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Monday, November 28, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 28, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning remarks during question period last Monday.

There are many dairy and cheese producers in my riding, and this subject is very important to me. However, I used an unparliamentary word that caused a commotion. I would like to withdraw that word unequivocally, and I apologize.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

[*English*]

BILL C-243—NATIONAL MATERNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STRATEGY ACT

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with regard to private member's bill, Bill C-243. I submit to you that the bill does not require a royal recommendation. I want to congratulate my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his comprehensive speech in the House last week. His arguments were persuasive and correct, in that the question before you is whether or not Bill C-243 would change the purpose or create a new function of EI maternity benefits, more specifically show that protection of the mother and her unborn child is an existing function of the current program. As it stands, outside of the province of Quebec, maternity benefits can be and are frequently used for the purpose of protecting the mother and unborn child when her work environment is hazardous. In fact, this is precisely why benefits can be taken eight weeks before the birth. This is a long-established practice.

The member for Kingston and the Islands also addressed the issue of the terms and conditions of EI maternity benefits, and showed that these terms and conditions are not relaxed by Bill C-243. There is no doubt that you have a difficult task in front of you. It is a complex topic, and parts of the bill are clearly in a grey area when it comes to royal recommendation. I urge you to carefully consider all the arguments put forward on this matter, in addition to the will of the

House, which was expressed so forcefully by 231 members who supported Bill C-243.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I listened with great interest to the comments of my colleague from Kingston and the Islands last week. I echo his concerns, and I would like to submit to the House that from our point of view as well, the bill would not require a royal recommendation. The spending that would be incurred by the bill is simply not there. I think you will find, if you read the rulings of your learned predecessors, Speaker Milliken, for example, that they are consistent with the ruling that the bill does not require a royal recommendation.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

I want to note for new members that if a member wishes to stand on a point of order, they should, of course, stand, but they should also say "*rappel au Règlement*" or "point of order", so that I know why they are standing.

It being 11:08 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF LAMPS CONTAINING MERCURY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-238, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Motion carried.

Private Members' Business

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Darren Fisher moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to stand here in the House of Commons today at third reading on Bill C-238. I have had the pleasure of speaking to this bill a few times in the House and at committee.

However, before I get started, to better reflect the environmentally positive intent of the bill and to complement the federal government's proposed code of practice for the environmentally sound management of end-of-life lamps containing mercury, at the committee stage, we amended C-238's title to read, "a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury act". This title better represents the precautionary approach and nature of the bill. It is important to me that Canadians are protected from toxic mercury and that we ensure these bulbs are recycled by Canadians in an environmentally sound way.

I want to thank my colleagues throughout the House for their support on Bill C-238. I want to deeply thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for approaching me early to jointly second this bill.

Bill C-238, as amended, passed unanimously through the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The comments and questions at the committee stage, from all parties, were thoughtful and supportive. I thank the members throughout the House who have provided me with constructive feedback and support. I truly believe that we are better when we work together. I appreciate, and have remained open to, members' comments, because this is what Canadians want and what they expect from us. They want us to work across party lines. Together, we can develop a robust national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of mercury-bearing lamps.

I come from a great place. Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is not just where elite hockey players are born, and it is not just the place over the bridge and across the harbour from beautiful Halifax.

Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is home to innovative businesses and bright minds—from Dalhousie University's Dr. Jeff Dahn, who has the research agreement for Tesla batteries; to facilities like Dan-X Recycling, in Burnside, which can take every bit of a mercury-bearing light bulb and safely recycle its components.

To represent this riding filled with great people and good ideas is an honour. As the federal representative for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, it is my job to bring these bright ideas from home and effect real change.

A Halifax regional councillor visited me the other day and asked me what the topic was for my private member's bill. When I told him about Bill C-238, he remarked, "Are you still on that? I remember when you worked on those bulbs as a councillor." Yes, I am still on this.

The idea for Bill C-238 goes all the way back to my early days as a municipal councillor. Like any new representative, I wanted to make sure that I knew my district inside and out. While visiting the Burnside industrial park, I came upon Dan-X Recycling. While touring this facility, I learned that it was able to recycle every bit of a fluorescent mercury-bearing light bulb in an safe and environmentally friendly way.

I also learned that it only takes 0.5 milligrams of mercury to pollute 180 tonnes of water. This statistic really resonated with me, especially coming from Dartmouth, the "City of Lakes". It is up to us to keep our lands and waterways safe. I also learned that these bulbs are valuable recyclables that can easily be diverted from landfills. Canadian municipalities are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on landfill cells each year. Whenever possible, we must divert recyclables.

Dan-X Recycling separates and reuses the glass in the production of new bulbs. The metal is melted down and reused by metal recycling facilities. It even processes and recycles the phosphor powder, which contains the mercury. This facility barely takes up 1,000 square feet, and employs local people through this clean technology.

It was at this point that I learned that when the previous government banned the use of inefficient incandescent bulbs, it was always assumed that regulations for fluorescent bulbs, in particular, CFL bulbs, would follow.

Back then, I committed to help in solving the issue of mercury-bearing light bulbs and to divert them from our city landfills. I helped to ensure that all Halifax regional city facilities diverted their spent mercury-bearing light bulbs to recycling facilities, ensuring their safe and environmentally sound disposal.

Now, as a member of Parliament for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, with one of these amazing facilities in my riding, I remain committed to solving this issue.

● (1110)

I have been a member of Parliament for only about a year. However, as soon as I could, my team and I hit the ground running on this issue. I want to ensure the safe and environmentally sound disposal of mercury-bearing bulbs nationwide. This is a problem with a positive solution, and together we can make this happen. Bill C-238 would build on the work of the previous Conservative government by producing a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of these bulbs.

I spent almost seven years as a councillor for the Halifax Regional Municipality, and I remember what it is like to have costs and red tape imposed by higher governments. From listening to my colleagues across the floor speak to Bill C-238, and through consultation, I came across a possible costly measure that required amendment. The member for Red Deer—Mountain View spoke to how the reporting mechanism in the original draft of this bill could cause delays and perhaps unnecessary costs, and I agree. It will be up to the consultation process, and any governments that might be implicated by this legislation, to determine any sort of reporting features, regulations, and standards. That makes the most sense.

Private Members' Business

While listening to testimony from indigenous witnesses at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I heard first-hand about the toxic effects of mercury on populations. Mercury is a toxic substance, with the ability to undergo long-range transport. I have used this example before in the House, and I will use it again. Hypothetically, mercury deposited in a Halifax landfill could redeposit into a northern Canadian community, or any other remote area. Although some provinces are making headway on this issue, mercury does not stop at provincial boundaries. Bill C-238 is about working together to find solutions while ensuring that every appropriate body is at the table.

Throughout this process, I have appreciated and listened to the feedback from my colleagues, and I have remained open to good amendments. After listening to the members for Abbotsford and for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I agreed to amend, strengthen, and open the consultation process of this strategy. It is imperative that all interested and appropriate governments, persons, and organizations are part of this consultation, and that they are all owners of this strategy. Bill C-238 must be a strong, collaborative effort that will include any interested indigenous groups, governments, stakeholders, or citizens, to ensure that this strategy will be best for all Canadians and will represent all Canadians. This will ensure a nationwide solution to this issue.

I believe that a problem like mercury-bearing light bulbs in landfills takes real environmental leadership to solve. I look forward to the dialogue that Bill C-238 will generate among governments, stakeholders, and citizens. I believe that, as a whole, we can take responsibility and protect Canadians from this needless pollution through this collaborative effort. This is another opportunity to show that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand.

It has been an honour to bring this bright idea from home, in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, and to work to make it a reality here in Ottawa. It is a humbling experience for me, as a new member of Parliament, to have an opportunity to create a law that will benefit Canadians nationwide. I hope that all members of this House will continue to support Bill C-238, a national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of mercury-bearing lamps. It is up to me to make the voices of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour heard here in Ottawa, but it is up to us in this House to work together to improve the lives of Canadians, now and for future generations.

• (1115)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the enthusiasm of my colleague across the way. I know he is sincere about addressing the issue of mercury. Unfortunately, what is troubling to me is that the member decided he would amend his bill to take away any mandatory duty to take action on mercury.

We have been trying to encourage him to come forth with why he made the decision that this would no longer be mandatory. I would appreciate hearing from the member as to why he has decided to remove very important mandatory requirements on the minister to finally move on measures for the safe disposal of mercury in lamps.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her great question and her efforts on the committee, as well as the huge amount of knowledge she has on methylmercury and its impacts on our country every day.

This bill is designed to be the beginning of a conversation and collaboration. This is a unique situation, in that all levels of government have some form of jurisdiction over it. Municipalities handle solid waste, the provinces issue the permits to handle that solid waste, and the federal government controls toxic chemicals. Out of respect for all levels of government, having this collaborative approach and putting people at the table to come up with a solution to this problem that all jurisdictions face is the proper way to go about handling this major problem.

• (1120)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his efforts on this bill. It is an honour to serve with him on the environment committee and to see the work he does there.

The environment committee studied this bill. While we were discussing the bill there, I looked up and noticed there were 70 fluorescent light bulbs in the ceiling. I was struck by the enormity of the issue and the amount of contamination that would spread throughout the environment if we do not properly deal with fluorescent light bulbs.

Could the member talk about the work he has done as a municipal councillor and now as an MP for his riding and the province of Nova Scotia?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Madam Speaker, when I first set upon Dan-X Recycling in Burnside industrial park and learned of the jurisdictional issues with mercury-bearing light bulbs, I thought for sure we could find a way, municipally, to come up with regulations that could handle the recycling of these bulbs. I discovered that was not the case, that it would take a multi-jurisdictional approach.

The only thing I could really accomplish at the municipal level was to ensure that the bulbs used in the buildings owned by the municipality were handled in an environmentally sound way. All of the buildings and facilities in the municipality of Halifax are now recycling their spent light bulbs at Dan-X, which is the only recycler in the area. That is the one thing I was able to accomplish.

I will add that Halifax Water voluntarily decided, without a motion, to do the exact same thing. Kudos to it for recognizing this issue. All of the buildings owned by Halifax Water also recycle their light bulbs in an environmentally sound manner. That is voluntary. There is no regulation that states they must do that. This was corporate and municipal leadership, in my opinion.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege to stand in the House to speak on Bill C-238, sponsored by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

We do some very good work together on the environment and sustainable development committee. This is an opportunity to discuss his important idea that has received support thus far from nearly every member. That is not always easy to do with a private member's bill like this, but he has done it. I want to recognize him and staff for all their hard work on this bill.

Private Members' Business

This is an important piece of legislation that aims to achieve a good goal. I will be supporting it as it moves forward. Exactly what does this bill do?

First, it establishes national standards for the safe disposal of mercury-containing lamps. Second, it establishes guidelines regarding facilities for safe disposal of mercury lamps. Finally, it asks the government to come up with a plan to promote public awareness of the importance of the proper disposal of mercury lamps. It also calls on the government to table its national strategy within two years of the bill's becoming law, and for it to be reviewed by Parliament every five years after that.

Fluorescent bulbs are in use for a very good reason. They conserve power in a way that conventional light bulbs simply cannot. In fact, they use between 20% and 25% of the energy required by traditional incandescent Edison bulbs. They are the most energy efficient and affordable means of lighting our homes and places of work and leisure. They also last up to 10 times longer than the old-fashioned bulbs. This is why they are so widespread in our communities and should continue to be readily available for the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, one of the critical components of fluorescent bulbs is mercury. In fact, there is no way to make these bulbs without it. It would be like a fish trying to live out of water; there is simply no way it can. Therefore, it is critical that we carefully dispose of these lamps in a responsible and environmentally conscious way when they finally burn out. Tossing these bulbs into the trash is very detrimental to the environment and human health. Those are the main issues here today.

The issue is that when these bulbs end up in regular landfill with the rest of our household waste, a large portion of the mercury inside the bulbs is released into the air or water. This has debilitating effects on the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, two resources that we need to stay alive.

The wonderful thing about this is that recyclers can recuperate the mercury found in these bulbs. There are methods of recycling this toxic substance. Mercury is a dangerous toxic substance that can have a severe impact on human health, especially in vulnerable populations like expectant mothers, as well as their babies developing in the womb. It can cause brain and central nervous system damage. It can also attack kidneys and lungs.

As this is a dangerous toxic substance, I am happy that the bill will help address its disposal from fluorescent lamps. There is definitely an environmental and safety impact from fluorescent bulbs. If they break in a home or workplace, the immediate release of mercury vapours can pose a health risk to people. Not only is this an issue, but there can be also the release of more mercury vapour into the air if the proper cleanup and disposal procedures are not put in place.

There are some other aspects of environmental stewardship that this bill intends to target. It supports the aim of our environment and sustainable development committee in looking at clean technology alternatives to products like fluorescent bulbs. There are a number of best practices for the disposal of mercury bulbs, and I would like to talk about some of those recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, in the United States. They have a wealth of

ideas on how mercury-containing fluorescent bulbs should be properly disposed of.

One of its recommendations, which may seem obvious, is that spent bulbs be handled with great care to avoid breakage. We have already discussed why it is a bad idea to break fluorescent bulbs. An already broken bulb cannot be properly recycled. It also recommends good strategies for employers, including that they be trained to know whom to call in the case of a burned-out lamp. This would encourage employees taking the initiative to remove or replace burned bulbs, which could possibly lead to breakage.

Another of its recommendations that may seem obvious is for the recycling of fluorescent bulbs that contain mercury. As the EPA states in one of its documents:

● (1125)

EPA strongly encourages the recycling of all spent fluorescent lamps as the preferred approach to managing lamps throughout their full productive lifecycle. Proper recycling not only minimizes the release of mercury in the environment but also allows for the reuse of the glass, metals, and other materials that make up a fluorescent lamp.

Virtually all components of a lamp can be recycled. Recycling fluorescent lamps reduces the amount of waste going to landfill, saves energy, and reduces greenhouse gases and mercury emissions.

The EPA is not alone in having good tips on how to safely dispose of mercury-containing bulbs. Australia's department of environment has established the FluoroCycle program. Its website states:

FluoroCycle is a scheme that aims to increase the recycling of lamps that contain mercury and reduce the amount of mercury entering the environment.

To achieve this, FluoroCycle provides a national voluntary scheme that businesses, government agencies, and other organizations can join as signatories. The scheme gives public recognition to the signatories for their commitment to recycling. This sounds like a really good initiative. Although somewhat different from what this legislation is proposing, it is a good example of how we can bring industry and commerce on board with recycling these mercury fluorescent lamps, instead of simply throwing them away.

This is a great project that our friends from down under have initiated, and I hope that we could maybe consider something similar here. This would only build on the great work done by my honourable friend from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

The Republic of Ireland has an interesting program. In Ireland, retailers take old bulbs, as long as new ones are being bought, on a one-for-one basis. This strikes me as a good idea, because this way the retailers can deal with the bulbs' safe disposal and transport to designated recycling facilities, removing the hassle from consumers. It is also good in that these consumers would be buying a new energy efficient fluorescent bulb to replace the spent bulb.

Private Members' Business

These lights are becoming more common. It seems as though every home, business, and place of work has at least some fluorescent lighting. Statistics Canada has said that, "In 2011, almost 9 out of 10 households (87%) in Canadian census metropolitan areas (CMAs) had at least one type of energy-saving light." Statistics Canada also had this to offer:

In almost every case, households used only one method to dispose of their dead or unwanted CFLs. In 2011, slightly less than one-third (32%) used a "controlled" method of disposal, with 24% using a depot or drop-off centre, and 8% returning the bulb(s) to the supplier or retailer (Table 2). Half of the households disposing a CFL used an "uncontrolled" method (i.e., throwing them in the garbage), or still had them at the time of interview (12%). The remainder used an unknown method to dispose of them.

These are eye-opening statistics, and I am certain this is one of the reasons my colleague across the way proposed this piece of legislation. He is also a supporter of a recycling facility in his constituency. My colleague has been doing great work on this file. I appreciate he and his team's taking the time to get this right, and I am looking forward to seeing this project move forward.

● (1130)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his action on the environment. It is very clear he has the intent to resolve this issue, and also to support a very important industry in his own riding, an entity that recycles toxins. We need to have measures exercised by our federal government that support these kinds of industries, so toxins are safely disposed of and taken away from the environment, so they do not harm the environment and our health.

On second reading of the bill, I spoke very kindly about the bill, and had also shared that I hoped the bill would go further. Much to my regret, and my colleagues' regret, the decision was made to water down the effect of the bill. I remain puzzled about that. The argument has been that we need more time for the various jurisdictions to work together. However, I have been working alongside the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and the industry for more than two decades on resolving the issue of emissions of mercury into the environment. In my humble opinion, it is time we actually have the federal government asserting its power to regulate this toxin, not simply to continue the dialogue, although continuing the dialogue is absolutely important. All members of this place recognize there is a need for the federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and aboriginal governments to begin working together more effectively.

We have a law in effect in the country, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act that actually provides for the designation of toxic substances that are deemed harmful to humans and the environment. It extends the powers to the federal government to establish a regulatory framework for the cradle to grave management of these substances. That includes safe disposal.

Mercury was scheduled as a toxin long before the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was even enacted in the mid-1980s. It was formerly listed under the environmental contaminants act, and way back then, decades and decades ago, it was recognized as one of the most significant toxins that we need to control.

As early as 2000, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment added mercury to its list of five top priority substances to address. Unfortunately, it has taken until very recently to address mercury. As I have mentioned previously in the House, apart from Alberta, no jurisdiction has regulated the single largest source of mercury in North America, and that is coal-fired mercury. Lamps were included in the CCME list, but after coal-fired power and cement. It is very pleasing that the member opposite has chosen to finally seek some action on this source of this serious neurotoxin.

Mercury, when combined with water forms methylmercury. That is how, if it goes into our water and into fish and is ingested, it can cause serious harm. It also can cause harm if it is in gaseous form. As I understand, when some of these lamps are broken there is potential for it to enter in a gaseous form, and therefore we need proper handling and disposal of these lamps. It is commendable that the member is seeking greater action on this risk.

So far, there is no safe dosage, but there are a couple of industries in Canada that are at least capturing it and trying to keep it out of the environment. Mercury cannot be broken down. It simply remains toxic.

What is important to note though is that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, right now, specifically empowers the ministers of environment and health to recommend to the Governor in Council to make regulations governing the disposal of any scheduled toxin, and that includes mercury. It is sad to say, as of today, no federal government has ever chosen to actually assert that regulatory power. Why is that significant? It is because the very framework of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is cradle to grave.

An additionally important framework for CEPA, when it was enacted, was recognizing the dual jurisdiction of federal and provincial governments, so if the federal government decided to issue a regulation regulating a toxin, any provincial or territorial jurisdiction could claim equivalency if it issued an equivalent regulation and the commitment to effectively enforce or seek compliance with that rule. It is for exactly that reason that that mechanism was put in place, and there have been calls for quite some time for stronger action on mercury.

For mercury in lamps, the only measure taken at the federal level until recently has been a Canada-wide standard, but mostly recently, there has been a code of practice put in place that deals with many of the matters the bill before us deals with. It sets forth suggestions to the provinces, cities, and companies on how they should control these lamps, how they should be collected and how they should be delivered to safe disposal.

● (1135)

I mentioned the Canada-wide standard. The common phrase is, "When is a standard not a standard? When it is a Canada-wide standard", because a Canada-wide standard is not binding. It is merely a suggestion. It is more of a suggestion that friendly federal-provincial relations rule over actually asserting a federal rule. From my perspective and the perspective of many out in the public, when we are dealing with a serious neurotoxin, when is there possibly a reason for the federal government not to finally assert its regulatory power?

Private Members' Business

The bill calls for a strategy to address a number of matters, but it is disappointing that it does not extend what a number of people, including the Canadian Environmental Law Association, have called for, which is extended producer responsibility. It is hoped that if the bill passes and again the discretion then passes to the minister to decide what to do with the bill, that consideration be given to this. We have certainly heard about this before the committee.

Environment Canada itself has reported that only 10% to 15% of these lamps are recycled, and therefore, while we will try to have a proper mechanism to collect and dispose, we have that continuing problem of people who are not even returning those lamps and they are simply going into the dump.

A greater issue is that, unless producers are made more responsible, the practicality of consumers transporting the lamps to dispose of them and the manner in which they are collected and then transported for disposal expands the risk of exposure and leakage. That is exactly what the bill is attempting to deal with.

Again, what is particularly troubling to me and some of my colleagues is the decision by the tabler to remove the mandatory provision. The very strength of the bill is that it sets forth three key measures on which there is unanimity, even in this place, of action needed to be taken to make sure that we keep this mercury out of the environment, yet the decision was that the minister does not have to do any of those things. I think that is very regrettable. Even though the bill does not provide exactly what those measures would be, the most important one is that the minister would have been required to actually issue standards. If we defined standard as generally accepted in law, that would be to finally promulgate the regulations that are long overdue on regulating these measures. Regrettably, this discretion is still left to the minister.

I think there is a lot of heartfelt intent. I appreciate the member's efforts to try to have a clear framework around this, and in fact to support a very valuable industry in his riding. Regrettably it does not drive that because he has taken away the mandatory aspect. If national binding disposal regulations were in place, the provinces and territories, as I have mentioned, could simply enact exactly the same rules and enforce those equivalent rules.

We have heard a number of calls during a review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to strengthen the mandate of ministers. This is troubling to many in the public who have been working on these issues for many decades. While the bill provides for the listing of these dangerous substances, there is no mandatory duty on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to actually take any action. That was what was commendatory about the bill that the member brought forward. It is regrettable that for whatever pressures were brought to bear on him, he has removed that provision. It is regrettable. Maybe at some point in time it might come forward and be strengthened.

We are dealing with toxins, and this is one of a limited number of substances, one of the top five designated by all the ministers of the environment across this country. I think it is regrettable that we would continue this, that we would defer to provinces or territories that may want to move in a certain direction, instead of the federal government. Every time a federal regulation is promulgated, there is vast consultation with the provinces and territories, with the industry

and with the public, and that could have allowed for that consultation, but in the end, it actually had a binding rule.

Again, I commend the member, but I find it regrettable that he has taken away the very mandatory aspects of the bill.

● (1140)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about Bill C-238, an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, which was brought forward by the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Bill C-238 builds upon efforts already under way across Canada to reduce mercury emissions to the environment. Reducing mercury emissions is an important goal, given the serious effects mercury can have on human health and on the environment.

As members are no doubt aware, mercury is a potent neurotoxin. It can cause damage to the brain, central nervous system, kidneys, and lungs. It is particularly damaging to the development of the human fetus, infants, and young children.

In terms of environmental impacts, mercury biomagnifies as it moves up the food chain, meaning that higher levels of mercury are found in animals higher in the food chain. This can lead to increased exposure for fish and wildlife as well as humans who consume certain kinds of fish. Increased exposure means increased health problems, including slower growth, reproductive failure, and the development of abnormal behaviours. Also, mercury can travel long distances in the atmosphere and has been found to accumulate in Canada's Arctic.

Given these impacts on human health and the environment, the Government of Canada is committed to minimizing, and when feasible, eliminating human sources of mercury emissions. Domestic mercury emissions have been reduced by approximately 90% since the 1970s, thanks to a wide range of initiatives to address mercury emissions, but more can be done.

In 2010, the Government of Canada released the risk management strategy for mercury. The strategy provides a comprehensive description of the government's plans and progress in managing the risks associated with mercury.

One example is the Products Containing Mercury Regulations, which came into force in November 2015. These regulations prohibit the manufacture and import of products containing mercury, with some exceptions for essential products that have no technically or environmentally viable alternatives. In the case of lamps, the regulation set mercury content limits for fluorescent and other types of lamps and requires labels to inform consumers about the presence of mercury.

In April of this year, Environment and Climate Change Canada published the proposed code of practice for the environmentally sound management of end-of-life lamps containing mercury. The code provides guidance and information relevant to managing these lamps at their end of life. The final code of practice is expected to be published by the end of 2016.

International initiatives to address mercury pollution are another important element of the Government of Canada's approach. It is estimated that 95% of human-caused mercury deposits in Canada come from foreign sources. To help reduce the impact of transboundary pollution on Canada, particularly the impact on Canada's Arctic where mercury tends to deposit, the government signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2013. We are in the process of finalizing the necessary implementation matters required to ratify the treaty.

The bill introduced by my colleague for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour would complement these and other existing measures to address mercury pollution by focusing on one particular source of emissions: light bulbs. Many energy-efficient bulbs, including the compact fluorescent lamps used in the homes and workplaces of many Canadians, contain a small amount of mercury. This mercury may be released if the lamp breaks or is improperly disposed of in regular garbage.

The bill would mandate the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. Amendments made to the bill at committee served to reinforce the purpose of the bill and the need for co-operation across jurisdictions in the development of a national strategy.

For example, the bill now speaks of safe and environmentally sound disposal. The environmentally sound end-of-life management of lamps containing mercury involves a range of activities, including collection, processing, recycling, diversion, and storage. The national strategy contemplated by the bill would capture any number of these activities rather than the disposal of lamps containing mercury in a landfill. This terminology is consistent with the proposed code of practice for the environmentally sound management of end-of-life lamps containing mercury.

The amendments made at committee also strengthened the bill by recognizing the jurisdiction over the protection of environment, including matters related to waste management, is shared between all levels of government in Canada. Removing the requirement on the minister to implement the national strategy recognizes this fact, as the minister cannot implement the national strategy on her own. As a result, the bill requires the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to work with other parties, including the provincial and territorial governments, in developing a national strategy.

The bill also intends to capture other interested governments, such as municipal and indigenous governments, that may have important roles in the implementation of the national strategy. The minister will need to co-operate with them, but also consult with other interested parties, including stakeholders in the development of a national plan of this kind.

The bill lists examples of the kinds of things that the national strategy could include. The possible elements set out in the bill

Private Members' Business

would not only help guide collaboration and consultation with other interested parties, including stakeholders, but would also help to ensure that the national strategy does not duplicate efforts already under way.

● (1145)

This strategy can evolve to ensure that a range of perspectives are considered in the development of the strategy.

One possible element of the national strategy is a plan to promote public awareness of the importance of disposing of mercury-containing lamps safely and in an environmentally sound manner. Many Canadians are currently unaware that these bulbs should not be disposed of in regular garbage, because they may break and release mercury.

The bill sets out a flexible framework for developing the national strategy but also contains important mandatory requirements. In particular, the bill would require the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to develop and report on the national strategy.

The first report to Parliament setting out the national strategy must occur within 15 sitting days of December 31, 2018 or within two years after royal assent, whichever is later. Every five years following the initial tabling, the minister must report on the strategy, including his or her conclusions and recommendations regarding the strategy. These reporting requirements will promote transparency and accountability and will help ensure that the national strategy achieves its intended purpose.

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for bringing this bill forward. The government supports this bill, as amended, and looks forward to working with other governments, indigenous groups, and stakeholders to develop an effective national strategy for the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps containing mercury.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today, even though I had a bad week last week. Labour rates for the number one employer in Alberta are going crazy, the Oilers lost, the Flames lost, and the Stampeders lost. However, this bill is a winner, and I am happy to stand here today to speak to this bill. I thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for introducing this bill. We sit on the environment committee together, and this is a winner.

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-238, a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury act. The bill would establish a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, guidelines regarding facilities for safe disposal, and the creation of a plan to promote public awareness.

Private Members' Business

Mercury has been identified as a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. The release of mercury poses a significant risk to the Canadian environment and public health. Canada-wide standards for mercury-containing lamps were developed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and endorsed in 2011.

I want to spend some time on the plan to promote public awareness. I know a lot of younger members in the House probably grew up during the *Star Wars* era and played with fluorescent lamps of sorts. They probably broke them. Hopefully they put some protection on their hands, but no one thought about protection from what they were breathing in when they broke.

I remember, a little before that era, that school teachers used to bring out mercury during science classes. We would play with the mercury hand to hand and roll it back and forth. No one knew any better. In fact, I remember a friend of mine putting it on his tongue to taste it. Think about that. I am not sure if he is around anymore, and I do not really want to inquire. That is how ignorant we Canadians were a number of years ago. We are not ignorant today, and we need to address it.

Going back a number of years, I was a young police officer in the mid-1970s, and I went to a community called Fort St. James in the interior of British Columbia. About 25 miles north of Fort St. James was an area called Pinchi Lake. There was a mercury mine on that lake. The mercury mine opened in around 1941, operated through the 1940s, closed for about 10 or 12 years, started up again in the late 1960s, and shut down again in the mid 1970s. There was contamination from that mercury mine. There was an open-pit mine and an underground mine.

Pinchi Lake is a beautiful lake on the outskirts of the mine. I remember driving there in the spring of 1978 to have a look at it, as I had heard about it. There was a town there too, a ghost town now, because no one lives there. There were people fishing on the lake, but on the shore, about every 300 yards, there were signs saying, "Mercury contamination. Do not fish". Yet there were people out there, aboriginal people, fishing. I stopped to talk to some of them. They said it would not hurt them and that the signs were just to keep them off the lake.

That is why we need to educate people. It was wrong then and it definitely would not be acceptable today.

Mercury is an essential component in some energy-efficient lamps, such as fluorescent tubes and light bulbs.

At home I have a fairly large shop. I like to play around with motorcycles and cars. As I get older, I cannot see as well as I used to. I hate glasses when I am working on something, because they always fall off and then I bang my head when I bend over to pick them up, so I decided to get the best lights out there, mercury vapour. I have these big vapour lights in my shop.

I went to a recycle shop in Edmonton, because I believe in recycling, to see if I could buy some. It probably was not so much being a real environmentalist; I am a little cheap and I could buy them a lot more cheaply used than new.

●(1150)

I bought mercury vapour lights, and I put them in my shop. I remember when I went over to pick them up, the guy was testing them. One did not work. Crash. One worked, so I bought that one. He did it about two times in a row. They did not work, and he threw them. I said, "You get half a dozen, which I need, and I will come back in a few hours". It was not a healthy atmosphere to be in.

Again, it is ignorance. People do not know the significant dangers of mercury lamps.

Why am I using them? I know better. Again, I am using them because they are very efficient. The use of fluorescent bulbs or mercury vapour bulbs lowers energy use, thus reducing the mercury that would come from power plants. That is why a lot of people use them. Plus they are more cost-effective and last 10 times longer than a normal light. That is why people in industry and people in shops use them and why they are in skating rinks across the country. They use them for that reason.

When our former Conservative government was in power, we were very active in negotiating the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2013, as mentioned earlier by the last speaker, which called for tougher measures to reduce mercury emissions. In 2014, our government followed up with regulations prohibiting the broad import and manufacture of products containing mercury.

Even prior to that, in 2001, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, which I mentioned earlier, got together and came up with a set of guidelines. The target was a 70% reduction in the average mercury content of all mercury-containing lamps by 2005, compared to 1990 levels, and an 80% reduction by 2010. Industry jumped to meet it, and the lamps passed the 80% standard by 2006.

Industry, when it is challenged, will comply and will work very hard to meet the guidelines set by government.

Much of the work and cost of implementing the strategy in Bill C-238 would actually be done at the provincial and municipal levels, which is where these recycling and disposal facilities would be located.

Prior to my role as an MP, I sat as the mayor of the city of Fort St. John and as a director on the Peace River Regional District board, which is the area encompassing all of North Peace. One of my portfolios was garbage disposal and garbage dumps. I travelled throughout the North Peace area.

Private Members' Business

I feel I am a bit of a trash expert. I know that much work needs to be done by bringing in this bill, Bill C-238. We need to educate the people running our garbage disposal dumps, although probably not so much in our larger urban areas, because those garbage dumps and facilities are very well organized and have professional people. I am talking about rural Canada and the Northwest Territories. In these small areas, most of what I will call waste disposal sites are unmanned. They are run by the counties. They may be manned one day a week by someone who comes in to look after them during a special day. However, at these sites, there are usually just garbage bins. Most people today probably bring their fluorescent lights or their mercury vapour lights, if they burn out, and toss them in. That is not good. That is bad, because we do not know where they are going.

We need to make sure that we educate the people managing these facilities to make sure the facilities have proper containment for mercury vapour lights. That will not be a big cost, but it is a cost. We must ensure that the government works with all levels of government to make sure they are there so that when people bring in mercury vapour lights for disposal, there is a safe place to put them and none of the mercury escapes.

Although a number of initiatives to address the lamps that contain mercury are already under way across Canada, co-operation among all levels of government will promote a consistent nationwide approach to the safe and environmentally sound disposal of lamps.

• (1155)

Our Conservative Party supports Bill C-238. The bill would ensure lamps containing mercury would be safely disposed, and it would be in line with the party's previous efforts to keep Canada's environment clean and control harmful toxic substances.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure as the member of Parliament for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook to speak today to this important bill, Bill C-238, a national strategy for sound disposal of lamps containing mercury.

I would like to speak about the leadership of my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. This bill is a continuation of his hard work at the municipal level.

At the municipal level, environmentally sustainable protection of the environment was a key item and objective of his. It is pretty impressive because I was told as a new member that maybe only 20% of private members' bills made it through. My colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour had unanimous consent in the House, and that is an indication of the hard work and consultation that he has done.

In listening to the audio of the committee, again, it was very obvious that members of all parties across the House and in the committee were eager to have the bill move forward on its merit because of the environmentally safe disposal.

The amendments coming back to the House under the guidance of the sponsor, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, would allow for all parties, governments, and stakeholders to sit together, talk about this issue, and find solutions, which is crucial. I would like to read a quote from my colleague for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour:

We need to include our partners in other levels of government to ensure that they, along with the federal government, take ownership of this initiative. This will be a strong collaborative effort that will include any interested indigenous groups, governments, stakeholders, or citizens to ensure the strategy is best for all Canadians.

I could not be more in agreement with my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

The contents of the bill are crucial. The bill speaks to Canadians wanting to reduce their energy use and their costs. Therefore, they need to find an environmentally friendly alternative. This compact fluorescent light bulb would do that. The savings are great, and it is a very positive step. However, Canadians need to know that the light bulbs contain mercury, the effect that mercury will have, and ways of recycling it. That is extremely crucial for the bill.

It was noted also by the ministry that four provinces had mandatory programs to collect these light bulbs: B.C., Manitoba, Quebec, and Prince Edward island. Nova Scotia Power has put in place a program to take back the light bulbs. These are extremely positive steps.

We must also note the importance, environmentally, for the economy. For the green tech economy, this is another step forward. I am so proud to see my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, who was inspired by visiting a local business that was disposing and recycling the lamps in a very sustainable and environmentally safe way. It is impressive that the MP took the example of that situation after visiting a company and moving it through steps. The first step, of course, was to the municipal government. The member did what he could in the municipality to ensure that all municipal fluorescent light bulbs would be recycled. That is a very positive step at the municipal level. His initiative would allow the federal government, the provinces, and stakeholders to work together to find solutions for a national strategy.

• (1200)

This is a green environmental initiative that is very well supported by the federal government and by all parties in committee.

As the Prime Minister has said on many occasions and as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has repeatedly said, the economy and the environment go hand in hand. This legislation is a good example of that.

[*Translation*]

It is extremely important for people to realize that we have to fix the mercury problem and that there are many ways to do so.

In the past, people did not really know what was causing the problem. They put these things in garbage dumps and trash cans. The problem is that it ended up in the air or the soil.

Incineration was another option. The whole thing can be burned to produce energy. The trouble is that it causes a lot of air quality problems.

The best approach, what we would like to see happen, is recycling, which ensures that the substance does not cause any problems in the air or the soil, and that is essential.

Government Orders

We need leadership on many fronts: businesses, municipalities, the provinces, and the federal government.

My colleagues may not know this, but in 2011, Statistics Canada found that 50% of people were unaware of the problems caused by mercury.

• (1205)

[*English*]

They also did not have access. Therefore, if people do not know the danger or they do not know where they can have these things recycled and if that is not accessible, they probably will not do what is best for our environment and our country.

The bill is extremely important. It proposes a national strategy, which will shine a light, make people more aware, and ideally dispose of these things in a way that is totally environmentally safe.

The second thing I want to note is the importance of collaboration among all parties, as indicated in the bill, as well as indigenous groups and all stakeholders that are concerned and want this to move forward.

We have to be careful. This is an add-on. It builds on programs already in place. It is not a duplication. That is what is extremely important about the bill. This is an opportunity to do what is right, an opportunity for the safe management of these lights to the end of their life, without compromising the environment.

It has been a great pleasure for me to speak to the bill. I congratulate the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his hard work. I also congratulate the committee members for all of their hard work. I will be supporting the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are 69 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-26. Motions Nos. 1 to 69 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1 to 69 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 9.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 11

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 13.

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 14.

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 15.

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 16.

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 17.

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 26.

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 27.

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 29.

Government Orders

Motion No. 30
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 30.

Motion No. 31
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 31.

Motion No. 32
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 32.

Motion No. 33
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 33.

Motion No. 34
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 34.

Motion No. 35
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 35.

Motion No. 36
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 36.

Motion No. 37
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 37.

Motion No. 38
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 38.

Motion No. 39
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 39.

Motion No. 40
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 40.

Motion No. 41
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 41.

Motion No. 42
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 42.

Motion No. 43
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 43.

Motion No. 44
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 44.

Motion No. 45
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 45.

Motion No. 46
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 46.

Motion No. 47
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 47.

Motion No. 48
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 48.

Motion No. 49
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 49.

Motion No. 50
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 50.

Motion No. 51
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 51.

Motion No. 52
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 52.

Motion No. 53
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 53.

Motion No. 54
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 54.

Motion No. 55
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 55.

Motion No. 56
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 56.

Motion No. 57
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 57.

Motion No. 58
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 58.

Motion No. 59

That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 59.

Motion No. 60
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 60.

Motion No. 61
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 61.

Motion No. 62
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 62.

Motion No. 63
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 63.

Motion No. 64
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 64.

Motion No. 65
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 65.

Motion No. 66
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 66.

Motion No. 67
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 67.

Motion No. 68
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 68.

Motion No. 69
That Bill C-26 be amended by deleting Clause 69.

● (1220)

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, before I get into the substance of the debate, I would like to draw the members' attention to the fact that I am wearing the prostate cancer tie. As members are aware, November is also known as "Movember", a month dedicated to raising awareness about prostate cancer.

Quebec has had a wonderful initiative in place since 2010 to support the Fondation du CHU de Québec, which works on prostate cancer research and prevention. Since 2010, a tie has been available for purchase for men to wear to show their support, which is what I am doing today.

This tie is a Surmesur boutique signature design, and this initiative is supported by Pierre Jobin, TVA's new anchor. I applaud him for his involvement, and I want to thank everyone in Quebec for wearing the tie for prostate cancer.

[English]

We are here today to talk about Bill C-26, and you tabled all the amendments that we Conservatives proposed, with the support of my colleague, the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

I want to pay my respects to you, Madam Speaker, because I have never heard my name so many times in such a short time. I am quite sure that my parents are very proud of that.

We are talking today about the Canada pension plan. It is crystal clear, because there is a huge difference between the vision of the government and our vision. The vision of the government is to pick up more money from the pockets of the people, to pick up more money from the pockets of business owners and essentially those who create wealth and create jobs, whereas our view is to give more tools to people to make their own choices on what they believe is important and to give them the tools to put money aside for retirement.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

That is why we object so strongly to Bill C-26. Our parties have two opposing views. At least that much is clear. In politics, sometimes we find some good points in things that we must nevertheless oppose, and vice versa. Sometimes we find that kind of balance in politics.

In this instance, the matter is crystal clear. On the one hand, there is the Liberal vision, which involves taking more money out of Canadians' pockets. On the other hand, there is our vision, which, in contrast, involves giving people tools that enable them to make their own choices regarding saving for retirement based on their own priorities, their income, and their way of life.

Bill C-26 essentially seeks to increase the contributions that workers currently make to CPP. We are currently being taxed roughly 9.9% and the bill would increase that rate to 11.9%.

In other words, this means that the average worker will pay up to \$1,000 more a year. For business owners, this means an extra \$1,000 per employee. That is why we believe this is not the right thing to do. The government picking taxpayers' pockets and charging business owners more money is bad for the economy. We will have the opportunity to come back to this with some serious statistics to show the consequences.

For seniors, this bill does not change anything. They will not get a penny more and that is a fact. The other thing is that we will have to wait not two, five, 10, or 20 years, but 40 years before this measure takes effect. At the risk of being ageist, I have to say that many of my colleagues will no longer be here in 40 years. I am 52 now, which means I will be 92. I have good genes. My parents are 92 and 93 and in good health. I might be lucky, but one never knows.

People will have to wait 40 years, or two generations, before there is a direct, tangible, and real impact. That is a long time. While they wait, workers and business people will pay even more, which is not a good thing.

We recognize that there are still some seniors living on low incomes today; however, the situation has greatly improved. In 1970, about one in three retirees were living on a low income, compared to 3% today. That is quite the improvement and it is due to the personal savings measures that we established.

The amount saved by Canadians is an important factor. The best way to improve our situation is to save, and Canadians have saved more over the years. In 1990, people saved 7.7% of their income, whereas today they save about twice as much, or 14.1%.

There have been two improvements over the years: the improvement in the situation of seniors and the increase in Canadians' savings. That is why we, the Conservatives, want to move in that direction. We want to provide Canadians with stronger, more responsive, more pertinent, and more effective tools that enable individuals to make their own decisions, according to their conscience, and based on their priorities, income, and choices that suit them. The government must provide savings tools rather than taking more money out of people's pockets.

This bill will be detrimental to the economy. We, the Conservatives, are not the ones saying so. I am pointing this out

today, but I am basing what I say on the conclusions of the Department of Finance, which found in a study that this would negatively impact all vectors of the economy. It forecasts reductions in employment, GDP, private investment, disposable income, and personal savings. Those would be the results of Bill C-26.

Baseball players get three strikes and then they are out. This bill has five strikes against Canadians and the country's economy. Not only does this bill take \$1,000 out of people's pockets and charge business owners \$1,000 more per employee, it also affects the five key drivers of job creation, savings, and wealth.

We find that unacceptable. That is why we strongly oppose Bill C-26 and why we introduced 69 amendments to eliminate 69 clauses. It makes sense. The amendments that were read earlier show our fierce opposition to every hyphen, semicolon, and letter that do not belong in this bill.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Now let us talk about some things that are quite interesting and important about the future, which is the retirement age.

As members know, people's health has improved. When Canada decided to implement the Canada pension plan a few decades ago in the 1960s, the reality was not the same as today. In the 1960s, the life expectancy of men was 68, but today it is 79. It is 11 years more than when the Canada pension plan was tabled. It is along the same track for women, whose life expectancy in the 1960s was 74 and today is 83. Therefore, the health of people is better and people live longer.

However, the government decided a month ago to cancel the previous government's decision to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67 and return it to 65. This was one of the worst economic decisions made by the current government. There are so many bad decisions, but one of the worst for its long-term effects is its change to the retirement age.

In 2012, when the previous Conservative government addressed this issue, for sure it was very courageous in addressing what was a very difficult issue, and for sure realistic and responsible, because it was the right thing to do and we did it with pride. Unfortunately, the current government has failed to recognize the reality of that. This is why today it will cost Canada billions of dollars more. The current government has failed to recognize the reality of the fact that people live longer, and with that, we can achieve so much more.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Given the current circumstances, lowering the age of retirement from 67 to 65 is one of the worst decisions this government has made.

Government Orders

In 2012, the Conservative government made a courageous decision that was not easy to explain to Canadians. However, we made it with honour and dignity because it was realistic and extremely important for Canada's economic future. Unfortunately, this government decided to reverse that decision and change the age of retirement from 67 back to 65.

That does not make any sense, particularly when we take into account the fact that there is a longer life expectancy. When the Canada pension plan was designed in the 1960s, life expectancy was 68 years for men and 74 years for women. Today, the life expectancy of men is 79, while women can expect to live to 83.

Since Canadians have a longer life expectancy and are in better health, they can continue to work longer. However, this government decided to bring the age of retirement back to 65.

The sad part is that this was not an easy thing for the Conservatives to do. We recognize that. It was a politically difficult decision to make. However, that was what had to be done, and the measure was implemented. It became a *fait accompli*, and the public accepted that decision.

However, now, the government is reversing that decision, which is sad because it will have a major impact on the rest of the economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member across the way is quite wrong in his assessment.

First, the member needs to realize that the Liberal Party platform recognized that what Stephen Harper did when he was prime minister and decided, when overseas, to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67 was just wrong. Canadians knew it was wrong. We could afford it. Parliamentary secretaries and others knew it was a bad policy decision. This government has reversed that Harper decision. We are saying that people should be able to collect OAS at 65. This is a positive.

With reference to the bill itself, there is a clear difference. This is a government that understands that we also have to think of future generations, for those who are in the workplace today, and who are retiring. We want to make sure that they have money in a retirement plan through the CPP.

From listening to the debate, one could conclude that the Conservatives, on the other hand, do not support the CPP. Would the member not recognize that the very same arguments the Conservatives are using today to say no to Bill C-26 could have been used to get rid of the CPP in the first place?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, the member is all wrong. First, we are attacking Bill C-26 because it is a tax increase, not the principle of the CPP. We do support the principle. The reality is that it will cost people billions of dollars more, as the Liberal government will pick 1,000 bucks from the pockets of people. This is totally unacceptable.

Second, when he talks about the fact we decided to raise the age of eligibility to 67, that was the real thing to do. We had the courage to

do that and we are proud of it. Why? It is because it would otherwise cost the Canadian economy \$11 billion by 2030. That is a shame.

He talked about the fact he was elected under the promise of an increased CPP. Let me remind him that he was also elected with the promise of a small deficit of \$10 billion. It is three times that amount. Shame on him.

• (1235)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech, although we disagree on many of the issues.

During the committee meetings, many of the witnesses came forward and said that a change had to be made for our future, for our children and our grandchildren, to the CPP as an important tool. It is one of three main pillars of the pension system we have going forward.

Does the member feel this is not the right time, or that we should never at any time increase the CPP for our children and their children?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, there is a clear difference between the fact that we Conservatives believe in the will of the people and the NDP believes in the action of the government. I do respect that, but it is not where we stand.

For us, it is better to give tools to people to make their own choices to put money aside for their retirement.

For us, the worst way to do it is to give the government the power to put its hands into the wallets of people and to pick out \$1,000 a year of what they earn. Also, it is not good, as far as we are concerned, to charge those who create wealth, who create jobs, \$1,000 more for every employee. It will have a bad effect on so many issues. It is the wrong thing to do.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do know that last week the parliamentary secretary addressed the issue of what it would cost Canadians to increase their CPP on retirement by \$4,000 more a year.

They keep mentioning \$1,000 a year. However, at the \$6 a week the parliamentary secretary mentioned, it would be \$312 per year per person, as well \$312 for the employer, a mere pittance of less than 15¢ an hour for the latter. I wonder if he could explain, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, those numbers come from the Department of Finance, the same department that concluded this measure would have a negative impact on employment, GDP, investment, disposable income, and personal savings.

We think this is a very bad bill for taxpayers and the Canadian economy.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as you know, a stronger Canada pension plan was a key part of the promise Liberals made to Canadians when we pledged to help the middle class and those working hard to join it. Then, in June, the Minister of Finance reached a historic agreement in principle with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan. It is an example of the results that can be achieved when the federal government has provincial partners. The legislation before the House is the next step toward implementing the commitment to enhance the CPP.

Why should we enhance the CPP? It is because achieving a safe, secure, and dignified retirement is, without a doubt, among the most significant goals for hard-working Canadians. We know that middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever and that many are worried they will not have enough to set aside for retirement. That feeling is palpable. When we knock on doors and hold town halls to talk to people and discuss the work of government, we find their concerns to be very well founded. Extensive analysis conducted by the finance department and provincial governments has found that around one-quarter of families nearing retirement, some 1.1 million families, face a drop in their standard of living when they retire. The middle class deserves better.

This conclusion led us to work toward our agreed enhancement to the CPP with the provinces. What are the benefits? First, there will be more money in the CPP waiting for Canadians when they retire. Once fully in place, the CPP enhancement would increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by about 50%. The current maximum benefit is \$13,110. In today's dollar terms, the enhanced CPP would represent an increase of nearly \$7,000, to a maximum benefit of nearly \$20,000. The Department of Finance has estimated that by strengthening the CPP, we would reduce by about a quarter the share of families at risk of not having adequate retirement savings.

We on this side of the House are proud to be able to take this bold action to support middle-class Canadians by strengthening their retirement incomes. Without a doubt, a stronger CPP would be good for the middle class and those working hard to join it, and good for the Canadian economy overall. For most Canadians, these increased benefits would come from just a 1% increase in their contribution rates. We are also making sure to give individuals and their employers plenty of time to adjust to the modest increases, making sure these are small and gradual, starting in 2019.

Today's legislation, as agreed with the provinces, would ensure that low-income Canadians would not be financially burdened as a result of their extra contributions. It would do this by enhancing the working income tax benefit to roughly offset the incremental CPP contributions, leaving eligible low-income Canadians with little to no change in disposable income while still securing them with a higher retirement income.

The enhanced CPP would simply build on the core existing CPP benefits and do so in a smart, carefully targeted, and effective way that reflects the extensive research that governments brought to the table in crafting this enhancement for the benefit of all working Canadians. Taken together, it is a comprehensive package that would

increase CPP benefits while striking an appropriate balance between short-term economic considerations and long-term gains.

It is for these reasons that I call on all members of the House to support this legislation, support Canadians, and ensure that all Canadians have a safe, secure retirement.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks.

I would like to know why his party is opposed to creating new savings tools and would rather make workers pay more.

[English]

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, I formally welcome the hon. member to the finance committee. He just joined the committee and brings a wealth of knowledge.

Although we disagree on almost everything that comes up at committee, from time to time, we find an area of agreement. The CPP enhancement is not one of those areas. He mentioned the same thing that the Conservative Party mentioned in its campaign, namely, that we should increase the TFSA. The fact of the matter is that a lot of Canadians cannot afford to meet the current threshold of the TFSA.

The number one reason the CPP enhancement is needed is that 48% of Canadians in 1971 had defined benefit contribution plans provided by their employers, but only 25% by 2011, and that number is declining further. The CPP enhancement is critical to ensure that Canadians have a safe and secure retirement. I encourage the member opposite not just to delete every clause in this bill but to bring forward ideas that would help Canadians have a safe and secure retirement. I encourage his party to support this bill.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech. We certainly welcome the improvements in CPP to date, but there are many that were omitted.

The member mentioned that they talked to people, door to door, during the election, about the Canada pension plan. I would like to know if the member told people that the dropout clauses for child rearing and for people living with disabilities were not allowed in the new bill. If so, when they had those talks, how did people respond?

• (1245)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, the fact of the matter is this. If people retire in Canada after 2019 and they have contributed to CPP, they will have more money when they retire. That is something that all Canadians from coast to coast to coast can celebrate. It is an important development.

Government Orders

More importantly, on the point that the member raised, just last week, our government made a commitment that the finance minister would be talking about that very point, the dropout provisions, with his provincial and territorial partners at the triennial review of CPP. The government understands and recognizes that that is a concern, and is moving forward with the minister bringing it up and reviewing those provisions.

The fact is that people are working in Canada who need a safe and secure retirement. It is to their benefit to support CPP enhancement. I encourage the party opposite to support this bill. Members opposite know that at the end of the day we are all here to fight for Canadians, and the CPP enhancement is fighting for Canadians and helping to strengthen the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. I would also like to thank him for being so available to the NDP on this file. I know he attended the Standing Committee on Finance meetings.

Some issues should not be up for debate. Unfortunately, some of those issues are. In a little while, my colleague will tell us more about how the new Canada pension plan definition will have an unfair impact on women and people with disabilities.

I would like to give my colleague an opportunity to add to what he said about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Raj Grewal: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is a man of towering intellect and has a fierce passion in advocating for his constituents. Unfortunately, we fundamentally disagree on a lot of items.

Although I appreciate the fact that he thinks I am open to the NDP suggestion, I very much support CPP enhancement. As I have mentioned numerous times throughout this debate, the most important thing is that we are strengthening Canadians' retirement. We are increasing CPP enhancement, and all Canadians across the country will benefit from our plan.

I encourage all members, irrespective of their party ideology, to support this bill.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, on October 6, the current government introduced a flawed bill in the House of Commons, Bill C-26. It did so while being fully aware of the bill's shortcomings. It did so with full knowledge that women and people living with disabilities would be negatively affected. That the bill would omit dropout provisions already in the Canada pension plan to protect women and people living with disabilities seemed to matter very little. Getting a deal done quickly, the PR, and the photo-op were more important. Looking good was more important. Sadly, looking good is more important to the government than sound public policy that protects the rights and needs of all Canadians.

Removing the dropout provision from the CPP was a surprise to many experts who have been working on a pension reform for many years. While testifying at committee, I asked Mark Janson, a pension expert from CUPE national, if he or his union had any indication that

the child-rearing or disability dropouts were on the table for CPP expansion. In reply, Mr. Janson said:

...it was a surprise to us to see they were not included. The signed document the finance ministers put out in June and the backgrounder they produced at the time said nothing about this, so it was only when we saw the legislation. During the years of talks we had not heard that this was an item to be discussed and perhaps changed.

When I asked Mr. Hassan Yussuff, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, about the government's plan to omit the dropout provisions, he was very straightforward. He said:

[The] committee has a direct responsibility to amend the bill to fix that problem. This is an affront to women's equality in this country, and it is simply wrong. It was corrected in 1997, and we have no business going back and taking that away from women and people who get disability benefits. However, the department came up with a draft. They've made a fundamental mistake, in my view, and it needs to be fixed. This committee has the responsibility to fix that.

More than half the workforce today is represented by women. To tell them that they are not going to be treated equally as men in the workforce is wrong and this committee has a responsibility. Equally, the department should come back to say that it made a mistake. This will do very little, I think, in terms of the premium increase. It disadvantages two very important groups in this country, and in my view, it was never discussed during the enhancement.

It's fundamentally wrong and given what the government has said about women's equality, I don't think this was intended. It needs to be fixed.

It did not take the NDP long to discover the flaws. At first we wondered if the omission of these critical provisions was an oversight or done on purpose. How could the government leave out provisions designed to protect the well-being of such a large number of Canadians? How could the government leave out provisions originally put into the CPP by the Prime Minister's father after he discovered a major hole in the legislation? We thought that for sure the omission had to be a mistake. However, we have come to find out that it was no mistake at all. We have learned that in the haste to get a deal with the provinces in June, the current government was willing to throw the rights of women and those living with disabilities under the bus. It was a shameful move and, now that they have been exposed, the Liberals should feel ashamed and fix the bill.

I know that many members on the other side of this House realize the government made a mistake. I watch them look down and squirm uncomfortably any time that we raise the deceit in this House or at committee. However, even when they have been exposed and their mistakes are laid bare, the government and all its members still refuse to commit to fixing the bill. Many times, my colleagues and I have stood in this House and asked if the government would fix its flawed bill. For days on end, all we got back were disdain and non-answers. Not one member on the other side of this House would even admit that the bill would trample on the rights of vulnerable Canadians.

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We were challenged to take our concerns to committee, so we did. The New Democrats studied the bill and we figured out how to fix it. We developed the language and the clauses needed in the bill to fix the government's mistake. In good faith, we went to committee. We listened to the witnesses, some of whom supported the bill, and some who did not. Many witnesses recognized the flaw in the legislation and urged the committee to put the dropout provisions into the bill.

• (1250)

During the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, I presented amendments to fix the legislation. My two amendments were all that were needed to put the dropout positions back into the bill. There were two amendments that would restore the protection for women and those living with disability. However, my amendments were ruled out of order. The only way to fix the bill would be to come back to the House and have the minister make the appropriate amendments at that time.

I moved the motion to have the committee consider making these recommendations to the House of Commons. What happened next was shocking and disheartening. The Liberal members on the committee resorted to the lowest form of procedural manoeuvring, and moved and passed the motion to adjourn debate. That meant that a motion to consider fixing the bill could not even be debated or discussed, never mind actually voted on. I could not believe it. It was a clear that a heavy-handed whip had been used. So much for the government of sunny ways, free votes, and the best intentions. It is clear that Canadians who voted for change are receiving nothing but chump change.

A few days later, I was able to bring my motion back to the committee. Again, the Liberal members of the committee proved very clearly that they were not serious about fixing the bill. Instead of even debating my motion, they used another procedural manoeuvre, which guaranteed no immediate fix for the bill. It was shameful and disappointing.

I have mentioned what happened at committee because I want Canadians to know, and I want my constituents to know, that things do not always happen here in Ottawa the way that we think they should. The government had a very easy way of fixing a major flaw in a bill it introduced, a flaw that could affect 14 million Canadian workers. It chose not to. We in the NDP now find ourselves in an awkward position. We plan on supporting the bill, but we are very concerned about whether the CPP will ever be fixed and the necessary dropout provisions included in the legislation.

So far, we have heard from the President of the Treasury Board, who said:

We are aware that more could be done in respect of the dropout provisions for disability and child rearing and, in fact, the Minister of Finance will raise these provisions at the next meeting of provincial and territorial finance ministers in December in the context of a triennial review of the CPP.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said:

Our intent is to pass the bill, as is; however, the Minister of Finance will then raise the dropout provisions at the next provincial and territorial finance ministers' meeting in December, in the context of the triennial review of the Canada pension plan.

In my view, these are both weak and non-committal statements. We have heard nothing from the Minister of Finance himself. Is he

committed to fixing the legislation? Is he committed to making sure that women and those living with disabilities are not victimized for the mistake in Bill C-26?

No one knows for sure. I am not optimistic. I will believe it when I see it.

• (1255)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to my hon. colleague's concerns with regard to some of the amendments he is proposing. We are not saying we are against them; we are saying that he needs to consult with and work with provinces. If he speaks to his Quebec colleagues, for instance, I am sure they would be against a top-down approach, or maybe he wants to speak to the members who sit behind him. There are about 10 or 12 of them. I am sure they would also be against an Ottawa top-down approach.

I am just wondering whether he has consulted at all with provinces. Have any provinces come on board and said that they support this?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, I am really surprised at that question. Actually, I am shocked. The Liberals brought in a bill, Bill C-26, that was supposed to enhance the CPP benefits for other people. We know it had to be fixed. They brought in a certain portion of it for one group of Canadians only, and omitted another group of Canadians. It is insulting.

The Liberals knew about it. They had time to fix it. Now they want to blame it on the provinces for not being there and hoping they will be in the future. Fix the bill now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question follows up on the previous question.

The Liberals are saying that we need to negotiate with the provinces to correct this oversight. The problem is that during the negotiations that took place with the provinces, from my perspective, and I have witnessed federal-provincial negotiations in the past, the improvements that are needed were discussed only in broad strokes. For instance, in this case, we are talking about increasing premiums and enhancing benefits. I would be very surprised if, through those negotiations, everyone would agree on how that provision should be amended, a provision that affects the contribution period, as well as women and people with disabilities.

In creating this legislative measure, the federal government completely ignored the downside of this bill in its current form. Basically, it is now asking the provinces to fix this mistake, even though the federal government's own ineptitude is entirely to blame, in my view.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. Was it even talked about with the provinces, was it purposely omitted, or did the Liberals have something at the provincial level, when they met with them, that they were not going to discuss this at all, and they were told they were going to omit it.

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I do not know what happened there, but I am really surprised that any province or anyone would try to take away a piece of legislation that has been effect since 1977 and omit it for people in the future. What is going on is absolutely insane.

They admit they want to make it better and stronger, and they can do it with this piece of legislation. They do not have to go back to the provinces, unless they purposely did it when they had the meetings with the provinces and said they were going to omit it.

• (1300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I am disappointed in the NDP. We have a CPP reform, a historic agreement, which was agreed to with the consensus of provinces, including NDP Alberta. The NDP, as opposed to recognizing the valuable, historic agreement, is trying to focus on an issue that all members are very sympathetic to, but which would require us to go back to the table.

My question for the member is: Does he believe that it is better that we not proceed with the changes and instead go back to the provinces and, hopefully, at some point in the future, come back with an amended piece of legislation, or should we do what has been suggested, that the Minister of Finance take the issue to the premiers?

However, at the very least, let us get this thing passed. It has been decades since we have improved the CPP. Now is the time for us to do it. If we can improve it, the Minister of Finance is committed to doing just that.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, my colleague is asking me if I think we should now just pass Bill C-26 the way it is and hope for something in the future. My question back is: Why was this omitted to begin with? That is the whole problem.

I do not understand what the Liberals are asking. They are doing such a great job for one group of Canadians and not including all Canadians. It is the same thing that happened with their tax deduction. They forgot the group. Why was this omitted? You should make sure it is fixed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. First, time is up. Also, I just want to remind the member that he needs to address the Chair and not the individual member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough Centre.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House today in support of Bill C-26. This is a piece of legislation that would bring peace of mind to millions of Canadians, many of them my constituents, who are worried about their retirement.

With Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, our government is fulfilling its campaign commitment to reform and enhance the Canada pension plan and help Canadians who are having trouble saving for their retirement.

The CPP is a Canadian success story and it is the right way to help Canadians save for retirement in a world that is very different from that of our parents and our grandparents.

There was a time when Canadians would work for one company all of their life and then retire comfortably with a gold watch and a defined benefit pension plan. Complemented by the Canada pension plan, they could be assured of a comfortable and dignified retirement but sadly, those days are no more. They are over.

It is very rare today to find a defined benefit pension plan outside of the public service. Today, due to costs and risks, most companies have moved to a defined contribution pension plan, which shifts the investment risk to the employee and that is if one is lucky enough to be working for a company that offers any kind of pension at all. According to Statistics Canada, in 2014 only 37.9% of employees had a pension plan and that number was trending down.

Then there is the changing nature of work today. A 2014 Workopolis study found that if current trends continue, average Canadians can expect to hold roughly 15 jobs in their careers. Indeed, 51% of people now stay in any one role for less than two years. Some of this is by choice, but some is also by necessity. Contract work is increasingly prevalent and employees are often seeking new challenges and new opportunities.

In short, Canadians can no longer rely on the traditional retirement savings methods. The onus has now shifted to employees, but the data makes it clear that Canadians are having difficulty with this new responsibility.

A report earlier this year from the Broadbent Institute found that only 47% of those aged 55 to 64 have no accrued employer pension benefits and the vast majority are retiring with inadequate retirement savings. Just half have savings that represent less than one year's worth of the resources they need to supplement old age security and the Canada pension plan, and fewer than 20% have the resources needed for five years of retirement.

According to the report, just 15% to 20% of middle-income Canadians retiring without an employer pension plan have saved anywhere near enough for their retirement. Without action, this means seniors are forced to continue working whether their health allows it or not, or are living their retirement in poverty. No Canadian seniors who have worked hard all their lives deserve to retire in poverty.

I understand why Canadians are having difficulty saving for retirement because I have been there myself. First, my husband and I saved to purchase a home in Scarborough, in the expensive greater Toronto housing market. At the same time, we set aside what money we could to put into a registered education savings plan for our two boys to save for their educations. Our first son started at Ryerson University this fall and our second son is not far behind. All along, my husband and I changed jobs and employers two times and have not had the benefit of an employer pension or savings plans.

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●(1305)

I am privileged now as a member of Parliament to have access to an employer pension plan. While I can now worry less about my retirement, millions of Canadians are not as lucky as we are, and many of my constituents are not as lucky. I regularly knock on doors in my riding of Scarborough Centre to stay connected to the concerns of my constituents, and many of them tell me that they are worried about their retirement. For many Canadians, this is one of the most important things on their mind.

Canadians are justly proud of the Canada pension plan. Like our public health care and the Canada child benefit, it is one of those things that helps to define Canada.

It has been a long time, since 1965, when the Liberal government of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson first established the Canada pension plan. As I have said, we live in a very different world than we did back in 1965, and Canadians face a very different retirement scenario today.

If we are to help Canadians save for their retirement and ensure that our retiring seniors do not slip into poverty, we need an enhanced Canada pension plan. With its efficient administration and strong performance, the Canada pension plan is the right vehicle to use as we seek to provide enhanced retirement savings for Canadians.

With Bill C-26, we would increase the maximum level of pensionable earnings by 14% by 2025. By increasing the amount of retirement pension, as well as the survivor and disability pensions, and the post-retirement fund, we are keeping our commitment of helping Canadians secure a strong, secure, and stable retirement.

We recognize that there will be an impact on both employees and employers, which is why the changes are being phased in gradually over the next seven years, from 2019 to 2025, for these needed investments. Canadians are investing in themselves and in their future. By investing in their employees, businesses will benefit as well. An employee who does not need to worry about their retirement is an employee who is happier and more productive for their employer.

Canadians deserve to retire with dignity. Today, 1.1 million families nearing retirement are facing a drop in their standard of living, but they will be able to retire with dignity when these reforms are fully in place.

Pension reform is an issue that needs national leadership. For years, as the provinces called out for federal leadership to address this growing problem, the previous government stayed silent, while everyday Canadians retired without enough savings to live comfortably.

I am proud to be part of a government that is prepared to lead and make some difficult choices. This is what leadership is about. The finance minister has worked closely with his provincial counterparts to reach an agreement that critics said was impossible.

We do not need to worry about our retirement in this place, but the millions of Canadians we represent do. This bill is for them, and I am proud to support it.

●(1310)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, this summer I had the privilege of meeting a lady who is doing the financial work for a number of different companies in her area. She said very clearly that if the CPP increase goes through, a number of her companies would actually be forced to lay off workers, let alone hire new ones.

My colleague gives the impression that this change in CPP would somehow eliminate poverty. I want to quote a book by the chief actuary of Morneau Shepell, co-authored by the finance minister.

Whatever the reason might be to expand the CPP, it is not to eliminate poverty. The poverty rate among seniors is now as close to zero as we can get. Yes, a little over five per cent of seniors today still have income below the poverty line.

Going back to the first comment I made, when companies are forced to lay off workers, or when companies that would like to expand and hire more workers are not able to do that, in the end we will have fewer people working. How is it beneficial if a very few people get access to a small increase in CPP but hundreds of others are actually laid off or are out of job?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, CPP enhancement is crucial to ensure that Canadians do not slip into poverty and can retire with dignity. Enhancement of the CPP will help Canadians secure a strong, secure, and stable retirement.

Allow me to share some independent commentary and reviews on our government's proposal for CPP reform.

Thomas Walkom of the *Toronto Star* said that it was “a clever bit of work” that made sense.

Ontario finance minister Charles Sousa said, “this federal government has shown great leadership and great desire to do something of great benefit for our young people.”

B.C. finance minister Mike de Jong said it was “a balanced approach to setting the objectives that were set out”.

Hassan Yussuff, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, called the plan “historic”, adding “I never thought this moment would come”.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, does the member have anything to say with respect to the fact that the dropout provision has been taken out, impacting particularly women and people on disability? I know the member is a very caring individual who wants to ensure that these provisions are in place for the protection and support of women and people with disabilities in our community. Would she support the call for change from her government with respect to this?

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Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, we are proud of Bill C-26, the agreement reached with the provinces, to reform the Canada pension plan and improve retirement outcomes for all Canadians, including women and those with disabilities. I agree with the hon. member that more can, and should, be done with respect to dropout provisions for disability and child bearing. I would note though that such changes will require agreement with the provinces. I understand the finance minister will raise this issue with provincial and territorial colleagues in December. I look forward to the results of those discussions.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the member must realize that for the government to take the provisions out to begin with, that must have been raised at the meetings with provincial and territorial leaders. If that is the case, then the government purposely traded this for something else. If that is not the case, then it inadvertently made a mistake and should be able to move forward in restoring these provisions that were in place since 1997. Would she not agree with that?

• (1315)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Madam Speaker, I would again emphasize that this would require an agreement with the provincial and territorial counterparts. The Minister of Finance will take that up when he meets them in December.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my remarks on Bill C-26, let me first offer my personal congratulations to everyone in the Ottawa Redblacks organization for a great Grey Cup victory yesterday. It was one of the more exciting games I have seen. A special shout out to Henry Burris, formerly of the Saskatchewan Rough Riders, who played a fantastic game. If that is the last game he plays in this league, it is a fitting exist. It was a magnificent performance.

I have some comments to make about Bill C-26, and, quite frankly, they are extremely critical.

Let again remind members of the definition of a tax. In essence, that is what is contained in Bill C-26. A tax is defined as “A compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits, or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions”.

Let us take that definition and examine what is contained in Bill C-26.

Bill C-26 purports to have CPP premiums increased. Are they going to be increased voluntarily or is it compulsory? It is compulsory. Workers and employers alone have no say in the matter.

Is it levied upon workers' incomes and business profits? Most assuredly, it is. Both employers and employees are going to be forced into paying increased premiums.

Therefore, I would suggest, by anyone's definition, that Bill C-26 is a tax. It is a tax increase. It is a business and payroll tax. This is the worst time in Canadian history to be levying new taxes.

I am not a fan of taxes of any sort at any time. However, in the position we are now in Canada, with a sluggish economy, raising taxes is absolutely incoherent to me. It makes no sense. It takes money out of the pockets of people. It reduces the availability of

Canadians to save more money. It reduces the ability of businesses to expand and create new jobs, in fact, just the opposite. I have talked to many small business owners who say that a CPP increase will, in eventuality, force them to either close up shop or lay off employees to try to survive. Neither one of those two options is a good one for small business owners.

The thing I cannot quite understand is why the government is trying to pass Bill C-26 now. Frankly, it is simply not necessary. Empirical evidence backs that up.

The government suggests that Bill C-26 is a way to increase retirement benefits for those Canadians who need it most.

When we take a look at the statistics, we find that less 5% of Canadian seniors are living below the poverty line. We have made great strides over the last decades. Only 30 or 40 years ago close to 30% of Canadians were living on low incomes. It is less than 5% now. Where is the need to increase retirement benefits if Canadians themselves are not living below the poverty line?

Additionally, I would point out that Canadians are saving more money now than they ever have in the past, approximately twice the amount they saved in 1990.

I would argue that all Canadians are aware of the responsibilities that come with planning for retirement. Their financial literacy quotient is increasing, and they are taking steps to prepare themselves for retirement.

Once again, if there is no need, why does the government feel it necessary to increase CPP premiums, to put additional taxes on Canadian businesses and Canadian workers? It does not seem to make much sense.

However, I think we can safely say that the reason the government is doing this is that it is part of its DNA. That is why its members are Liberals. They live to increase taxes. This is just one more example of it.

However, what is truly troubling to me is that this paternalistic approach to saying the government knows best, that it will take care of the retirement needs of people, is not only paternalistic, it is insulting to Canadians. In effect, the government is saying that Canadians do not have the capacity to plan for their own retirement, so the government will do it for them.

• (1320)

I have confidence in Canadians. I have confidence that they can plan for their own retirements and they do not need to be told by any government, let alone the current one, how to go about doing that.

I would point out for members of the chamber that there are more opportunities, more investment and retirement vehicles, in the marketplace now than there ever have been before to assist Canadians in planning for their retirements. I make specific reference to the TFSA, the most important advancement in tax avoidance that we have seen since the advent of RRSPs, a vehicle we introduced when our Conservative government was in power.

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The TFSA, currently permeated in the Canadian tax base by about 10 million stakeholders who have TFSAs, allows after-tax dollars to be put into a tax-free savings account. The money generated in that account over years is tax free, and is not taxed when that money is taken out.

We introduced this new innovation several years ago when we were in government. We started with a contribution limit of \$5,000 per year, the amount Canadians could put into their TFSAs. A few years later, we increased it to \$5,500. Then just before the last election, we increased the contribution limit to \$10,500 to allow Canadians to put up to \$10,500 a year into tax-free savings accounts to help plan and prepare for their retirements.

What did the Liberal government do? It rolled back the TFSA contribution limit, down to \$5,500. In other words, it took away the ability of Canadians to put an addition \$5,000 into TFSAs. What was the rationale? The Liberals say that Canadians simply do not have \$10,000 kicking around at the end of the year. Therefore, since they would not be able to max out their contributions, the government would reduce their ability to even try.

In other words, the government is saying that Canadians could not afford to contribute to TFSAs. What is its answer? Instead of allowing Canadians the opportunity to voluntarily put money into tax-free savings accounts, the government is forcing Canadians, who apparently cannot afford it, to pay money into a state-run pension plan that is taxable when people withdraw their benefits. Canadian investors have no ability to choose the investment vehicle of their choice.

Nothing makes sense about this whatsoever. If Canadians are going to be forced to save, why not allow them to at least put it in tax-free savings accounts? No, that is not the case. They are being forced to put it in the CPP.

Granted, I believe the pension fund managers of the CPP over the years have done a very good job. However, the point is that, as an individual, I would like to control the investment vehicles myself. I want to choose whether I want to put money into mutual funds, stocks, bonds, or other investments, rather than someone telling me what I have to invest in and what my rate of return will be.

Once again, this seems to be a pattern with the government. It has the attitude that government knows best. We have seen this before. The insult to Canadians is that Liberals do not believe Canadians are bright enough to choose wisely with their investment accounts. They believe the government is smarter than Canadian taxpayers.

We can all recall, just a few short years ago, during the federal election campaign, when the Conservative government introduced the universal child care benefit. The chief of staff of the prime minister of the day, Paul Martin, went on television and said that it was a bad idea because if the government gave money directly to parents and let them choose how to raise their children, they would blow it all on beer and popcorn. That is the attitude the current government has. It is paternalistic, it is condescending, and it is insulting. That is why, on this side of the House, we will oppose Bill C-26.

The basic difference between Conservatives and Liberals is this. As Conservatives, we believe in lower taxes, balanced budgets, and

smaller governments. The Liberals believe in higher taxes, deficit spending, and much larger governments. Eventually, Canadians will see the light and that is why, on this side of the House, we will be opposing Bill C-26, and opposing it with vigour.

● (1325)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the fact that there are more people saving now than there were in 1990, but he neglected to mention the fact that there were also many more people paying into employer-generated pensions than that helped people save indirectly through those pension plans.

What this comes down to is that there is a great growing difference between the haves and the have-nots in this country. This is a matter of building the middle class, strengthening the middle class, and making sure that people have what they need when it comes time to retire.

My question to the member opposite is very simple. Does he believe that there is a growing difference in Canadian society between the haves and the have-nots, and does he feel it is the role of government to assist to prevent that from happening?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, my approach, quite frankly, is that I believe in individual freedom. I believe in an individual's right to make his or her own decisions rather than have the government step in and be Big Brother all the time. That is a fundamental distinction that I do not know my colleague opposite truly understands.

In other words, I believe the government is trying to find a solution for which there is no problem. Statistics bear that out. Fewer than 5% of Canadians right now, fewer than 5% of seniors, are living below the poverty line, when 30 years ago it was 30%. More Canadians are saving as they prepare for retirement. They are doing so of their own volition. They are doing so with plans they generate themselves. They are not being told, nor do they want to be told, how to invest and where to invest.

That is why I believe in individual freedom. That is why I believe that Bill C-26 is a flawed piece of legislation.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for his speech. He is a very nice person and I have a great amount of respect for him.

Some members are saying that this is not the time for CPP expansion, but many of our retirees, at least in Hamilton Mountain, are suffering in poverty. The three main pillars when they went to work were the Canada pension plan, some of their own personal investments, and a private pension plan from work. However, people's private pension plans are now being eroded by bankruptcy protection. They have been wound up and they have been shortchanged. People did not have enough time to stretch it out. That is happening more frequently.

Knowing that that's one of the main pillars, does the hon. member not think we should now be putting in protections for our children and grandchildren to make sure that they do not have these problems? I know this is not going to fix everything, but it is one of the main pillars we can strengthen. Then we can work on the others.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his kind remarks at the outset of his question. From one Blue Jays fan to another, I suppose we will always have some areas of agreement as well as some of disagreement.

My answer to that would be to ask what life his children or my children or grandchildren will have if they do not have jobs. Many small business people have told me that the CPP expansion, even though the government suggests that it is a modest increase, would have an incredibly detrimental effect on their ability to hire more employees.

In fact, when we were on a tour across Canada just recently, we happened to be in Thunder Bay. I went to a restaurant for dinner with one of my colleagues. The restaurant owner, once finding out that I was a member of Parliament, started to engage me in conversation about what the expansion of the CPP premiums would mean to his business. He told my colleague and I, very clearly, that the profit margin was so skinny that with the CPP expansion, he would either have to close his doors or lay off employees. What kind of retirement would he have? What kind of retirement would his employees who might be laid off have?

There are other ways to help Canadians who need assistance plan for retirement. We expanded the GIS. The GIS is targeted to the lowest-income Canadians in this great nation of ours. We expanded it. I believe the Liberal government, to its credit, increased it by about 10%. Things can be done without increasing a job-killing tax, which Bill C-26 most surely is.

• (1330)

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak to Bill C-26 once again. I am confident in the beneficial impact it will have on the lives of hard-working Canadians.

I like to think of the bill as an investment in our future, an investment to ensure that Canadians who have worked hard all their lives will be able to lead the lives they always wanted when they retire. More importantly, the bill is an investment in young Canadians, an investment in our future generations.

With all nine Canada pension plan participating provinces supporting this investment, it is well known that this investment is indeed necessary. By enhancing the Canada pension plan, we are enabling young Canadians to enter the workforce with confidence, knowing that when it comes time for them to retire, they can do so with a stable pension.

Throughout my first year as a member of Parliament, I have spoken with many young Canadians regarding a wide range of issues. As mentioned in my first speech on the bill, the issue of saving for retirement was consistently brought to my attention throughout these conversations. Even though they may be decades away from retirement, with fewer and fewer employers offering a workplace pension plan, young Canadians are very concerned that they will not have enough when they retire.

A 2016 survey conducted by Franklin Templeton indicated that 70% of young Canadians say that retirement makes them anxious. In a 2016 poll conducted by *The Globe and Mail*, it was discovered that saving for retirement is the second most pressing concern for young

Canadians. Why is this? It is because today's young Canadians have grown up in households where not saving enough for retirement has been a constant fear. These young Canadians see the approximately 1.1 million families currently facing the insurmountable fear of not having enough money saved to maintain their standard of living in retirement, and they take on this fear before entering the workforce.

It could be argued that due to the fact that Canadians are living longer, the fear of not saving enough for retirement is greater for young Canadians than it was for their parents, given that they know they have to save more for longer. It is hard for me to believe that in 2016, in our country, our young adults are facing such concerns. Young Canadians entering the workforce should feel like they have their whole lives in front of them, because in reality, they do. However, currently these young Canadians are faced with the intimidating fear of not having enough money saved for retirement, something they should not worry about until much later in their lives.

According to Statistics Canada, Canadians aged 34 and under currently account for 42.5% of Canada's population, and this is expected to increase over the next 15 to 25 years. This is a significant portion of our population that cannot be ignored. It is for this reason that an enhancement of the Canada pension plan is necessary. Bill C-26 is designed to address and ease their concerns.

When speaking with young Canadians in my riding regarding this issue, I have promised that I would be their advocate here in the House of Commons, and by standing here again in support of the bill, I know I am fulfilling that promise.

Now, switching gears a bit, the members opposite have raised concerns that the bill does not benefit low-income Canadians because of the incremental increases in contributions. I would like to remind the members opposite that the bill would also provide an enhancement to the working income tax benefit, which would provide additional benefits that would ultimately offset the incremental increases in contributions. I would also like to remind them that the contributions to the enhanced portion of the Canada pension plan would be deductible.

I am well aware that the members opposite have brought forward other concerns about the bill, but I want to remind these members that our government was able to work with all nine Canada pension plan participating provinces to come to an agreement on this enhancement. This demonstrates that our government is able to effectively work with the provinces. Therefore, I want to assure the members opposite that no matter what concerns they have, our government is able to work with the provinces to make adjustments and fix any problems that may arise in the future. This is something that will be discussed when the minister meets with the provinces next month.

• (1335)

Like many members in this House, I come from a family that immigrated to Canada. My family, like every other, worked hard and made sacrifices so that their families and future generations would not have to face the same struggles. Ultimately, they made these sacrifices in the hopes that future generations would live better lives than they did.

Government Orders

In keeping with this concept, today many Canadians who have worked hard all their lives are now in their later years and are struggling to make ends meet. Many of their employers did not provide a workplace pension plan, and the current Canada pension plan is not strong or stable enough for them to live comfortably. I can guarantee that the Canadians who are currently facing these struggles do not want future generations to face the same struggles they are currently facing.

This government is working hard to ensure that this does not happen. By working with the provinces to reach an agreement and by being strong advocates during the debates in this House, this government is demonstrating its commitment to providing a better life for our country's future generations. Enhancing the Canada pension plan is an investment in our future, and I hope all members of this House feel the same way.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing up the issue of young people as it relates to this piece of legislation. We have heard a lot of commentary, in particular from the opposition today, about older individuals and seniors and how fewer of them require the changes we are talking about today, but in reality, the objective of this legislation is to affect people generations from now.

The member talked a bit about when he was campaigning and talking to young people. Can he comment on how many of those young people he talked to spoke of the fact that they had employer pensions, and in particular, how this legislation could help them specifically?

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Madam Speaker, actually, when I spoke to this bill previously, I mentioned that I had gone to a lot of high schools and spoken with high school students. A lot of them were concerned that the government was literally burying its head in the sand and not addressing the fact that we have an aging population that is going to retire all at once. The students were concerned that they will have to incur that cost, so they were quite pleased to know that our government is taking these steps now instead of just punting it down the field.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the comments my colleague made was that his party is concerned about the future of young people and jobs and all that sort of thing. However, it is clear that increasing CPP premiums would actually reduce the number of jobs that are available. We have heard from many small business owners that they will not be able to expand their workforce. They will not be able to make that new hire. In fact, they may actually end up laying off some of their current employees. I fail to understand how we can square that circle of increasing CPP premiums, reducing jobs, and making it better for young people.

Dan Kelly, the president and CEO of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said this:

Two thirds of small firms say they will have to freeze or cut salaries and over a third say they will have to reduce hours or jobs in their business in response to a CPP/OPP hike.

How can this member actually believe that increasing CPP premiums will increase the number of jobs available for the young people who are graduating from the high schools he just mentioned?

Mr. Gagan Sikand: Madam Speaker, the increases are modest.

I would like to match his words with the words of a previous member of the opposition. The late Jim Flaherty, in 2010, said that to do nothing would condemn Canadians to not having enough money for themselves when they retire.

It was the opposition members who actually acknowledged that there is a CPP gap, but it was the opposition that failed to do something about it. Unlike the Conservatives' previous government, we have actually done it. We have worked with the provinces, and we got it right.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was going to rise to ask a question, but it seems that I will be starting my speech now. I would like to say hello to all those Canadians who are watching us right now, especially my constituents in Beauport—Limoilou.

I am very pleased to speak in the House to Bill C-26, regarding the Canada pension plan.

My Conservative colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan spoke just before me. I admire his exemplary oratory skills and aspire to achieve the same some day. He talked about how this bill is typical of this and every Liberal government since the dawn of Canada. In fact, this is about taxing Canadians even more in order to fill the government's coffers to help carry out the Liberal government's agenda.

My colleague also talked about the Liberals' paternalistic approach to everything. All the while, he was able to illustrate with clear and concise definitions that increasing CPP contributions was in fact a tax from an economic and social policy perspective. He described in detail the Liberals' typically paternalistic approach to raising taxes.

That was encouraging to me as I wanted to explain that this bill is typical of this government, one that, despite its claims, has been increasing Canadians' taxes every month since coming to power one year ago.

It cancelled various tax credits that we introduced, such as those for children's sports activities or books and educational items. It refused to move forward with its promise to lower the small business tax, which represents a tax hike. It cancelled the universal child care benefit and replaced it with a benefit that was poorly implemented and that, by 2020, will incur extraordinary costs that were not anticipated. The government did not think of indexation, for example. That is not revenue neutral.

Government Orders

The Liberals have also proposed the Liberal tax on carbon of 11.5¢ a litre, which will soon be implemented. They are also increasing the CPP contribution by \$1,000 a year for every employee and every employer. Furthermore, they did not reduce the small business tax. They are also making it more difficult to obtain a mortgage in order to buy a home.

On this side of the House, we understand full well that the exponential growth in real estate prices in places like Vancouver and Toronto is a problem that needs to be addressed. However, the Liberals decided to draft a bill that makes no distinction with respect to the different regions of Canada in order to resolve a problem that is affecting only certain cities.

Bill C-26 is part of a general plan to raise taxes for Canadians. This bill is proof that the Liberals are saying one thing and doing another. For the past year, we have been hearing the Liberals talk about strengthening the middle class, but what we are seeing is that they are imposing more taxes on the middle class and introducing measures that will prevent the middle class from developing as it should.

We could even go so far as to say that the government is using the middle class to achieve its own ends and improve its electoral fortunes three years down the road. The government promised us a modest deficit of \$10 billion a year. However, that deficit has now grown to \$30 billion because of the government's poor decisions and bad management. To fill its coffers, the government has to raise taxes in all sorts of areas, and that includes the Canada pension plan.

In a nutshell, because of Bill C-26, workers will take home \$1,000 less every year and employers and entrepreneurs, the people who lead the way in job creation in Canada, will have to give up another \$1,000 per year.

• (1345)

I heard what my Liberal colleague said about seniors working hard all their lives and being entitled to a good Canada pension plan. He was talking about workers who are seniors right now. I stood up to ask him a question. Nowadays, more and more of our seniors keep working after retirement. My father-in-law retired from the Quebec public service a few years ago and is now working part-time. The higher Canada pension plan premium will be deducted from every one of his biweekly paycheques. Moreover, the changes to the Canada pension plan will not come into effect for another 40 years. Many seniors, including anyone who is currently a senior, will not benefit from the higher premiums, which are supposedly intended to reduce poverty among seniors.

I would also like to reiterate what my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent was saying a little earlier when he began the debate on Bill C-26. As he explained, what we are seeing right now are two different and opposing political and philosophical outlooks. My colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan provided a good description of the Liberal Party's vision. The Liberals think they know better than Canadians what they should do with their money and how they should use it at the end of the day. That is so paternalistic. It is in this government's DNA. It always thinks it knows better than Canadians what do to about all kinds of things, including how to invest and prepare for a comfortable retirement, if that is possible.

Conversely, we the Conservatives believe that individuals, Canadians themselves, know best what suits them to meet their own needs. That is why, during the 10 years we were in power, we took action and introduced policies that would help return as much money as possible to taxpayers, to maximize the amount of money that would stay in their pockets at the end of the year, as well as maximize the tools available to enable them, in turn, to maximize everything themselves. For instance, I think that the tax-free savings account is an excellent tool. Many people in my immediate family use that measure, as do my neighbours and constituents.

I also want to say that we should look to our ancestors. For example, my great-grandfather built his own retirement nest egg. I am not saying that we should go back to a time when there was no government plan to support those among us who forget to do our due diligence and prepare for old age. However, we must not implement measures that encourage people to neglect their needs and their responsibility to take care of their own retirement. We must always keep in mind the sage advice that our ancestors lived by. In other words, we must create our own nest eggs and ensure that when we reach old age we are able to take care of ourselves as much as possible for as long as possible.

I also think that Bill C-26 reflects two rather different political approaches. I would go so far as to say that my NDP colleagues share this same vision. Currently, every policy from this government is about short-term political gains with a view to re-election in three years, or so they think and want. How many decisions did we make in the past 10 years that were not at all popular? We still went ahead and made them anyway. We were courageous and proud to make those decisions. I am talking about increasing the age of retirement from 65 to 67. That was an extremely courageous and necessary decision. I am sure that I will likely never retire. I will work until I die, as people did for thousands of years. It is too bad.

I wanted to close by saying that one of my hobbies is to watch political debates. I have watched the debates in France, England, and in Germany, and the majority of the western European countries are saying that the age of retirement needs to increase. We said that, but this government is going in the opposite direction. It is very unfortunate.

• (1350)

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his eloquent speech. He clearly articulated the Conservatives' views, and I thank him for that. His speech was very informative, as usual.

My colleague mentioned that the government provides a minimum social safety net for those who forget to do their due diligence.

In his opinion, has the government done its due diligence regarding current seniors and future seniors like us? We have not been 16 for a long time.

Government Orders

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, in my opinion, the government has continued on the same path as the Conservatives in that they are increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which is a good thing. We can acknowledge that.

However, the government is preventing seniors who are currently working part-time from thriving. In my riding, most seniors that I meet work part-time. They therefore have to contribute to a retirement plan that they will not benefit from.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his fine speech. I have the pleasure of serving with him on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

He spoke about DNA, and I think that is a very important issue. The approach I take is based on the principle of walking the talk. For example, the Conservative Party often says that it does not like deficits. However, that party ran a deficit in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. They do not walk the talk.

The member also spoke about the Conservative Party's long-term vision. Since we are talking about pension plans, I would like to remind him that the Conservatives sold the GM shares at a loss. That is not a long-term vision. The only purpose that served was to allow the Conservatives to tell Canadians that they balanced the budget in 2015.

Since we know that defined benefit plans are in decline in Canada, what does my hon. colleague propose? Should we do the same thing that we have done for the past 40 years or should we do things differently?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, it is not up to me to suggest measures. The Liberals are in government. What I can say is that their current proposal will not increase or strengthen the CPP, but instead will provide the government with additional revenue to cover its poor financial management.

I would like to say to my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that in 2007, 2008 and 2009, the world went through the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. We ran deficits at the time to weather that great storm, and we did so with the best record of all G7 countries as we created more than 1.2 million jobs and had the best employment rate of all OECD countries.

We believe that the government should follow our lead.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hear a lot about tax breaks. This is a government that generally supports tax breaks. After all, we introduced Bill C-2, which gives a substantial tax break to Canada's middle class of hundreds of millions of dollars, and nine million plus Canadians are benefiting from that.

One could ask the question, why then, if there is so much focus on tax breaks, did the Conservatives vote against that most significant tax break?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, we voted against Bill C-2 because it is a false decrease of taxes in Canada.

I would invite my colleagues to chat with Senator Larry Smith, who has done great research and has put forward some amendments at the Senate committee on finance. This is research that shows, without doubt, that the decrease of taxes will only benefit households that make between \$140,000 and \$170,000 per year. It will not help any household with revenue under \$100,000 per year. People with lower incomes are not better off with that. That is my answer to my colleague.

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker, (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we resume debate, I want to advise the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health that I will have to interrupt her speech and that she will be able to finish afterwards.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to talk in support of Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act. This is an extremely important piece of legislation that will help millions of hard-working Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including many in my riding of Brampton West.

Opponents who are critical of this legislation often cite the fact that we have hard-working Canadians struggling to make ends meet today. I have residents from my riding calling and meeting with me on a regular basis to express how difficult it has become to support their families. Let me start with a story.

I met a couple with three children from my riding a year ago last November at a coffee shop before my constituency office had even opened. Both parents worked and the father had a second part-time job, yet this family was struggling. They were barely able to feed their children. Unfortunately, their story has become too common in our country. Canadian families that work so hard should not be struggling.

This same family visited me again a couple of months ago in September. They asked me if I could thank our Prime Minister on their behalf. The Canada child benefit that our Prime Minister has championed has taken a huge burden off this family. The increase in the Canada student grants has given this family hope that their children will be able to attend university one day.

This is just one of the many examples of families that have been positively impacted by the reforms our government has introduced to address the urgent issues facing Canadian families.

Short-term stimulus is extremely important. However, to generally serve Canadians our government must deliver for Canadians in the long-term as well. We need to give Canadians hope for their future. We need to ensure that all Canadians are given the opportunity to have a strong, safe, and secure retirement. Ensuring that all Canadians have the support of a pension plan that helps them maintain their standard of living after they retire is essential to achieving this objective.

Statements by Members

Canadians value the long-term pension security provided by the Canada pension plan since its inception over 50 years ago by Lester B. Pearson's government. One of the harsh realities of today's economic climate is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Canadians to plan and save for their retirement years. The cost of living in Canada continues to spike sharply. Retirement savings and the pension plans of Canadians are not keeping pace. The life expectancy of Canadians is going up. As a result, an increasing number of Canadians will be forced to reduce their standard of living in their retirement years.

I have heard these issues loud and clear at the doorsteps, in our town halls, at community events, and in my constituency office. Last week, one of my constituents said that if it is this difficult now, what would he do when he retires and needs to live on a fixed income? What would his grandchildren do? How would they support themselves in their retirement? This is a real and growing concern for middle-class Canadians. As I said, the cost of living in Canada is rising. The cost of food is increasing, particularly healthy foods. The cost of leasing an apartment is increasing. Transportation costs continue to go up. These trends are expected to continue and will increasingly burden Canadian families in their retirement years.

I see that my time is up for now. I will continue my remarks after question period.

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health will have six minutes remaining in her speech following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

GIANLUCA CELLUCCI

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, November 26, over 200 members of the Richmond Hill community gathered in memory of Gianluca Cellucci, the son of Ioanna and Carmello and brother of Francesca, who was tragically lost nine months ago. The event was organized by nine of Gianluca's closest friends, and included the unveiling of a stone plaque and recently planted tree in South Richvale at Greenway Park, just to the west of the elementary school he attended.

Today, I wear a pin on my lapel that is emblazoned with Gianluca's signature as a reminder of the noble, determined, and compassionate young man he was. Gianluca was a political science graduate who was passionate about social justice issues and aspired to join local law enforcement. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and wonderful tributes by Jacob, Robert, Matthew, Paolo, and Domenico.

We love Gianluca. God bless his soul.

* * *

● (1400)

2016 GREY CUP

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night saw another page written in the storied history of Canada's unique game, with a barnburner 104th Grey Cup. The Ottawa

Redblacks and Calgary Stampeders gave us memories for the ages in a thrilling to-the-last-play contest of the type that Canadian fans have come to expect.

Canadian football is part of our heritage and helps define us. There is no other annual event like the Grey Cup, which brings together fans from every corner of the country to celebrate Canada. Our distinct three-down game again demonstrated that it cannot be matched for drama, heroics, and sheer entertainment.

Our congratulations go to outstanding Canadian Brad Sinopoli and the rest of the Ottawa franchise for their underdog victory. Commissioner Jeffrey Orridge, Matt Maychak, and the league can be proud of a championship that demonstrated the enduring appeal of our game, and the host Argonauts franchise led by Michael Copeland and Sara Moore delivered a first-rate game day experience.

Next year, the CFL will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation by holding the Grey Cup game in our nation's capital. It will be a fitting finale to a year of celebrating Canada. It will show once more the enduring and special place Canadian football holds in the heart and culture of our country.

* * *

FOOD BANKS

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the holidays are a wonderful time of year when friends and families gather to celebrate.

[*Translation*]

However, many Canadian families will not be celebrating because they do not have access to basic necessities such as food at affordable prices. Most of us take these things for granted.

[*English*]

Canadians are recognized around the world for their generosity and compassion, and there is so much we can do for our less fortunate neighbours. Throughout the country, food banks can always use more canned meats, jars of peanut butter, and baby food.

In Kanata—Carleton, more volunteers are still needed to adopt a family or to help us unload the buses. On Saturday, December 3, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., my team and I will be at 340 Legget Drive to unload buses of food donations from the people of Kanata.

I encourage everyone to support their local food banks.

* * *

VANCOUVER EAST

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Vancouver East is a proud, diverse community, with a deep and rich history. From art to culture, to service provision, it has it all.

Statements by Members

The Japanese Language School and Japanese Language Hall celebrated its 110th anniversary. This remarkable milestone is an illustration of the strength, determination, and dedication of the Japanese community to rebuild after the horrific internment of Japanese Canadians.

Over at the Ray-Cam Co-operative centre, we celebrated its 40th anniversary. Forty years ago, the tenants at the Raymur Housing project fought hard for this incredible centre, and today this inner city centre is a gem in the community, providing excellent support to a diverse and multicultural neighbourhood.

To cap off the celebrations, in its 20th year, the Eastside Culture Crawl showcased the brilliant creativity and talents of more than 475 artists. If people ever want to see what a diverse, accepting, caring, strong, resilient, creative, and talented community looks like, come to East Van.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is making an important commitment to developing a Canadian poverty reduction strategy. Government can make a difference, but we cannot do it alone. That is why the member for Bay of Quinte and I are fortunate to have a new program in our ridings called “Creating Community”, run by the Hastings & Prince Edward Poverty Roundtable.

With the help of an Ontario Trillium grant, this program brings together people who have personally experienced poverty in order to educate our community on the complexity of the issue and to bring the diversity of perspectives together, with the goal of action on poverty reduction. This project deepens our understanding that poverty is not an individual experience, but a community one, needing responses at all levels.

Community consultations are now under way on the causes and impacts of poverty, and solutions to it. Poverty often has a local context, so we look forward to collaboration between our government and these community initiatives.

* * *

● (1405)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 25 I attended an inspiring event in Chilliwack dedicated to helping sexually exploited women in our community.

The PEARL Life Renewal Society was created by Joan Goosen and a group of dedicated volunteers committed to empowering girls and women who are sexually exploited, trafficked, and in prostitution through support, education, and love to embrace hope and renewal.

We heard powerful presentations on how most girls trafficked in Canada are lured into the sex trade between the ages of 12 and 14. The most powerful story of the entire night came from Tamara, who shared her story of being sexually trafficked starting at the age of 13. After 15 years, through hard work, determination, and God's grace, she finally broke free and is now helping others to do the same.

PEARL is working toward creating a safe space with wrap-around services in Chilliwack to care for those trapped in the sex trade.

Chilliwack is a compassionate, caring community and I know I speak for all of my constituents in wishing PEARL every blessing as it starts this important ministry.

* * *

[Translation]

GUIDO NINCHERI AND UMBERTO BRUNI

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we have all spent time admiring the intricate stained glass and the ceiling in this venerable chamber. Guido Nincheri, the greatest Canadian artist of his kind, was born in Tuscany in 1885. He is known as the Canadian Michelangelo.

His glorious oeuvre stands in sharp contrast to the regrettable fact that the Canadian government imprisoned him because of an individual depicted in one of his works.

On November 18, I had the poignant experience of visiting his workshop, which is practically intact and a veritable time machine.

Mr. Nincheri had an extremely talented student, Umberto Bruni, who became a famous Canadian painter. On Thursday, November 24, I had the honour of wishing Mr. Bruni a happy 102nd birthday.

I invite all of my colleagues to honour the memory and celebrate the life and career of the great master and his illustrious student.

* * *

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the work of social and community organizations across the country and in Anjou and Rivière-des-Prairies in particular.

Whether they are fighting poverty, promoting immigrant integration, supporting families or helping seniors feel less isolated, these organizations do phenomenal work every day.

From SAC Anjou and the volunteer action centre to Équipe RDP, le Phare, the kids from the YLC, Carrefour Solidarité Anjou, women's centres, SARA, Optimist clubs, and various seniors clubs, I know all of these groups do so much with so little.

What they lack in resources they more than make up for in what really counts: compassion, generosity, and a deeply rooted desire to change things. That is the soul of nobility and beauty.

All of the volunteers and employees of these organizations have my heartfelt support, respect, and admiration.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, EVRAZ is the biggest producer of large diameter line pipe for oil and gas transmission in North America and employs over 1,000 Canadians, including Canadians in my riding. It manufactures 100% made-in-Canada pipe, from scrap to steel to pipe. EVRAZ produces over one million tonnes of steel annually from recycled metal.

Conrad Winkler, president and CEO of EVRAZ, visited me in Ottawa today to point out that every tonne of recycled steel saves 1.8 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, emitting 79% less than Chinese steel and using 64% less electricity.

The infrastructure needed for Canada's pipelines can be made right here in Canada by Canadians for Canadians. EVRAZ is a classic example of a creator of good paying, skilled, middle-class jobs.

Pipelines bring jobs to operators, oil and gas drillers, and many other firms in local communities. The previous Conservative government approved numerous pipelines. The Liberal government needs to do the same.

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MISSION CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS PARADE

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the 33rd annual Mission Candlelight Christmas Parade taking place this Friday in my riding. The parade is an opportunity for all to celebrate the holiday season and to come together with friends and family to create lasting memories.

The Candlelight Christmas Parade has been a beloved tradition in the community for years and will showcase over 70 floats this year.

I am excited to take part in the parade this Friday starting at 7:30 p.m. The festivities begin at the corner of Horne Street and First Avenue. I am looking forward to kicking off this holiday season with my constituents at the candlelight parade. I will see everyone there.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

J. ARMAND BOMBARDIER MUSEUM OF INGENUITY

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone here knows Bombardier as a leader of industry in Canada, and it should come as no surprise that that business was created in Valcourt, Quebec, in my riding.

It was none other than renowned inventor Joseph-Armand Bombardier who designed the first vehicle to glide across the snow in 1935. The Ski-Doo brand will be forever etched in our minds as the first snowmobile. A museum in his honour opened its doors in Valcourt in 1971.

The museum was recently completely renovated with a focus on ingenuity, one of the defining characteristics of its namesake. The museum is a source of inspiration, creativity, and innovation. The

Statements by Members

idea that the museum conveys is that we need to think bigger, pursue our dreams and ideas, and believe that anything is possible and within everyone's reach.

I invite all members of the House to come and visit this remarkable place to immerse themselves in the universe of this great inventor.

* * *

[English]

MEDAL OF BRAVERY

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 7, while responding to a fire alarm, Constable Fraser Curtis and his partner were told by bystanders that there may be someone still in the burning building.

He entered the building, without protection and at great risk to his own life, crawled through thick smoke and fire, located the victim, whom he heard coughing, and although the victim was disorientated, belligerent, covered in soot, and intoxicated, he carried him out of the building.

On Thursday, November 24, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell awarded Fraser Curtis with the Medal of Bravery. Chatham—Kent Police Chief Gary Conn stated, "All our officers are heroes amongst us, but clearly Constable Curtis' actions went beyond the call of duty in saving this individual's life. His actions further support and exemplify why we chose to become police officers and enter into such an honourable vocation."

Thank you, Fraser.

* * *

2016 GREY CUP

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in front of a capacity crowd of more than 33,000 and millions of TV viewers, two fabulous teams squared off in Toronto for the privilege of hoisting the coveted Grey Cup. This is an enduring Canadian symbol of hard work, sacrifice, and remarkable sportsmanship.

I will confess a bias. When I saw down yesterday to watch the game with family and friends, I was rooting for our hometown team. I am delighted to congratulate the Ottawa Redblacks for an excellent season and for bringing the cup home to Ottawa for the first time since 1976. I also want to congratulate the Calgary Stampeders for a hard-fought, competitive game that kept us on the edge of our seats.

On behalf of every fan of Canadian football, young and old, from coast to coast to coast, I thank the teams for their exemplary performance, both yesterday and throughout the season.

Congratulations, Redblacks.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 125 years ago today, on November 28, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers got its start in St. Louis, Missouri.

Oral Questions

In 1891, the electrical industry was in its infancy. Electrical workers were expected to work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, with no safety equipment or standards to speak of. Their mortality rate was way above average, going as high as one death for every two workers hired.

Ten delegates attended the first meeting, representing 286 members from across the United States. Today, in Canada alone, the IBEW represents over 70,000 workers in the electrical industry. The IBEW is at the forefront of making workplaces safer to ensure that workers come home at the end of each day. IBEW members negotiate for fair wages and benefits in exchange for their work, which is second to none.

Through the code of excellence program and first-class training, IBEW members learn to take pride in their work: to do it once, and do it right.

As a proud member of the IBEW, I call on all members of this House to join me in congratulating the union on its 125th anniversary.

* * *

2016 GREY CUP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa's Redblacks are this year's CFL champions, bringing home their first—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Yes, that is right, Mr. Speaker. I know we are all Ottawa Redblacks fans here in this Ottawa chamber.

This ends a 40-year drought. As a young team of only three seasons old, the team clearly was the underdog. Despite their youthfulness, they have made the Grey Cup twice already, and this time, thanks to the incredible leadership of Henry Burris, his teammates, and the coaching and support staff, they took it all the way, winning 39 to 33.

I look forward to the champions hosting the next Grey Cup on home turf. I know that all members of the House of Commons will go to celebrate this great national treasure and to cheer them on, so that they can win their second Grey Cup in a row.

* * *

• (1415)

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S HISTORY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of attending the 2016 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching ceremony, where three outstanding teachers from Fundy Royal's Sussex Middle School were honoured.

Brian Clancy, Lisa Sheppard, and Catherine Morneau gave their sixth grade students a challenge to teach their community about the Canadian experience of Vimy Ridge, but to do it in an awesome way. Those students were truly inspired, and combined their short essays into a book that commemorates the 100th anniversary of the battle. Their creation is an impressive 75-page travelling history lesson,

presented in both French and English, for the world to read, learn, and understand the Canadian experience at Vimy Ridge.

Congratulations to Mr. Clancy, Ms. Sheppard, and Ms. Morneau, as well as to all of their students, for their awesome work. We are so pleased to celebrate them here in Ottawa today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister displayed a lack of judgment once again last weekend in his remarks following the passing of dictator Fidel Castro. His statement shocked many Canadians.

Now that the Prime Minister has acknowledged that Fidel Castro was a dictator, will he also acknowledge his lapse in judgment?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the vast majority of foreign heads of state did not call Fidel Castro a dictator at that particular moment, even though that is what he was. At the news of Fidel Castro's passing, they chose to try to say something positive about him.

That is what the Prime Minister of Canada did, and that is what the other world leaders did, because the intention was not to revive old antagonisms, but to show support for the people of Cuba and encourage them to look forward and create a better future for their children.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a U.S. senator describes the announcement as shameful and embarrassing, then we must take note.

The Prime Minister acknowledged that Mr. Castro was a dictator. As we say back home, it is time to walk the talk. Now that he has spoken, it is time for action.

Will the Prime Minister edit the comments that appear on his website to reflect what he has now acknowledged?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wants to see democracy in Cuba. The Canadian people want to see democracy in Cuba. Canada has enjoyed 50 years of unbroken relations with Cuba that served both our countries and the rest of the world.

Now is the time to build on all that we accomplished with the Cuban people to help them work toward a more democratic and open society with greater freedoms.

It is up to the Cubans to do that, but Canadians are well placed to help them get there under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

[English]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after initially ignoring the fact, the Prime Minister himself admitted that Fidel Castro was a dictator. However, he failed to mention the abuses of human rights and freedom under Castro in his official statement.

Will he now amend his official statement on the Prime Minister's website to reflect what he has publicly admitted?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in French, and I may also repeat it in Spanish if it is needed, it is very important for Canada to use our relationship with Cuba over the last 50 years to help the people of Cuba now to have a better future for their children, with more freedom, and to set the bar toward democracy. The leadership of the Prime Minister will be key for that.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, in expressing his personal sorrow at the passing of the Cuban Communist dictator, had nothing to say about the Cubans who Castro executed in prison, tortured, and oppressed.

Is that because the Prime Minister and his father never met the victims of Castro's tyranny, or is it because the PM was only wined and dined by Cuba's Communist 1%?

Now that the Prime Minister has had time to reflect on his ill-advanced condolences, will he tell us what he might do to improve the lives of the Castro regime's victims?

• (1420)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what he will not do is create a situation where we internalize even more of the past. We encourage the people of Cuba to unify, all together, and to work hard together to give a better future to their children, with more freedom, and to go step by step toward democracy. The leadership of our Prime Minister will be key for that.

The fact that Canada has had strong links, people to people, with Cuba over the last 50 years, not because we agreed with the regime, but because we wanted to support the people of Cuba, will be an asset.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Members may not have as much respect for members on the other side as they would like, but I know they have respect for this place, and I would like them to show it.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, instead of paying tribute to a dictator, should have offered condolences to the long-suffering, repressed people of Cuba.

The Prime Minister should have spoken of hopes for a better democratic future for the people of Cuba. Instead, the PM not only expressed personal sorrow at Fidel's passing, but described as a real honour his recent meeting with Fidel's successor, the equally ruthless, Raúl.

Why will this naive Prime Minister not address democracy, human rights, and the rule of law?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Fidel Castro passed away, the leaders of the world, with very few exceptions, did not call him a dictator. They said about the same thing as our Prime Minister and Ban Ki-moon: that former president Castro of Cuba made advances in the fields of education, literacy, and health.

The European Union has said, "a man of determination and a historical figure"; the Mexican president has said Fidel Castro was "a friend of Mexico"; Spain, "a figure of enormous historical importance" and "a son of Spaniards"; Britain, "historic if controversial figure—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are really concerned that the Liberals are going to break the promise they made that the 2015 election would be the last to be held under the current, unfair system.

The special all-party committee on electoral reform will present its recommendations in the next few days.

Is the minister renegeing on the Liberals formal promise because the committee does not support the Liberal Party, or simply because the Liberals have rediscovered the beauty of a system that has just given them another false majority?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows just as well as every member of this House that we have been committed to this file since we began our mandate. We gave the majority on the committee to study electoral reform to the opposition. My parliamentary secretary and I have been out there connecting with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and we have been clear from the very beginning that we will not move forward on reform without the broad support of Canadians. I am looking forward to receiving in this House the committee's report, and moving forward then.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report released by StatsCan confirms that sexual misconduct is widespread in our military: 1,000 reports in the last year alone. Eighty per cent of all forces members saw, heard, or personally experienced "inappropriate sexualized behaviour". We are not talking about the 1950s here; we are talking about 2015. This report is only the tip of the iceberg.

[*Translation*]

The government cannot just wash its hands of it and call the situation unfortunate.

What concrete action will be taken to fight sexual assault within our military?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sexual misconduct of any kind is completely unacceptable, and will not be tolerated. Through Operation Honour, the Canadian Armed Forces remains fully committed to eliminating harmful, inappropriate sexual behaviour within its ranks. I sincerely thank the over 43,000 Canadian Armed Forces members who participated in the survey on sexual misconduct. We need to do better, and we will do better.

Oral Questions

•(1425)

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister says she respects the work of the all-party committee. Then we have to wonder why she spent the weekend on television undermining the work of that very same committee.

The Liberals campaigned and were elected on the promise to make 2015 the last election under the unfair first-past-the-post system, but since forming government, this minister has increasingly backed away from this committee. This, when the all-party committee is just days away from issuing its report to all Canadians. Why is the minister undercutting the committee's work? Will she now clearly commit to implementing the recommendations of our committee?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his work on the committee. I am looking forward, in this House, to receiving that report on December 1.

The member asked what I was doing on television over the weekend. We introduced Bill C-33 in this House. We repealed the unfair elements of the Fair Elections Act. We extended voting rights to those Canadians living abroad. That is what I was doing.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating that the minister threw a committee of the House of Commons under the bus while she made these announcements on this bill.

She is supposed to be the minister of democratic reform, not the minister for undermining democratic reform. Perhaps we should remind the minister that her single most important job was to make good on the Liberal promise that 2015 was the last election under first past the post.

The committee has heard from hundreds of experts and thousands of Canadians who have told us overwhelmingly that the current system distorts the democratic will of Canadians. When the committee is working so hard to build a compromise, when so many Canadians are saying yes to reform, why has this minister become the voice of no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Democratic Institutions, I have been committed to this file since I began my mandate. The member knows well that I have a great deal of respect for the work of this committee and for the committee's independence, and that I am looking forward with a lot of eagerness, probably more than any other member in this House, to receiving that report on December 1. We are going to take the time to give that report the respect it deserves and present this House with a thoughtful plan forward.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before this Liberal government came to power, Canada was consistently ranked as one of the least corrupt nations in the world. These cash for access fundraisers are showing a pattern of behaviour that smears our Canadian reputation. From the Prime Minister's secret meeting with Chinese billionaires to the justice minister's

lawyer fundraisers, to the finance minister's dealing with drug companies suing the government, this pattern of behaviour has to stop.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and end these cash for access fundraisers?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows, we have some of the strictest rules around fundraising of any level of government, and our party follows those rules. In fact, the rules clearly state that only Canadians can donate to political parties. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that Canada's political financing laws are the most advanced and constrained and transparent in the world.

In regard to ticketed fundraising events he confirmed that every party and every campaign does them.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, Canadians are perceiving corruption.

International media are now reporting on the Prime Minister's questionable fundraising. *The New York Times* is even reporting about the Prime Minister's questionable shakedowns. They are highlighting the secret fundraisers the Prime Minister had with Communist Chinese officials. They are drawing attention to the payment they gave to the Trudeau Foundation, a foundation controlled by the Prime Minister's family. What is it going to take for the Prime Minister to end his unethical fundraising schemes?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that all members and Canadians note that the Prime Minister has no involvement with the Trudeau Foundation. This is something that has been stated time and time again.

What Canadians elected us to do is to work hard for them, and this government has had unprecedented levels of public consultations to make sure we are responding to the varied challenges facing Canadians. We will continue to do that work. Once again, Canadian fundraising rules are some of the strictest in the world, and we will continue to follow them.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, the Trudeau Foundation relied on donations from Canada. It was 2014 when the foreign money started to flow. In 2015, nearly \$430,000 of foreign donations were given to the foundation. However, the Prime Minister landed a huge donation when his Communist Chinese friends gave \$1 million, including \$50,000 to the building of a statue of his father.

When will the Prime Minister admit that mixing his personal, party, and government business is wrong, and when will he put an end to it?

Oral Questions

●(1430)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member stated, the foundation confirmed that discussions on the donation began in 2014, when Stephen Harper was actually the prime minister.

The foundation is an independent charity that supports research in social sciences and humanities. I would hope that the member opposite supports organizations that promote research.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what did the Liberals learn during their ten years in purgatory? Absolutely nothing.

In 2004, the Gomery Commission shed light on the sponsorship scandal. A few days ago, we learned that Chinese billionaires are donating to the Liberal Party in order to gain privileged access to the Prime Minister and his ministers.

Will there be another inquiry in the wake of these revelations of conflict of interest ?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we find it odd that opposition members are trying to politicize this matter especially when it is a well-known fact that the approval process began in 2012 under the previous government, and that their minister of finance, Joe Oliver, gave final approval in July 2015, before Canadians rejected them.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the waters continue to muddy around the Prime Minister's cash for access schemes. In trying to defend foreign donations to his family-run foundation from Chinese billionaires, the Prime Minister claimed that he had stepped away from all family-related responsibilities after he was elected. However, the facts paint a different picture.

The Prime Minister was elected in 2008, but he continued to help run the foundation until 2014. What is the Prime Minister trying to hide, and why won't he come clean with Canadians about what he promised these Communist officials in exchange for the million dollar payment?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back in this place. I think it is important to note that Canadians have elected us to get some real work done and actually respond to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing.

The member knows very well that when it comes to fundraising, we have some of the strictest rules in the world. In regard to ticketed fundraising events, the Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that every party in every campaign fundraises.

This government has undertaken unprecedented levels of public consultation to make sure that we are responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing. In regard to accepting

donations, the member knows very well that only Canadians can donate.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has stated that Chinese nationals were at the Liberal Party fundraiser so that he could “draw in investment” from these billionaires. He secured some investment all right, \$1 million for his family-run foundation.

Canadians deserve answers. These events break every element of the Prime Minister's ethics rules.

When will the Prime Minister finally come clean with Canadians and admit what he gave in exchange for this \$1-million payment?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to note that Canadians have elected a new government, and this government does things very differently. It almost feels as if the member opposite is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Most members in all parties are able to listen to question period to both sides without reacting. The rest need to do so also. The fairly small number who do not listen should start listening. The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that when it comes to fundraising, we have some of the strictest rules, and this government will continue to follow the rules.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new Statistics Canada survey released today shows that one in four women in the Canadian Forces has been sexually assaulted at least once in her career.

In fact, the rate of sexual assault in the Canadian Forces is double that in the general population, and often these women are assaulted by a superior. That is unacceptable.

What does the government plan to do about this crisis?

●(1435)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is sobering and disappointing to know that members continue to be victimized and feel threatened in their work environment, but these survey results are critical for all of us in understanding the true scope and nature of the institution's problems.

The findings will assist the Canadian Armed Forces to focus our efforts in the areas of greatest concern. Every man and woman willing to serve their country despite many dangers and sacrifices in our military service deserves a professional environment in which they are treated with respect and dignity.

As I stated, we do need to do better.

Oral Questions

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, very clearly, better indeed. The StatsCan report is deeply troubling and confirms that sexual misconduct is still rampant in our military, and it only considers members currently serving. It does not include the young women who are most vulnerable, those in the cadets, boot camp, or on course, nor does it include the women and men who have left due to military sexual trauma.

We need a clear plan of action. When will the minister implement a strategy to fight against sexual misconduct in our military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Vance, the chief of the defence staff, has launched a plan. It is called “Operation Honour”, and this survey was part of that plan to get the full extent of the situation.

Now this provides the necessary information to continue to evolve the plan, moving forward. As I stated, this type of behaviour is completely unacceptable and we will root it out.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 100,000 out-of-work energy workers need the government to stop dithering and delaying on getting pipelines built. It has been almost five months since a Federal Court ruling on northern gateway. It has been six months since the NEB approved the Trans Mountain expansion and seven months since it approved the Line 3 replacement program.

Even if the Liberals finally approved these pipelines, and we hope they will, it does not help energy workers unless they get built.

Will the Liberals commit today to do everything in their power to ensure that any pipelines that they actually approve will actually get built?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did commit to the people of Canada that all of those projects that were under review would be subject to interim principles and timetables and deadlines.

From January 27, we have been respectful of all of those deadlines and all of those timetables, as we will continue to be.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indigenous support for the northern gateway continues to grow, but the Liberal government has thrown up its hands and walked from the table.

I would like to quote from the 31 first nations that are equity partners. They said:

[This] project is a new way of doing business and sets a precedent for collaborative partnerships between First Nations and Métis communities and the resource industry.

Our ownership...will ensure a sustainable, prosperous future for generations to come.

Is the minister going to betray these first nations that have negotiated in good faith?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been engaged in meaningful consultation with indigenous people on all of the major energy projects that are currently under review. Unfortunately, the former government was

insufficient in its consultation with the very people that the member just referenced, so much so that the Federal Court of Appeal quashed the application.

Therefore, we are responsible for a new and more meaningful way of discussing these projects with indigenous people, and we will be loyal to the timetables that we have announced.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last March at his family reunion in Washington, the Prime Minister claimed to have an easy fix for the softwood lumber file. He said that in the new era of co-operation with President Obama, all would be settled in a mere 100 days. Well, some 200 days later, I guess those files did not fix themselves.

After years of agreement and stability, when can Canadian forestry workers expect the Liberals to get serious about this serious issue?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the previous Conservative government that allowed the agreement to expire and did absolutely nothing to initiate negotiations.

Canada is prepared for any situation, and we will vigorously defend the interests of Canadian workers and producers. International courts have always ruled in our favour in the past, and we are confident that they will continue to do so. Meanwhile, I am continuing negotiations with Ambassador Mike Froman, whom I will meet in Geneva over the weekend.

However, we are seeking a good deal for Canada, not just any deal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number 390 must mean something to the minister. Three hundred and ninety is the number of days she had to prevent the trade war with the United States. It is also the number of days that the government utterly failed in accomplishing that. The Prime Minister's judgment and seduction strategy are not doing Canadians any good when it comes to international relations.

This week, some Conservative members will be going to Washington to make the voices of forestry workers heard. What is the minister waiting for? Why does she not pack her bags, go to Washington, and come back with a deal?

● (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Ambassador Mike Froman will not be in Washington. He will be in Geneva, and I will be there too this weekend to continue the negotiations.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

We are standing up for the interests of our industry. Last week, André Tremblay, the president and CEO of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, said that our government was doing “excellent work”. We are seeking a good deal for Canada, not just any deal.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, in a fit of candour, the Minister of Finance finally admitted what we have been saying all along: the infrastructure bank will not benefit small municipalities. He said that the private sector will be more interested in investing in major transformational projects with high rates of return.

[*English*]

It is no wonder that Michael Sabia is openly talking about a return of 7% to 9%.

Why would Liberals take \$15 billion that would have been accessible to places like Valleyfield or Nanaimo to redirect them into projects that will be tailor-made for Montreal or Vancouver?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, out of 980 projects that we have approved so far, more than 600 projects are in smaller communities throughout the country. Some of those, there are water and waste water upgrades in Red Deer; upgrades to the Saskatchewan Landing water facilities; waste water upgrades in Selkirk and Gimli, Manitoba; water treatment plant upgrades in the town of Deseronto, Ontario; sewage plant upgrades in West Lorne, Ontario; hard surfacing of Trans-Labrador Highway—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

* * *

[*Translation*]**NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party promised to make environmental assessments robust and credible again. Now, apparently, the acting chair of the National Energy Board, the NEB, who was appointed by Mr. Harper and is supportive of Kinder Morgan, will appoint the members of the committee responsible for assessing energy east. In short, nothing has changed, and the NEB's environmental assessments are no more credible than before.

When will the government implement an assessment process that Canadians can trust?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Canadians want an environmental assessment process that they trust. That is why the government has established a country-wide survey of Canadians on the Environmental Assessment Act, on the Fisheries Act, on the Navigable Waters Act, and on the National Energy Board. All of those results will come back to the government in late March and we will have a long-range plan of environmental assessment.

I hope the member is not suggesting the government should tell the National Energy Board chair who should sit on what panels.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day the devoted team at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, one of six national museums, brings life to the story of over one million immigrants who landed at the Port of Halifax between 1928 and 1971.

Over the next 12 months, many positions will become available on the boards of all six of our national museums. Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us how she plans to fill these positions?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's museums are spaces of exchange, creation, and discovery. I was proud to launch a new process for the 45 positions available on the boards of our six national museums.

[*Translation*]

The government has adopted a much more open, transparent, and merit-based approach. I invite all Canadians who love history, science, or the arts to contribute that passion to our national museums.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just learned that a Canadian Forces CF-18 plane crashed at 11:09 this morning, in the Cold Lake area, in Alberta.

I wonder whether the minister has any information he can share with us on the situation and the pilot's condition.

● (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I can confirm that one CF-18 has crashed near Cold Lake. Search and rescue has been dispatched and is on station. I will have more information as it comes in.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that a CF-18 fighter jet crashed at CFB Cold Lake. Our thoughts and our prayers are with the pilot, the families, and indeed with everyone in Cold Lake and in the armed forces throughout Canada.

Could the Minister of National Defence update the House as to the status of this terrible accident?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regrettably, the situation is ongoing. I have been receiving reports while I have been sitting here. When I have more information, I will update Canadians and the House when I can.

Our hearts and prayers are with the families. Search and rescue is on station at this moment.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has been to Africa twice looking for a peacekeeping mission. The Prime Minister is on his way back.

Will we get any details about the peacekeeping mission before Christmas? Will we have a debate and a vote on this dangerous mission?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we are committed to peace operations. We are getting all the necessary information and working within the whole of government aspect with my colleagues. The goal is to have this information before the new year. I look forward to sharing all this information with the House and Canadians as well.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is dangerously naive about world affairs. He admires a brutal communist dictatorship, which raises doubts about how he views other global threats and how to address them.

Our security is too important to be left to the Prime Minister's risky ideological whims. Our troops are in Iraq and will certainly be in Mali fighting jihadi terrorists, but the government will not call it a combat mission.

How can the Liberals put our troops in harm's way when their ideology is based on making sure the worst regimes in the world feel comfortable at dinner with Canadian diplomats?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that Canada is doing around the world, especially when it comes to our Canadian Armed Forces. Whether it is currently in Iraq or an upcoming mission in NATO, and the peace operation that we will be conducting as well, we know the risks. We will make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces have the right tools and the right training to fulfill those missions.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Victoria, people are dying from drug overdoses in record numbers. Last week, we lost five people in 72 hours. Since January, we have lost 56 in Victoria and 622 across B.C.

The government has done nothing to change a Conservative law that makes it extremely difficult to open safe injection sites. Vancouver Mayor Robertson has called on the government to speed up the application process.

Will the minister move immediately to expedite these applications and declare the opioid crisis a national health emergency?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of the member for Victoria for this very serious problem. Members need to know that six or seven people die every

day in our country as a result of opioid overdose. That is simply unacceptable. I share the member's grief and his passion.

I work on this file every day. I have already enumerated many of the actions that we have taken. We will take steps to make sure that safe, supervised consumption sites are available in the country. Every step that we can take will be done in collaboration with our partners.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative has been vital for building capacity of first nations fisheries. Yet every year first nations communities are unsure of the continuation of this program. It generates good jobs in our communities that are desperately needed, while fostering environmental sustainability. The facts are clear.

When will the Minister of Fisheries finally listen to first nations and commit to long-term renewal and expansion of the Pacific integrated commercial fisheries initiative?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share our colleague's support for this important program. It has allowed successive governments to build capacity in indigenous communities in a way that offers them commercial opportunities and economic development opportunities, while respecting traditional local knowledge and science-based management. I share her enthusiasm for the program.

I am confident that the government's commitment to working with indigenous communities will allow us to be in a position to continue to make these investments. I look forward to working with her in that regard.

* * *

● (1450)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past week the world's longest ruling tyrant died. Canadians were appalled to hear the Prime Minister state, "It is with deep sorrow that I learned today of the death of Cuba's longest serving President." He was Cuba's longest serving president because he persecuted, oppressed, and killed those who opposed him. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs should have condemned his legacy rather than mourning their loss.

How could the Liberals celebrate such a vicious reality?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to repeat again that most leaders around the world said about the same thing our Prime Minister said. At a time when the people of Cuba will be able to transition, we hope, to more freedom and democracy. We need to support them and to encourage them not to agonize about the past but to unify together to give their children a better future. They can count on Canada for that.

We have had a 50-year unbroken relationship with Cuba. We have a Prime Minister who has strong links with Cuba and who will help those people.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my family fled the communist regime in Poland, so I know a bit about communist repression.

After decades of brutal repression in Cuba, this past weekend was a time when Cubans could finally dream of freedom. Under Castro's rule, Cubans who opposed him faced torture, imprisonment, forced exile, or death by firing squad.

Why would the Prime Minister choose to celebrate Fidel Castro when he should be looking at ways to empower the Cuban people?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is precisely in order to help the people of Cuba to be united instead of agonizing about the past that we need to encourage them to do the reforms that will bring them more freedom and move them toward democracy. The fact that Canada strongly supported the people of Cuba over the last 50 years, under both Conservative and Liberal governments, will be an asset. We have work to do. I suggest that everyone practice his or her Spanish.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want a better future for the Cuban people and the way we remember the past shapes the future.

The Liberals are cozying up to dictators the world over, in Cuba, China, Iran, Belarus, and Russia, and ignoring questions of fundamental justice, freedom of the press, and every type of minority rights. The Liberals' campaign for the UN Security Council seat seems to involve ignoring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

When will the Prime Minister stand, apologize to the victims of this brutal regime, and finally express his solidarity with the Cuban people?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Cuban people have different views about that. The only way to help them to move on in order to have an improved society with freedom and democracy is not to antagonize about the facts, as my colleagues want to do, but to focus on the future together, Canadians united with the people of Cuba, to support them all the way. We will do it under the leadership of our Prime Minister.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's diversity is a source of strength and pride. Sadly, minority

communities are sometimes targeted for attack, including recent incidents in Toronto, Ottawa, and Regina.

Groups like the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs have been calling for improved support to help at-risk communities protect their institutions.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please tell us what the government is doing to ensure the safety of minority communities and to help us protect our schools, community centres, and houses of worship?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the representations made by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and others. There is no place in Canada for racist and hateful conduct like we have seen, sadly, in recent weeks.

This morning, I announced a stronger security infrastructure program, which funds up to half of the cost of security projects for non-profit community institutions. The program is now more accessible and broader in scope to help protect Canada's diverse communities. An attack on any one of them is an attack on all of us.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently a number of surviving thalidomide victims were here in Ottawa pleading to be included in the government's compensation package. The minister says that cases are being reviewed, but these folks are being denied.

Will the minister do the right thing and tell Crawford's Class Action Services to conduct a professional, in-person examination of these claimants, as was carried out in a previous compensation package?

• (1455)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, our hearts go out to thalidomide survivors, and we are deeply committed to offering support to them to live the rest of their lives in dignity.

There is no definitive medical test for thalidomide, so an objective review process has been used to assess the eligibility of individuals. Based on this process, I am pleased that dozens of new individuals have been added to the program, bringing the total to 122. Additional new survivors may still be identified, as I am pleased to say that there are still applications under review.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past two decades, Canada has lost and continues to lose auto jobs to China, Mexico, and Japan.

Oral Questions

Despite solidarity between the manufacturers, the unions, and the chambers of commerce, who all agree that Canada needs a national auto policy, this minister is still a holdout.

The workers have done their job by creating a billion dollars worth of opportunity for investment in jobs and productivity in this country, but the Ontario Liberal minister believes we do not need a strategy, and the federal Liberal minister is just indulging him.

When will the minister put aside partisan interests and instead be truly innovative and side with Canadians, not his Liberal cousins?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are taking action on this very important file. I remind the member opposite that we extended the automotive innovation fund, a fund that is working with the auto sector and labour movement to make sure we bring investments into Canada. We have also made additional investments in the automotive supplier innovation program, which is helping our small supplier base become more innovative and connected to global supply chains.

The bottom line is that we understand the importance of the automotive sector. It creates direct and indirect jobs for 500,000 people across the country. We are going to continue to make investments to provide growth in this particular sector. We are taking action, and that is what matters.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development recently visited India to promote Canada's innovation agenda.

As the vice-chair of the Canada-India Parliamentary Friendship Group and someone who takes a great interest in this relationship, can the minister please highlight some of the key accomplishments of his trip to India?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year Canada's trade with India grew to \$8.1 billion, a 30% year-over-year increase. That is why I had the opportunity to travel to India to strengthen this very important relationship, along with my colleague, the Minister of Immigration.

Together, we signed an action plan between Canada and Maharashtra on urban infrastructure development. We announced 10 new projects, funded through IC-Impacts, a partnership aimed at building sustainable communities and smart cities.

The bottom line is that we want to help Canadian companies enter the Indian market to create good-quality, middle-class Canadian jobs.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has given away billions outside of Canada to secure a UN Security Council seat. The Prime Minister is spending in other countries around the world and forgetting about those in need here in Canada.

Six hundred thousand seniors live below the poverty line in Canada, and hydro prices in Ontario take more out of their wallets each month. They have no representation around the cabinet table to fight for them to live comfortably.

When will the Liberals stop giving away money to buy a Security Council seat on the backs of today's seniors and vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity stand in this House to remind all members how important the welfare and well-being of seniors has been to this government in the last year.

We have increased the guaranteed income supplement by almost \$1,000, taking 13,000 seniors out of poverty. We have brought back the age of eligibility for old age security to 65 years old, which means that 100,000 seniors will avoid falling into severe poverty. We have enhanced the CPP, meaning that over the next few years, 300,000 seniors will be lifted out income insecurity.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2014, the Supreme Court confirmed the banks' obligation to comply with Quebec's Consumer Protection Act.

What is the Liberal government doing? It is rewriting the law to get around the Supreme Court decision and reduce the banks' obligations to Quebecers. This attack on Quebec society takes away people's right to challenge the big banks' abusive practices.

When are the 40 Liberal members from Quebec going to stand up and stop being accomplices in this money grab?

● (1500)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to be very clear. We want to protect Canadian consumers all across the country. These changes will not add anything. The federal legislation will continue to protect Canadian consumers across the country.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is the banks' lackey. He is behaving like a lobbyist and Canadians are going to pay for it.

First it was securities, and now the federal government is taking aim at the Consumer Protection Act. While Quebec is working on modernizing the law, the government is setting it back about 50 years. It is a nasty boon to the banks, which will increase their obscene profits by taking money straight out of the pockets of Quebec families.

Who is drafting the government's bills? Is it the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Royal Bank, the CIBC, or the Toronto Dominion Bank?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to protect Canadian consumers across the country. That is why our regulations will be clear. Canadian consumers are protected. There have been no changes to our regulations.

* * *

POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, who attends Liberal cocktail parties at \$1,500 a head with the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister? The financial elite, bankers, developers, and the Canadian establishment, that is who, and it smacks of undue influence.

The Liberals have starred in this movie before, where public interest plays second fiddle to big Liberal donors.

Will the Prime Minister, a self-declared champion of democracy, put some order into political party financing by restoring public funding and lowering donation ceilings, like Quebec did?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows full well, the rules governing fundraising are among the strictest in the country and our party is following the rules.

The rules say that only Canadians can make donations. The Chief Electoral Officer said that Canada's election financing laws are among the most advanced, transparent, and constraining in the world. We will continue to follow the rules.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2016 Governor General's History Awards: Rita Gravina; Catherine Pfaff; Geneviève Marois; Elizabeth Freeman-Shaw; Sarah Murdoch; Holly Richard; Brian Clancy; Lisa Sheppard; Adam Pounder; Lori Buchanan; Robert C.H. Sweeny; Laura Schneider; Kris Folds; Merna Forster; and Kirsten Riebot.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that Thursday, December 1, will be an allotted day.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act and other Acts.

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

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

[Translation]

I also have the honour to table, in both official languages, the second report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

[English]

LIAISON COMMITTEE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Liaison Committee entitled, "Committee Activities and Expenditures April 1, 2016 - August 31, 2016". This report highlights the work and accomplishments of each committee, as well as detailing the budgets that fund the activities approved by the committee members.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study on Poverty Reduction Strategies, six members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel to Kuujuaq, Quebec, Saint John, New Brunswick, Toronto, Ontario, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Medicine Hat, Alberta, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in the Winter of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motion. I move:

Routine Proceedings

That, in relation to its study on Canada and the Defence of North America, ten members of the Standing Committee on National Defence be authorized to travel to Washington, D.C., United States of America, in the Winter and Spring of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study of The Situation in Eastern Europe and Centra Asia 25 Years after the End of the Cold War, seven members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development be authorized to travel to Kiev, Ukraine, Astana, Kazakhstan, Riga, Latvia, and Warsaw, Poland, in the Winter and Spring of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study of Canada's global engagement on human rights issues, seven members of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development be authorized to travel to Washington, D.C., United States of America, in the Winter and Spring of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following travel motion. I move:

That, in relation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference on the Rule of Law and Human Rights, three members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights be authorized to travel to London, United Kingdom, in the Winter of 2017, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1510)

FINANCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have discussions among the parties, and if you seek it I believe you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 5 to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Finance be deemed to have taken place and that the motion be deemed carried on division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to on division.)

* * *

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by Canadians calling on Parliament to develop a national strategy for seniors. These petitioners realize that the percentage of Canadian population who are seniors is rising and that Parliament needs to act to address this changing demographic.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONFEDERATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of representatives from my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, particularly veterans from the Orangeville Legion, who are concerned with the plans for the 150th anniversary of Confederation, which is approaching next year. They point out that medals have been issued previously, in 1867, 1927, 1967, 1992, and awarded to deserving Canadians to commemorate Confederation and the 60th, 100th, and 125th anniversaries of Confederation.

These petitioners, who are citizens of Canada, are calling on the Government of Canada to issue a commemorative medal as part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

FISHERIES

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition for my home province of British Columbia. Petitioners are calling on the government to help save wild salmon by supporting my bill, Bill C-228, which transitions harmful open net salmon farms in British Columbia to safe, reliable, closed-containment systems.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present petitions today, again from residents of my home province of British Columbia. Petitioners are opposed to Kinder Morgan's new bitumen-based, export only, crude oil pipeline which will run from Edmonton to Burnaby. Among other things, they are concerned about the damage the pipeline will cause to our environment.

Although the rules of the House do not allow me to endorse a petition, I am happy to table it today, and I urge the government to listen to these petitioners before it makes a final decision.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions from folks who are very concerned with the physician-assisted suicide legislation that was recently passed. Petitioners asks that the Parliament of Canada enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care institutions from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for physician-assisted suicide.

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise once again in the House today to table a petition signed by many Canadians who support Bill C-245, so that we can immediately implement a poverty reduction strategy.

I have collected so many signatures from people across Canada because Canadians can see just by looking around them that 1.3 million children in this country are living in poverty, that one in eight families need the help of a food bank to put food on the table each month, and that 35,000 Canadians are homeless.

I think that, when they go back to their ridings, all MPs in the House will see just how many people are living in poverty.

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to deliver two petitions in opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. They have been signed by constituents of Courtenay—Alberni, coastal British Columbia, and people from coast to coast.

Petitioners point out that Kinder Morgan is planning to build a new heavy oil pipeline from Alberta to Burnaby, tripling the capacity of the Trans Mountain pipeline to 890,000 barrels a day. The pipeline brings massive environmental and economic risk, but no substantial benefit to British Columbia, the City of Burnaby, or local residents. Petitioners are therefore calling on the Government of

Government Orders

Canada to immediately act to prevent this new oil pipeline from proceeding through Burnaby.

• (1515)

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions.

The first petition pertains to a critical issue of human rights globally, and that is the treatment of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong practitioners within the People's Republic of China. The petition is signed by numerous petitioners from British Columbia, from Vancouver as well as Burnaby and Nanaimo, so Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. The petitioners are concerned for human rights, and that the government and this Parliament take action to defend practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong.

HOUSING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is primarily from residents within Saanich—Gulf Islands: from Mayne Island, Saanich, Sydney, Salt Spring.

The petitioners are calling for the government to follow the advice of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and urgently move to an affordable housing strategy. I note that there is work in this area now, but these petitioners want to see the affordable housing strategy put in place.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health has six minutes remaining in her speech.

Government Orders

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to continue my speech on an extremely important piece of legislation.

As I was saying, last week, one of my constituents said to me, “If it is this difficult now, what will I do when I retire and need to live on a fixed income? What will our grandchildren do, and how will they support themselves in their retirement?”

This is a real and growing concern for middle-class Canadians. The cost of living in Canada is rising. The cost of food is increasing, particularly healthy foods. The cost of leasing an apartment is rising. Transportation costs are going up. These trends are expected to continue, and these trends will increasingly burden Canadian families in their retirement years.

As a result of technological advancements, Canadians are living longer and healthier lives. In 1971, a 65-year-old Canadian was expected to live to the age of 79. Today, the expectation has risen to the age 87. The numbers continue to improve, continue to rise. However, this also increases the risk that Canadians will outlive their savings.

Today, 1.1 million Canadian families with major income earners approaching retirement are at risk of not having enough saved for their retirement. This is about a quarter of families approaching retirement. We need to take action to help ensure that this trend does not continue.

Fewer Canadians have access to a workplace pension plan, and even fewer have access to a defined benefit workplace pension plan. In 1981, about 34% of private sector employees had workplace pension plans. Today, this figure is close to 24% and continues to drop.

After working hard for 40 or more years over their lifetimes, Canadians deserve better. A stronger Canada pension plan is a critical priority for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. Our government has developed a responsible, long-term solution to address this issue. The enhancements to the Canada pension plan proposed in Bill C-26 will provide real and meaningful change for all Canadians.

Enhancing the Canada pension plan will give Canadians a larger public pension, helping them retire with dignity. I am proud of our government's hon. Minister of Finance, and all of the Canadian provincial finance ministers, for prioritizing an enhancement to the Canada pension plan, and for reaching a bold and historic agreement to deliver for the benefit of each and every Canadian.

Working Canadians currently receive a pension that is one-quarter of their eligible earnings. This figure could increase to one-third of eligible earnings under the proposed plan. This is a meaningful and significant change. To ensure that our most vulnerable Canadians are not held back by the changes, the working income tax benefit will be increased. The increase in the working income tax benefit will roughly offset the incremental Canada pension plan contribution for low-income workers. Only the contributors who make additional contributions will be able to receive the benefits of the enhancement.

This important feature of our nation's pension plan legislation would ensure that each generation pays for its own benefits and that

our Canadian pension plan remains financially sustainable. If the enhanced Canadian pension plan had been implemented in the past, instead of the 24% of families who are approaching retirement being at risk of not having adequate retirement savings, that number would be closer to 18%. This represents a life-changing difference for many hard-working middle-class families who will likely struggle to maintain their standard of living through retirement under the current system.

The proposal would make a meaningful impact for all Canadians. This means more money to put toward living expenses for retirees, more money to put toward housing, more money to put toward food or health services such as prescription drugs, and the list goes on.

Ensuring that Canadians have more money in their pockets at retirement through the proposed Canada pension plan changes would stimulate our economy in perpetuity, creating long-term growth. Canadians have given our government a clear mandate to ensure that all workers have a minimum level of financial security as they retire.

● (1520)

All Canadians deserve to retire with dignity and to have the opportunity to maintain their standard of living in their retirement years. It is our responsibility to support legislation that would have such a meaningful impact on the day-to-day lives of Canadians in their retirement years.

On behalf of the residents of Brampton West, I proudly support the proposed enhancements to the Canada pension plan, and I encourage all parliamentarians to vote in favour of Bill C-26.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two specific questions for the member about this proposed pension change.

First, the government cut back on tax-free savings accounts. It is concerned about people being able to save for retirement. Why not let people save for their own retirement?

Second, the government speaks, often, about concern for current seniors. It should be frank about the fact that this program is not aimed at current seniors at all. There could be a variety of mechanisms, such as cutting taxes for seniors and cutting taxes across the board, but especially for vulnerable seniors, that would actually help seniors who need the help right now.

Why is the government increasing taxes, which reduces the capacity to save, in a way that does not actually help our current seniors at all but adds an additional burden for our businesses in the present time. Why is the government proceeding in that direction, when it has much better, more effective alternatives available?

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to see reforms to the Canada pension plan. Canadians want and deserve the opportunity to retire with dignity.

Government Orders

Our government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has illustrated our unwavering commitment to assisting senior citizens. Our government has increased guaranteed income supplement payments for single seniors. Our government has rolled back changes to old age security, reducing the eligibility age back to 65 from 67. Our government has invested in affordable housing infrastructure.

This legislation governing the Canada pension plan requires that individuals who make additional contributions receive the increase in benefits associated with higher contributions. This reform was established in the 1990s to ensure that the Canada pension plan remains fully funded and financially sustainable.

Canadians are asking for a more secure retirement, and our government plans to do just that.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier the member mentioned what a great result it is for people in the middle class with the income tax breaks, but they do not include people who make \$44,000 or less with no children or their families.

She mentioned how important this bill is for the middle class looking for long-term solutions, but apparently, it eliminates people raising children and people living with disabilities. What is the long-term solution for them going forward?

• (1525)

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-26 would benefit all Canadians. Canadians deserve a strong, safe, and secure retirement. Our government has demonstrated and illustrated an unwavering commitment to creating equality and opportunity for women and persons with disabilities. We are aware that more could be done with respect to the drop-out provisions for disability and child rearing to make sure that this expansion is as inclusive as possible.

However, as my colleague also knows, to make any changes to the plan, we need agreement with the provinces. The Minister of Finance will raise the drop-out provisions at the next provincial and territorial finance ministers meeting in December in the context of the triennial review of the Canada pension plan.

Canadians are asking for a secure retirement, and our government is committed to delivering on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, the parliamentary secretary did not answer the simple question I asked, so I will ask it again and hope she answers.

The OAS and the CPP changes the government talks about do not help current seniors. What she is talking about imposes costs on current businesses and on the current economy. We know that businesses are going to suffer. Some businesses are going to close as a result of this. However, it provides absolutely no relief or benefit for current seniors.

Why is the government not contemplating proposals that actually provide benefits for current seniors and strengthen our economy for the future? Why is it not looking at some of these more effective alternatives that empower the private sector rather than going in the direction it is going?

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, as I said, a stronger national pension plan will make our economy and Canadian businesses more sustainable.

Our government has made a strong commitment to helping small and medium-sized businesses innovate and grow. Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy.

As Canadians retire with their enhanced Canada pension plan, they will have more money in their pockets to spend. They will purchase goods and services from businesses and in turn stimulate our economy. This is the long-term vision we are looking at. We will continue to deliver on the commitment we made.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to speak once again to Bill C-26, which seeks to expand the Canada pension plan.

We have always known that the Liberals do not listen to anyone except their cronies. Although they like to stand up and tell us that they are defending the middle class, I have my doubts. In fact, the more they talk about defending the middle class, the more they raise taxes, and the more money they take from taxpayers' pockets, which does not help the middle class.

Every time the Liberals introduce a new bill, we can expect taxpayers to be forced to fork out more for a new tax. We all pay taxes. The government is taking even more money out of taxpayers' pockets.

The Liberal mindset is this: I am, I demand, and I think for Canadians. We on this side of the House believe in Canadians and the middle class. We believe that taxpayers need their money. We know perfectly well that Canadians, not the government, are in the best position to manage their own money.

If the Liberals had listened to what anyone other than their cronies had to say, they would realize that not everyone agrees with them.

I have some quotations from certain people to share. On May 31, 2016, the senior director of economic, financial and tax policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said:

...we're worried a big tax increase is headed for the middle class like an elbow to the chest...This comes at the worst possible time—an economy reeling from weak commodity prices and slower consumer spending will be lucky to eke out growth of 1.5% next year. It's difficult to stimulate the economy while pulling money out of the pockets of Canadians.

On June 20, 2016, the president and CEO of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said:

It is tremendously disappointing to see that finance ministers are putting Canadian wages, hours and jobs in jeopardy and willfully moving to make an already shaky economy even worse.... It appears that jobs and the economy are not particularly high priorities for the governments that have signed off on this deal.

Government Orders

We have been talking about seniors a lot. The basic principle is not a bad one, but seniors who are 70 years old now will not need help in 40 years. They need help right now. Seniors who are 70 now will never get this help because it will not be available for another 40 years. The Liberal government is bringing in a law that will not take effect until 2019, which is so interesting because that is when the next election happens. That is a very Liberal way of doing things. The Liberals never really cared about the middle class. They cared, as always, about themselves.

It is one thing to hold \$1,500 fundraising cocktails and invite a bunch of millionaires, but the middle class is having a hard time making ends meet. The economy is faltering. All of those grand Liberal principles are just a smokescreen. The Liberals talk about giving this to people, and they think we are not politically savvy enough to see through their little game. If changes are to be made, it should not take 40 years.

● (1530)

It is good to think about the long term, but we also need to think about our seniors who need help now, not 40 years from now.

That is why I will be voting against this bill. It is full of holes. It is not what the Liberals say that worries me. It is what they never tell the public. They give nice speeches and make headlines, but what scares me the most is what the Liberals are not saying.

Middle-class families are being taxed to death and are struggling to make ends meet. Many of them will now have a harder time. For example, it will now be even more difficult for new graduates to pay back their student loans or buy their first home. The Liberals did away with the old rules, and now young families will be unable to buy their first home. It will also be more difficult for companies to create jobs and increase wages.

Every time I hear the Liberals talking about their plans, I worry about what they are not saying because that is what is dangerous. No one is against virtue, but the bill before us says in black and white that it will take 40 years for the system to work properly. Not even I will see that money, and I am in my early 50s. In 40 years, I will probably be too old to remember that the Liberals implemented this measure. Our seniors need help today, not in 40 years.

What is more, the same question keeps coming up: where are the Liberals going to find this money? The Liberals are giving out money hand over fist to everyone right now. However, as far as I know, money does not grow on trees. Everyone dreams of a better future, a better life, and a better situation, but that takes money. It is not always pleasant to live on credit. As taxpayers, if we were to live on credit, the bank would not hesitate to come and take our money and our assets when the bill comes due.

I would therefore like someone to explain to me what the Liberals do not understand. We will not vote for this bill as long as it does not produce an immediate effect. The effects of this bill will not be felt for a very long time. However, our seniors need help now, not 40 years from now.

● (1535)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important every so often to reinforce what we are actually debating here. This is a historic agreement.

For many years I sat on the opposition benches hoping that some day, Stephen Harper and the then Conservative government would do something with regard to the CPP. We finally have strong national leadership and have actually seen provinces of all political stripes, meaning NDP, Conservative, and Liberal, come to the table. We have an agreement with those provinces and territories. That is what we are debating today. It is about the future of pensions for today's workers.

Only the Conservatives have determined that this is a bad piece of legislation. Why does the Conservative Party believe that everyone else is wrong and that it is the Conservatives who are right? I would suggest that the Conservatives have lost touch with reality and with Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I will be honest, this is not only about the Conservatives.

The hon. member might be under the impression here in the House that it is just the Conservatives who are against this bill. However, when we go around some of the poorer ridings, we see that people do not understand what the Liberal government is trying to accomplish with this because the money is needed now, not 40 years from now.

I am glad to know that my colleague across the way would have liked the Conservatives to do something. Unlike the hon. member, we think that makes a lot of sense. The Liberals do not believe in Canadians, but I do. I believe that Canadians are the only ones who can say what they want to do with their money, but the Liberals do not believe that because they always think they are above everyone else.

As the saying goes, when the Liberals stand up, the good Lord rests. I am sorry, but when the Liberals stand up, I sit down because I do not believe a word they say.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Like her, I believe that the government could be helping seniors who are retired now. Among all seniors, 30% of women who currently live alone live in poverty. That number has tripled over the past 20 years.

Could my colleague elaborate specifically on the situation of retired women living in poverty and how this bill is only going to make matters worse for them?

● (1540)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Indeed, I could speak at length about women living in poverty because I was poor at one point.

Government Orders

This bill brings into focus the situation of a segment of the population that is already struggling. The bill never refers to these people and that bothers me. We have heard some fine speeches. However, as I already said, will repeat, and will continue to say, it is what the Liberals have left unsaid that frightens me.

They never once mention women living in poverty or single women with children who struggle day after day. I know what that means because I struggled my entire life. I was a single parent when I was 28 years old and now I am a member of Parliament.

I am so proud to stand with the Conservatives for the simple reason that I have come to understand something: when you struggle in life, you end up succeeding; but if you rely on promises that are not kept, like those of the Liberals, you can go on being poor for a long time, because those promises are just empty words.

[English]

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to express my support for Bill C-26. I am speaking today because I believe Bill C-26 will benefit my constituents in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

As members know, a strong Canada pension plan was a core element of our government's bold plan to put people first and to help the middle class, because we understand that a strong economy starts with a strong middle class. That is precisely what we are doing by enhancing the Canada pension plan.

Middle-class Canadians in my riding are working harder than ever, and many are worried that they will not have set enough money aside for their retirement. The Department of Finance has examined whether families nearing retirement are adequately prepared for retirement. About one in four Canadian families approaching retirement, or about 1.1 million families, are at risk of not saving enough to maintain their current standard of living.

The risk is highest for middle-class families, families without workplace pension plans are at even greater risk of under-saving for retirement. A third of these families are at risk.

I spoke with many seniors in my riding during the last election who were concerned that they will not be able to afford basic costs before they receive their next guaranteed income supplement cheque. Our government has to address this by substantially increasing the GIS, and also honouring our campaign commitment to lower the age of retirement from 67 to 65.

However, they were more concerned about their families' futures. They wanted to know their grandchildren would have the same security going through life that they had. Hearing that on the doorsteps from residents of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is why I support Bill C-26.

Younger Canadians across the country and in my riding, who tend to have higher debts than the previous generation and in most cases will live longer than the previous generations, face the challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at the time when fewer can expect to work in the jobs that will include a workplace pension plan.

We are aware of the need to help Canadians save more. Saving more will mean they are more confident about their future and about their ability to secure a dignified retirement.

I am proud to be able to say that we are delivering on our commitment to do just that. Working in close collaboration towards a common purpose with governments across Canada, we reached an agreement that will give Canadians a more generous public pension to help them retire with dignity. The goal of a stronger CPP is truly a high priority, which is shared by Canadians from coast to coast to coast, with 75% in favour of a strong public pension plan.

The challenge that government faced in drafting an enhanced CPP was that the current plan was not accumulating benefits quickly enough to meet the future needs of Canadians in the world where workplace pension coverage continues to decline.

The enhancement that the Canadian government agreed on would do two things to address this. First, it would boost the share of annual earnings received during retirement from one quarter to one third. For example, an individual making \$50,000 a year in today's dollars over his or her working life would receive about \$16,000 per year in retirement instead of the roughly \$12,000 they receive today.

Second, the enhancement would increase, by 14%, the maximum income range covered by CPP. This means, once fully in place, the enhanced CPP would increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by 50%.

● (1545)

In other words, the current maximum benefit of \$13,110 in today's dollar terms would increase by nearly \$7,000 under the enhanced CPP, bringing the maximum benefit up to almost \$20,000.

The legislation also includes enrichment to the CPP disability and survivor benefits. For most Canadians these increased benefits would come from just a 1% increase in contribution rates. This enhancement is set to help young Canadians just entering the workforce the most. They would see the largest increase in benefits. This means that young people throughout my riding and across Canada would have a Canadian pension plan that fills the gap for those who do not have a workplace pension plan.

Having grandchildren myself, this is important for me, knowing that young people today will have a CPP that ensures their security when they grow older and eventually retire. We are also making sure to give individuals and their employers plenty of time to adjust to this modest increase, making sure it is small and gradual starting in 2019.

Today's legislation as agreed upon with the provinces and territories would ensure that low-income Canadians are not financially burdened as a result of their extra contributions. It would do this by enhancing the working income tax benefit to roughly offset incremental CPP contributions, leaving eligible low-income Canadians with little to no change in disposable income, while still securing a higher retirement income for them.

Government Orders

The enhanced CPP would simply build on the core existing CPP benefits, in a smart, carefully targeted, and effective way that reflects the extensive research that governments brought to the table in crafting this enhancement to the benefit of working Canadians. Taken together, it is a comprehensive package that would increase CPP benefits while striking an appropriate balance between short-term economic considerations and longer-term gains.

What does Bill C-26 mean for my constituents and Canadians across the country? Enhancing the CPP means first and foremost there would be more money from the CPP waiting for Canadians when they retire. This means they would be able to focus on the things that matter like spending time with their families rather than worrying about making ends meet. It means reducing the share of families at risk of not saving enough for retirement as well as reducing the degree to which Canadians are under-saving.

A stronger CPP is also the right tool at the right time to improve retirement income security of young workers. It is an opportunity for today's hard-working Canadians to give their children, grandchildren, and future generations a more secure retirement. Since I was elected last October, I have had the honour and great responsibility of representing my constituents in Ottawa. I have enjoyed time with young people in my riding, local schools, community groups, and other events. Their ability to save money for a secure and comfortable, dignified retirement is very important to me.

This enhancement of the CPP and this investment in Canadians would ensure future generations are secure in their retirement. This is why I will be voting for Bill C-26 and I encourage my colleagues from every party to do so as well.

• (1550)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said he is looking forward to improved retirement security for his grandchildren. I, too, have a number of grandchildren. However, how will it be more secure for our grandchildren if, as Dan Kelly said, two-thirds of small firms have to freeze or cut salaries, or even reduce hours or the number of jobs? If our grandchildren do not have jobs, it does not matter what the CPP will be, because there will be no CPP for them without jobs.

Also, the member mentioned once these measures are fully in place, but he failed to address the fact it will be 40 years from now. How can we really believe that these measures will help current retirees when they clearly will not be implemented for a full 40 years?

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure we all remember when CPP was introduced back in 1965-66. Even then, those across the aisle said that businesses would close as a result, but look at the result today. Our seniors have a better retirement from the CPP.

My government today understands the need to enhance the CPP so that the next generation can have a decent retirement.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a couple of statements on what the bill would do for our grandchildren and children going forward. He gave us a little bit of a history lesson about when the CPP was introduced in 1966, but he never mentioned the 1977 ruling when the Liberal government at the time introduced legislation so that people dropping out of the

workforce to raise children and those living with disabilities would not be penalized as a result.

Now, in 2016, Bill C-26 calls for enhancements to the CPP, but it eliminates the drop-out periods for people in the future. What will that do to our grandchildren and children, and why was it omitted?

That is the main question: why was it omitted?

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the work our government has done with the provinces and territories to enhance the CPP. However, we are aware that more could be done with respect to the drop-out provisions as a result of disability and child rearing. However, any changes need the approval of territorial and provincial governments. The finance minister is fully aware of that, and he will bring that issue to the meeting with the territories and provinces in December.

• (1555)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that small businesses are the big job creators in our country. We know that for every extra \$1,000 in CPP payroll taxes an employee is going to pay, the employer is also going to match that contribution. Therefore, for a small business with 20 employees, that will be an additional annual cost of \$20,000 directly out of its income.

If a small business is to incur that additional cost, what does the member think that will do to its ability to increase employee wages? An employee's income is already going to be reduced by \$1,000 because of the CPP contributions they will have to make. Therefore, they will get no raise and will have a reduced income. Where does he think that will leave the employees?

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, and as negotiated by the Minister of Finance with the provincial and territorial finance ministers, the changes to the CPP will be phased-in over seven years, starting in 2019 to 2025, to ensure that the impact is small and gradual.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak today to Bill C-26, because it has the potential to address an issue that is so very vital to our identity as Canadians. The manner in which we care for each other is the measure of who we are as a people. We have much work to do in many areas to ensure accessible and affordable health care, child care, education, and housing for every Canadian so that none of us is left behind. We must address the shameful colonial legacy of inequality forced on this nation's indigenous peoples and ensure, as the bill before us today purports to do, that every Canadian is able to retire in dignity and security.

Government Orders

While the measures outlined in Bill C-26 represent incremental progress in providing retirement security for Canadians, they fall short in many aspects and completely fail in one critical regard. I would like to speak to these shortcomings in the time I have here today, in the hope that the current government will do the right thing and fix the very serious flaws in this bill.

We know that Canadians take pride in their work, the proceeds of which allow us to care for our families, raise our children, and pursue our dreams. Whether in the private sector, public service, or the military, the work of Canadians contributes to our economy and weaves our social identity. It is reasonable to expect and to hope that in a country as rich in resources as ours, when Canadians come to the end of their working careers they are able to retire in dignity and security. This is the reason we created the Canada pension plan, a system so successful that it is considered the international gold standard. We extend our gratitude to Stanley Knowles, an incredible former member of the House who proposed the Canada pension plan and pursued it so that Canadians could be safe in their retirement years.

We know, however, that the CPP as it currently stands falls short of providing full retirement security for Canadians. That is the reason New Democrats have called for what we know are affordable and sustainable enhancements and improvements to the CPP in order to ensure that Canadians are able to retire in dignity, not just now but for generations to come. New Democrats stand with the Canadian labour movement in calling for a doubling of CPP so that it will provide benefits set at 50% of pre-retirement income. That is sustainable, affordable, and necessary, especially when we consider that defined pension plans from employers, including the Government of Canada, are under serious attack.

Many Canadians do not have adequate savings to maintain their lifestyle upon retirement and the need to address income insecurity is becoming ever more urgent. A large part of this problem is fuelled by the erosion of workplace pension plans to the point where only six in 10 working Canadians have one. According to the finance minister himself, young people today face a future of precarious work in which the odds of staying in a job long enough to benefit in retirement from a private pension plan, if one exists, are slim.

The enhanced CPP is a plan that would benefit a new generation of workers entering the workforce, but would do little to alleviate the retirement income crisis of those approaching retirement today. The New Democrat platform includes a national seniors strategy to address the issues of affordable housing and home care, pharmacare, and health care, as well as income security. My Motion No. 21 calls on the government to adopt that strategy. The New Democrat member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has introduced Bill C-245, outlining a poverty reduction strategy for all of Canada. I encourage the government to consider the informed and considered proposals put forward by New Democrats on these issues, supported by extensive community and expert consultation.

Now I would like to move back to the bill that we have before us today and address the major failure of Bill C-26 to include dropout provisions for the enhanced portion of the CPP benefits it proposes.

● (1600)

As an activist who has fought for equity and equality of access for women my whole life, I am appalled at the backsliding that will penalize those who drop out of paid work to raise children or as a result of disability. More often than not, those penalized workers are women.

Under the current system, women receive CPP payments that are 13% less than men's. Without the child rearing dropout for the enhanced benefits, that gap will grow. The narrow eligibility criteria and cumbersome application and appeals process create a system in which CPP disability benefits are extremely difficult to obtain. People who manage to collect CPP disability benefits should not be penalized because they have dropped out from making contributions due to disability.

Women and persons with disabilities are more reliant than other Canadians on public pensions like the CPP, after having faced a lifetime of economic disadvantages. They earn less than their male counterparts and when they raise children they have fewer dollars to contribute to the CPP and are penalized as a result. They receive far less from the CPP because it favours higher income workers. Seniors with disabilities have higher than average expenses, and it is criminal to overlook their needs.

The special dropout provisions correct some of that systemic discrimination and are an important equity feature of the Canada pension plan. The current dropout provisions introduced in 1977 by a certain Monsieur Trudeau, and lauded as recognizing child rearing as a value to Canadian society and our economy, do not apply to the additional or enhanced benefits that would be created by this particular legislation. One has to wonder whether the Liberals of 2016 value child rearing and child care even less than their predecessors.

Women and persons with disabilities will suffer a penalty as a result of Bill C-26, and this discrimination will be most severe for women with disabilities. Are these the sunny ways our Prime Minister mentioned or is this part of his declaration as a feminist?

The Liberals may try to cite costs as a factor in their decision to omit the dropout provisions from the new enhanced benefits, but our very preliminary calculations show that the costs would be very low. Using the available information, the estimated cost of dropout provisions for each employee and each employer would be just 0.2% of a worker's average salary. This is a small price to provide such an important and significant benefit.

Government Orders

Failure to fix this problem would cost parents significantly. Calculations based on figures from Service Canada's website indicate that a mother who spent six years raising children will get between \$800 and \$1,200 less per year than she would with the dropout provisions in effect for her enhanced contribution.

New Democrats fought hard for changes to the CPP and for increases in CPP benefits. We welcome the changes tabled by the government, but we can and should do better. We need to address the needs of seniors today, as well as those of future generations. To that end, in addition to the measures I have already outlined here, we will continue the fight to stop the clawback of GIS benefits. New Democrats call on the government to follow through on its promise to develop a seniors price index as soon as possible.

We can do better. We must do better. Our future is literally at stake. Our reputation as a progressive society is on the line.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have talked about extensively is the importance of the government of the day getting support from the different levels of government, specifically provincial governments. We have been waiting a long time to see an agreement in place and finally have that agreement. That is why we have this legislation.

Could the member comment on how encouraging it is when provincial governments of all political stripes—New Democrat, Liberal, or Conservative—say this is a good thing for future generations and all Canadians.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, we know absolutely that the provinces were rallying for increased CPP not very long ago. In fact, one Liberal government was going to create its own pension program, because the CPP was not enough. Now it has not had to do that, or apparently it has indicated that it is not necessary anymore.

I do know Premier Notley in Alberta is very supportive of an increased CPP. However, I would hope that the government would consider making it fair all the way around, for women and persons living with disabilities.

In this negotiation the member talks of with the provinces, what did the government give away? How on earth can we expect our country to thrive if women and those living with a disability are left out? Is it inconceivable.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for a very thoughtful and well-presented speech on the very important matter of the future access to CPP.

As I have shared with my colleague, I have been receiving letter after letter from constituents concerned about what is not in the CPP bill, particularly about the impacts to women who take time away from work, not earning income and will therefore get dropped out from the CPP benefits. They raise the additional concern of what happens if at some point in time they are sharing the work between two spouses, but then it does not work out, there is a divorce, and there are no CPP benefits.

There are all kinds of extrapolations we can look at where certain Canadians are going to be prejudiced by the fact that the

government, in its wisdom or lack of, has decided to delete benefits that were once available more broadly to Canadians.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for that observation. We know that women, whether they are divorced or face widowhood, are very disadvantaged by a reduced CPP benefit.

I would like to point out that nearly one million Canadians rely on food banks in our country. They do that because they are poor, they cannot manage, and they do not have the income they need. Of that one million, 49% are women. Almost 18% are persons living with disabilities. That paints the picture quite clearly. We are failing these groups.

I recall the days, not so very long ago, perhaps in the mid-1970s, when the travesty of our country was the people who were retired, particularly women, and the stories of them having to live on animal food and not doing well at all. I do not want to go back to that. I do not understand why the government would want to go back to those days.

If we look to the future, we know there will be more and more seniors. We have to ensure they are taken care of, and that includes women and persons living with disabilities.

• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a bit of a different perspective in dealing with the legislation before us today. Just over a year ago, Canadians went to the polls and voted for real change. The reason I say that because what we are debating today is not only symbolic, but it demonstrates, in a very real way, the difference between the current government and the previous government.

For many years, when I sat in opposition, I would look to the government and the prime minister of the time, Stephen Harper, for strong leadership on the retirement file, on the issue of CPP. It was not because it was coming from nowhere. The issue was coming from many different regions of our country. Many provinces wanted Ottawa to do something with the CPP. For years, the Conservatives sat in government and chose to do nothing. They have their own mindset about how retirement should work into the future.

I have always believed that the Conservatives were not really big fans of the CPP program. Through this debate, my belief has been reinforced.

Why the real change? Since taking office, seniors have been addressed in a very real and tangible way. Today, we are talking about the CPP. The Minister of Finance reached out to the provinces, listened to what Canadians wanted, and understood the demands of what the provinces also wanted to see. For the first time, we have seen a national government demonstrate leadership by going to the table and working out an agreement among the different provinces and territories on how we can deliver on ensuring a better retirement for today's workers. I believe Canadians as a whole want to see that.

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We got the job done. The government introduced the legislation, after getting a historic agreement signed off with the provinces and territories. Now we are debating it today. Future workers will benefit when the time comes for them to retire. This is about having a vision, something the previous government did not have.

I then look at my New Democratic colleagues. They seem to want to continue to give the impression that only they care about seniors. They look at ways to criticize, not acknowledging that in fact what we are doing today is a positive thing. They look for ways in which they can be critical, even though a New Democratic premier is supportive of this.

I would suggest for my New Democrat elected friends across the way that even the vast majority of New Democrat members would in fact support and say positive things about this legislation.

Is it absolutely perfect? As we know, there is always room to be better. The Minister of Finance has made a commitment to bring those issues raised on the floor of the House to the attention of premiers to see if they can improve upon the agreement. However, at the very least, the New Democrats should acknowledge that this has been in the making virtually since day one with our government. Canadians have been waiting for this for more than 10 years.

The member who just spoke said that we had to be sensitive about our seniors and their needs and made reference to food. We have to take a holistic approach in what the government is doing on the senior file. The most vulnerable seniors today are getting a substantial increase in the guaranteed annual income. Tens of thousands of seniors will be lifted out of poverty as a direct result of our government's action to increase the guaranteed income supplement. This is good news.

● (1615)

Again, for my New Democratic friends, they do not have to stand and applaud when the government does good things, but at the very least try to reflect reality and express the truth of the matter at hand. The matter is that our government is committed to servicing and trying to improve the quality of life, not only for future retirement needs but also for those most vulnerable seniors who find it so difficult to make financial ends meet.

I know how serious it is. While canvassing in Winnipeg North, I spoke to seniors who said that they were having a tough time deciding on whether to buy food, or purchase the medications they required or other necessities. Far too many seniors go to food banks as a direct result of this. Our government clearly understands that and has delivered on making a difference by increasing the guaranteed income supplement. However, that is not all. We still have three foundation stones dealing with public pensions. I made reference to two of them. The other one is our old age supplement.

One of the first things this government did within a couple of months of taking office was reverse the decision former prime minister Stephen Harper took when he increased the age of retirement from 65 to 67. I remember it well. I sat on the other side and the prime minister was overseas when he made the announcement that we were in a financial crisis in Canada and that the government would have to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67. There was nothing to substantiate it. It was a personal opinion

of a prime minister who had no faith in other pensionable social programs in Canada. Within a couple of months, we reversed that decision. Now individuals know that when they hit age 65, they will be able to retire and receive old age supplements.

Today should be a happy day. This bill has received support from many different sectors of our society, in particular, our provincial governments that have signed off on enhancing CPP. The Conservatives, on the other hand, talk about why they oppose the legislation. They brought forward a series of amendments. Their argument seems to be that we should not allow for the increase in the CPP because it is a tax. Therefore, they will not support the bill.

It contradicts the actions of the Conservatives on Bill C-2. They voted against Bill C-2, which was hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks for over nine million Canadians. Their arguments are not consistent with their actions. When I think of the Conservative Party's real agenda on the CPP, I believe it would be quite content if the CPP were not there. The arguments the Conservatives are using today could be used ultimately in getting rid of the CPP.

● (1620)

I would challenge the Conservatives to change their position and vote with the rest of the members, the Bloc, the NDP, and the Liberals, support the legislation, and oppose the amendments that are being debated.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, for his very passionate speech and for the good work he does for his constituents. It does not go unrecognized.

I also want to note that I am happy he has so adequately expressed the former Conservative government's position of reducing taxes for Canadians. That certainly is a position we are very proud of: balancing budgets, reducing taxes, creating jobs. I thank my hon. friend across the way for identifying that as a Conservative platform.

My question is that in their campaign promises, the Liberals promised to reduce the tax for small business. As he also so adequately stated, this is a payroll tax. Not only will the employees experience it, but also employers. Instead of reducing taxes on small business, this will increase them.

Could my hon. friend explain how he thinks he can justify that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member wants to talk about taxes. To me, that is not what this debate is about. This debate is about our future and those individuals who are employed having a better retirement fund in the years ahead. That is really what this debate is all about.

However, if we want to vote on the issue of taxes, all I need to do is refer the member to Bill C-2, something I have already provided comment on. That is a bill that put hundreds of millions more dollars into the pockets of Canada's middle class.

Government Orders

The Conservatives—and I know it is hard to believe—actually voted against it. They wanted to keep the money, not give that tax break.

Therefore, there is a bit of inconsistency in terms of the small business. Hopefully, in my next answer, I will be able to address that.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend. I know my friend works very hard in this House every day. I feel sorry for him sometimes, as I do not think he gets enough sleep. I want to thank him.

I listened to the member's good speech. He said a year ago that Canadians voted for change, and real change. I agree with that. That is what they voted for. However, they did not expect chump change, which is what this proposed bill will do. Right now, 4.5% of women receive the maximum benefits under this legislation that we have under CPP.

What real change would this proposed legislation give women, when it is omitted from the dropout period of child-raising and people with disabilities?

My other question is, why has the dropout period for women raising children and people with disabilities been omitted, and why was this not discussed when the provinces met with the federal government?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that, through the Minister of Finance, a series of discussions had taken place that ultimately saw the different provinces and territories come to an agreement. To make the type of changes that are being talked about from the New Democratic Party would require the provinces and territories to come onside. Having said that, we need to also recognize that the premier of Alberta is a New Democrat, and sometimes these kinds of things go through.

Is it perfect? No, we think there is room for improvement. That is why the Minister of Finance has made the commitment to go back to the table to see if we can improve upon this.

However, let us not underestimate the value of the current agreement and how workers into the future are going to benefit by it. There is always room for—

•(1625)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I hear talk about Canada pension, I think back to when I was first elected in 1988. I had been in the retail business for 25 years in a small town in Nova Scotia. The thing that surprised me the most after I was elected was how many people I was helping get the Canada pension disability. These were not people who abused the system. These were people with real disabilities and no way to put food on the table. They depended on the Canada pension disability plan. That, to me, is an important role. It is hard to understand how people can speak against increasing the benefits of the Canada pension.

I wonder if the member would tell me if he has had the same experience with people with disabilities. Again, their quality of life goes to zero. They go broke. The minute someone becomes disabled,

the first thing that happens is they go broke, and that makes the situation worse.

I would like the member to comment on the disability aspect of Canada pension.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the strength of the individual who posed the question has been well demonstrated through his electoral success, and I commend him on that.

He has identified one of those social issues that no matter what level of government people are elected to, they genuinely care about helping individuals who are in need, and they want, as much as possible, to see social programming. Our benefits programs, including CPP, for disabilities, OAS, and the GIS, are all solid programs. This is why government needs, not only to give the programs attention, but to further enhance them whenever possible. We want to be able to provide that hand to try to improve the quality of life of all Canadians, especially those in society who are most vulnerable.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence; the hon. member for Essex, softwood lumber; the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, Housing.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak in this debate and discussion on the CPP, something which affects almost all Canadians. I spoke to this bill at second reading, and it is interesting to see at report stage how the debate has gone forward, or in some cases not gone forward.

Before I get to the main body of my speech, I want to deal with an issue that the parliamentary secretary has continuously repeated, that all of the provinces have come onside to support this change, and citing the Conservative premiers, of which there are very few. It should be noted that the premier of my province, Mr. Brad Wall, said very clearly that the reason he was backing this was because he was concerned that a worse agreement was going to be put in place. This was not exactly a ringing endorsement.

As he said, he was more concerned that a more aggressive Ontario Liberal plan would be put in place. He signed on to the Liberals' changes, not because he thought it was a good idea, but to prevent something worse from happening. When someone endorses something because the person fears the government will do something worse, I do not know if the government can honestly claim that as a ringing endorsement, as was presented to the House. I wanted to note that. I am sure the parliamentary secretary will address that in questions and comments.

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When looking at the overlying issue with the CPP, the Conservative Party has objections to it, and the government is pushing it forward. The reasoning is very similar on both sides, but comes to very different conclusions. The government is arguing that for the cost of living and people's retirement, this is a good bill. The Liberals are saying that the cost of living for seniors is too high and it is difficult for them to make ends meet. It is difficult for seniors to make a living, so we therefore need to make these changes so that future seniors should benefit.

Interestingly, we in the opposition, in some respects, are arguing a similar issue. The cost of living makes it difficult, and people need every cent they can get. The Conservative Party is arguing that people should be allowed to keep doing what they are currently doing with their funds and decide for themselves what they should do with their money. As has been noted, this could end up being an \$1,100 hit for the average person, assuming the average person pays the maximum. While, for some people, \$1,100 a year is not significant, for people whose budgets are tight, that is very significant.

As has been noted frequently in debate, there are studies by the Fraser Institute and other institutions that have noted that almost all of the increased premiums will come from savings. However, some of it will come from consumption. One way or the other, Canadians have a problem. They have a problem because they do not have enough money to pay for their necessities of life, now or in the future. Every circumstance is different, but this needs to be noted.

We are not dealing with abstracts for people at the high end of the income scale, and, frankly, this does not target people at the really low end of the income scale, because the OAS, and particularly the GIS, are used to deal with that. That is how the current Liberal government and past Conservative governments have dealt with the issue of poverty. The CPP deals more with middle-class Canadians, the broad swath, the centre, economically and socially, of our society, and their cost of living.

The question we are really debating here today is how we can make things more affordable for Canadians now and in the future. How can we make things more affordable and create a better standard of living for Canadians in the present, in the future, and in retirement? This needs to be underlined in this whole debate. The largest cost for all Canadians across the board is taxes. In Canada, over 40% of our GDP ends up getting sucked up into taxes. That is the size of it when we put everything together.

● (1630)

One of the reasons why seniors are struggling and having a difficult time today and why the Liberals are arguing that they need increased CPP benefits in the future is because we continually have taxes that are too high. The Liberals like to talk about the one element of tax changes that was positive in their budget, but they do not talk about the positive tax changes from the previous government that they eliminated: income splitting and assistance to families. Parents with children is one particular group that is going to be under fiscal pressure due to these changes with the CPP.

Just think about when in life people have the greatest expenses. When is the time that they have a mortgage? It is also a time that they frequently have their children. People's children are growing up,

spending more money, wanting to do sports, and to do things with their schoolmates. Those are the years when people are trying to earn their peak amount of money. It is not their retirement, but their earning years.

Along came the Liberal government. First it eliminated income splitting, which was again a policy that benefited Canadians at the middle of the spectrum of our society. Most Canadians, depending on where they are in life, would have benefited from that for a good portion of their life because we know that as they go through their lives they are all in different income strata for different seasons.

When they are students they are technically very poor, maybe living in their parents' basement. Most of their income may go to pay for tuition, but they get by. They are considered poor.

The years when people are paying the maximum in CPP premiums are often when they have the greatest expenses. They need to take care of their house. They perhaps have parents to take care of. Generally that is when they have children. This is when the government again is coming after people with tax hikes and, as I noted earlier, the elimination of income splitting.

That is why we in the opposition have been referring to the CPP hike as a tax hike. It would take money directly from people, reduce their freedom, reduce their choice in what they could do with it, and give them a worse rate of return than they would otherwise have if they had invested it in private savings plans. This is something that has been documented by researchers looking at this.

For my grandpa, the CPP was a marvellous investment. He paid into it for practically the minimum number of years, and since he lived to be 92 years old he collected well above the average amount. It was fantastic, better than a 20-some per cent rate of return, which was the average for people. He made way more on his investment than he could have anywhere else.

But for people of my age, a generation Xer born in 1974 and younger, the rate of return after inflation for CPP that is invested is barely 2%. That is horrendous. People could do better. That is why we are referring to it as a tax. The government takes the money and people ultimately lose money. It drives up their cost of living.

What could people be using this money for if the Liberals were not taking it away? Electricity prices are going up, in many cases due to the wrong-headed environmental policies of federal and provincial governments. Property taxes are going up, again something that often hits people in their prime earning years with children and families the most. Inflation and various other expenses are all going up. Here we are, taking away more of people's money.

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The basic argument is this. If the government is taking money away from people, not returning to them the amount that they should have and could have earned had they been able to invest and control their money privately, it is definitely a tax hike, because what people are doing with this money is subsidizing the government. It allows the government to get away with lower OAS premiums. It allows pension plans that are integrated with the CPP to get away with lower premiums. People are losing money. That is why it is a tax hike. It is a tax hike that raises people's standard of living and, as has been noted, taxes are the most expensive thing that we have to deal with in our society.

That is why I and my fellow Conservatives oppose this bill. It is the wrong policy for Canadians. It is a bad investment. It takes money out of people's pockets. That is why we as Conservatives are opposing it.

• (1635)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member for Saskatoon—University is this. If the member wants things to be more affordable, should they not ensure that people actually have money available to them in the future? Does the member not believe that planning for the future through OAS, GIS, and through CPP is a worthwhile venture? Does he believe the CPP should be planned for the future, prepared for generations to come? Or does he believe it should be scrapped altogether?

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, I am not arguing for the scrapping of the CPP altogether, and one of the reasons is the basic inertia of the system. To redesign something purely from scratch is not necessarily the best idea. What we did in government was, instead of expanding something that was not the best, we chose other vehicles, like TFSAs, to give people better rates of return, more freedom, and more flexibility.

Therefore, while CPP was really a great deal for people who got in early, it is a bad deal for people of my generation. The entirety of CPP is a bad deal for people of my generation. However, to unwind something that substantive and large is very difficult, and there are better ways to do it, but we are where we are and so we will go forward.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for some time I was the pension critic, and I did a great deal of work in terms of studying this particular question. One of the things that I learned, and which I think is quite widely known, is that investment in the CPP is the gold standard. Because of the wisdom of those investments, the return is quite significant, compared to private pension plans, which depend on the vagaries of the stock market; one day we are up and the next day we are down. Quite frankly, depending on that possibility is something that many seniors are most certainly not willing to gamble on.

• (1640)

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, let me suggest that the hon. member has some dated information, because the Fraser Institute did a study, and like I said, for people my age, people born in the 1970s and later, this has been an awful rate of return.

I understand that some people prefer the security of a system where everything is more clearly laid out for them. However,

different people have different views, and that is why we should give them the choice and not continually force everyone to put the entirety of their savings into the Canada pension plan. There are other things out there, like RRSPs and TFSAs.

The goal from the government's perspective is to keep people out of poverty, not to provide a middle-class income with pensions, and allow people to decide how they want to do their savings. Do they want to spend their money now or do they want their money later for retirement? This is why we give people the freedom, because everyone's situation is different.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to chuckle at the Liberals. Any time we question their plans to undertake major expansion of government programs, it must be because we are against the program entirely. Whatever happened to striking the right balance between a public pension program and also preserving space for private savings?

We have a government that is cutting back on tax-free savings accounts. We have a government that does not support those more effective changes that encourage private savings. It is not undertaking measures for current seniors, but is instead talking about future seniors by taking more money out of the economy at the present time.

Could my friend talk more about the cost that this will have on small business? We have heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others about the significant negative impact that this will have on the economy, on the ability to create wealth that benefits seniors and all Canadians.

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Speaker, labour and capital are some of the basic inputs into business. The way CPP is structured, it has the effect of a payroll tax, which is a tax directly on labour. This means it is a tax on productivity. As we tax productivity, it makes productivity naturally less productive, because the tax is slowing it. Therefore, it is making it more difficult for businesses to hire, it drives up the unemployment rate, and lowers businesses' profits. It makes a business more difficult to succeed, and therefore makes people less likely to take risks.

This is bad for the economy. Taxing productivity is the worst thing we can do if we want to grow the economy. We should target consumption, but instead the Liberals here are targeting productivity, and we are all losers for it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I get started with my remarks, specifically I would like to reference the previous speaker. At one point during answering questions he talked about the CPP and not using it as an opportunity to provide middle-income opportunities, yet earlier on his speech he talked about how it was the gold standard that his grandfather came to admire so much. We are left wondering whether or not the member thinks we need to move away from what CPP used to be as opposed to just arguing against what might happen or what he perceives to be happening.

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When we talk about this issue, the first thing we need to identify is the fact that there are changes in the workforce. The workforce today is not what it used to be decades ago. In fact, there are far fewer people who are receiving employment pensions or pensions that are being paid for by their employers. The fact of the matter is that in the fifties and sixties, there used to be robust pensions that were set up by employers to pay into these pension plans so that people could have that security when it came time to retire. Many people did enjoy that benefit and take advantage of that.

However, even within those pensions it is changing. Those pensions that used to be so reliable are not as reliable as they used to be, as we see companies and employers starting to do things for various different reasons that affect those pensions.

Not that long ago in my office in Kingston and the Islands, I had a couple of former executives from manufacturing plants that used to operate in Kingston but unfortunately do not any more, to talk to me about what companies were doing to avert, whether directly or indirectly, paying those pensions out. That just creates less stability and less reliability of the employees to make sure they have that security when they retire, eventually.

It is not just about the changes in the workplace, it is also about young people and what they are coming to expect. Years ago young people could conceivably leave with a high school education, get a good paying job, whether in manufacturing or another sector, that provided them with a pension, that provided them with security during their employment, and then afterwards, provided them with a pension. They could live a comfortable life off that, but things are much different for younger people now.

We have pages who come to this House to help out. Sometimes I look at them and think, is it not much different for them. They are expected to get a university degree or a college degree at a minimum. The vast majority of graduates then go on to post-graduate work, and the debt they incur as a result of that is something they have to carry for many years into the future. They have to start planning to pay that back.

Couple that with the fact that more and more young people now see it more unreasonable that they will actually own a house. There are more people now than ever before who actually come to terms with the fact that they might be renting forever and not actually owning.

As a government it is our responsibility, as this legislative body it is our responsibility to make sure that our society has those reliable and predictable means of knowing that they will be taken care of in the future.

There is also another change in the demographics of then versus now, and that is with respect to the haves and the have-nots. Quite frankly, there are more people who have and many more people who have not, and the middle, in between, is shrinking dramatically. It is changing the way Canadians view that security and stability for the future.

I would submit that it is time that we take a serious look at how we can implement policy to make a change and create a greater security among Canadians. That is about planning for the future, and

ultimately it is about what I like to think of as preventive maintenance.

We hear these arguments from the other side of the aisle about spending so much money, forcing small businesses to spend money, and I will get to that point in a second. The one thing we do not talk about is what happens if we do not do this. What if we do not make sure that we are setting up the security now for later? We will pay for it one way or the other.

• (1645)

If we do not pay for it now by making sure the proper measures are in place for CPP, or whatever other measures might come forward, later on we are going to be taking care of those people, and we are going to be paying for it then.

When I was mayor of Kingston and I was on the health board, I remember the frustration of the health unit that the government was always so unwilling to put money into preventive health care. It was always about reactive measures.

My submission is that this government is doing the exact opposite of that. This government is looking at setting up preventive measures so that generations from now, young workers are properly taken care of and have those measures. By no means is this setting up a middle-class lifestyle. This is providing the bare minimum. This is providing a small portion of what people will actually need to retire.

I also want to address another topic that has come up on the other side of the House today, and no doubt I will be asked a question about it, so maybe I will pre-empt that by talking about it now. It is with respect to small businesses. I am a small business owner. At any given time, I have four or five employees who work for our small business in Kingston. I have no problem with this small increase. We pay source deductions just like every other business does. We pay EI, CPP, and WSIB, and these are necessary to make sure that society is being taken care of. We respect that as a business.

With regard to the small increments over the six-year period between 2019-25, the question is how small businesses will deal with this. We have heard that asked in the House today. The reality is that small businesses have to look at ways they can make this work. They have to find alternatives where necessary. They have to look for opportunities where they might not currently exist. The reality is that in any business, any added cost, whether it is a cost for a product or for a service to add to the business, adds to the bottom line and ultimately adds to an increase in whatever goods or services the individual is selling.

On the point that businesses will have to close their doors, although we would hate to see that and would hope it does not happen, I would suggest that it is a very unlikely scenario.

This is something the Liberal Party ran on and talked about in the election. This should come as no surprise to anyone that we are taking serious action when it comes to CPP and that we are taking the time to make sure that future generations are taken care of. It is about providing dignity with respect to income security for future generations.

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Quite frankly, this is the right thing to do. I am extremely supportive of this piece of legislation, and I know that future generations will look back on this and regard this as a pivotal shift in CPP in the direction of helping plan for people's futures.

• (1650)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of costing, my colleague touched on health care. I have to remind him that in terms of preventive health care, all of us will agree that this is a cost that comes from businesses and individuals to the provincial government. The Conservatives gave the provinces a 6% increase per year. The Province of Ontario used to brag about cutting health costs to 3%. I am wondering what the member's comments would be on the Liberal health minister in Ontario who did not use the money we gave him to supply health care and preventive medicine.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, that is very loose connection. I spoke to my time on the health board and a particular issue we had.

In any event, if the member is looking for me to say that at some point or another I have, can be, or was critical of the provincial government, yes, as the mayor of a municipality in Ontario, we obviously took positions that were sometimes critical.

I cannot recall this exact reference the member is bringing up other than to say that, yes, there are always times when municipalities have to show the provincial government if they are not happy with them. I would encourage any municipality to do that.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during the speech by the member for Kingston and the Islands, I saw the member for Calgary Nose Hill come in, under the camera over there, and use her cellphone, appearing to take a picture in this general direction. Could the Speaker address that?

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Laurentides—Labelle for his intervention. I did not see anything in particular. We will have a look to see and will check. Members will know, of course, that the use of smart phones for recording video, audio, or photographs in the chamber is not allowed. I thank the hon. member for bringing it to our attention. I am not able to respond to it at this particular moment. I did not see anything that was against the rules of the House. We will take it up and see if there is anything we can do.

I was going to say, just before the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle made his point of order, that for the benefit of all hon. members, some members may have seen the last question and comment as not particularly relevant to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands's speech, and that may be true in the form of it. However, hon. members should know that when they raise a matter in the course of a speech that may not be exactly on topic with respect to the question before the House, it is absolutely relevant if another member wishes to pose a question on it. Members would probably recognize that.

By the way, I am not taking the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands' time. Questions and comments.

• (1655)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thanks for that clarification. I can assure you that I am not recording. I do not think I am capable.

I want to share a letter written to me by a constituent, completely unsolicited. I want to share in the House what she said:

Now with this exclusion of the child-rearing dropout provision in the proposed expansion of CPP, I'm even more concerned that those making the decisions are either inadvertently or intentionally excluding this work from the social policy conversation. If it's an error, then there is a dire need for more diverse voices and experiences to be involved with policy development, and I want to know how this gap is going to be redressed.

She has written to the Government of Canada to answer that question. I wonder if the hon. member could respond to that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am not the Government of Canada, so I cannot answer that question, which was sent to the Government of Canada, other than to say that, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out, the Minister of Finance had indicated that there is always room for improvement and room to look at ways to do things better. He had committed to going back and having further discussions with the provinces.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am curious about how the drop-out provisions got taken out to begin with.

If the government was at the table with provincial and territorial leaders, someone had to raise it. Did the government raise it? Did the minister raise it? Did his officials raise it? How did it come to be that it is actually not part of this important bill?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to repeat what I just said, because I think I covered it.

The important thing is to look at what this bill actually is doing. This bill will change the lives of future generations. This bill will contribute to the security of young people today as they move toward retirement. More importantly, it will contribute to their faith in a system that will have security for them later on.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today in the House of Commons from my new perch here in the back row. It is my first speech, since taking this spot, to engage with more Canadians. As I said when I was first elected and sat in the corner over there, any seat in this chamber is a true honour to occupy, and I think all members on all sides would agree with that.

I am glad to be speaking again about CPP reform and specifically about Bill C-26, because this, yet again, is an example of a government absolutely disconnected from the reality of the economy.

We have a jobs crisis in Canada right now, and this legislation would lead to fewer jobs. The finance department has confirmed that.

It is a jobs crisis of epic proportions, and the Prime Minister and the finance minister have done nothing. In fact, they have made it more difficult for employers to hire people, and I will spend a few moments talking about that.

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Where is the crisis most acute? It is in Alberta, where 200,000 Canadians, families, are without the certainty and the confidence a job provides. If that alone is not a crisis, I do not know what is. I am very proud of my colleagues from Alberta who have been raising this in the House daily for the last year. We have yet to see a plan of any sort from the Liberal government.

The epicentre of our jobs crisis in Canada is in the west, which we have to remember kept Canada moving forward through the great recession of 2008-09, when Canada led the G-7 in economic growth and job creation after the worse recession since the thirties. We relied on family members in Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Manitoba, and now the government is turning a blind eye to that crisis.

In Calgary, the unemployment rate is 9%. People were coming from around the world to work there because of the opportunities in the last generation. The government has no plan. The unemployment rate in Edmonton is roughly 8%, and there is not even an acknowledgement, in a serious way, of that prolonged state of affairs.

Let us look at whether this is just a global commodity cycle, which I have heard members of this government sometimes suggest, instead of their inaction. Let us look at the parliamentary budget officer's recent report on the labour market. Let us look at what the PBO found on job creation in Canada. I will quote from page 1, which really summarizes the PBO's report,

The Canadian economy created 96,000 (net) jobs from Q3 2015 to Q3 2016, which is half the average annual gain of 192,000 over the previous five years.

That is when our party was in charge of the economy, so the Liberals are not even batting half our average. I will continue.

Job gains from Q3 2015 to Q3 2016 were entirely part-time and mostly in the private sector. Full-time and public sector employment contracted.

Does that not underscore the crisis we are experiencing? Is that not a call to action for the Liberal government? When is the government going to come to grips with the economy?

The \$30 billion the Prime Minister has spent to put us in deficit has created zero full-time jobs. We will hear the Minister of Innovation and the ACOA minister, who is in Mississauga, I might add, speak about jobs, but they are part-time jobs.

We remember the election, when the Prime Minister, the third-party leader at the time, said that Canada was in a recession. That was false then, and it was proven false afterward. He said he would spend no more than a \$10-billion modest deficit. That was another false claim. He spent \$30 billion. Why did he say he was going to go into deficit? It was to stimulate job creation. That is false. He has created zero full-time jobs, according to the PBO. This is the job crisis we are in, yet the Prime Minister is going around the world, spending our money elsewhere, and has no plan for job creation at home.

• (1700)

The last time I rose in the House to speak on this very subject, 2,000 jobs at Bombardier were lost, so this is not just a job crisis in western Canada; it is a Liberal job crisis.

What is worse, the unemployment rate for young people has remained fixed at 13%, which is unreasonably high. What was the response of the finance minister? It was that our young Canadians should get accustomed to job churn. That is shameful absence of leadership. In fact, I think it is the modern equivalent of "Let them eat cake", a comment that is disconnected from the reality our young people are facing. Rather than saying "We're working on innovation jobs, working on clusters, and making sure there are more people going into the STEM fields and coding", he said, "You'd better get used to unpaid internships and being underemployed". That is a failure of leadership.

Why are we in this crisis? Taxes are going up on job creators and entrepreneurs, who are highly mobile. Taxes are going up on small and medium-sized businesses that have had their previous tax reduction decreased. We have a carbon tax, which on the weekend the environment minister said would make our economy more competitive, showing the height of her disconnect from reality. Today, we are discussing a payroll tax. In one year, the run up in the deficit and the taxation of people, businesses, and consumption is unparalleled in Canadian history. In fact, it would take multiple Liberal governments of the past to introduce so many different types of tax increases all in one year.

Getting back to Bill C-26, what did Finance Canada's own report say about the CPP reforms? It said that 10,000-plus job losses would result from these reforms in the bill in the coming years. We are in a job crisis. We are creating a carbon tax that would raise the import costs of manufacturers in Ontario, and the costs of farmers in the west and across the country, and of people who are hauling lobster and trying to get it sent over to Europe to be sold, and of the lumber industry. Higher costs on all those people translates into higher costs for families and seniors. Now we are doing a payroll tax that the minister's own department has said will lead to 10,500 job losses in the coming years. His own department has said so. It is staggering.

What have the leading groups that work with employers said? The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business have both implored the government not to bring in a payroll tax at a time when we are trying to get corporations, small and large, to use some retained earnings to hire one or two more people. We are putting a payroll tax on them and stopping them from hiring more people, whether by a 1% increase in premiums today or a 4% increase in coming years.

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As I have said many times in the House, there is no crisis in retirement savings. In fact, who claimed the media was “fear-mongering” with regard to a retirement crisis? It was the finance minister in his book with his actuary at Morneau Shepell, Fred Vettese, in a book called *The Real Retirement*. They said it was fear-mongering. Well, the finance minister is now relying on that fear-mongering to bring this bill forward.

Who will it help? Ipsos Reid showed that 70% of Canadians do not realize that retirees and people near retirement will not benefit. In fact, Fred Vettese, the chief actuary at Morneau Shepell, has said it will only help 8.7% of middle-income Canadians boost their retirement income. It will not help people on the low end, those we were trying to help when we were in government, with GST reductions and other things, and not people at the high end. It will only help 8.7% of people in the middle. That translates into 5% of Canadians who in the future might have some modest increase in retirement income, if they do not use RRSPs, if they do not get the value from their home, and if they do not use the TFSA that minister Flaherty brought in. Therefore, potentially 5% would benefit while 95% of Canadians would pay, and employers, whom we are imploring to hire more people, are forced to pay premiums for every new person they hire.

• (1705)

It is shameful, in the midst of a jobs crisis, the government is introducing yet another tax that would lead to more Canadians being unemployed.

We must stop it here. We have to focus on job creation for the future.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard one Conservative after another get up to talk about it being a payroll tax and the difficulties of enhancing the Canada pension plan.

Does my hon. colleague agree that the Canada pension plan does good for Canadian society—indeed, Canadians overwhelmingly support it—and why is it a good thing for this country?

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking at the annual dinner in the riding of my friend, the member for West Nova, in a week and a half. I look forward to being back there.

The CPP is a good thing. None of us is saying it is not. However, if he noticed, in the last minute of my speech I spent time dissecting the crisis in retirement. There is no crisis. Who said there is no crisis? The finance minister said so in his book he was selling to Canadians. Now he is selling them something else entirely. I tried to focus my remarks on that, using Finance Canada’s own statistics.

We have a government that loved to get elected in saying, “We’re all about evidence-based decision-making”.

What does the evidence say? Finance Canada says ten thousands jobs will be lost as a direct result of this bill in the midst of a jobs crisis already gripping this country, for a perceived retirement shortfall of a small group of middle-income Canadians who could be helped through TFSA enhancements, through home sales, through RRSPs, through the economy doing better and wages rising.

This bill would likely lead to a wage freeze and fewer jobs.

• (1710)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a great speech. It is actually one of the ones that makes a lot of sense.

My understanding is that this is a cost, not only to the employer but also to the employee, costing them somewhere up around \$1,100, or maybe \$800, each. Could he help us understand? For most people who are paying into it, particularly those who are just getting out of university, starting their family, buying a home, how long would it be before they actually get any benefit from it?

Hon. Erin O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, one of the most alarming absences of leadership on the government’s side has been in response to my friend’s questions about the closure of an old processing facility in his riding that has employed people for two centuries. Yet, because the minister will not grant an exemption to that heritage property, it will be another example of a dozen or so jobs lost.

We are in a jobs crisis. We bring that to the floor of the House every day, my colleagues from Alberta, my colleagues from Ontario, on both a small and a large level, and the government is disconnected with how that affects families.

My friend is right. The premiums paid are both by people and by businesses. The major business groups have told us that in this slow economy right now, businesses will not hire people, or will freeze wages, as a result of this premium, and younger people will not see a benefit for decades.

Fred Vettese, the chief actuary of a firm called Morneau Shepell—I can say that name in the House; I cannot say the name of his co-author, the finance minister—has said there is no retirement crisis and that even this perceived CPP enhancement would help fewer than 5% of Canadians, because only 8% or so of the middle class need an enhancement. There is no retirement crisis.

If they are trying to do something for a very small subset of Canadians that would result in the unemployment of tens of thousands, that is the wrong decision and we have time to stop it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see my colleague, and I wish him well in his leadership bid.

When I listen to the Conservatives’ arguments for why they are voting against the CPP enhancement, I realize that one could use those same arguments against having the CPP today. Could the member tell us what his thoughts are on the current CPP? If he says the current system is okay, is there a situation when he would see CPP payments being enhanced? Would there be a time or scenario where they could be enhanced?

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Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for wishing me well.

I was in the member's city a week or so ago with my friends from Interlake and Brandon at the Free Press News Cafe. People were quite open with their concerns about the carbon tax, and the farmers in the Interlake know they will be paying thousands more just for diesel. In fact, small and medium-sized businesses have little margin and the current government is going after their margins. It does not want them to take anything home and put it in their jeans at the end of the day. This is what I heard loud and clear in friendly Manitoba, and I trust he is hearing the same.

What I would remind the member of, and no one reminds the House of good Liberal virtues more than that member does, because he is up quite regularly, is the incessant call for evidence-based decision-making. When the member goes into his caucus this Wednesday, I ask him to stand up to the Prime Minister and say, "Prime Minister, Morneau Shepell's chief actuary has told us that this bill will lead to job losses while only targeting a small percentage of people, fewer than 5% of middle class Canadians decades from now."

If that is what we are trying to do, at the risk of potentially losing 10,000-plus jobs, why would we be doing this in the middle of a jobs crisis? It is time for the member to stand up in caucus and ask the Prime Minister to stop waging a war on job creation.

• (1715)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at a time when so many people have lost their jobs or are at risk of losing their jobs in the near future, the government is about to implement a new payroll tax and take more money off the paycheques of my constituents.

For those who are listening, who may not realize what is about to happen, the Liberal government is about to increase the amount of money taken off an individual's paycheque that goes to the Canada pension plan. Also, the amount of money that their employer pays into this plan will also increase.

For many Canadians, this amount of money coming off their paycheques will make it harder to pay their monthly bills. For employers, especially small businesses, this increase to their operating costs will force many to make choices on whether to hire more people or simply to let people go.

Today I want to do two things in debate. First, I want to refute the government's primary argument for doing this, and, second, I will refute the government's assertion that this is the best policy to help Canadians save for retirement. I will point out how many of its policies are actually detrimental to them doing so.

On the first point, this is a payroll tax increase. The Liberals believe that my constituents cannot be trusted to make the right decisions to save for their retirement. They want my constituents to believe that the lowly taxpayers do not have the capacity to plan for their own savings and manage their retirement. They want them to believe that dependence on their government in their old age is the path to their security. They want them to believe that the government's seizure and control of their funds is in their best interest.

While there is a role for government in many situations, the fundamental belief in the freedom of Canadians is what sets Liberals apart from common-sense people. Liberals believe that it is only through government control that Canadians can prosper; whereas common-sense Canadians understand that the government should exist to enable our freedom, not to diminish it.

When I listen to the rhetoric around this particular bill and this particular financial instrument, I hear the government saying that Canadians are not saving enough and the government will come in and save them. I hear nothing about how the government will enable their freedom and enable their choice to be economically prosperous.

There is a huge fallacy in trying to convince the Canadian population that the best way for them to plan for their old age, for their retirement security, is to depend upon a large bloated Liberal government. I cannot believe that the government would actually put out that duplicitous comment and not believe that there would be some sort of push-back from the Canadian population.

This is why it is not the correct policy at this point in time. First, the government is creating a crisis where there is none. Certainly we need to ensure that Canadian seniors are well taken care of, that they are well looked after and honoured in their retirement. This measure will not impact Canadian seniors who are already into their retirement. In fact, it will do absolutely nothing for them. This will not increase their pension or help their prospects. Moreover, this will certainly not help their children, which many retirees are concerned about. In fact, this will disable them and disadvantage them.

I think the Liberals have been trying to sell this plan as some form of curative for pensioners who are already in retirement, and we know that is not the case. The fact that there is duplicity in the communications is so dishonest.

Let us talk about people who are planning for their retirement right now. First, there has been no formal consultation to date, absolutely none. The government has not talked to anyone. The Liberals announced this with great fanfare, hoping the Canadian public would turn a blind eye to this absolutely abysmal piece of legislation, which is based on zero financial credibility, and, frankly, zero actuarial credibility. However, I digress.

Beyond the lack of consultation, I would like to see the government commit to creating jobs for Canadians and creating the economic conditions in which people can increase their opportunity for economic growth and prosperity.

In terms of looking at policy instruments which would enable the prosperity of Canadians and my constituents, the government has absolutely failed. The bill will not do this. All this does is take away Canadians' freedom and require more dependence on the government. That is shameful.

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● (1720)

Let us talk about these things. First, aside from the great arrogance of the government assuming that Canadians cannot save for themselves and must rely on the great saviourship of the Prime Minister and all of his wonderful gazes into the cameras, Liberals want to put in place a national tax on everything. There is the carbon tax, which will actually not reduce greenhouse gas emissions but only function as a GST, because, number one, they have not done any proper modelling in terms of price elasticity around the demand for carbon. It would only increase the price of everything for people who are struggling to make ends meet.

Liberals want to increase EI premiums, which would put a further chill on small businesses and job creation. They have put in place regulatory uncertainty for major resource projects. Anyone who is looking to invest in Canada right now is going to decide not to because of the political uncertainty, which also puts a chill on job creation. They are not doing anything to retain labour in my province of Alberta. They are allowing the best and brightest in Canada to bleed into the wind.

Liberals talk about increasing humanitarian levels of immigration without looking at the economic implications of that. They are running up a huge debt. I looked at some of the numbers that came out of the parliamentary budget office this year, and, in a non-recessionary period, the government is spending at unprecedented levels. If we are talking about the future of people's retirement, the level of debt that the Liberal government is going into is shameful. I cannot even think about this most of the time. Spending for spending's sake, rather than with any sort of outcome or goal, is not going to help Canadians with their retirement.

Moreover, the thing I find so fundamentally arrogant, in saying that only the government can help them save for their retirement with a program that might not be solvent at some future point, is the fact that the government eliminated the tax-free savings account increase that the Conservative government put in place. They said average Canadians cannot deal with that, average Canadians cannot be trusted with putting their own money into it. I know, without a shadow of a doubt, it is the people in my riding, who are now out of work in the energy sector because of the Liberal government's ideological opposition to that sector, who used the TFSA the most.

Rather than giving Canadians a vehicle in which to save their money, the government is saying it is not going to do that. It is going to take it away. Canadians are going to depend on the government and the Prime Minister and his sunny ways, because he is going to see everyone through with all of his financial acumen, his economic expertise, all of his great connections and understanding how to scrimp and save given his trust fund background. It is saying that everyone should trust in him, and he will show everyone and their children the way. Canadians do not believe that. That is hogwash.

Canadians need economic opportunity and a commitment to freedom, a commitment to understanding that it is Canadian families and workers who first and foremost understand how best to use their money. It is Canadian families who best understand what they need to do to make their families prosperous and give their children opportunities. Increasing CPP premiums, for many small business employers, boils down to a choice between one employee or two.

This is at a time when the government has sent a chill through investments and is sending that sort of message. Then it is deciding to put a further chill on investment right now. It is irresponsible and garbage.

I do not even understand how Canadians cannot be infuriated with the arrogance that the government is putting forward in this bill, in saying that Canadians do not know how to spend their own money or how to save for retirement. From the bottom of my soul and with every fibre of my being, I oppose this bill. Because of the arrogance of the leftist, socialist school of thought, that the government first and foremost knows best how people should spend their money and save for their futures, I oppose this bill, and I know many of my constituents do as well.

Instead of putting this absolute pile of garbage forward, I wish the government would commit to creating economic conditions in which investment could occur in Canada and small businesses could thrive. I wish the government would push back against harmful economic practices in fragile economies like Alberta, like a price floor on labour or a carbon tax. This is the sort of economic policy that bankrupts and fails countries. I hope that my colleagues will take that into account.

● (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is definitely passionate; I will give her that much. However, we will have to agree to passionately disagree in terms of her approach. She emulates what many of her Conservative colleagues have been talking about. There does seem to be a distaste coming from the Conservative Party toward the Canada pension plan.

My question is not that difficult. It is one that I started with the member's colleague who spoke prior to her. It is in regard to CPP in general. Can the member give the House any circumstance whatsoever where she could envision CPP being enhanced? If not today, is there another situation where the member would support it, or is she just outright against any enhancement? Is the Conservative Party outright against any enhancement ever of the CPP?

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, in order to enhance my constituents' retirement prospects, I am not looking just to the CPP. I want them to make more money. I want them to have more job opportunities. I want them to pay less tax. I want them to have more efficiency in government. I do not want them to have to see large debt loads for no reason, brought up just for vanity projects. I do not want my constituents to have to pay more in taxes because I have an environment minister who wants to rub shoulders with elites in Davos. I do not want my constituents to have to pay more in a payroll tax for something that is never going to benefit them in the future.

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This is the great Liberal fallacy, that somehow government can produce more freedom for economic opportunity for Canadians. It is this fallacy that the government is putting forward that will end in its electoral defeat.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, there was talk about how can we make this better. A lot of the member's business owners are saying they do not want it. However, when we were at the committee stage, we had a lot of organizations, such as the labour groups and the Canadian National Association of Federal Retirees, saying that because big corporations are not getting into the defined benefits plans or they want to get away from them, the only solution at this time in the three pillars is to expand the CPP. It would not fix all, but it was one of the ways to help our children in the future.

I am wondering, is the member saying that these organizations are wrong, or we have to look at other ways? What I heard is that the TFSAs are not working and the defined contributions are not working.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Madam Speaker, any time the government members tell us there is only one way to solve a problem, and it is the government's, we should be wary.

Some of the feedback that has been brought forward in terms of the efficacy of this particular policy instrument has included that the full new benefits will not be available until at least 39 years after 2025, when the initial implementation of the CPP expansion has been completed. There are questions about the accrual of \$1 trillion in assets. Where can one invest \$1 trillion today in a prudent fashion that will still earn adequate returns?

Will participants understand that his new tier does not bring guaranteed benefits? What will happen when they have to freeze or even reduce benefits and contributions? Is this politically feasible?

How will small plans respond? Will they respond just by closing? Many of these plans are well administered, and we should not create incentives for them to terminate.

What about a new working income tax benefit? Is that fair? Have we targeted the correct audience for this reform?

The bottom line is that there are many different ways that we can look at the question on how to incent Canadians to best save for their retirement. Certainly one of the best ways we can do that is by providing them with employment opportunities and a prospect of a government without severe debt, none of which the current government has any intention of doing.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, for many years now, the NDP has been fighting tirelessly for improvements to the Canada pension plan, so I can only be happy that it is finally happening. I would like to say that I will be supporting the main motion at report stage. However, I have to oppose the Conservative motions seeking to remove practically every clause in the bill.

Retirement insecurity is reaching crisis proportions in Canada, since many Canadians have been unable and are still unable to save

enough throughout their lives to maintain the same standard of living once they retire. At the end of the day, over 6% of seniors are living in poverty. We in the NDP believe that this increase is crucial in order to ensure that our seniors can retire with dignity.

Bill C-26 proposes adding a separate new tier to the current CPP. This new CPP tier would be implemented gradually over the next nine years, until 2025, and basically does the following two things: first of all, it raises the income replacement rate from 25% under the current CPP to 33%; second, it raises the earnings ceiling from where it is today at \$54,900 to \$82,700.

Once the transition period is complete in 2025, it will still be 40 years before people receive the full enhanced benefit. The first workers who will receive the full benefit are now 16 years old. Someone who is 59 in 2019 and who makes higher contributions for six years before retiring in 2025 at the age of 65 will receive no additional benefit.

It will take time for the changes to come into effect. The NDP believes that certain measures should be taken immediately to help seniors and Canadians on the verge of retiring who will not benefit from these changes.

The government needs to leverage the energy generated by this agreement and do what it takes to improve long-term retirement security for today's workers. It must respond to Quebec's concerns about the impact of this enhancement on low-income workers.

The NDP will keep fighting for other increases to the guaranteed income supplement and old age security as well as the national pharmacare program and the program to improve home care and palliative care.

As is often the case with the Liberals, when we take a closer look at their proposals, we quickly realize that everything is not always perfect. In fact, we need only look at some of the details of this bill to realize that some things are not as we would like them to be. One of them is the child rearing drop-out provision. That is a failure. As the NDP critic for families, children, and social development, I am having a great deal of difficulty understanding and accepting that the Liberals have not kept this child rearing drop-out provision, which is currently in the CPP. This measure ensures that women are not penalized for having left the labour market for a period of time in order to raise children. The Liberal bill also eliminates a similar clause for people who have received disability benefits under the CPP.

It is all very well to increase CPP benefits, but that is not all that should be done. The NDP worked very hard for the CPP to become a reality, and we are going to work very hard to ensure that this bill is not inequitable.

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Do members know why I am talking about inequality? It is because women are penalized for having children. Only 4.5% of women receive the maximum amount of benefits. I was really shocked to learn that because we have a Prime Minister who brags at every opportunity that his government supports women and that he is working hard to improve gender parity.

● (1735)

The Prime Minister is squandering an opportunity. I think it is safe to say that he has missed the mark. On the contrary, his government's bill is creating more inequality. It is not right. The fact that the Liberals do not even see the problem makes even less sense.

What we need to keep in mind is that 63% of low-income seniors living alone are women. Does the House understand how high that number is? We in the NDP think that this is unacceptable.

I see this reality in my riding. I see many seniors struggling to make ends meet at the end of the month, and they only make it thanks to the incredible commitment of community organizations back home such as St-Hyacinthe volunteer centre or the Acton Vale volunteer centre. They help our less fortunate seniors every day. Through their engagement and drive, these volunteers make seniors feel less isolated, get them to socialize, and help them continue making an invaluable contribution to the community, which in turn helps improve their quality of life and that of all our fellow citizens. Through their work, they constantly reflect the values of our wonderful community: independence, sharing, caring, loyalty, respect, dignity, and solidarity.

These two volunteer centres have been working with all of the other organizations in the Saint-Hyacinthe region for many years in order to promote volunteer work and help overcome the many challenges associated with meeting the community's growing needs. It is their desire to always want to do more for others that makes such a big difference.

It is time that the Liberal government followed suit. As the Prime Minister has said, in 2016, we cannot allow women to receive fewer benefits because they had to leave the labour market for a time to go on maternity leave. Allowing this to happen basically amounts to gender discrimination. It is unthinkable to give senior women 30% lower benefits than men.

Enhancing the CPP is one step, but more must be done to correct its flaws and injustices. The NDP wants to do more for people. That is why we believe in developing a holistic vision and improving Canada's socioeconomic safety net. That is what we are trying to do with my Bill C-245, which would create a national poverty reduction strategy to make things better for our seniors throughout their lives, not just in retirement.

That is the kind of holistic vision we need to develop to achieve a more inclusive and just society that leaves nobody behind. Doug MacPherson, national coordinator for the Steelworkers Organization, agrees. He welcomes the proposed CPP changes, but says they are an inadequate response to the critical situation facing many working Canadians when they reach retirement. He added that the government, which prides itself on passing evidence-based legislation, obviously failed to see the situation clearly this time around. Mr. MacPherson also said that it should be clear the current system

has some serious flaws that the proposed Canada pension plan changes will not fix.

Let us work together to help all seniors, but above all, our senior women.

● (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about this worldly vision, more of a holistic approach, dealing with the issue of poverty.

I appreciate what the member is saying, but I would remind her that two specific measures have been announced in the 2016-17 budget. The first is the Canada child benefit program, a program that will literally lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty. The second is a substantial increase to the GIS for Canada's most vulnerable, in particular single seniors. Again, this substantial increase will lift tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty.

I know the NDP voted against the overall budget, but could you give a clear indication of whether she supported those two initiatives?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I cannot give you that indication, but I am sure the member will be able to respond.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, taking a holistic approach specifically means taking into account the consequences of the measures we adopt, rather than being satisfied with going forward one case at a time.

What I said in my presentation is that we could think about the future of the CPP, but it was also important to help the seniors who are retired now and living in poverty. We cannot say that it does not matter because we are doing something else.

Taking a holistic approach means ensuring that all of our measures meet people's everyday needs.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about statistics and the percentage in terms of the lesser amount women would receive in CPP once they retired. Could she comment on the impact that this reduction in benefits means to the life of a Canadian senior woman?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, indeed, the whole issue of women is very important.

Throughout women's careers, there is one thing on top of another that all have an impact on their retirement. First of all, underpinning everything, women's wages are lower. In addition, when they choose to have children, and more often than not, it is not a choice, they have to stop working for long periods of time. All these things affect their retirement.

That is why, as my colleague emphasized, when we are making decisions regarding the Canada pension plan, it is important to consider the situation facing women and correct the inequalities that hurt them when they retire.

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising once again to speak to Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, at third reading. I feel strongly that this will be one of the largest tax increases in Canada's history and it will disproportionately impact middle-class Canadians.

During the second reading debate, I was asked a question by the member for Avalon concerning my comments made at that time, that this CPP increase was a tax hike given that if contributors to the program died before they were eligible to claim CPP benefits, the entirety of these accrued benefits would not flow to their partners or their dependents.

The member for Avalon pointed out that because he, a sitting member of parliament, was receiving CPP survivor benefits, this major CPP contribution rate hike was not a tax.

I would like to make a couple of observations regarding the member's assertion.

Only persons who are not collecting CPP pensions are eligible for the survivor benefit. These individuals can qualify for up to 60% of the contributor's retirement pension if the surviving spouse or common-law partner is not receiving other CPP benefits.

Even under the most generous of circumstances, the spouse or common-law partner of someone who had paid into the CPP his or her entire working life would only be able to collect a maximum of 60% of his or her pension, and this would not be done as a lump sum payment but rather in installments.

If a family experienced a tragedy where both the contributor and his or her spouse or common-law partner were unable to collect CPP benefits, these full benefits would not be passed on to the children or grandchildren.

On the other hand, if that same person had consistently contributed to a registered retirement savings plan, the entire value of those contributions would be passed on to his or her next of kin, regardless of whether that person had his or her own CPP pension.

As the member knows, RRSPs invest in securities that hold similar risk profiles to investments made by the CPP Investment Board, so the risk of losses are comparable to the CPP.

I would assert, once more, that this is a tax hike. There is really no way around that.

Government Orders

For greater clarity, let us look at the dictionary definition of the word "tax", which is "A compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits".

The CPP contributions are compulsory. They are being levied by the government on income, and they are going to be used by the federal government to provide for pensions. Therefore, it is a tax.

Also, the Liberals are not being forthcoming with the actual size of the increase in CPP premiums they would be imposing on contributors. The Liberals should call a spade a spade and admit that it is a tax hike and tell folks making more than \$54,000 just how much more they will have to pay out of each paycheck.

Today, Canadians are contributing 10% of their income between the basic exemption, which is \$3,500, and the maximum pensionable earnings amount, which is \$54,900, into the CPP. When the bill is fully implemented, contributions on income between the minimum threshold and \$54,000 will increase from 10% to 12%. CPP contributions on income between \$54,000 and \$82,000 will increase from zero to 12%. CPP contributions on incomes of \$82,000 and above would increase from zero to 8%. That is hardly a gentle push to save more.

This would one of the largest single-year increases in taxes for middle-class Canadians in Canada's history, and it would be middle-class Canadians who would be bearing the largest increase in premiums relative to their income.

Every Canadian making more than \$54,000 would see the percentage of each paycheck that would go to the CPP increase by significantly more than 2%.

● (1745)

Many will see their contribution rates rise by up to eight percentage points. That is 8% more of each paycheck they will not take home. Anybody who claims that increasing CPP contributions by eight percentage points will not have an impact on a family's bottom line is just wrong.

In a country like Canada where credit is fairly easily available, people can replace the income they will lose from the increase in mandatory contributions through greater borrowing. There are a number of Canadians who will not be able to reduce their overall household expenditures by 8% to maintain a balanced budget and may be put in the position where they have to borrow in order to continue to afford their mortgage or car payments, for example. While it is unwise to borrow money to offset any decrease in income by an increase in CPP premiums, it probably will happen.

For folks making above \$54,000 per year looking to pay off their mortgage as quickly as possible, or individuals who may be looking to pay off their student loans earlier, the reduction in take-home pay will have a real impact on how quickly they can pay off their debt. Are people really better off if they are putting aside more money for retirement instead of paying off their mortgage or their debts more quickly?

Government Orders

This legislation would not increase take-home pay. It would not create new money. Therefore, an increase in payments in one area of household expenditures necessitates a decrease in another. Unfortunately, with the recklessness that the Liberals are entering Canada into long-term structural deficits, they do not seem to realize that families have to stick to a budget and make ends meet. The buck stops there.

Folks in my riding have also pointed out that higher payroll taxes negatively impact the competitiveness of businesses. One area it will really hurt is self-employed individuals who will have to pay both the employer and employee portion of the CPP. Therefore, they will have less capital to put back into their businesses.

A financial planner from Martensville made the following point to me, which I hope the finance minister will take seriously. He said that he encouraged those young people who came to him for financial advice to start saving even just a small amount for their retirement while they were young. However, he said now these same young people would be forced to divert that small amount to the CPP rather than their own savings and retirement plans.

With this CPP tax hike, the Liberal government is actually discouraging young people from saving by taking the small amount that they might have been able to put into a TFSA or an RRSP and taxing it away. If we want Canadians to save for their future, why would we take away their choice on how to do just that?

I am hopeful that all those new nominally independent senators will undertake due diligence and not simply rubber stamp what is clearly ruinous legislation to middle-class Canadians. The CPP is a contribution program. An increase in benefits is only made possible by a corresponding increase in contributions. Depending on their circumstances, Canadians may or may not get back what they put into the program, as I mentioned earlier in my comments. Every household will have to adjust to the reality that the government does not trust it enough to save for its retirement and can only begin to worry about what the Liberals plan to do next to make Canadians, who knows, eat more vegetables, exercise more regularly, and the list goes on and on.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

While I understand the Conservative position that we should ask less of the government, I cannot help but ask my colleague the following question.

All of us in the House today, perhaps the Conservatives less than the rest of the members of Parliament, can see how there will be benefits in 50 years. However, everyone agrees that there is nothing for an urgent situation, now. The fact remains that the Conservative approach did not seem to work in 10 years, since so many seniors are heading to a system where there will be great insecurity.

What does my hon. colleague have to say about that?

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I want to point out something I have said time and time again, that Conservatives do believe in reasonable evidence-based policies to help Canadians retire with dignity.

I know I mentioned these statistics in earlier speeches, but according to Statistics Canada, the percentage of low-income seniors was 29% in 1970, and today it is 3.7%, so clearly this is a significant improvement.

The best way to prevent poverty in old age is to give people the tools they need to save money and to let them make their own choices, based on their own needs and means. They know how to manage their money, not the government, especially not this government that wants to take money out of their pockets.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have made it very clear that they will not support this bill. I can appreciate that. If it were up to the Conservative Party, the bill would never see the light of day. We saw some of that with their moving some 60 amendments to the bill.

Is there a time or situation in the future when the Conservative Party would support the enhancement? We understand that today, the Conservatives want to kill the bill and will debate it endlessly, but the issue is, will there ever be a time that the member could see the Conservative Party supporting an enhancement to the Canada pension plan?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, one of the things I learned early on when I became a member of Parliament is never to speculate. Therefore, I do not want to speculate on whether or not there would ever be such a time.

What I can say today about the CPP is that from 1966 to 1986 the contribution rate was 3.6%. These original contributions were far lower than what is being contemplated today at 11.9%. At 11.9%, the government is replacing private sector retirement plans, which was not the intent of the original legislation.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek for her wise words. Being from Saskatchewan, I know she understands what the Liberal government has done to the coal industry. It has created the potential for huge job losses in a town called Coronach, where there is a mining company and a power generation company. Could she expand a little more on how jobs will be affected by the CPP changes and how they will accommodate that?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, this is a payroll tax. When I was in my riding during our break week in November, I heard this over and over again. It is a payroll tax that will increase the cost of doing business for everyone, and it will have an impact on their bottom line. The facilities in the member's riding will be no exception.

Government Orders

I found it very interesting to hear one of the members on the government side basically shrug off these concerns and say that some businesses would have to increase the prices of what they are producing, or their services, or they might need to close their doors. I would say that Canadians will be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. Unfortunately, the time is up.

The hon. government House leader has a point of order?

BILL C-26—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to advise that agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages.

Some hon. members: Shame.

• (1800)

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, obviously there is quite a bit of surprise and disgust in the House at what we have just seen take place from the government side. This is the second time that we have had the invocation of closure on the same bill. The Liberals did not want to let every member who was interested speak to it at second reading, and they do not want to let every member interested in speaking now speak to it at report stage. It is critical that we have a full airing and discussion of the bill.

Perhaps not every bill before the House requires the same amount of debate and discussion, but this is one of critical importance. This is a piece of legislation that will kill jobs, that will kill businesses, that will make it harder for families to make ends meet. This is a bill that very much ignores what ordinary people and business leaders are telling us in the House we need to do. Rather than giving it a proper airing, rather than having a full discussion, again we have a notice of closure motion, and I know we will be discussing this further tomorrow.

As I reflect on the points that I wanted to make, I appreciate that unlike many members on this side of the House, I will actually have an opportunity to speak to this. When I think about this, as I think about many of the other bills that we discuss, I think about my children. My daughter Gianna is three and a half, and my son Judah is just over one, and I think about what the bill will mean for them in the long term, as they move eventually into adulthood, as they try to

live well economically and in other respects, and as they move toward retirement. What can I do, as a legislator, that will pass on the best possible country to my children?

That means having a strong society, a strong culture, but what can we do when it comes to the economic sphere that will position my children well? I think we can do what we know builds to a strong economy. We can encourage the kind of economy that is growing, that is creating jobs and opportunities. That does not mean an economy in which the government controls everything. That means an economy in which we have a robust private sector that is creating jobs and opportunity for my children and for other people, now and into the future.

The fundamental mistake of the bill is that if we care about people's well-being, about people's economic situation, and we care about their retirement, the natural conclusion of caring is control. If the government cares about people's retirement, it has to control it. It has to take more of their money and put it aside for them. Our view, as the Conservative Party, is unique within the House, in that we believe that caring does not require control. We can care about the economy and yet recognize that a strong economy requires a strong, and, to some extent, regulated, but not an overly controlled private marketplace, because that is where wealth and opportunity are generated. That is where the creative ideas that spur economic growth come from. That is the source of the innovation that will allow my children to have a better standard of living than I do. It is a strong private sector that creates those long-term opportunities.

Repeatedly, we are accused by other members of the House of not caring about retirement, of not being interested in a stronger retirement situation for our seniors. However, the difference is not one of caring; it is one of control. We understand that just because we care does not mean we need to control. In fact, the best expression of care for people's well-being in the context of the economic realities we experience, is giving people control over their own retirement, but at the same time giving them the tools that allow them to succeed and do well. That can mean, as we did when we were in government, strengthening tools like the OAS. It can mean providing significant tax cuts for seniors, bringing in income splitting for seniors. As we committed to in the last election campaign, it was having a single seniors tax credit. We significantly increased the age exemption, for example. We brought in a full host of tax reductions for seniors that allowed seniors to live in a stronger economic position.

• (1805)

However, caring does not mean controlling. We cared, and we handed control over to individual seniors in terms of their own retirement. That was our own unique approach, but other parties believe that if we care, we have to then advocate for more government involvement.

Government Orders

Then, when we advocate for this balance between the existing CPP as well as stronger savings vehicles and tax cuts for seniors, they say that we must oppose the CPP in its entirety, as if there is this inescapable binary between the big expansion the Liberals have proposed and complete abolition on the other. No, we think that we have a system that is working fairly well, not perfectly, but that the enhancements can come in really identifying those who need the help the most and providing them with core supports and tax reductions, but always leave our seniors in control of their retirement and do not put in the process undue burden on our businesses. This is the connection. In trying to control people's retirement, the government is raising taxes on small business. It is introducing new higher payroll taxes for our small businesses. This will hurt economic growth. It will kill jobs, kills businesses, and reduce opportunity. It will reduce the opportunities that are available for my children and everyone else's.

I want to make another specific point about the contradiction in the logic that we are seeing from the government. On the one hand, the Liberals are introducing a carbon tax. They say that a carbon tax is necessary to reduce carbon. They say that if we do not like something, we should tax it in order to reduce it. That is their argument. On the other hand, today we are debating a bill where they would increase the tax on employment. Therefore, if their view is that a tax is a disincentive, then surely that applies as much in this case as it applies in the case of their arguments with respect to a carbon tax. They cannot have it both ways. If a carbon tax is their strategy for reducing carbon, then what is a tax on employment but a transparent measure that will certainly, perhaps not intentionally, be a measure that will have the effect of reducing employment?

On this side of the House, we oppose increasing taxes on Canadians. We strongly oppose this new tax on employment. We think we can more effectively support people by giving them the resources themselves. We also oppose the carbon tax. It will reduce production and hurt the economy, and it will not actually increase the efficiency of production. It will simply chase those emissions across borders. It will not have the impact that the Liberals desire. However, the Liberals really have to reconcile in terms of their own economic logic whether or not they think a tax is a disincentive. If they think a tax is a disincentive in the case of carbon, then the same principle exactly applies when it comes to employment.

Finally, I want to underline that we have a choice here. We have advocated strengthening private savings vehicles and providing tax reductions as an alternative that helps current and future seniors, but does not hurt our economy. One of the major advantages of private savings is that it actually allows people to use those savings in a more flexible way throughout their lives.

Most people I know save for different major projects throughout their lives, which then helps them economically in the future. People might save up for post-secondary education. That post-secondary education allows them to have a greater earning potential. Then they save up to buy a home, and they might save up for a small business, or for some kinds of personal investments, which then build up to that savings for retirement. They can realize the value of that education throughout their life, with that home if they choose to sell it, or perhaps if they choose to sell that small business.

Therefore, private savings give individuals greater flexibility whereas a government-controlled savings mechanism, like the Liberals are talking about with higher taxes and then future disbursements, means that the government is taking money away from people, and they do not have the opportunity to use those savings throughout their life. They do not have the opportunity to make those investments, get an education, a home, or a business, which are things that help them and generate a stronger economy.

As I think about my children, Gianna and Judah, and what this bill means for them, I am going to strongly oppose the bill knowing that we are better off caring but not controlling.

● (1810)

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member raised an interesting point that I had not heard raised before with regard to comparing the carbon tax and what the Conservatives, in this instance, say is a payroll tax.

The member mentions that that would be a good example to show that we are not being consistent. However, in fact, on this side of the House, we do not believe that the Canada pension plan imposes a payroll tax. It is the Conservatives who are saying it is a payroll tax.

Therefore, I would like the member to understand that if it is payroll tax and that is going to mean that job creators are not hiring people, then that obviously means that it does affect behaviour. Taxes affect behaviour. Conservatives are the ones who think it is a payroll tax. Therefore, the carbon tax would affect behaviour and consumption.

I would like to turn the member's argument on its head. The Conservatives are the ones who are saying it is payroll tax, when on this side of the House we say see it as an investment in Canadians' future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the carbon tax, I believe it will affect behaviour but the effect will be to send industry over the border. It might affect Canadian emissions, but it will not affect global emissions. It will not actually address the problem.

I will just say this. The Liberals do not want to call this a tax. Whether or not we call it a tax, the fact is a tax by any other name smells just as bad. The economic impact of this is that it acts like a tax, even if the Liberals want to call it something else. If the government charges an extra fee, a deduction, a new made-up word, a levy, or something or other on top of something else, that creates a disincentive for it.

Most economists would use the word "tax". I am agnostic on the word, but fundamentally, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and other experts tell us very clearly what the impact will be. It will kill jobs. It will kill businesses. It will hurt wages.

Government Orders

We know that that is the impact, again, regardless of the language the government wants to use.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to return to the issue of whether we call this a tax or not.

Part of what Canadians are going to work for is not just wages for today, they also want to retire eventually. Their pension package is part of the wage package. To call the CPP increase a tax increase would be the same as calling their wage a tax. When such a broad definition of taxation is used, it just kind of stops making sense. If every cost incurred by an employer is a tax, that would not make any sense at all.

Canadians are going to work. They want to defer some of their wages in order to be able to take their retirement. This is a sensible way of doing that. I do not think calling it a tax adds anything to this debate. In fact, I think it really obfuscates what Canadians are going to work for. I do not think the debate is moved ahead at all by referring to the CPP increase as a tax, just as debates about wages would not be advanced if we suddenly started calling people's wages "taxes".

I wonder what the member thinks about that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is important to point out the strong attention that our friends on the political left pay to redefining language away from the clearest possible wording.

As I said, members can call it a tax, a levy, or a deduction. Here are the facts: if there is a mandatory portion of a person's pay that the government is taking away from them, it does not have to be called a tax, but economically it behaves like a tax. Economically, it introduces a disincentive relative to the person's previous position. It means that compared to prior to the deduction, they are relatively worse off and relatively less likely to engage in that behaviour, because the amount they are taking home as a result of it is less.

That is the basic economic logic here. Again, it does not matter what the members call it, but the behaviour of it is exactly the same.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take up a certain point in this debate that I do not think has got quite enough attention.

We often talk about the fact that the proposed CPP increase would not do a lot for seniors today, and that is likely true. It is in the nature of the plan. Pensions plans are about building for the future, and if we want to do something for seniors today, there are other things we can should do, but the fact that the CPP would really only benefit people 40 years from now is just saying that it would benefit the young people who are entering the workforce today. I do not see that as a vice of the proposed increase at all.

Though there are some problems with the bill, I want to take a moment to put on the record that with the increases to the CPP, the virtue of the bill is that for young people who are facing a different work environment than my parents did and, frankly, than my grandparents did, the CPP has a lot to offer.

It has a lot to offer in a couple of ways. One, and I think the most important one, is the portability of the plan and the fact that it goes from employer to employer. No matter what province an individual

is working in, they and their employer will continue to pay into the CPP, and that is a cumulative benefit that they will receive over their entire life.

I think there is real advantage to that in a labour market that we know is changing and is causing young people today, first, to have trouble finding work in the first place. When they do, it is not long-term, permanent work. Young people today will not only be changing employers many times, but will likely change careers many times.

The idea was that an individual would find a company pension. That was part of the three pillars of retirement savings planning when CPP was brought in. People would have a public pension, a company pension and their private savings, which were meant to represent only a third of what they would need to retire, because people at that time recognized that asking people to save for the entirety of their retirement was in all likelihood setting the bar too high.

The company pension was meant to be a pillar. We no longer have that. Even if some young Canadians today are lucky enough to get hired by a company that does offer some kind of pension scheme, it is very unlikely they will stay with that employer for 25 or 30 years. That means it will be hard for them to receive the full benefit of that pension plan.

Even if they are employed for 20 or 30 years by a couple of different employers with their own versions of retirement plans, whether some kind of defined benefit plan, although those are disappearing very quickly, or different defined contributions plans or pooled RRSPs or whatever the mechanism is, in order for them to receive their retirement benefit and their income, they will have to be in touch with and interacting with multiple financial institutions and plans to cobble together that income that at one time would have come from one comprehensive company plan and the CPP.

The CPP can step in to play an important role for young people who are struggling to find and keep employment and who would like to retire one day. The fact they are working on contract and are not guaranteed work past eight months, or a year or two years, does not mean they want to keep doing that for the rest of their lives. In fact, I submit that many of them would be very happy to sign on with a company that promised them long-term employment with good benefits and a pension plan that they felt they could rely on.

That is a really important benefit. The cost or the direct financial details aside, this is a good way for young people facing a very challenging labour market to be able to put together some kind of pension plan that provides a defined benefit. In the private sector, defined benefit plans are disappearing. It seems another one disappears every day, but it is important, if an individual wants to be able to plan for their retirement, to have a sense of how much income they will have.

We know from the experience of 2008 that the situation can change very quickly when all of the risk is put on the individual and the market goes south, for reasons beyond the control of any one particular Canadian. It means that their retirement savings can disappear overnight.

Government Orders

The retirement savings that were kept by the Canada pension plan did not disappear overnight. If they are like most Canadians, who unfortunately had a lot of their retirement savings disappear overnight in the stock market, I think most people would be glad to know that what they did put into the CPP would still be there for them, and gladder still, if that were a more significant percentage of their overall retirement income.

• (1815)

It is a benefit in that it follows people around, and that is important for young workers. It is a benefit to them too in that it provides a kind of core defined benefit around which they can plan the rest of their retirement savings.

We have heard a lot of members talk about the role of individual responsibility and the importance of savings. As a principle, it is impossible to impeach that. It is important for people to take responsibility, but one way they can do that is by making collective decisions and electing governments that have proposed and are implementing a good public pension. I do not see this as government taking away people's money and planning for them. I see this as Canadians making decisions about who to elect, based on platforms that have to do with collective decision-making.

The CPP offers a better retirement alternative than many Canadians would be able to find in the private sector. That is true in part because it shares the risk across all working Canadians. It is true in part because it has some of the lowest administrative fees. It is true in part because it is a fully portable plan. It is also true because one of the deceptions in the position of Conservatives in the House, when it comes to individual savings, is that somehow all Canadians are equal in the access that they enjoy to plans that provide good returns. I do not think anyone who has any knowledge of retirement savings could honestly get up in this place and say it does not matter how much money people have to invest in a mutual fund or with a particular financial planner or adviser to determine what rate of return they get. We know that all they have to do is walk into a bank and they will be told that if they have \$25,000 instead of \$5,000 they can get a higher interest rate on their savings account. That principle continues to apply, and those returns continue to increase exponentially with the amount of wealth people have.

When it comes to the CPP, all Canadians are treated equally, and their savings dollar goes just as far whether they are saving a bit because they get paid \$14 an hour, or a lot because they are they paid \$50 an hour. There is a basic issue of fairness. No one is saying that the CPP should be 100% of Canadians' retirement income, but it needs to be an important pillar and there is an important issue of fairness there that needs to be addressed.

Fairness in the CPP is an important principle and it is one of the reasons that we in the NDP have been disappointed that certain provisions instituted by previous Liberal governments, previous Trudeau governments for that matter, in order to ensure fairness for the CPP, are not present in this round of increases for the CPP. I am speaking in particular about dropout provisions for women who have to leave the workforce or decide to leave the workforce because they want to spend time with their children and do not want those years counted toward their overall benefit because that would punish them in terms of the benefit that they get out of the CPP. Likewise, I am

speaking about people with disabilities who also may have to take time out of the workforce and do not want those years counted toward their overall benefit because they did not earn very much in those years, obviously, if they were not working to their full potential. That is a principle of fairness that traditionally had been recognized by Liberals, and it has been unfortunate to see that the current Liberals refuse to recognize that principle of fairness in the CPP.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain has done a great job of identifying what I hope was an oversight by the Liberals. If it was not an oversight, that is even worse. If it was an oversight, I do not think the Liberals have handled it very well because what they should have done was admit that they made a mistake, that they missed that, and made a commitment to return to the table and secure the appropriate changes before ramming this bill through. Instead, they decided to use time allocation hoping they could bust it through before Canadians started paying attention. I think that is shameful, and I was sad to see it. I do want to commend, once again, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who identified the problem and offered amendments in committee. When those amendments were not accepted because they have financial implications and the government would need to champion them, the member moved a motion calling on the committee to recommend to the government that it undertake to do that. Even that was shut down. It has been very disappointing to see the Liberals not continue what, until now with the current government, had been a tradition of Liberals' recognizing that basic principle of fairness with respect to the CPP.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been very clear that there will be another round of talks with his provincial counterparts about what to do in the future regarding CPP.

The member seemed to be disappointed with the time allocation. Yet we know the Conservative Party has made a commitment to defeat the bill. The best way for the Conservative Party to defeat it is to ensure that it never sees the light of day, to continue talking and talking. The Conservatives have demonstrated that they can talk endlessly against this bill and it would never come to a vote.

Would my colleague rather the legislation pass or allow the Conservatives to ultimately kill the bill?

• (1825)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I usually defer to experts in subject areas, and I know the member for Winnipeg North is an expert in talking endlessly. However, in this case I am afraid I cannot. It is often the case that opposition parties oppose government bills. In this case, his argument would be a lot stronger if the government would fix some of the basic problems with the bill that the member for Hamilton Mountain has identified.

Essentially, what he is saying is that the Conservatives are willing to give the Liberals all the time they need to fix the bill. Instead, the Liberals have used time allocation and will pass it without the fixes. The member's position would be much stronger if Liberals would fix the bill and then we could have this debate again.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked this question of the member previously, and I hope he has had a chance to revise his answer.

Seniors today know that this bill will not help them one iota, not a bit. How do we tell seniors today that this bill is not going to help them?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, this was the point that I was trying to address in the first part of my speech. We need to take measures to help seniors today, which is important. There is a range of things we could do, whether it is investments in affordable housing, or raising the GIS or OAS. A national pharmacare program would be a great benefit for seniors, but we do not hear the Liberals or Conservatives talking about that.

The point I was trying to make was that we should be thinking of this as a policy for young people, and that was not a bad thing. It is okay to make good policy for young people in our country as well. While there are a lot of things we need to do for seniors, I do not think it is a reason not to proceed with this particular change simply because it, in and of itself, does nothing for seniors. This is a policy for young people. That is okay. When we talk about pension planning over 30 or 40 years, that inherently will be for young people. That much time is needed in order to have an effective and successful retirement plan.

We are having the conversation, and this is going to benefit my children. I am very happy to vote for something that will be of benefit to them, even though it will not benefit my grandmother.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague who always delivers such eloquent speeches.

I would like his opinion on something that is going through my mind. The Liberals are boasting about a bill that is nothing more than a long-range 50-year plan.

It would be like me telling my two-month-old daughter that I was going to put \$1 a month away for her education and in 20 years it would amount to a lot of money. That is sound management, but it is nothing to write home about. The truth is, there are serious problems that need to be addressed right away.

What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, there certainly are serious problems that need to be addressed.

We have to do something about affordable housing, health, and drug prices. It is good to adopt measures for young people, but that is not an excuse to not deal with these other problems. We must not choose just one or the other of these issues. We must address them at the same time.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, this will be my fifth Christmas as a parliamentarian.

For five years, I have been hoping that the government, either Conservative or Liberal, would give an extraordinary Christmas present to the people of Mauricie by finally dealing with the problem of pyrrhotite once and for all.

There are two aspects to this important issue. The first, of course, is financial support for the victims. This part has already been resolved and we know the government's response, in that it has offered \$10 million a year, over three years, for the pyrrhotite victims. Although this is well below what is needed, we welcome these amounts.

The other problem, which is just as important as the first, is the review of the quality standard for aggregates used in concrete, and I will explain to the House why this is important.

On the one hand, it is important because many victims still do not know whether they will receive compensation, given that the provincial claims program uses a standard that is not scientifically proven and compliant with a certain consensus reached at the first trial.

The judge in this case also asked that the quality standard for aggregates used in concrete be reviewed to ensure that it is based on clear scientific evidence. I would like to add that this is the only way that the Government of Canada can ensure that the problem facing the Mauricie, as well as an increasing number of other regions in Canada, does not continue to grow and does not extend beyond the current victims.

We must also keep in mind that policies and standards are generally reviewed every five years. The standard on aggregates in concrete was therefore reviewed in 2015, which would be funny if it were not so shameful.

The 2015 review of this standard did very little. Since no scientific study was conducted to arrive at a specific number, as was done for the European standard, for example, the standard merely indicates that the stone aggregate used to mix concrete should not contain more than 0.1 pyrrhotite. However, "should not" does not set out an obligation.

Every time I asked this question, to either the Liberal government or the previous Conservative government, I was always told that this was a provincial problem because the building code falls under provincial jurisdiction.

I would like to remind members that the Quebec building code is made up of federally established standards. There is a whole series of standards that must be followed. Reviewing the federal standard for aggregates used in concrete would help ensure that all of the other resulting standards are followed.

My question is simple. Does the Liberal government intend to do something about the quality standard for aggregates used in concrete?

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Trois-Rivières is very familiar with the steps this government has taken to assist homeowners in Quebec whose foundations have been affected by pyrrhotite. We are taking actions even though the federal government bears no responsibility for this problem. This is something we have made clear on previous occasions, and in our platform.

Perhaps a more detailed explanation for the member will be helpful. Indeed, some hon. members may not be familiar with this issue, so let me begin by providing some background.

In the mid-1990s, contractors in some parts of Quebec began to use concrete containing pyrrhotite, a mineral that can cause deterioration, over time, as slabs are exposed to water. Hundreds of homes in Trois-Rivières and Maskinongé have been affected by the problem, which typically requires the costly replacement of the foundation.

The member for Trois-Rivières believes that the federal standards for the aggregates used in concrete is at the root of the problem. This is simply not the case.

First, it is important to understand that the provinces and territories regulate the design and construction of new houses and buildings. This is why, when Canadians want to build or renovate their homes, they apply to the local municipality, not the federal government, for the necessary permits.

The National Model Construction Codes are prepared under the direction of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes, with the goal of promoting technical consistency of regulations and market uniformity across Canada. However, it is up to the authorities that publish building codes in each province and territory to decide whether to adopt the codes.

More to the point is that the use of expansive aggregates such as pyrrhotite in concrete has been prohibited under the National Building Code for more than 20 years. The fact is that federal construction standards banned the use of pyrrhotite in concrete before these problems began to emerge in Quebec. The member for Trois-Rivières is asking the federal government to do something that has already been done.

It is also worth noting that in June 2014, the Quebec Superior Court concluded that professional technical consultants, suppliers, and contractors involved in the supply of faulty concrete were responsible for this economic and human tragedy.

However, our government is more concerned with doing the right thing than assigning blame. That is why in budget 2016, we included a commitment to provide up to \$30 million, over three years, to help homeowners who are dealing with the consequences of pyrrhotite.

That commitment is now being fulfilled through an agreement signed by the governments of Canada and Quebec on July 11.

Under this agreement, the Société d'habitation du Québec has been given the green light to begin delivering the federal funds through the existing Quebec program to compensate homeowners

who have been impacted by pyrrhotite. This is the quickest and fairest way to deliver assistance to affected homeowners.

I would encourage the member for Trois-Rivières to recognize the government's efforts in this regard.

● (1835)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Madam Speaker, not only do I recognize these efforts, but I referred to them in my first question.

My second question will be far more direct. The government's representative told us that even though the government is not assuming responsibility, which I do not understand because it is a federal standard, it is prepared to do the right thing.

I have a very specific question. Is the federal government participating or does it intend to participate in the research program set up by Laval University, the Régie du bâtiment du Québec, and the Centre de recherche sur les infrastructures en béton to finally have a scientific base for evaluating the quality of aggregates used in concrete?

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, while I appreciate the member's frustration, as he is working on behalf of his constituents, I believe he is aiming it at the wrong target. As I noted earlier, the National Building Code has prohibited the use of pyrrhotite in concrete since 1995, and the Quebec Superior Court recently ruled that responsibility for this problem lies with technical consultants, suppliers, and contractors who were involved in supplying the faulty concrete.

What has changed over the past year is that our government has engaged on this issue. I think the hon. member appreciates that. While the previous government was indifferent to the financial hardship of affected homeowners, we are collaborating with the province to provide \$30 million in federal assistance to them.

I am sure the member will acknowledge that this is the right thing to do.

● (1840)

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have risen in the House to ask many questions of the government on softwood lumber, and I have yet to receive an answer on this very pressing issue. I have heard the government squabble back and forth with the Conservatives about which government has neglected this file the most. Canadians will lose their jobs, and all I hear from the government is a child's argument that well, they did not do it either. Enough with the finger pointing. Canadians deserve answers.

Two months ago, I asked the Minister of International Trade what her plan was to protect jobs. Everyone knew that it was only a matter of time before we were hit with new tariffs and unfair trade measures by the United States. Now the industry has filed a petition calling for duties, which we know can be applied retroactively.

Adjournment Proceedings

While it is true that we have never lost a case before us, it is also true that these cases are extremely expensive and have resulted in the closure of over 400 mills and the loss of over 20,000 jobs. This has had a serious impact on many communities across this country where people rely on good-paying jobs in the forestry sector.

I hear the minister telling us that she is talking to the U.S. trade representative, but talk will not change the fact that we will lose more jobs without a plan. At this point, we are calling on the minister to tell us how specifically she intends to support this important industry in Canada to ensure that mills are not closed and jobs are not lost.

I hope that when I ask these questions today of the government, we will finally get the answers that thousands of Canadians want to know. Will the Liberal government provide loan guarantees? How much will it provide? How will it be regionally applied? Can the minister assure people working in the forestry sector that they will not lose their jobs because of the current government's inaction?

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

Our government is guilty of neither negligence nor inaction. The softwood lumber industry is very important to Canada. It is a key component of Canada's forestry sector and the Canadian economy because it generates some 260,000 jobs.

The industry is also an economic driver for many rural communities. The United States is Canada's main export market for softwood lumber, so it is clear that maintaining stable, predictable access to the American market is critical to the industry's ongoing success.

The government recognizes that, which is why it has made the softwood lumber file a priority since coming to power. The minister, Ambassador MacNaughton, and I have done a lot of work on this file, and we will continue to do so. We have taken part in an exhaustive consultation process with Canadian stakeholders, a process that is still ongoing, to ensure that Canada's negotiating position reflects the whole range of Canadian interests. Consultations revealed a clear preference for a negotiated agreement, and the Liberal government acted accordingly by opening talks with the United States earlier this year.

In a joint statement with President Obama on June 29, 2016, the Prime Minister described the main features of a new agreement. In addition, in order to reach a mutually acceptable agreement with the United States, the minister regularly discussed the softwood lumber issue with her American counterpart, Ambassador Michael Froman, including at the APEC summit in Lima just recently.

Officials from Global Affairs Canada have also been working tirelessly on this file as they continue intensive negotiations with their American counterparts. Since October 2015, there have been 18 negotiating sessions in addition to regular informal discussions, all with the goal of reaching a new softwood lumber agreement.

Canada finds it unfortunate that the U.S. forest industry has asked the Department of Commerce and the ITC to investigate the countervailing and anti-dumping duties regarding Canadian softwood lumber imports. These claims are unfounded. The Government of Canada would prefer to come up with a negotiated solution. However, Canada will relentlessly defend the interests of the Canadian softwood lumber industry, including in the case of disputes, whether before the WTO, under NAFTA, or before the American courts.

The Liberal government will continue to work with the provinces and territories, the industry, workers, and other stakeholders to defend Canada's interests. We want to get a good deal for our softwood lumber industry, not just any deal.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's concern for forestry workers in our country. He spoke about inaction, and raising the issue is inaction. At this point we need assurances for people who work in this sector. A petition has been filed. Jobs will be lost. If it is a priority, then where is the plan? There has been no answer on the loan guarantees. There has been no answer on how much money these might be, and there has been no answer on how they would be regionally applied.

If Liberals' are not going to stand up for forestry jobs in this country, I can assure all Canadians, especially the 260,000 people who work in the forestry sector, that the NDP will.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Lametti: Madam Speaker, the government will continue to work hard to make progress on the softwood lumber file. Canada prefers a negotiated agreement, but it will not hesitate to vigorously defend the interests of Canada's softwood lumber industry before the courts. The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of the softwood lumber industry, considers it a priority, and gives priority to this file.

We will negotiate a good agreement for Canada and not just any agreement. We will continue to work with the country's stakeholders to move forward in the softwood lumber file.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:47 p.m.)

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