in the five minutes I had our position on sanctions, so I will let my colleague read the record.

In terms of our support for what the government has laid out in support for the troops and training, it was very clear what we wanted to see. It was just very clear goals, ensuring it is the professionalism. The government has acknowledged some concerns around theft or people wanting to profiteer from the mission and ensuring that is not going to happen. We are providing what I think we should be doing and being consistent on it, as official opposition, to say that we understand what the government's intentions are and we will monitor it closely. We want to ensure the goals are established clearly.

That is why we always look forward to debate. Ultimately, debate and a vote is what we normally ask for in these situations. That is exactly what we have done, and we have been consistent on that. My colleague from St. John's East has been crystal clear on our objectives as the official opposition in terms of keeping the government to account and at the same time, of course, supporting the people of Ukraine.

The Deputy Chair: Before we resume debate, I just want to ask the assistance of all hon. members. Now that many members are splitting their time in a five minute speech and a five minute questions and comments, could they pay attention to the Chair to end their speech within five minutes? Also, on questions and comments, we were typically getting two sets of questions rather than three. It is obvious many members would like to participate tonight, so if members could be mindful of the clock and ask short questions and give short answers it would allow more of your colleagues to participate in the debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

• (2200)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thought I was going to have 10 minutes, so having 5 minutes I will speak a little quicker.

I am very pleased to take part in the debate on the situation in Ukraine. On behalf of the people of Canada, we are all here tonight united in the determination to not let the situation in Ukraine fall from our agenda and to ensure that we are standing strong in

condemnation of Vladimir Putin and his actions, his invasion in Ukraine. We stand firm in support and solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

I am also very pleased to speak on behalf of my constituency of Parkdale—High Park, which has a large number of Ukrainians, many of the more than 1.2 million Ukrainian Canadians in Canada. The cities of Toronto and Kiev are twinned actually, so we have close links to Ukraine. I have really learned from the people in my community the lessons of history. These are people who lived under the former Soviet Union, whose relatives suffered through the Holodomor, the famine genocide. I have had the great privilege of being an election observer four times in Ukraine and of receiving young Ukrainian interns in my office here on Parliament Hill.

In particular, working with the young Ukrainian interns has taught me a lot. It has taught me that young people do not give up hope. They want, I think, what people everywhere want. They want a normal, modern democracy. They want to be governed by the rule of law. They want to have confidence in their judiciary. They want to have democratic freedoms and human rights and to be free of corruption. These young people come here to learn about our government and to learn about a democracy in the hope that they can go back and help build a stronger democracy in their country.

However, what is called the “spirit of Maidan” has really been betrayed. There were people killed there and many more have died since. I was going to recap some of the terrible recent history. However, a couple of years ago who would have thought we would be in the situation we are today with 6,000 dead; more than 1.2 million Ukrainians displaced; thousands of buildings, apartments and factories destroyed; and the Ukrainian economy very perilous right now.

We join together. This is a debate in the spirit of collegiality to say that we stand in unison with the people of Ukraine.

I want to especially give a shout-out to Paul Grod and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, because it has been the Ukrainian diaspora that has really been vigilant and forceful in demanding accountability and support for Ukraine. I really want to thank them. There have been many long cold vigils and rallies and it has been a pleasure to stand with the community, as many of us here have.

Let me be clear, as my colleagues have been, my colleagues from Ottawa Centre and from St. John's East, that we support the actions of our government in terms of training and professionalization of the military in Ukraine because, really, it did not have much of a military.

We especially want to emphasize the notion of democratic development. Let us keep in mind the spirit of these young interns who come to Canada and help in the building and fostering of a democratic society. That is really what is going to bring long-term stability in Ukraine, having a free and open media, an active and accountable government, and a reputable judiciary. Clearly, they need economic aid.

Government Orders

I have asked several questions this evening, as have my colleagues, about sanctions and the need to really target those sanctions to put the pressure on Putin's key friends and allies and to keep squeezing the Russian economy. I think that is going to continue to be very important.

● (2205)

Let us not forget diplomacy. I know we all want to be immediate and take as much action as we can, but ultimately, we are going to have to find a solution here, so let us not forget about that.

I know my time is up and I want to end with a quote from the Ukrainian minister of finance. She said:

International support can only be effective if the Ukrainian government is also effective and diligent in its efforts to reform the country, fight corruption, improve transparency and accountability, improve the rule of law and create the conditions for the return of economic growth and prosperity.

Surely, ultimately, that is what we all need to be working for.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have been listening intently tonight and I hear ideas and concepts of nuance and diplomacy. I think we all agree that we want to do things in a diplomatic a fashion as we can, and as the son of parents who were liberated from the Netherlands, it is actually apropos that we are talking on the celebration of the 70th year of that liberation of my parents.

Things like nuance and diplomacy play a role, but we also need to understand, and I hope the opposition will get on board with us, there is a point in time when we have to call a spade a spade and be willing to go forward in a strong fashion and speak strongly, and do the things that need to be done in order to liberate a country that has been invaded by another country to the point that its freedoms and ability to rule itself have been taken over.

We can talk about all these things, but I would like to hear the other side say that we need to be very direct at certain points in time.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, as the daughter of a World War II veteran who fought in the Battle of the Atlantic and was on a minesweeper, and was on Omaha Beach on D-Day, I also know that there are times when action must be taken.

Perhaps the member came in at the very tail-end of my remarks because I did talk earlier about a whole suite of approaches and actions from sanctions to military support, to democracy building, to diplomacy. There are many aspects to our response and we must be very robust on many fronts.

Earlier my colleague made an important point which was that Canada can and should play a more robust international role in encouraging other countries to fully contribute to the UN trust funds because those moneys are urgently needed and the investment in those funds has really dwindled in 2015. There is a whole menu of activities that needs to be undertaken and I agree with that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, while the context of this debate is that there is great unanimity around this chamber, the Government of Canada has taken a number of unprecedented steps in aiding Ukraine, none of which has come before Parliament for debate. One was providing the RADARSAT-2 data to Ukraine. The second was sending military support to train in Ukraine. I have also heard it reported that we have a memorandum

of understanding with Ukraine which has not been tabled before the House.

I wonder if the member agrees that a take note debate after all decisions are made is not quite what parliamentary democracy requires and particularly the decision to provide RADARSAT-2 data, which was opposed initially by both Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defence, should have come to this place for debate.

● (2210)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, that is exactly the position that New Democrats have taken in the House. We had many questions about the full nature of the military training support that was offered. We wanted to ask questions in the House prior to the decision being taken and as a parliamentary democracy would normally require, we wanted to have a vote on that initiative. None of that has happened.

The member is quite right that while a take note debate, while important, and we have had a few take note debates on Ukraine, it is coming after the fact that a decision was taken.

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this debate, which highlights the role that Canada is playing in supporting the Ukrainian people in their time of crisis.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine, our Conservative government has been at the forefront of the international community's efforts to implement democratic and economic reforms, and to restore peace and stability in the face of unprovoked Russian aggression. That aggression and Russia's flagrant violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity have led to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and the displacement of many more thousands of Ukrainians within their own country.

Ukraine continues to face enormous economic and security challenges, and Canada has remained a steadfast and trusted partner in contributing to the defence of Ukraine and the support of the Ukrainian economy.

Our goal is to help Ukrainians achieve a level of peace and prosperity that we in Canada have for so long enjoyed and the challenge is immense.

In its yearly report on Ukraine, the World Bank cited the state of the global economy, exacerbated by the ongoing crisis in eastern Ukraine, as representing the ongoing major threats to the Ukrainian economy. In 2014, the Ukrainian economy real GDP declined by 7.5%. Its currency lost approximately half of its value against the U.S. dollar, and inflation reached 25%. Complicating the situation is the fact that Ukraine must contribute a very significant portion of its government revenues to defend itself against Russian-sponsored rebels.

The bottom line is that Ukraine needs Canada's help.

Government Orders

On September 17, 2014, during President Poroshenko's first official visit to Canada, he and our Prime Minister announced the signing of Canada's first \$200 million low-interest loan to support Ukraine's economic and financial recovery. This past March, our government committed to a second \$200 million loan to help stabilize Ukraine's economy and address pressing social needs. These loans, along with financial support from the International Monetary Fund and other key partners, will be crucial in helping Ukraine to achieve financial stability and a return to economic growth.

Since January 2014 Canada has announced more than \$575 million in economic and development assistance to Ukraine. It has also provided significant non-lethal support and, more recently, it has agreed to join a mission to train the Ukrainian armed forces.

As Ukraine works to implement its recently signed association agreement with the European Union, we expect that it will also adopt best practices, business norms, and transparency standards that will enhance Ukraine's reputation as a destination for foreign investment and as a preferred trade partner to do business with.

We want to commend President Poroshenko and his government for their commitment to implement significant structural and economic reforms within Ukraine. As president, he has begun to set in place an ambitious timetable to build a more open and transparent market-based economy whose success will be driven by engaging with trading partners like the European Union, Canada and the United States. Canada strongly welcomes these reforms and our government is committed to taking all reasonable steps to support those reforms.

In fact, Canada is already playing a role in those reforms. Ukraine's economic advisory council, which was established by President Poroshenko, is actually headed by a Canadian, Mr. Basil Kalymon of the Richard Ivey School of Business at Western University.

Over the past year, I have had the distinct pleasure of leading two trade and development missions to Kiev, most recently in January. The purpose of these visits was fourfold. First, it underlined that Canada will not abandon Ukraine in its time of need. Second, I was able to meet with a number of my ministerial counterparts to discuss opportunities for Canada to partner to rebuild Ukraine's economy. Third, I was joined by a group of Canadian business people of Ukrainian heritage who were committed to acting as catalysts in supporting and affecting economic reform and transformation in Ukraine. Fourth, I was able to announce an additional \$42 million of development assistance. This support would assist Ukrainian dairy and grain farmers to improve their production, quality of their product, storage, and marketing of their product. The funding would also provide technical assistance on anti-corruption, transparency and governance reforms.

● (2215)

Canada has also been providing technical assistance to Ukraine to improve its energy security. This assistance has helped Ukraine develop an energy contingency plan and identify areas where Ukraine can improve its oil and gas regulatory framework which, of course, in turn, would improve the competitiveness and clarity of this sector. A more transparent regulatory and business environment

in the energy sector is expected to lead to new opportunities to support Ukrainian prosperity, opportunities which Canadian companies would undoubtedly benefit from.

During my two recent visits to Ukraine, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of their ministers. I met with the minister of education. I spoke with the minister of agrarian policy and food. We spoke about energy and coal with the minister responsible for those areas. I interacted with my counterpart, the minister of economic development and trade. I had a chance to have a robust meeting with the new minister of finance for Ukraine. I can tell members that I returned to Canada with the clear confidence that their ministerial team has a sincere commitment to completing the economic and structural reforms required to re-energize Ukraine's economy.

Indeed, I was pleased that President Poroshenko has already established a business ombudsman and a national anti-corruption bureau.

Our government is grateful for the work that private sector organizations, such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, do in supporting Ukraine in its time of need.

I want to recognize the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, which is playing a key role in expanding the business-to-business commercial relationship. Canadian companies such as Black Iron, Iskander Energy, Serinus Energy and Shelton Petroleum are among the many which are anxious to re-engage in the Ukrainian economy.

While our trade relationship is presently quite modest, we know that there is tremendous potential for growth. It is companies such as the ones I just mentioned which will contribute to that growth.

Recognizing this, Ukrainian trade minister Aivaras Abromavicius and I announced this past January that we have restarted free trade negotiations between our two countries. This announcement builds on the commitment made by our countries' two leaders during President Poroshenko's historic visit to Canada last year.

This trade agreement would create new market access opportunities and predictable conditions for businesses, further strengthening our bilateral partnership.

A free trade agreement with Ukraine would also help address many of the non-tariff barriers which presently act as a hindrance to Canadian companies wishing to do business in Ukraine.

I am very pleased that Ukraine was named a priority market under Canada's global markets action plan. That plan, which we refer to as GMAP, is our government's over-arching strategy for creating jobs and economic growth through trade and investment.

Ukraine is a promising market for Canadian exporters in sectors such as agrifood, especially pork, aerospace, and seafood.

Additionally, there are growing opportunities for Canadian companies in the mining, information technologies, renewable energy, and oil and gas sectors.

Government Orders

Canadians understand that the Ukrainian people face enormous economic and security challenges. Our government has assured Ukraine that Canada will remain a steadfast ally, partner, and trusted friend, as the Ukrainian people successfully meet those challenges.

One thing I can assure members of is that Canada will never abandon Ukraine. As our Prime Minister has said:

Whatever difficulties may lie ahead, whatever actions are taken by those who threaten Ukraine's freedom, Ukraine will never be alone because Ukraine can count on Canada.

• (2220)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I had the privilege of participating in the foreign affairs delegation that travelled to Ukraine in 2012 to look into ongoing issues with the erosion of the rule of law and democracy. While we were there, we met with many panels of people. One of the panels was very interesting and goes toward the minister's portfolio.

We met with the American Chamber of Commerce, the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Business Association. Those business advisers said to us at that time that unless we had deep pockets, we should be very careful of investing in Ukraine. Since that time, there has been, essentially, a revolution in Ukraine. The people are grateful. They feel that they now have a better chance of having control over their government, but they remain very concerned about continuing corruption and the lack of a flow of benefits to the people of Ukraine as opposed to their flow to the oligarchs

In a meeting just this week that Canada participated in with the donors, the Europeans and Americans again expressed concern that the reforms on the rule of law and anti-corruption are not moving as rapidly as they had hoped.

In my experience in work with Canadian aid in both Indonesia and Bangladesh, Canada provided experts on an ongoing basis and did not have them just parachute in for a week. Is the minister's department giving consideration to actually offering up some financial and anti-corruption experts to help Ukraine over the long term develop these mechanisms to protect both the people and investors?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her interest in Ukraine. I sense that there is a consensus in the House that Ukraine does need Canada's support.

With respect to transparency and anti-corruption measures, clearly, that is a significant challenge Ukraine faces. Much of our engagement with Ukraine, especially on a minister-to-minister basis, has been on addressing our concerns about governance and corruption.

I can tell the member that I was sincere in my comments when I said that I do believe that the ministerial team President Poroshenko has put together has a sincere commitment to addressing those issues. It is going to be a long road. Many of the challenges within Ukraine are endemic. We have already, of course, provided expert advice to Ukraine. That will be ongoing.

We have also reminded the government of Ukraine that Canada has a trade and development facility under which we can enhance

their ability to access foreign markets and make their small and medium-sized enterprises aware of export opportunities within Canada. They also are able to assist Ukraine with addressing governance challenges within the country.

We are working very hard to try to bring all of these things together. It is going to be a long journey, but I am confident that President Poroshenko and his team have really set themselves on a course that will move Ukraine toward prosperity and peace.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it was quite a privilege for Canada to have President Poroshenko address this House. He talked about the importance of trying to get the free trade agreement. It is obviously a very high priority for the Ukraine government.

My question is related to that, given that this is the minister who leads the Canadian government on the issue of trade agreements. Can he provide us anything further on whether the government has a strategic time frame as to when it would see some form of agreement in principle? We have been talking about the potential of a trade agreement with Ukraine for a couple of years now. Could he provide some thoughts on what he would like to see personally in terms of an agreement and a time frame?

• (2225)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for that question, which focuses on Canada's trade relationship with Ukraine.

We have completed a number of rounds of negotiations with Ukraine. A time frame would be very difficult to set, if not impossible, understanding that the capacity of Ukraine's government to engage in a timely way in things such as trade negotiations will be very challenging.

That said, we have actually, on our side, made significant efforts to assist Ukraine in continuing to prepare themselves to conclude negotiations. As I mentioned earlier, there is a trade and development facility Ukraine actually can draw on, which would assist them with the capacity restraints they have, as they negotiate a trade agreement with Canada.

Understand that the standard we always set when we negotiate trade agreements is that it has to be a trade agreement that reflects Canadian interests, that is in the national interest. However, in Ukraine's case, we also have additional motives, which are to assist Ukraine in restoring its economy to health. That will be a long-term project for the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government and for us as Canadian partners.

We believe that liberalizing trade, opening up trade between our two countries, is one measure we can take to enhance the prospect of Ukraine benefiting from the Canada-Ukraine relationship.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Minister of International Trade for his very good work with the people of Ukraine.

I am proud this evening to stand in support of Ukraine. I am very proud of the position our government has taken in supporting Ukraine and the Ukrainian people's desire to pursue freedom, sovereignty, and democracy.

I come from a riding that is very rich in Ukrainian history. I have many communities that have strong Ukrainian ethnicity and are very closely tied to the Ukrainian people. Many of them have friends and relatives still in Ukraine.

I am also the grandson of Mennonite immigrants who in the early 1900s fled Ukraine during a time of civil unrest and found their home here in Canada. I am so grateful that Canada accepted by grandparents on both sides, and I have a strong attachment to the people of Ukraine.

I spoke with a gentleman this past week who had been in Ukraine the previous week, and upon people there learning that he was Canadian, they expressed their sincere appreciation and thankfulness for the support Canada has given to Ukraine.

In particular, there were three things they were thankful for: our prayers, which they appreciated; our support on the international stage; and our supplying their troops with flak jackets. To quote directly what one of the individuals said:

We provide our troops with food and clothing to keep them warm and fed, but you Canadians supply them with body armour, which makes sure that our sons and husbands come home at night.

The Ukrainian people are very appreciative and thankful for the support we have shown them so far, and I am just so proud that our Prime Minister has expressed unequivocal support for the people of Ukraine.

I am just wondering if the minister could expand a little bit further on how important it will be to provide continued economic support.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his comments, because he and I share a common heritage. My mother was actually born about 30 miles from the eastern Ukraine border, so I understand his passion for supporting Ukraine.

Economic support is as important as the support we are providing in terms of non lethal military assistance and the training we have recently agreed to undertake in Ukraine.

The economic dimension of this relationship between Canada and Ukraine cannot be underestimated. We have somewhere in the order of 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, many of whom are business people and many of whom are prepared to engage economically with Ukraine.

When I was there on my two trade missions, I was accompanied by quite a number of Canadian companies whose owners had Ukrainian heritage, and they were impressing upon us the importance of getting a trade agreement in place, of removing some of the trade barriers, and of removing some of the investment barriers and the lack of transparency in the economy.

I am absolutely confident that if we do this right, Canada can play a major role in allowing Ukraine's economy to recover.

• (2230)

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Chair, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona.

Government Orders

The debate we are having in the House tonight is important, and I am glad that so many MPs from all parties want to participate. The situation in Ukraine is deeply worrisome, and everyone has an opinion on it, including those of us here in the House and all Canadians.

Russia's illegitimate military intervention in Crimea and the ensuing violence, which is still ongoing, shocked the international community. According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, more than 6,000 people have been killed in eastern Ukraine and over 15,000 more have been injured. People in the region are having a harder and harder time getting water and electricity, and the fighting has been going on intermittently despite ceasefires between the two parties.

My NDP colleagues and I supported and continue to support Canada's efforts to help the Ukrainian people, including our involvement in NATO's Operation Reassurance. We stand with the Ukrainian people and we will continue to do so. We have a duty to help them. In addition to the non-lethal military support already provided by Canada, we can assist Ukraine in other ways, such as contributing to the country's democratic development or its economic stability.

I do not have much time today, but my colleagues from Laurier—Sainte-Marie and Ottawa Centre, in particular, have outlined various measures that Canada could take to help the Ukrainian people.

I would like to come back to the announcement that was made a few weeks ago by the Minister of National Defence. He announced the deployment of 200 Canadian military members to train the Ukrainian armed forces until March 2017. We know that there are some issues with the Ukrainian military at present. It can and must play a key role in stabilizing the region. Unfortunately, it continues to have difficulty modernizing and becoming more professional. Canada can certainly help train Ukrainian troops. Quite honestly, the intentions behind the deployment that was recently announced are commendable.

However, many questions still remain about exactly what our Canadian troops will be doing on the ground. There was a press conference to announce the whole thing, and tonight we are having a take note debate. However, we are getting very few additional details on the real mandate that Canadian troops will have on the ground in Ukraine.

Canadians and parliamentarians alike deserve more information on the details of the mission. This is a democracy, and transparency is important. There should be a debate in House.

My riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, is home to CFB Valcartier. The soldiers who are part of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group are currently taking part in the exercise MAPLE RESOLVE. They will be in a period of high operational readiness as of July 1. Being in a state of high operational readiness means that the soldiers who are currently at Valcartier could be deployed to Ukraine in the coming months, once the group from Petawawa completes its deployment.

Government Orders

With that in mind, it is crucial that the soldiers in my riding and their families be kept informed of the government's intentions and of the real mandate that our troops will be assigned.

In addition to the take note debate we are having today, we need to have a formal debate and a vote in the House. For now, the government has made a unilateral decision without consulting parliamentarians from all the parties. That is unfortunate. Everyone in the House agrees that we must help Ukraine. Canada has a role to play and we can certainly contribute to democratizing the country, stabilizing its economy, and training its troops. However, we should at least debate this in the House. It is part of our responsibility as parliamentarians. Unfortunately, that was overlooked yet again. Although I appreciate the debate we are having this evening, we have to do more. We are a democracy. It is important for the government to give us the opportunity to hold a formal debate on the issue and formally vote on it in the House.

• (2235)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am a bit confused.

First, I thank the hon. member for taking part in the debate. However, after I announced our operation to train Ukrainian forces, the NDP foreign affairs critic called for a debate in the House. That is why the government moved this motion and we are having this debate this evening. So far—I have been here for two or three hours now—I have not heard the NDP take a clear position on the training operation in Ukraine that the government announced.

I have a simple question for the hon. member. Does she support the operation to train Ukrainian forces recently announced by the government?

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for his question.

I was also here for most of the speeches given in tonight's take note debate and I did not hear any details from the government about the real mandate our troops will have on the ground.

In order to take a meaningful position, we must be well informed. We need transparency and information. The government has to be prepared to answer our questions. That is not the case right now. In fact, the NDP is asking for an official debate in the House, not an extremely informal take note debate like the one we are having tonight, so that we can make our position known in an official vote. That is what we are asking for from the government, and we still have not received an answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think this is an appropriate question to ask in seeking clarification, because I am not convinced the New Democrats support this mission.

What I have heard speaker after speaker say is that the NDP does not see clear goals. The members are concerned about the theft of materials, what the troops will be doing and they do not know the details.

Based on the answer the member just provided the Minister of National Defence, could she be concise on the NDP's position? If there were a vote on it today, if this was a vote as opposed to the type of debate we have right now, how would she vote? Would she vote in favour of what has been done in terms of military advisers going to Ukraine?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my Liberal colleague for his question.

I find it a rather strange that he, of all people, thinks we are a bit confused. When the Liberals tried to take a position on Canada's mission in Iraq and the extension of the mission in Syria, it was very confusing. There was a lot of flip-flopping. That is what happened.

What we asked for in the House is very clear. We want detailed information so that we can make an informed decision and take a stand in a formal vote in the House. We have asked the government to make that happen multiple times. Unlike the Liberals, the NDP likes to be informed and to have the details before making decisions.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, I am even more confused because the NDP demanded a debate and we are having a debate.

[*English*]

The member wants more information. The NDP has not asked a single question in question period in the two weeks since the training announcement was made. It has not written me a letter asking for information. Tonight when I spoke, the NDP members did not ask me for any details of the training operation. They asked about logistics in the Ukrainian military and the provision of supplies. They have not asked any detailed or substantive questions about the training operation.

We have provided all the information. What is actually going on here? Let us call a spade a spade. The NDP does not want to take a position, because most Canadians support this training operation. The NDP's ideological base cannot tolerate the notion of Canadian troops operating in any capacity overseas. I think that is what is really happening.

Let us just try to pull this out a little. What is the NDP position? If the NDP members actually have questions to ask, why do they not ask them in question period? Why have they not been brought forward in an opposition supply day to debate and put it to a vote? Why have they not written me a letter, asking any of those questions? I just do not think it is credible.

• (2240)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Chair, I think the minister must not be paying much attention in question period, because even though we do ask questions, we never get any clear answers from the government. What we are asking for here is a formal debate in the House, not a take note debate after the decision has been made.

Government Orders

I also think the minister's memory must be failing him, because immediately after his speech, I asked him how the government was going to keep Canadians and parliamentarians informed of the details, objectives and progress of the mission. He did not answer me.

Before I answer his question, I would like an answer to mine.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I find it rather peculiar in this debate that the Minister of National Defence is now interjecting and asking why the NDP is not simply focusing its discussion on military aid, yet his colleagues, including the Minister of International Trade, stood and gave a lengthy speech about the need for Canada's support in trade with Ukraine. There has been discussion about sanctions.

The entire western world understands that in the situation Ukraine faces, it is important that we use every measure at our disposal to help Ukraine to move forward, to fight back against the aggression that it faces from its neighbour Russia, and to fight against the perils in its economy right now. Its democracy has flailed under previous administrations. There are so many pressures that Ukraine faces, and I understand that since this debate began, we have actually had a very convivial dialogue about this.

I have a very strong Ukrainian Canadian constituency in Alberta with which I commune. First and foremost, I thank the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora. The Ukrainian Canadian community in my riding has stepped forward and raised tens of thousands of dollars in support of Ukrainians, after the turmoil, deaths and injuries in the Maidan, to support medical aid and the building of democracy.

I want to tip to my hat to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for its continued relentless efforts to seek the support of Canadians and the Canadian government to build the nation. I also want to thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for the establishment of the Canada Ukraine Foundation, through which all of us can contribute to the building of Ukraine.

I want to commend the Canadian government, not simply for stepping forward and providing military training aid. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was in Kiev, though I have not heard the Minister of National Defence mention that or thank him. He travelled to Kiev and promised additional aid. This additional aid is exactly in the direction that one of my colleagues mentioned tonight, which is building civil society and its ability to hold its government accountable. That is very important. I am also delighted to hear that the FCM will help to deliver that. It has a lot of experience working with civil society.

Many of us have spoken tonight about the clear strategy on sanctioning. I am grateful that the government has been imposing sanctions. Clearly, there are some important people who have been left out, and we are simply asking questions about why those people, in particular, are being left out.

Obviously, we can play a major, ongoing role in diplomacy. We have a long history of diplomacy. Something that was brought to my attention tonight was very interesting. The Elders, which was established by Nelson Mandela in 2007, is travelling to Russia to meet with Putin to try to get him to move more toward peace. This

includes Kofi Annan, Lakhdar Brahimi, the former foreign minister of Algeria, Jimmy Carter, Gro Harlem Brundtland, and Ernesto Zedillo, the former president of Mexico. Many nations around the world are stepping up to the plate and concentrating efforts to support Ukraine.

One area that I have not heard the government mention, and that actually came forward in the natural resources committee in a full day review, is how we help Ukraine as it is suffering with its problems with energy? Some of the conditions imposed by the IMF are telling it that it has to stop the subsidies on energy. I have been conversing, through one of my former interns, with the officials in Ukraine who are looking for expertise on energy efficiency. That is an area where Canada has a lot of expertise, and I hope the government will move forward, turn to our experts and send them over.

The million dollar question is what happens when the troops move toward Kharkiv or Mariupol? Let us hope that it does not happen. Let us hope that all of the efforts on the front by many nations supporting Ukraine will prevent that from happening.

● (2245)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, there have been some comments tonight that we have not given specific information on what is going in the training mission over there. I think that we have, a number of times, and I would like to list them and ask my colleague a question.

We are doing anti-IED training; military police training; logistics management training; individual and unit tactical training; medical training, particularly with the experience we have gained in the years in Afghanistan; and flight safety training.

Those are the six things, *grosso modo*, that we are doing there. Would my colleague agree that the NDP could support those mission objectives?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I know the hon. member has a strong military background and that is the area in which he is most interested. From my perspective, I have worked many years in foreign aid and that is where my expertise lies. These questions probably belong more to our defence critics.

However, that is the kind of aid that we would like to provide to a lot of countries, but that is not the question before us. The question is: What is the framework for providing that aid, what are the safeguards and so forth? I do not think that it is us who have raised those questions. Others have put those questions to us and we simply put them forward to the government.

One of the things we could do, in the same way that we stepped forward to call for the freedom of Yulia Tymoshenko, is for the government to be upfront and centre to defend Nadiya Savchenko. She is a current hero of Ukraine, and I would like to hear more talk about her and what our strategy will be to try free Nadiya.

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanchi—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, despite the fact that it is clear that Putin's aggression is illegal, there are complexities to this issue that former USSR leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, brought up in terms of the historical context, the rapid breakup of the former Soviet Union, the failure of perestroika, and his call that we not use rhetoric that fans flames of disunity and disharmony. Obviously, Ukraine and Russian peoples have much in common and there should be, as Gorbachev had called for, efforts to find a peace that is sustainable for both peoples.

Is there a role for Canada can play? I am supportive of everything we can do to help the people of Ukraine. I support sanctions, but I am also concerned that we have placed Canadian troops into this situation without a discussion in Parliament. I know I may be a very small minority on this point, but I am concerned. I would rather see us pursue whatever we can do to build the bridges, as I see German leader, Angela Merkel, attempting to do.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, this is the moment in time when the world is meeting at the UN moving toward nuclear disarmament. That is where we could be putting a lot more effort. I know the current government is not a particular fan of the UN, but we have to remember that there are two major mechanisms we work through, one is the UN and one is NATO.

I note that this military mission, even in training, is not endorsed by NATO. I remain a little puzzled on how exactly we are rationalizing the sending of troops and not seeking the support of Parliament.

Frankly, from my standpoint, I can remember hearing the voices of the Ukrainians on the eastern border with Russia, saying that they did not want Ukrainian or Russian troops in their community because they would be at risk.

Our responsibility is to try to reduce that risk and to try to keep front and centre those families that are being put at risk. Therefore, we need to be exercising every conceivable diplomatic measure we can so it does not move toward a larger scale war.

It is our obligation to stand with other nations and ensure that Minsk II is actually obeyed.

• (2250)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am splitting my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I have heard many people talk tonight about helping Ukraine. I am pleased to inform the House that Canada is doing a great deal to help Ukraine from a humanitarian situation, from a development perspective, and also with what we are doing to help strengthen its military. I want to focus my remarks today on Canada's development assistance program and its role in responding to Ukraine's democratic and economic crisis.

Last year's revolution was about the desire of Ukrainians to live in a prosperous, democratic, independent European country. Given the current conflict in eastern Ukraine and the country's general economic and democratic fragility, there is quite obviously still a very long way to go. Progress is coming and this is thanks in large part to a new generation of young reformers in government and

because of a re-energized civil society that continues to work in the best interests of the Ukrainian people.

Canada's own contributions in Ukraine are helping too. As our Prime Minister has announced, Canada has expedited and prioritized new bilateral development assistance programming to support Ukraine, more than doubling the development assistance budget over traditional levels.

Since January 2014, Canada has committed more than \$578 million in funding to assist Ukraine. Of this, \$139 million is for increased bilateral development assistance, or more specifically, to advance democracy and the rule of law, and to stimulate sustainable economic growth. Since January 2014, Canada has announced over \$43 million for projects to advance democracy and the rule of law.

Through trusted partners, we have sent observers to ensure free and fair elections. Canadian technical assistance improves elections regulations, trains elections officials, ensures safety at voting stations, and raises voter rights awareness. There were two national elections in Ukraine last year and Canada played a leadership role in coordinating international assistance and election monitoring. This year, our partners will continue to work for longer term change in Ukraine's democratic culture. They will do this by training political parties to better respond to citizens' issues and by developing mechanisms for public engagement. As Ukraine begins to decentralize, next October's local elections will be another important step forward in the country's democratic transition.

Canadian contributions in Ukraine also include supporting efforts for an independent free media and a strong civil society. Free access to information and ideas lets citizens form educated opinions based on facts, allowing for constructive and effective participation in the democratic decision-making process. Freedom of expression, information and media are therefore as important for individual dignity as they are for accountability and democracy. Canada is pleased to support development projects that improve these basic rights in Ukraine.

In addition, Canada supports Ukrainian cities and regional administrations in economic planning and active and effective citizen engagement. As resources and authority continue to be decentralized, local governments are facing greater demands. Given Canada's strong municipal management expertise, we have spent the past several years sharing our knowledge with Ukrainian cities. The country's 2015 budget has increased funding for local governments, and a constitutional reform to entrench decentralization is planned. We will continue to draw on Canadian and regional experiences, including Polish expertise, to assist local governments to manage new functions, resources, and to ensure oversight and accountability.

Government Orders

• (2255)

Mr. Chair, I see that you have given me the sign that I have very little time left. I just want to emphasize that Ukraine is a top priority for Canada and it is one of the 25 countries of focus for development assistance. Canada is among the strongest international supporters of Ukraine's efforts to restore economic stability and implement democratic and economic reforms.

We have condemned in the strongest terms Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, and we continue to be at the forefront of the international community's response to Russia's aggression. We are monitoring the situation very closely and we will continue to deliver assistance and appropriate aid.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there has been a great deal of concern about the amount of Russian propaganda that is out there. If we listen to the propaganda we hear all sorts of untruths, such as the people who are causing the civil unrest in eastern Ukraine.

The minister made reference to the importance of development projects. I wonder if she would give us a sense of what she would like to see in terms of how we could play a role in countering the Russian propaganda machine that has proven to be fairly effective in formulating opinions that are just not true. An example of that would be that it is Russian military personnel causing all of the unrest, in the vast majority, in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Chair, I was privileged to be part of the foreign affairs committee that went to Ukraine two years ago. When we were in Kharkiv, we met with a small group of people who were part of the free media. They too were telling us how difficult it was for the free media to have any effect or influence in Ukraine, simply because they did not have enough private sector advertisements to keep the free media functional. I am pleased to tell the House that while I was there, I wrote a personal cheque for \$200 to give to this one gentleman who was running his own radio station. I said to him, "I am buying advertising from you. This is a fair exchange of goods and I don't care if the only thing you say is that Lois Brown supports free and fair elections." However many times \$200 would buy, I wanted him to put that advertisement on the radio. I am pleased to say I have supported the free and independent media in Kharkiv and certainly hope that it has the opportunity to continue.

We will continue to do that with our development dollars. We know how important civil society is to the growth of a free and democratic society.

The Chair: I would point out to members that the rules that apply here are similar to the rules that apply in the House. One cannot use the name of a member, including one's own name in speeches in the House.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

• (2300)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for running ads that said that the hon. parliamentary secretary supports free democratic elections.

I can probe the question of the budget for humanitarian assistance in Canada. We just received the budget. It does not give us a total for

what development assistance is available in 2015. We have a lot of pressures. I know my hon. colleague takes them to heart and works very hard on them, but we have a huge humanitarian crisis right now of Syrian refugees, which is pressed up against Jordan, Lebanon and also Turkey, with overflowing refugee camps that are under-resourced. We obviously have a real concern for the people of Ukraine. We have our traditional partnerships around the world and the priority on maternal and child care.

From what I have been able to find out, it looks as if the budget for overseas development assistance was cut by \$670 million two years ago and it looks as though the amount is frozen. Are there more aid dollars coming? Is there an increase that was not mentioned in the 2015 budget? How are we going to meet all these commitments?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Chair, what we do know about aid is that at the conference that is coming up in Addis Ababa in July, the ask is going to be for some \$135 billion. We know there is never going to be enough money in any aid budget. It is time that we did aid differently.

We are looking at some new financing mechanisms to ensure we get private sector dollars in there as well. With our Minister of International Development, Canada has been at the forefront of these initiatives, working with the World Economic Forum and most recently there is the announcement that was made in Washington.

Canadians continue to be exceedingly generous people. We just made the announcement on Monday about a matching fund for the Nepal emergency that is going on. For every dollar that is contributed by an individual Canadian, the Canadian government is going to match that dollar for dollar. I encourage people to consider giving generously. Organizations like Save the Children, World Vision, the World Food Programme, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Médecins Sans Frontières and Red Cross are all organizations that are accepting donations. We know that Canadians are exceedingly generous people, and they want to know that their aid dollars are being spent effectively.

The results we have seen from the money that we have put into our maternal, newborn and child health initiative have been nothing short of miraculous. The lives of some 280,000 moms have been saved and millions and millions of children are now reaching their fifth birthday.

It is about accountability. It is about effectiveness. We are going to continue to spend the dollars appropriately and continue to get those kinds of results.

Mr. Ted Opatz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am honoured to take part in this very important debate in support of Ukraine tonight.

I would like to begin by praising the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora for their support and commitment to Ukraine. That is all 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian heritage and the organizations that organize this community like the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, League of Ukrainian Canadians, League of Ukrainian Canadian Women, Canada Ukraine Foundation and the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce and so many others. They have been absolutely incredible and I thank them all so sincerely for their efforts and their leadership.

Government Orders

There is a new medical mission leaving this week on a diaspora-led mission and recently as well Canada has sent 1,100 tactical medical units and 238 sets of state-of-the-art night vision goggles to Ukraine's army.

I also praise Canadians in Ukraine like Lenna Koszarny and others who in collaboration with Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine, Roman Waschuk, have ensured that all materiel has been sent, received and delivered accordingly. Well done for them.

Whether it takes months, years or decades, Crimea will return to its rightful place in Ukraine. Canada will never recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory.

Mr. Putin must also stop his campaign to undermine all of his neighbours in the Baltic states and in the west with his very dangerous information war waged against all of us and particularly directed at the Russian people themselves as he drifts closer and closer to Russia's totalitarian past. By doing so, Putin perceives enemies and threats where none existed and now continues to threaten global peace and security.

The Russian people have big hearts and big souls. Russians are generous and kind people who are being misdirected by their own leadership. They are being misdirected by Putin and his oligarch facilitators who continue to prosper despite a failing economy while his weapons expansion continues and the Russian people increasingly suffer and go without. His war upon his own people is intended to methodically eliminate the democracy that they very much deserve after the long dark years of communism.

I am very proud of the role Canada is playing to promote peace and stability in Eastern Europe today and to bring stabilization to Ukraine so the Ukrainian people can choose their own path, democratically, in a free and prosperous Ukrainian nation.

Unprecedented in the post-Cold War era, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has highlighted the broader importance of the transatlantic security relationship and that of NATO, in particular. As a founding member of NATO, Canada has a long-standing commitment to promoting security in Central and Eastern Europe. This commitment was evidenced by our swift response to the current crisis. In fact, the Government of Canada was among the first to respond to NATO's call for contributions to the alliance's immediate assurance measures.

As ever, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces answered the call and I am proud to have served alongside them during my time in the military.

Early on, Canada deployed soldiers to Poland and Eastern and Central Europe as part of Operation Reassurance. Over the last 12 months, our soldiers have taken part in numerous training exercises aimed at building the capacity of our allies.

An important contribution to NATO's persistent presence in the region, Canada has taken on a leadership role in training exercises designed to develop and enhance interoperability, readiness, joint operations capability and multinational responses to potential crises.

Indeed, since the initial deployment last year, over 500 Canadian Armed Forces members have participated in exercises in Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia and more will continue to. There are

presently approximately 220 soldiers stationed in Drawsko Pomorskie and soon there will be approximately 200 Canadian soldiers in Ukraine helping to develop capacity in Ukraine's army. That was recently announced by Canada's Minister of National Defence and we thank him for that announcement.

Their deployment not only represents a demonstration of our ongoing commitment to NATO, but also of the readiness and professionalism of the Canadian Armed Forces. The leadership role undertaken by Canadian Armed Forces at training exercises during Operation Reassurance is a testament to our determination to increase this interoperability.

Canada is a proud ally and we will work very closely with our allies in NATO and in Ukraine. Canada will always stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine.

This Prime Minister and this government and our ministers will make sure of it.

● (2305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I know that for medical reasons the member for Toronto Centre is not able to be with us. I know this has been a very important issue for her and I would like to put a question to the member. It is related to the very important world banking industry. I would like to get a sense from the member of what his thoughts are.

There have been suggestions that there needs to be some dialogue. To what degree could he provide the House with whether the government has had any dialogue on the issue of the possibility of banning Russia from the SWIFT banking system? I recognize the important role Canada has to play in leadership and looking at consensus. Is this one of the things the government is having discussions on?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Chair, as the member knows, the SWIFT system is a private entity based in Belgium. We talk to all of our allies, whether it is financial, NATO or in other fields, and we continually have that dialogue. We also have to move in concert with the rest of our allies as well as taking into account the SWIFT system's independent nature.

● (2310)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, I know my colleague from Etobicoke Centre is a bit of a historian. He talked about some of the countries in the region, sort of within Putin's vision. In the 1930s, we heard about protecting the German nationals in Sudetenland, Poland, Austria and other places, and we know what happened there.

Do the things we hear today about protecting the ethnic Russians in Moldova, Georgia, Estonia or a number of other places in that region give my colleague concern about having seen this movie before?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his many long years of service as a fighter pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. I thank him very much for that.

Government Orders

I have seen this movie before. My parents, in fact, have seen this movie before. My father could tell us about this movie from the inside of a gulag. This is something that is recurring in history. Vladimir Putin is also a historian. He studies Stalin, he understands Stalin, and he is refining his methods. He is drifting very quickly back to Russia's totalitarian communist past. This should be disturbing to us all.

This is somebody who is pressing our borders again, since the Cold War, be it the overflights over our Arctic, the overflights over Baltic space, the overflights over NATO members. It is a violation and something that is provocative and threatening global peace and security where it never had to be or should have been.

Vladimir Putin has personal ambitions to recreate an empire of his own and we are not going to allow him to do that. Canada and its allies are going to stand firm in the face of Mr. Putin and all of us are going to enjoy the freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law that all of our nations have earned over 70-plus years of having to deal with the communist system.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to have my colleague quickly talk about the value of training. As a former colonel in the Canadian Armed Forces, knowing what it is like to be in the infantry and the dangers associated with the equipment that is used, there have been occasions where people have shot themselves in the foot, self-inflicted injuries. We have heard about this happening in Ukraine, because of the volunteers and recent recruits, as it set up this brand new army in the last year.

Could the member speak to the value of what we are going to be doing there as a training mission?

Mr. Ted Opatz: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. friend for all of his work on Ukraine, for the multiple election missions we put on, for the multiple times he has personally delivered non-lethal military aid to Ukraine. I thank him for all of that on behalf of Canada and on behalf of the Ukrainian people.

An army needs to constantly train. Canada has learned that, even throughout the years of Afghanistan. Every time we sent a new mission to Afghanistan, there was an 18-month cycle of training, deployment and returning. Sometimes they went as long as two years.

The fundamentals of any army have to be reinforced no matter how good it is. It is like an athlete, it needs to continue to train and reinforce those fundamentals. It becomes muscle memory. It becomes instinct. That is what the Ukrainian forces need from us. We have that expertise. We have expertise from the many years in Afghanistan and other missions, Bosnia and what we are learning across the globe right now as Canada works very hard to achieve peace and stability in other places.

The Ukrainian forces need that reinforcement. I know their people are battle-hardened, however, they need to understand the fundamentals of training, they need to be able to train themselves eventually. As a former trainer on many courses myself, it is important that all of this is reinforced and that we provide the fundamentals to the Ukrainian armed forces so that they can carry on forward themselves in future years, keeping their army strong and well-trained.

● (2315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to stand here today to share some thoughts on what is a very important issue, not only here in Canada but around the world, as the world is very much focused on what is happening in Ukraine.

To make it very clear, we in the Liberal Party recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine. The western world and beyond have seen this horrible situation arise because of one leader from Russia, Putin, who has caused so much damage and destruction in an area of the world where there is an immense amount of pride and a desire to see Ukraine grow. The setback for this great nation is most unfortunate and very hard to describe.

When we look at where we are today and how it evolved, I would suggest that the real heroes are the people of Ukraine who took note of what was taking place, not that long ago, in terms of the European Union and the trade association that was being rejected by the former president.

We witnessed the people of Ukraine filling the streets, in particular the Maidan, sending a very powerful message not only to the elite and the leadership in Ukraine but to people around the world.

The real heroes are those individuals who put their lives on the line, many of whom lost their lives in that battle. We appreciate the efforts of people from coast to coast to coast here in Canada who in their caring hearts want to see Canada play a role in what is happening in Ukraine. That has been a motivating factor in what we are debating today and in the many other debates we have had, for well over a year, related to Ukraine.

We have had members' statements. We have had not one but two emergency debates, I believe. Many members of Parliament have visited Ukraine. We have had hundreds of people of Ukrainian heritage participate in the presidential election and parliamentary elections. All of this is because Canada truly cares about what is happening in Ukraine.

I indicated what a privilege it was to have President Petro Poroshenko address the House of Common and acknowledge how much he appreciated the friendship and general goodwill from Canada, in particular from people of Ukrainian heritage who have been reaching out and supporting Ukraine in a time of need.

Very briefly, I would just commend the people of Winnipeg for their efforts. We have seen fundraising events. We have seen protests, in very cold temperatures.

● (2320)

Canada has been engaged not only at the political level, but at the grassroots level. It has been the people, whether they are the people of Ukraine or the people of Canada, who have been a driving force to ensure that we take the actions that are so very important to support Ukraine in its time of need.

Government Orders

What can we do? We are talking today about sending 200 Canadian forces personnel for training purposes to Ukraine. The leader of the Liberal Party has stated, virtually from day one, that we support Canadian military personnel going over and playing the role that has been asked of them. Whether it was the hundreds of millions of dollars in aid or other types of support to Ukraine, much like Canadians as a whole, we as a political entity have been very supportive.

We have some incredible individuals within our caucus, including our critic for foreign affairs, the member for Toronto Centre, and my colleague from Wascana. As it was suggested earlier, the leader of the Liberal Party has allowed me, by going to Ukraine on several occasions, to get a better sense of what is taking place. That has been very beneficial. The caucus discussions we have had have been very thorough. In fact, some might recall that back in February, on behalf of the Liberal Party, I raised the issue during question period of Canada possibly having a military presence and asked what the government was doing in that regard.

We recognize the phenomenal efforts of individuals as well as organizations, none more than the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. It has been fantastic in supporting members of all political parties in the House and providing updates. There are some valid issues that have been raised through the congress. I have attempted to raise them this evening. I very briefly will make reference to two of them on which it would be valuable to hear some dialogue. I recognize it is a very awkward statement for some members to provide comment on, but it is something that needs to be raised.

I raise them in the perspective of our allies and the people who support us. We need to work in sync with our allies and the United States. There are also things that can be done in providing some leadership.

The first issue of banning Russia from the SWIFT banking system is something of great concern. I do not know to what degree the government has raised this issue, so I put that on the table.

Second, earlier today I made reference to the number of deaths. There have been an estimated 7,000 deaths and 19,000 wounded. The issue of weaponry is one that has been brought to our attention. I suspect it has also been brought to the attention of the government.

To what degree has the government had some sort of discussion on those issues with our allies and the United States?

We have talked about trade this evening. That has some merit in the long-term relationship between Canada and Ukraine. After all, President Poroshenko addressed the House and said, in essence, that he would welcome Canada entering into trade with Ukraine. If we think about the European Union, the trade deal and so forth, it would seem to be a natural fit. However, I suspect we have to be very aggressive on that file.

• (2325)

I have appreciated the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Chair, I just want to get to some points that the member for Winnipeg North made.

He said that his leader has been supportive of Ukraine right from the get-go. I wonder how he squares the circle when his leader says that the Russians are going to be mad because they lost at hockey, and he makes those types of flippant comments, and tries to portray the invasion, occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea as a joke. How can the member say that his leader is supportive of Ukraine when he has not apologized for his comments? We know that he has been kind of vacant on this debate over the last year and a bit. We have not seen a strong statement from his leader.

I am really concerned that his former leader, Jean Chrétien, is off to Russia later this week to meet with President Putin. How does the member square that? He is going as an individual or maybe he is going on behalf of the Liberal Party; I do not know. Is he going to try to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, I suspect that the member, with all due respect, is being somewhat selective in what he chooses to quote.

I can tell the member and individuals who might be watching this debate this evening that the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada has been very clear. He has indicated very clearly that we recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine, that an illegal occupation has taken place by Russia in Crimea and that we are concerned deeply, as Canadians as a whole are concerned, about what is taking place in Donetsk and Luhansk and the eastern portion of Ukraine.

The leader of the Liberal Party has been very vocal on the issue. Maybe the member is not in the same circles or listening to the leader, as he has participated in many discussions, in round tables and meetings with different groups. The leader of the Liberal Party is in fact quite passionate about the importance of Ukraine and recognizes just how important it is that we recognize the sovereignty of Ukraine and that we be there to support Ukraine in whatever way we can.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, considering the parties in this House have been remarkably supportive of a mission for which we do not have a lot of information, it is unfortunate that this has turned into some partisan sparring.

I want to ask the member for Winnipeg North what information his party has been privy to about the RADARSAT-2 data.

Has the member heard whether it is the case, as I have heard, that the Ukrainian government is dissatisfied with the quality of data it is now receiving from the Canadian Department of National Defence, and has asked for RADARSAT-2 stations to be set up in Ukraine to directly provide the data to it?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, I am not as familiar with that. I suspect that if the member were to check with our foreign affairs critic, he would have a better sense. That is not what I understand to be the case. Generally speaking, I suspect that the results have been relatively positive in terms of how it has been received in Ukraine on a number of actions that the government has taken.

Government Orders

There are some areas which the government can improve upon. For example, when we talk about the individual economic sanctions, we have made reference to Igor Sechin. Why has he not been classified as an individual who should be sanctioned, when we see that other jurisdictions, in particular the U.S.A., have recognized him for who he is and have sanctioned that particular individual.

The government will often talk about numbers, that we have the highest number. It is not who has sanctioned the most individuals. It is the quality of the list. The government needs to improve the way in which it is looking at putting in some of the sanctions. It could in fact be doing a better job.

I do not know enough about the specific issue to which the leader of the Green Party makes reference to be able to provide further comment.

• (2330)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

I am very honoured to have this opportunity to participate in today's important debate on Canada's support for Ukraine. Also, as a member of Parliament for Mississauga East—Cooksville, I have many constituents who have Ukrainian roots. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their participation and contribution, and of course, to thank all the organizations already named by other colleagues during this debate.

I was shocked, like many Canadians, by Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine in February last year, leading to the current unlawful and unacceptable occupation of Crimea. I was shocked, because Russia's actions in Ukraine show a fundamental disregard for the rules of the international system. This hostility is a threat to the people of Ukraine, to our friends and allies in Eastern Europe, and to the world order as we know it.

By annexing Crimea, Russia has violated its obligation toward Ukraine, as stipulated in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, and by annexing Crimea, Russia has abandoned its responsibility as a world leader, leaving the international community with no choice other than to take action in support of Ukraine and the region.

I am proud to say that Canada, as a strong member of NATO, has been involved from the very beginning. Indeed, a critical part of Canada's contribution to date is the remarkable work of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, and I would like to take some time to highlight the contributions of the the Royal Canadian Air Force through Operation REASSURANCE.

As members may know, a Canadian air task force participated in the NATO Baltic air policing mission from September to December 2014 in Lithuania. The NATO air policing mission aimed to preserve the integrity of NATO European air space and to safeguard NATO nations from air attacks. The assistance was crucial for member nations, such as the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, as they lack the full range of air defence assets in their own militaries. This is increasingly important in the wake of Russia's aggression toward Ukraine.

Canada's contribution to this essential mission included approximately 135 personnel and four CF-18 Hornet fighter jets, along with a mission support element. In this mission, the Canadian air task force worked with NATO allies and responded to intrusions into Baltic air space.

While Canada formally handed over its NATO Baltic air policing mission responsibilities to Poland, the Royal Canadian Air Force continued to actively support operations until early January 2015 to ensure the continuity of operations and to support NATO allies and security partners in the interim transition period. The work of the Canadian Armed Forces in this mission allowed Canada to support NATO operations in the region while showing support for our allies in Eastern Europe.

In addition to the Royal Canadian Air Force's contribution to the NATO Baltic air policing mission, Canadian aviators also conducted interoperability training with NATO allies in Romania from May to August 2014. This training included air defence, air superiority, aerospace testing and evaluation, and tactical support. This air task force included six CF-18 Hornet fighter aircraft and about 200 personnel.

In conclusion, Canadians can be proud of Canada's support for NATO assurance measures to promote security and stability in the region. Thanks to the hard work of the Canadian Armed Forces, Canada is able to make a real and effective difference every time our military personnel deploy.

• (2335)

In collaboration with our allies, we are not only demonstrating alliance solidarity but we are sending a clear message to Russia that attempts to change borders by force must be stopped.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I know he has been very involved in the Ukraine file, like many other members here, and that he really cares about this cause.

I would like us to talk more specifically about what can be done now. I sometimes get the impression that we are focusing only on certain particular aspects of this issue. As a result, we are having trouble seeing the bigger picture with regard to what is really happening in Ukraine and how we can meet long-term objectives to help Ukraine develop and have better governance.

Does my colleague believe that we could boycott certain sectors in Russia and that we could add, as we talked about many times today, some of Putin's close friends who have not yet made Canada's sanction list? In my opinion, there are some things we could do that could have a very positive impact.

One of the most important points that we have not talked very much about today is corruption. As long as Ukraine is grappling with corruption with regard to investment in general, it will be very difficult for that country to develop in the longer term.

Does my colleague think that these measures could be just as beneficial as other measures we have taken to date?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Chair, I have had an opportunity to be with the member opposite as election observers in the last presidential election in Ukraine. She spoke about many things that can and should be done in Ukraine. However, I will focus on this mission of sending 200 personnel who are going to train the Ukrainian army.

I have asked for this since the very beginning. It is important for Ukraine and every country to have a well-trained military. The advantage that Ukraine has is the territory to set up a training base to get the assistance, training and eventually better equipment not only from Canada but also other allies, so that it can face Russia's aggressions with force.

Unfortunately, what Putin is showing is force, and force can only be stopped by force. I hope it will come to a point where he, or whoever comes after him, can sit at the table and resolve the situation through diplomatic channels and not by force or military actions.

• (2340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will pose a question that was sent to me. Therefore, I am asking this question on behalf of someone else.

The member made reference to the 200. How will 200 military servicemen help prepare the Ukrainian military who are facing 60 times that number of Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine? Approximately 12,000 Russian soldiers are in eastern Ukraine right now.

Does the member have any sense as to how the 200 was determined? It is an interesting question.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Chair, as I indicated, these are instructors who are going to train. There are also instructors coming from the U.S. and European countries. Therefore, there will be a larger group. They are not going there to fight the Russian army. They are going there to provide basic training and to assist Ukraine in organizing its army, so it can eventually face Putin and protect its own territory.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Chair, on August 24, 1991, Ukraine declared to the world that it would no longer be part of the Soviet Union, it would seek its own independent and democratic future.

In the very early years of the country's independence, Ukraine had to make many tough decisions as it established its sovereignty.

[Translation]

Ukraine had to make some difficult decisions in establishing its sovereignty.

[English]

One of the most important choices for the Government of Ukraine was to rid the country of nuclear weapons and to accede to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Taken in the spirit of non-proliferation and disarmament, and contributing to global security, this decision was applauded by the world community.

In return, the Government of Ukraine sought guarantees in signing the Budapest memorandum on security assurances on December 5, 1994. This document governed the removal of weapons of mass destruction from Ukrainian territory in exchange for assurances from its partners and co-signatories the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia. The signatories committed to respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

They agreed that they would refrain from the threat and use of force. They guaranteed, also, that their weapons would never be used against Ukraine except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. They reaffirmed their commitment to seek immediate United Nations Security Council action to provide assistance to Ukraine if it should become a victim of an act of aggression.

Russia, through its reckless and cynical policies, has broken its commitments. Instead of being a guarantor of Ukraine's security, it has become its biggest threat. In March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea illegally. Today it continues to maintain troops in eastern Ukraine and to provide weapons and support to insurgents there. Russia is determined to break up Ukraine.

Russia continues to conduct a relentless media campaign propagating falsehoods about the Ukrainian government and the political and economic reforms the country is trying to achieve.

This aggression is an attempt to undermine efforts by the government and the people of Ukraine to change direction towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Russia's complete disregard for basic international norms and its own commitments has necessitated a strong international response to assist Ukraine in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I am proud to say that Canada has stepped up. In response to a request from the Ukrainian government and in collaboration with international partners, Canada has provided non-lethal military equipment to the Government of Ukraine to address a number of the critical needs of Ukraine's forces. Specifically, these contributions, which include night-vision goggles, medical kits, a mobile field hospital, high-frequency radios and ordnance disposal equipment, enhance the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces in their fight to defend their country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Canada has also recently announced a significant military contribution to assist Ukraine in building the capacity of its armed forces. These initiatives are part of a whole-of-government effort to make sure we are providing the best possible support to our partners in Ukraine.

To this end, the departments of National Defence and Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development have worked together closely over the past year to deliver timely and effective support to Ukraine's security and defence forces, including through jointly delivered material assistance and direct collaboration on the development of the recently announced military training initiative at every stage.

In addition to training and equipment support, Canada is also working to build capacity and reform Ukraine's security institutions. Canada is contributing to the NATO Ukraine trust funds, with a focus on assisting Ukraine in developing its command, control, communications and computer capabilities.

Canada is also supporting efforts to help reform Ukraine's logistics systems and increase its interoperability with NATO. Military capacity-building programming to Ukraine includes the deployment of a Canadian security expert to the NATO liaison office in Ukraine, as well as military police training.

We do not stand alone in our efforts to support Ukraine's security. Through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, we are supporting efforts to ensure that the international community is aware of developments on the ground. Canada is a strong supporter of the OSCE's special monitoring mission, an unarmed civilian mission that aims to reduce tensions and foster stability and security.

We have deployed 22 Canadians who are experts in security, human rights, the rule of law and media to the monitoring mission. Canada has a long history of contributing to free and fair elections in Ukraine and the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections were no exception. Through bilateral and OSCE elections observation missions, Canada sent some 300 Canadian observers to each election, contributing to Ukraine's efforts to elect officials in free, fair and democratic elections.

• (2345)

Unfortunately, Russian policies and actions have a destabilizing impact across the region. For this reason, the Department of Foreign

Government Orders

Affairs, Trade and International Development is contributing to the NATO-accredited centres of excellence in the Baltic states to help strengthen the regional framework in areas of cyber defence, energy security and strategic communications.

While Canada has done much to help Ukraine meet its security challenges, the needs of the country are still greater. The Government of Canada will continue to work with our Ukrainian and international partners to further Ukraine's security.

Canada will not rest, nor back away, when the security of Ukraine, a close friend and partner, continues to be threatened by a belligerent neighbour.

The Chair: It being 11:48 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

(Government Business No. 19 reported)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:48 p.m.)

Ms. Sims	13188
Ms. James	13189
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Opitz	13189
Mr. O'Toole	13189
Nepal	
Ms. Laverdière	13189
Mrs. Yelich	13189
Mr. Marston	13189
Mrs. Yelich	13189
Public Safety	
Ms. Nash	13189
Ms. James	13189
Consumer Protection	
Ms. Papillon	13189
Mr. Sorenson	13190
Health	
Ms. Fry	13190
Ms. Ambrose	13190
Correctional Service of Canada	
Mr. Easter	13190
Ms. James	13190
Canada Post	
Ms. Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	13190
Ms. Raitt	13190
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	13191
Ms. Raitt	13191
Public Safety	
Mr. Sweet	13191
Ms. James	13191
Nepal	
Ms. Foote	13191
Mrs. Yelich	13191
Marine Atlantic	
Mr. Cleary	13191
Ms. Raitt	13191
Taxation	
Ms. Crockatt	13191
Ms. Bergen	13192
Taxation	
Mr. Dubé	13192
Mr. Sorenson	13192
Employment	
Mr. Bellavance	13192
Mr. Poilievre	13192
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mr. Dewar	13192
Mr. Poilievre	13192
Mr. Van Loan	13192

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	13193
Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lukiwski	13193
Sir John A. Macdonald	
Mr. Van Loan	13193
Mr. Rankin	13194
Mr. Hsu	13196
Privilege	
Statements by the Minister of National Defence Regarding Canada's Military Engagement Against ISIL—Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	13197
Interparliamentary Delegations	
Mr. Allison	13198
Committees of the House	
Industry, Science and Technology	
Mr. Sweet	13198
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Weston (Saint John)	13198
Ministries and Ministers of State Act	
Mr. Rathgeber	13198
Bill C-672. Introduction and first reading	13198
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	13198
Petitions	
Canada Post	
Mr. Toone	13198
Agriculture	
Mr. Sweet	13199
Iraq	
Mr. Sweet	13199
Agriculture	
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	13199
Southern Resident Killer Whales	
Ms. May	13199
Anti-terrorism Legislation	
Mr. May	13199
Agriculture	
Mr. Genest	13199
Sherbrooke Airport	
Mr. Dusseault	13199
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	13199
Motions for Papers	
Mr. Lukiwski	13199

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion	13200
Ms. Leitch	13200
Mr. Caron	13201

Mr. Lamoureux.....	13202
Ms. Bateman.....	13202
Mr. Côté.....	13203
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13204
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard).....	13204
Mr. Dubourg.....	13205
Ms. Bateman.....	13205
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona).....	13205
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13207
Mr. Dreesen.....	13207
Mr. Rajotte.....	13208
Mr. Sullivan.....	13209
Mr. McCallum.....	13210
Mr. Barlow.....	13210
Mr. Caron.....	13212
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13212
Mr. Cleary.....	13213
Ms. May.....	13214
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard).....	13214
Motion agreed to.....	13216

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Canadian Air Transport Security Authority

Motion.....	13216
Motion agreed to.....	13217

VIA Rail Canada Act

Bill C-640. Second reading.....	13217
Motion negatived.....	13218

National Anthem Act

Bill C-624. Second reading.....	13218
Motion negatived.....	13219

Unemployment Rate

Mrs. Groguhé.....	13219
Motion.....	13219
Mr. Saxton.....	13221
Mr. Côté.....	13221
Mr. Garneau.....	13221
Mr. Saxton.....	13222
Mr. Brison.....	13223
Mr. Caron.....	13224
Mr. Van Kesteren.....	13226
Mr. Sullivan.....	13227

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Ongoing Situation in Ukraine

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 19, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair).....	13227
Mr. Van Loan.....	13227
Motion.....	13227
Mr. Nicholson.....	13228
Ms. Nash.....	13229
Mr. Goodale.....	13229
Mr. Opitz.....	13230
Ms. Nash.....	13230
Mr. Harris (St. John's East).....	13230
Mr. Hawn.....	13232

Mr. Goodale.....	13232
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona).....	13232
Mr. Bezan.....	13233
Mr. Garneau.....	13233
Mr. Warawa.....	13234
Mr. Harris (St. John's East).....	13235
Mr. Goodale.....	13235
Mr. Carrie.....	13235
Mr. Kenney.....	13235
Mr. Harris (St. John's East).....	13237
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13237
Mr. Maguire.....	13238
Ms. Michaud.....	13238
Mr. Garneau.....	13238
Ms. Laverdière.....	13238
Mr. Carrie.....	13239
Mr. Garneau.....	13240
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona).....	13240
Mr. Benoit.....	13241
Mr. Fantino.....	13241
Mr. Harris (St. John's East).....	13241
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13242
Mr. Bezan.....	13242
Ms. Nash.....	13243
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13243
Mr. Sopuck.....	13243
Mr. Dewar.....	13243
Mr. Bezan.....	13244
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13245
Ms. Nash.....	13245
Mr. Toet.....	13246
Ms. May.....	13246
Mr. Fast.....	13246
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona).....	13248
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13248
Mr. Falk.....	13248
Ms. Michaud.....	13249
Mr. Kenney.....	13250
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13250
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona).....	13251
Mr. Hawn.....	13251
Ms. May.....	13252
Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora).....	13252
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13253
Ms. May.....	13253
Mr. Opitz.....	13253
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13254
Mr. Hawn.....	13254
Mr. Bezan.....	13255
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13255
Mr. Bezan.....	13256
Ms. May.....	13256
Mr. Lizon.....	13257
Ms. Latendresse.....	13257
Mr. Lamoureux.....	13258
Mr. Trottier.....	13258
(Government Business No. 19 reported).....	13259

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