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(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 2, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 2, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to five petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.) Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled “Air Canada's Implementation of the Official Languages Act: Aiming for Excellence”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I would like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, as follows: the member for Beauport—Limoilou, the member for Drummond, the member for Madawaska—Restigouche, the member for Charlottetown, who is the parliamentary secretary, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, the member for Calgary Midnapore, the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, the member for Sudbury, the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, and the member for Saint-Boniface—Saint-Vital.

The committee does remarkable teamwork. We are always working towards the same goals. This morning, we are submitting a unanimous report to the House. I am fortunate to chair an extraordinary committee.

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-383, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (psychotherapeutic services).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to introduce my private member's bill, which would amend the Excise Tax Act in order to exempt psychotherapeutic services delivered by a psychotherapist from the goods and services tax.

Once passed, this bill will ensure that psychotherapists are treated the same as their fellow practitioners in other health care fields who do the same kind of work and who are exempt from the excise tax.

I urge the government to get behind this very simple but very necessary bill to rectify this blatant tax inequality. The government says that Canadians' mental health is a priority, so this is an opportunity to do something good for Canadians' mental health and for tax fairness in Canada too.

I hope that the government will get behind this bill. I am prepared to give the Minister of Finance my bill if he wants to include it in his next budget implementation bill. I would be pleased to provide him with a copy of the bill.

I am grateful to the people who are working on this issue and who have been calling for tax fairness for psychotherapists for a very long time.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

FIREARMS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today that deals with the process for firearms reclassification. This is a firearms issue but is also a rule of law issue.

Firearms owners are concerned when reclassification decisions are made by the RCMP, sometimes without proper communication, in which reclassification takes place and property that they are able to possess one day, without any change in the law, they are suddenly no longer able to possess. This petition raises in particular the issue of the 10-round plus magazine reclassification changes.

The petitioners call on Parliament to remove the power of the RCMP to arbitrarily make classification decisions on firearms.

Government Orders

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table e-petition 1164, which has been signed by over 9,000 Canadians. This was the last petition that was sponsored by our late friend and colleague Arnold Chan. It is my honour to table it on his behalf and on behalf of the authors of the petition. I wish that he was here to table it himself.

The petitioners call upon the government to fulfill Canada's responsibility, as established by the international education commission, to ensure that girls around the world have access to quality education, and specifically, to increase Canada's investment in global education by 2¢ per day, per Canadian, an increase of \$632 million over three years by 2020.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from constituents in my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay. The petitioners recognize that Canadians share a deep concern for the environment and recognize its inherent value, and that Canadians understand that a healthy and ecologically balanced environment is inextricably linked to the health of individuals, families, and communities. They therefore call on the House of Commons to enact legislation to implement an environmental bill of rights in Canada.

[Translation]

HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

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

The first one is from people in my riding and calls on the government to do something to address the crisis facing homeless people.

[English]

We note that there is a national housing strategy being called for by these petitioners, and hope for action soon.

•(1010)

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the ongoing global issue of the rights of small family farmers around the world to save their own seeds for the coming season to be able to protect, particularly, the rights of women in agriculture globally.

[Translation]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present dozens of petitions from the people of Drummond in response to Health Canada's approval of the sale of genetically modified salmon and the fact that, at this time, no one knows when they are eating genetically modified salmon. It is rumoured that people in Quebec are eating genetically modified salmon, but no one knows for sure, because Canada does not have mandatory labelling.

The petitioners are therefore calling on the Government of Canada to pass legislation on mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods. These kinds of petitions have been landing on my desk for over a year now.

* * *

[English]

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.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to budget implementation act no. 2, Bill C-63. The second budget implementation bill includes key measures of our government's second budget, which outlines the second phase of our government's plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for every Canadian to succeed.

Thanks to these smart investments and an overall commitment to equity, our government is ensuring that Canada's best days are still ahead.

Before I get into the budget implementation bill, I want to talk about the measures the government has taken so far to give all Canadians, including those in the middle class and those working hard to join it, the opportunities they need to succeed.

To begin with, we asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a bit more in taxes in order to be able to give the middle class a tax cut. That tax cut for the middle class benefited nine million Canadians, which is something we can be proud of.

[English]

Then we brought in the new Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. As a result of our CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system. Compared to the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is more generous and better targeted to those who need it the most.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In the fall economic statement released on October 24, the government announced that it would strengthen the Canada child benefit by indexing it to annual increases in the cost of living effective July 2018, which is two years earlier than planned.

What this means, in practical terms, is that for a single parent with two children and income of \$35,000 the enhanced Canada child benefit will contribute an additional \$560 in the 2019-20 benefit year towards the cost of raising his or her children. That means more money for books, winter coats, and skating lessons, for example. The added confidence that the Canada child benefit brings to families can have a positive impact on economic growth, as we have seen in the past.

Our government has also enhanced the Canada pension plan in order to provide Canadians with financial security when they retire from their hard work life. Enhancing the Canada pension plan ensures that Canadians will have more money in retirement so they are less worried about saving, can focus more on enjoying the good times with their families, and do not have to worry about financial issues.

Starting in 2019, we will be enhancing the working income tax benefit, or WITB, by an additional \$500 million per year. This will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, including families without children and the growing number of single Canadians. The enhancement will be in addition to the increase of about \$250 million annually that will also come into effect in 2019 as part of the enhancement of the Canada pension plan.

These two actions alone will boost the total amount the government spends on the WITB by about 65% in 2019, increasing benefits to current recipients and expanding the number of Canadians receiving this support, which is essential for those who need it the most. This extra money could be used for things such as helping to cover the family grocery bill or buying warm clothes for winter. Above all, the improved benefit will help low-income working Canadians make ends meet.

The government is also showing that it is committed to helping small businesses invest, grow, and create jobs by lowering the small business tax rate to 10% effective January 1, 2018, and to 9% effective January 1, 2019. This will provide a small business with up to \$7,500 per year in corporate tax savings to reinvest in and grow its business. These kinds of savings are crucial for businesses to grow and prosper.

Lastly, the government intends to make important changes to the tax system that will ensure Canada's low corporate tax rates serve to support businesses, not to provide unfair tax advantages to the wealthiest Canadians.

• (1015)

[English]

The steps taken to date are having a real positive impact on our economy and for Canadians. Optimism is on the rise, and with good reason. Job creation is strong, with over 450,000 new jobs created in the last two years—

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to relevance. This member and I have gone through this a few times. He brings out talking points, which it seems he is recycling from last week's fall economic update.

Bill C-63 has many measures, and the member has not touched upon a single one yet. I wonder if he has read the bill or if he is embarrassed to talk about what is not in the bill. He is talking about things that are completely not benign to the discussions today. As he is leading off the debate, I would ask the member to actually devote some time to Bill C-63.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I note that the hon. parliamentary secretary is only five minutes into a period of 20 minutes that he has to reflect on the motion that is before the House.

Members will also know that on issues of budgets, budget implementation, and these types of bills, as with their experience in committees, these measures certainly encompass a broad range of topics, and in the usual case members are given a degree of latitude with respect to how they make their arguments on these measures. However, I would say on budget and fiscal measures, the boundaries become even that much broader.

Therefore, I appreciate the hon. member's intervention. He is right about relevance. However, we will continue to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say and we will be able to get a good assessment of that toward the end of his remarks.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, job creation is strong, with over 450,000 new jobs created in the last two years, and the unemployment rate is at its lowest level since 2008. Youth unemployment is also at a historic low.

Canada is now the fastest growing economy in the G7 by a wide margin, growing at an average rate of 3.7% over the last year, the fastest pace of growth since early 2006. Growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, significantly above expectations at the beginning of the year. The fiscal outlook has improved by more than \$6.5 billion annually on average from what was projected in budget 2017 last March. This is why we are here today, to consider and discuss the important measures contained in Bill C-63.

I will describe just a few of the key elements briefly, and I encourage the member opposite to pay close attention.

I will start with our help for the middle class and those striving to join it.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

This budget implementation bill supports the middle class and those working hard to join it by protecting the rights of federally regulated workers when they request flexible work arrangements from their employers. Flexible work arrangements include flexible start and finish times, the ability to work from home, and new unpaid leave to help employees manage their family responsibilities.

These work arrangements benefit many women who continue to do the majority of unpaid work in the home. Budget 2017 was the first budget in Canada's history to include a gender statement. It seeks to present a frank and honest analysis of the impact the budgetary measures will have on women.

- (1020)

[English]

The government believes that having a meaningful and transparent discussion around gender and other intersecting identities will help us better understand the challenges that are faced, and will help it make informed decisions to advance the goals of gender equality, fairness, and stronger workforce participation.

The government also recognizes that youth today face important challenges when it comes to finding and maintaining good, well-paying jobs. While internships can give young Canadians the hands-on work experience they need to make a successful transition into the workforce, some internships, in particular those that are unpaid, can be unfair and exploitative.

The budget implementation act proposes to eliminate unpaid internships in federally regulated sectors where the internships are not part of a formal educational program. These changes will also ensure that unpaid interns who are part of an educational program are entitled to labour standard protections, such as on maximum hours of work, weekly days of rest, and general holidays. It is the right thing to do for our young people trying to gain necessary work experience to enter the labour force.

[Translation]

With regard to tax measures, the budget implementation bill begins to implement changes arising from the government's in-depth review of federal tax expenditures in order to make the tax system simpler, fairer, and more efficient.

Bill-based accounting was examined as part of the tax expenditure review. Bill-based accounting allows taxpayers to defer taxes by permitting the costs associated with work in progress to be expensed without the matching inclusion of the associated revenue.

In the 1980s, bill-based accounting was eliminated for all professionals except those designated under the law. At the time, these professionals had limited access to the small business deduction. Since those restrictions no longer exist, this measure eliminates the ability of designated professionals to use bill-based accounting.

We are listening to Canadians. In response to feedback and to mitigate the effect this measure will have on taxpayers, the inclusion of work in progress into income for tax purposes will now be phased in over four years rather than just two.

[English]

The government is also proposing changes to the principal residence exemption. The current income tax system provides a significant income tax benefit to homeowners disposing of their principal residence, in the form of an exemption from capital gains taxation. The principle residence exemption is available only to Canadian residents, individuals, and trusts.

Families are able to designate only one property as the family's principle residence for any given year. The government is proposing amendments that will improve the integrity of the tax system and ensure improved tax fairness for homeowners. An individual who was not residing in Canada throughout the year and acquired a residence will not be able to claim the exemption for that year. The ability of trusts to designate a property as a principle residence will be limited to improve fairness and integrity by better aligning the rules applying to trusts with the rules that apply when the property is sold directly by an individual.

Finally, more reporting will be required in respect of the disposition of a property for which the principal residence exemption is claimed. The Canada Revenue Agency will be provided with the authority to assess taxpayers beyond the normal assessment limitation period in respect of unreported dispositions.

[Translation]

The government is continuing to propose measures to ensure fairness for all taxpayers.

By developing in a cleaner, more sustainable way, Canada's natural resource sector will be able to keep making significant contributions to the Canadian economy. The success rate of exploratory drilling has grown considerably since the 1990s. In most cases, discovery wells now lead to production. Under the provisions of the bill before us today, consistent with the usual treatment of enduring assets, expenses associated with oil and gas discovery wells will be treated as Canadian development expenses, unless the wells are deemed unsuccessful.

By improving the tax system's neutrality, this measure supports Canada's international commitment to phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and indirectly supports the federal sustainable development strategy's measures and goals, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Canadians and indigenous peoples deserve to know that their government is doing everything in its power to protect the natural environment while supporting our economy. Our government intends to meet its objective of having a low-carbon economy and this is a step in that direction. This bill includes tangible measures that will move Canada forward as a smart and compassionate country. The government plans to strengthen the middle class and ensure that Canadians have the support, resources, and confidence they need to succeed, create jobs, and keep our economy growing.

Government Orders

Growing the Canadian economy helps the government to improve its record. Canada's financial situation remains solid and the government will see to keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio on its downward trend in order to preserve Canada's financial health and allow us to continue investing in those who contribute to our country's success. Every Canadian deserves to benefit from this economic growth. The government has lowered taxes for middle class Canadians and has committed to ensuring that the tax system does not offer unintended benefits to the wealthiest Canadians, or those with a high income. I urge hon. members of the House to vote for this bill that will benefit all Canadians.

•(1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for getting to Bill C-63. I certainly appreciate that contribution to this place. I think we can have a good debate.

The government has deemed it important to cut off access to work in progress for professionals such as lawyers. I have met with advocates and law society members who have said that this change will make it more difficult for people seeking legal representation, whether due to a car crash or a health issue. These lawyers operate on a contingency basis and will be forced to pay tax on work they have not received any income for. Other clients are going to have to subsidize those activities to pay these taxes when there is no firm way for them to pay them, unless they win their case. These are some of the most vulnerable people.

Does the member recognize that the government has made accessing proper legal representation in rural areas more difficult? Could he explain why he is making this change?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, let me first thank my colleague for his question.

As a lawyer by training who practised law and advocated for access to justice, I am very sensitive to the concerns he raised, and I think they are important. I believe that tax fairness is our main concern going forward. We have listened, and we want to make that two-year transition a five-year transition because we want legal professionals to have that transition time and we want to maintain access to justice as well.

Among other things, we want to avoid negative repercussions for lawyers operating on a contingency basis. Originally, we were going to bring this measure in over two years, but now we are stretching that to five years to give legal professionals the time they need. We always pay attention to what they have to say. There are many lawyers in our caucus. I know there are many lawyers in this House and that, like me, they care about access to justice. Our government's objective is to make our tax system a little bit fairer.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to members of this House, I am sure, nor indeed to Canadians across the country, to hear that the Minister of Finance has been subject to a fair bit of scrutiny over the last number

of weeks, particularly with regard to conflicts of interest around Bill C-27 and his personal holdings in Morneau Shepell.

When asked about that in question period, when the time for questions and responses is very short, the finance minister likes to start talking about his fiscal measures. Presumably, the introduction of this bill would be very important to the Minister of Finance.

Therefore, I find it passing strange that the opening speech was given by the parliamentary secretary. Is that because the Minister of Finance did not want to be subject to a 10-minute question period by members of this House?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Finance is often here for oral question period.

It is an honour for me to be here to introduce this important bill. My colleague, whom I hold in high regard, ought to be pleased to see me do so, as we now have an opportunity to discuss a bill that is important to Canadians. As everyone knows, since taking office, we have presented two key budgets.

In budget 2016, we introduced the Canada child benefit, which is reducing child poverty by 40%, but the NDP voted against that, which still surprises me. It is an honour for me to come here and talk about our budget initiatives, from both 2016 and 2017, that have put Canada back on track for growth, job creation, and prosperity, but above all, for inclusive prosperity, which is particularly important to me. For decades now, we have seen an increase in inequality and income disparity. When we came to power, we made sure to put Canada back on track for growth that is good for the middle class and for all Canadians.

We know that the more we reduce inequality and the more we help those in need, the more we grow our economy. That is what we did in budget 2016, and that is what we are doing in budget 2017. My NDP colleague should like some of the measures in Bill C-62, including the proposed guidelines for unpaid federal internships, which will ensure that young Canadian workers have more rights.

•(1030)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague opposite has the difficult task of defending the indefensible.

My question for the member is simple. Why is the government attacking seniors by depriving 230,000 seniors of the guaranteed income supplement? According to the actuary of Canada, the government is going to take \$3 billion out of the pockets of our most vulnerable seniors.

Why attack the middle class, which accounts for 8 out of 10 families, according to the Fraser Institute? The government is taking away more benefits than it is handing out. Why, contrary to its claims, is it attacking the middle class?

Why is it attacking not only our businesses, but the most vulnerable people in our society, such as diabetics and those with autism, by eliminating their tax credits?

Government Orders

Can the member ask his minister to address this situation? I would also ask him to end his deficit spending, which is counter to the government's commitments.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to reassure my colleague and let him know that I am very proud to defend one of Canada's best economic records in decades.

As I mentioned in my speech, in terms of growth, 45,000 jobs have been created since we took office. According to all of the economic indicators, our government's performance is far superior to that of the previous government on virtually every front. That is what I am defending.

Speaking of defending the indefensible, I would imagine that the member knows something about that. He was a minister under Stephen Harper for 10 years. He should know what he is talking about. What I am defending here is a government that is focused on growth and reduces inequalities. I am very proud of that.

I am happy that the member mentioned the guaranteed income supplement because one of the things that we have done since taking office is to increase that supplement by 10%, which puts about \$1,000 more into the pockets of our most vulnerable seniors. We have helped 900,000 seniors. We also helped hundreds of thousands of seniors from falling into poverty by reducing the age of retirement from 67 to 65. That is what we have done for seniors, and I think that we can be proud of those results.

At the very end of its mandate, the government that the member across the way defended increased the tax-free savings account limit from \$5,500 to \$11,000, a measure that it knew would help only the wealthiest 3%. The American that invented the concept said that it was madness and that it would impose a fiscal straitjacket on the government. Members will recall that Joe Oliver, who was finance minister at the time, said:

[*English*]

"Well, why don't we leave that to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's granddaughter to solve?"

[*Translation*]

We certainly do not leave problems for anyone's grandchildren to solve on this side of the House. We deal with problems promptly to secure stronger growth.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for highlighting some of the areas we are working on to introduce equity into our tax system.

I am particularly interested in the working income tax benefit we are announcing. Seventy per cent of Canadians living in poverty are working. This benefit would address people who are trying to get into the middle class, people who are working but still live in poverty. It is also to encourage people to get into the workforce.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a good point.

Yes, we know there are many vulnerable Canadians who have the lowest incomes and have trouble making ends meet. That is why we

will be increasing this tax benefit by 65% over the course of our mandate. That represents an increase of half a billion dollars, as mentioned in our 2017 fall economic statement. I think this will be of some assistance to Canadians who need it most.

As I said earlier, we on this side of the aisle know that reducing inequality and helping those who need it most fuels economic growth. This is a concept the previous government never grasped during its 10 years in office. The correlation was observed in the years following World War II, for example, when middle-class incomes kept pace with rising growth.

With more inequality and less growth, we are trying to balance our system to make sure that Canadians in need have as much money in their pockets as possible to pay for public transportation, housing, and electricity.

In terms of the economy and fairness, this is the fundamental difference between our approach and that of the previous government, which preferred giving tax breaks to the wealthy with no benefit to the economy, and which had one of the worst track records on almost every economic front since World War II. It had a horrible track record in job creation and GDP growth. It also added some \$150 billion to the debt.

• (1035)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last two election campaigns, both in 2011 and 2015, the Liberals made a clear promise to limit the amount eligible for the stock option loophole but backed away from this promise when they came to power. Why did the government decide to break its promise to eliminate the tax loophole on CEO stock options in the 2017 federal budget? It could do it today.

Before the member answers this question, we do not want to hear about the child tax credit. We do not want to hear about all the things they say they are doing to help Canadians and to help those who are not in the middle class join the middle class, because we know that the CEO stock option loophole tax break for people on Bay Street is not helping them.

We want a direct answer. Why did they not follow through with this promise?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, yes, we increased taxes for the wealthiest 1%, a measure they voted against. It is only natural that the NDP would not want to talk about the Canada child benefit, since it voted against it. The NDP promised all of the most progressive measures during the election campaign, as well as a Conservative budget, and was obsessed with the idea of a zero deficit. That is what the NDP told Canadians in 2015.

Government Orders

With respect to the hon. member's question, I would like to remind him that we invested a total of \$1 billion in the last two budgets, which puts us on course to recover tens of billions of dollars lost to tax avoidance. We have identified \$25 billion lost to tax avoidance and tax evasion. That is what the government is doing.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if I could get the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to share his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “thank you” is the key expression in my speech today. I was in a coffee shop recently. I bought a cup of a coffee, and I said “thank you” to the barista serving it, and she said “thank you” back, and not “you're welcome”. I thought that was particularly bizarre, because we are taught from childhood that the sequence is supposed to be “thank you; you're welcome” and not “thank you; thank you.”

I then realized that this double “thank you” happens all the time when I am buying or selling goods. I finally stumbled upon an explanation, from the economist Steven Horwitz, as to why this double “thank you” occurs. In a free market economy, whenever we buy or sell something, we have something that is worth more to us than what we had before. If I have an apple and want an orange, and someone has an orange and wants an apple, and we trade, we still have an apple and an orange between us, but we are both richer, because we both have something that is worth more to us than what we had before. How do we know that? It is because the exchange was voluntary. Neither of us was forced to trade the apple for the orange. We each did it by volition, because we wanted the product the other person had.

Every exchange in a free market economy, literally every single one, without exception, is based on voluntary exchange: labour for wages, investment for return, payment for product. In each case, the buyer and the seller offer what they have voluntarily. By contrast, every single transaction done by government is done by force, even legitimate, desirable transactions. We all agree that the government should fund an armed forces to keep us all safe. We all understand that if left to themselves, citizens might not voluntarily donate enough money to marshal such a force. Therefore, we believe that the government has a role in compelling taxation to fund what is, in effect, a public good we all require and from which we all benefit.

However, surely we should also agree that the use of that force should be limited to cases where it is absolutely unavoidable and necessary. We should not expand government into areas people can decide upon and act out on their own volition. The government continually gets involved in areas that are easily done through voluntary exchange. In fact, it replaces free choice with force very often.

The Liberal government has done that. It claims that the need for government intervention in the economy is to protect the weak from the strong. That is a strange way of looking at the world. Since when does expanding coercion help the weak? Relationships of force typically favour the strong.

Let me give members a counter-example. An 18-year-old walks into an Apple store to consider buying an iPad. Now, this young man is worth about \$1,000. He earned it in his summer job mowing lawns. The company he is dealing with is worth \$878 billion, almost a \$1 trillion. He is negotiating with the most powerful company in the world, which is almost \$1 trillion in size. How could that negotiation ever be fair? The answer is voluntary exchange. Apple cannot get his \$1,000 for an iPad unless it proves to him that it is worth more than the money he has to part with to get it. By contrast, he cannot get the iPad unless he can convince Apple that the \$1,000 is worth more to the company than the product it has to part with to get it. In other words, this system of voluntary exchange takes the most powerful company in the world and lowers its power to the level of an 18-year-old with barely enough money in his bank account to pay for a tablet.

Now imagine they enter a different universe: government. If Apple decided it wanted a subsidy from government, paid for by the taxes of that young man, I am afraid Apple would have a heck of a lot more power in making that decision come about. The government could use force to collect the money to subsidize the company. In that scenario, Apple could hire an army of lobbyists, make political donations, and influence public opinion, whereas that poor young guy would be too busy mowing lawns to have the same political power.

• (1040)

Therefore, when the government is in control of the economy, the bigger, the stronger, and the more powerful forces always get ahead. They can use money to acquire political power and political power to acquire yet more money. That is why countries with big governments typically have much more poverty and much bigger gaps between rich and poor.

The current government is expanding itself into areas not necessary for governments to be involved in. Let me give some examples.

The Prime Minister said he was going to determine how much Canadians would choose to invest in Bombardier. In the end, he did not give them any choice. He decided for them. He gave \$400 million of taxpayers' money to this company that is able to invest a fortune in lobbying. That \$400 million was, in part, used to boost the salaries of the billionaire executives by 50% while 14,000 workers were laid off.

Government Orders

There is the infrastructure bank, which will give \$15 billion worth of loans and loan guarantees to wealthy investors who are contributing to infrastructure megaprojects. This will ensure that if the project succeeds, the private investor will make money, but if it fails, the taxpayer will take all the loss. Again, this is a financial arrangement that not one of those taxpayers would voluntarily enter into. After all, what do they get? They get a big pile of losses. However, because the powerful interests that lobbied the government at the Shangri-La Hotel, where a summit of private-equity investors was held, were able to convince the government to force taxpayers into that economic relationship, the government is again favouring those who have political power over everyone else.

There is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank we just learned about in this very bill. Five hundred million dollars, half a billion dollars of Canadian tax dollars, would be invested in this new foreign-run infrastructure bank to build infrastructure in faraway, overseas lands. Who in Canada would ever buy shares in a bank that will never pay any dividends and will only ever offer loans and loan guarantees to wealthy investors, who will take advantage of it in the event that their projects go under? However, if those projects make money, and if they profit, those borrowers, again wealthy investors and construction companies on other continents, will get all the profits. They get all the profits; taxpayers get all the loss. Again, no one would voluntarily enter into such a transaction.

There is something called superclusters. The government has a billion-dollar fund it is going to hand out to wealthy high-tech investors, who will then use those subsidies to pay themselves exorbitant salaries. They are not necessarily expected to earn any of the money themselves, because they will be able to get their revenues and their capital from taxpayers, who are not voluntary participants.

In Ontario, we had the Green Energy Act. People were forced to pay 90¢ for a kilowatt hour that was only worth 2.5¢. We know that no free person would decide to pay 90¢ for something that is worth 2.5¢. Who won? Of course, it was the wealthy investors who turned themselves into multi-millionaires with this enormous wealth transfer. Who lost? It was the poor, the working class, the people whose power bills doubled to fund this monstrous wealth transfer from the working class to the super-elite.

In all these cases, the government has used coercion and force to appropriate more and more of the economy and favour those who have the most political power. All of those people are rich. Therefore, when the government claims that it is expanding its power and control over the economy to help the less fortunate, I ask, at the very least, that this House look upon such claims with great skepticism.

Instead, this House should favour the free market, where people are judged on their merit, on their contributions, and on the voluntary exchange of goods and services that requires every single person who wants to get ahead to offer someone else something worth more to him or her than what it costs. That is the free market, that is true empathy, and that is the way we build a just and prosperous society.

● (1045)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the member has a different perspective and he is wrong in so many ways. He talked about redistribution. He says that this government has a redistribution of wealth that favours Canada's wealthiest. He is so wrong. Never before in the history of Canada have we seen a redistribution of Canada's wealth to the middle class and those aspiring to become a part of it. Let me give a very clear example of that.

The member is very wishy-washy on a multitude of things. The greatest income tax break has been given to Canada's middle class, a tax cut that the Conservatives voted against, hundreds of millions of dollars from Canada's wealthiest to Canada's middle class. There is much more, but, unfortunately, I do not have the time.

I appreciated the first minute and a half of the member's speech, but if he looks at what is actually being implemented by this government, I am sure he would find his arguments are wrong.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have looked at the Liberals' policies very carefully and it turns out they are exactly the opposite of what the member says. Let me give an example.

On the middle class, 87% of middle-class taxpayers are paying more income tax today than they were when the Prime Minister took office. That does not include the carbon tax, which has driven up the cost of gasoline, home heating, groceries, and other essentials, a tax that falls particularly heavy on the poorest people and particularly light on the wealthy. Those are not even included in the calculations that show the middle class is already paying more.

Who is paying less? It is the wealthy. According to Finance Canada, the wealthiest taxpayers in Canada are paying \$1 billion less tax since the Prime Minister took office. That is exactly the opposite of what the government promised and what its rhetoric suggests.

● (1050)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member for Winnipeg North, I will agree with the member for Carleton that we ought to take the government's claims with respect to its budget with a great degree of skepticism. I want to congratulate the member for his mastery of the concepts in an introductory economic course, but if he took further courses on economics, he would appreciate that those concepts become considerably more complex and nuanced, particularly the ideas of coercion and voluntary exchange within a free market and when certain actors start with very unequal amounts of resources, whether they are social or financial.

Is the member just not aware of those complexities and nuances or has he ignored them for political purposes?

Government Orders

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right, that different people start with different wealth depending on the families into which they are born. That is why we need to guard against them using that wealth to acquire greater political power and use that power to acquire more wealth.

The Bombardier Beaudoin family is a great example, a family born with \$1 billion of net worth. It is able to hire an army of lobbyists to come to Parliament Hill and get \$400 million of interest-free loans, supported by the socialist NDP, by the way. In exchange for that, the family was able to give itself a 50% pay hike and retain control of a company in which it only had a minority interest through a complex web of special voting shares. All of that was facilitated and made possible by handouts from government.

That is how socialism works. The wealthy use its power to get more money from the government. The bigger the government is, the more concentrated the wealth becomes, because the greatest concentration of wealth is government.

Strategas Research has done a study showing that as government in Washington gets bigger, the spend on lobbying in that great capital goes up. It is almost a one-for-one correlation, because businesses go where they can get a return on investment. If all of the money is with the government, they invest in acquiring power within the government. We believe in dispersing wealth and power out into the hands of the people who earn it. That is how the free market system works.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few seconds to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He described the economic system that the Liberal government appears not to grasp in simple terms everyone can understand.

What I take away from my NDP colleague's remarks about Bill C-63 is the word "skepticism". The Liberal government has lost all credibility in matters of public finance and taxation since it was elected and promised to run very small deficits. Remember that, during the 2015 election campaign, the Liberal Party promised to run very small deficits and to balance the budget by the end of its term in 2019. It also promised that the deficit would never exceed \$10 billion.

However, in their first budget, their first opportunity to keep their first important promise, what did the Liberals do? They loosened the purse strings, revved up spending, and forgot their promise. Now, two years after they were elected, they are announcing that they will run a deficit of almost \$20 billion this year. That is twice the limit they set for themselves in 2015. They also say they are projecting deficits in excess of \$10 billion in the coming years. Skepticism is what we feel when this government talks numbers.

On this side of the House, we believe in responsible government spending, tax breaks, and making life more affordable for all Canadians. We know that it is unacceptable to ask future generations to pay for today's spending. It is especially unacceptable to ask future generations to pay for the Liberal government's out-of-control debt, especially when we are talking about tens of billions of dollars. Let us keep in mind that, last December, the Department of Finance found that the federal debt could double, to reach \$1.5 trillion. I

never thought I would use this number in the House. By 2050, the federal debt could reach \$1.5 trillion. That is \$1,500 billion that our children and their children will have to pay, because the government is acting totally irresponsibly today.

Even worse, the government says that it will never formally return to a balanced budget. In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance announced huge deficits for the next six years. Unfortunately, an important section is missing: there is no plan to return to a balanced budget.

The government has announced massive deficits for at least the next six years, and it has no plan to get the country out of its huge tax hole. Why does the government think that Canadians would accept such a situation? That is not what they voted for in 2015; they did not vote for a \$1.5-trillion deficit in 2050.

Clearly, when it comes to the deficit, every penny over \$10 billion is a promise to Canadians that has been broken. If we count every penny over \$10 billion, it comes out to 990 billion broken promises this year, 860 billion broken promises next year, 730 billion broken promises the year after that, and all the way to 2050. Billions of broken promises for every penny over the estimated \$10-billion deficit.

These broken promises are just one more item in a long list of disappointments. The list has become extremely long and includes the broken promise of electoral reform, the inadequate protection of the dairy industry, the failure to reach a softwood lumber agreement, Omar Khadr, and ethics issues in the cabinet. I would like to remind you that this is the first time in history that a minister of finance and a prime minister are facing complaints and being investigated by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. It is unprecedented that the two most important people in the government are being investigated by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

We never get answers to our questions. I remember that we once spent an entire question period asking the Prime Minister for a simple answer to a simple question: how many times had he met with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner?

• (1055)

He has not once answered this question. We asked the Minister of Finance to acknowledge that he placed himself in a conflict of interest right here in the House, before Canadians and members of Parliament. He never answered.

Government Orders

Yesterday we learned that he paid a \$200 fine for having been in a conflict of interest. How can we trust a government that is not even capable of answering members of Parliament, telling the truth and answering simple questions? He got caught with his hand in the cookie jar and is content to merely pay a fine. To put a lid on the issue and try to get people to forget that he committed an offence, the Minister of Finance even had the gall to try to buy Canadians' and the opposition's silence by saying that he would donate \$5 million to charity. I do not believe anyone on this side of the House can be blamed for being skeptical.

The government always thinks that the answer to its problems is to raise taxes on Canadians. Since it took power, taxes have been rising, affecting health and dental insurance benefits, personal savings, hydroelectricity, gas, heating, farmers, medical treatments that save lives, small and medium-sized businesses, people with type 1 diabetes, etc. The list keeps getting longer. Why?

After learning that the deficit could reach \$1.5 trillion over the next four decades, someone undoubtedly asked the Minister of National Revenue to find some money somewhere. For the government, the easiest way to find money is on the backs of those who are most in need, those it has been saying it wants to help since the outset, but that it continues to harm.

According to a report by the Fraser Institute, since 2015, more than 80% of middle-class Canadians, the same people the government claims to want to help, have been paying higher taxes. These are the facts, and they come from the esteemed Fraser Institute, not us.

Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre, co-authors of the report, said of the government's track record that, as is often the case with Liberal governments, its rhetoric is far removed from the facts on the ground. They say that, despite the government's many claims to the contrary, it has increased personal income tax for the vast majority of middle-class families.

Given all the facts, the Liberal government's rhetoric, and its promises, it is clear that it says the opposite of what it means, something it has been doing more and more, unfortunately. When it says that it is on the right track, then I think there is real cause for concern. Indeed, they may say we are on the right track, but our children and their children will still have to pay for the Liberals' actions.

Across the aisle, they will say that the economy is doing well and that it continues to grow, but it is important to remember that the economy is growing despite the Liberals' actions, not because of them. Infrastructure projects and investments have been on the decline, not on the rise. In August, the parliamentary budget officer confirmed that grants and contributions made by Infrastructure Canada to provinces carrying out infrastructure projects were essentially stagnant, with no increases over last year. Not only does this mean that there is less money to improve roads and bridges in our communities, it also shows the government's lack of commitment and, once again, Canadians' skepticism.

The Liberal government's out-of-control and poorly thought out spending and its lack of concern for the growing tax burden it is imposing on Canadians are fundamentally unacceptable. The

Canadian economy requires a different approach from the one proposed by the Liberal government, which is forgetting the impact that its out-of-control spending will have on economic security and future generations in our country. For that reason, I will obviously not be supporting Bill C-63.

• (1100)

I ask the government to see reason, answer the opposition's sensible and simple questions and tell Canadians the truth.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member focused a great deal of his time on the deficit, yet the Harper government over 10 years created the most significant amount of debt for Canadians in the history of Canada. I do not think we need to take advice from the Conservatives about how we should manage the deficit situation, especially if we compare it to economic performance. In the last two years, we have assisted in generating more than 400,000 jobs. That is almost half of what the Conservatives did in 10 years.

Perhaps the member could explain to Canadians why, when our government gives breaks to Canada's middle class, such as the tax break to middle class and the increase in taxes on Canada's wealthiest, the Conservatives consistently vote against Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the answer could not be more simple. It is because we do not trust the Liberal government. We do well, since, in reality, more than 80% of middle-class Canadians are now paying more in taxes. That is the truth of the situation.

They talk about the previous government's deficits, but I am very proud of the Harper government's record. Canada emerged from the worst economic crisis in recent years in better shape than any other G7 country. That is because we were able to effectively manage Canada's public finances. That is why we left the current government a surplus in excess of \$1 billion, which allowed it, when it came to power, to say that it had money and wanted to spend it. Unfortunately, it bit off more than it could chew, since its deficit will reach \$1.5 trillion by 2050. This is unacceptable.

• (1105)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when there is talk about the Minister of Finance's conflicts of interest in the House or elsewhere, the Liberals often imply that the measures in this bill justify his conflicts of interest and make it acceptable for him to use his public office for financial gain.

Does my hon. colleague agree that a cabinet minister doing a relatively good job should justify his using his position for financial gain?

Government Orders

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. No, I do not approve of the Liberal government's attitude whatsoever.

I do not understand why the Minister of Finance has been hiding behind the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner ever since we started asking questions about ethics. To me, the best way to avoid a conflict of interest or an ethical conflict is to personally act for the good of all Canadians and not wait for someone else to say whether or not we are acting appropriately.

It seems to me that someone in the Minister of Finance's position should know that conflicts of interest start with one's behaviour and one's ability to restrain oneself.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, small business owners that employ a lot of people were very upset this summer. They were very concerned when they started to see what the government was doing. They were led to believe it was going to take from the rich and give to the poor, and they never really considered themselves rich. They just thought they were hard-working business people, employing people in the community. What are the comments and suggestions the member is hearing from his business communities in Quebec, and how do they relate to this government and what it is doing to them?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the economy of my riding, Mégantic—L'Érable, is defined by its small and medium-sized businesses. Its job creators are its small and medium-sized business owners. Its farmers and agricultural producers ensure that there are still villages to support the towns. These people work hard seven days a week, 12, 13, 14, or 15 hours a day.

What I can say is that considering what these people do to create jobs, they do not accept and will never accept being treated as cheats by their own government.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will continue in the same vein as my Conservative colleagues.

I was not so much surprised as offended when I heard that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner had fined the Minister of Finance for breaking the rules by forgetting to declare his villa in France, which he hid in a company. Then again, who among us has not forgotten a villa in France, Spain, or Morocco at some point? Apparently that is the kind of thing that can happen to someone like the Minister of Finance.

He forgot, and he got his knuckles rapped for it. I want to make sure everyone at home understands the penalty this poor man is being forced to pay. He has to pay \$200. This is the man who just signed a cheque for \$5 million in an attempt to extricate himself from a scandal involving his shares in Morneau Shepell, which benefited from a bill that he himself introduced. No doubt that was a hard lesson for the Minister of Finance to learn from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Unfortunately, all that did was feed the public's cynicism toward politicians, the Liberal government, and the Minister of Finance. Those people are completely out of touch with reality.

●(1110)

[*English*]

I want to be sure that I am understood in both official languages. We just learned this week that the Minister of Finance was fined because he forgot to officially declare that he possessed a villa in beautiful Provence, France. That is something that probably happens to a lot of people in Canada: "Oh, yes, the villa; sorry about that. I just forgot."

He got caught, and then received a slap on the hand, a big one. It was a hard lesson for him, I guess. It was \$200 for contravening the code of ethics. We are talking about the same minister who just recently said he would write a \$5 million cheque to try to get out of a scandal. It was a scandal because the minister tabled legislation, Bill C-27, that directly profits his own company. He made millions of dollars on that. Then, because he got caught, he said, "Okay, I'm a rich man. I can fix that. I'm going to write a cheque for \$5 million." Now, the minister has received a fine of \$200. That poor man, it must be a really hard week for him.

I am making a joke about that, but seriously, it is only increasing the cynicism of this country's citizens. During the last campaign, the Liberals said they wanted to reinstate trust in our democratic institutions. They wanted people to stop being cynical about the political class.

Since the Liberals were elected, they have been doing the opposite. They are breaking promises. They are tabling legislation that profits themselves and their friends on Bay Street, the elite of this country. As NDP members, we think this is completely wrong. They are going in the wrong direction. We have to point that out, and say it loudly and clearly.

[*Translation*]

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I thank the member from Drummond for his support, which has allowed me to have a drink of water.

Today, we must debate the budget implementation bill. There are many things we could talk about. Let me go back to the last election. The Liberals told us that interest rates were low and that it was the right time to borrow money and to run deficits in order to reinvest in our infrastructure. That might make sense. It is the mandate given to them by Canadians.

However, what we are learning is that instead of running a small deficit to build infrastructure, they ran up a large deficit, and we still have no infrastructure.

The deficit is higher than projected, and not because the government spent more money on infrastructure. In fact, it spent less than anticipated. Shovels are not in the ground, projects are not moving forward, and some projects have not even been approved. The money is not making its way to the towns and villages of our communities.

Government Orders

This week, The Canadian Press reported that \$2 billion in infrastructure spending had been delayed. However, this is money that should have been invested in our communities this year to help build new infrastructure. The Liberals just keep putting it off.

What is the reason for this deficit if not infrastructure spending? After all, this was the idea flogged to Canadians in the last election.

As the finance critic, I am very concerned about this situation. The government is not investing in our communities as it said it would, and the deficit is much higher than projected.

The economic lever to grow the economy is just not there. Not only are the Liberals breaking their promises, but they are also increasing the public debt much more quickly than they had promised. They are doing exactly the opposite of what they had promised. I have to wonder where they are headed and whether Canada is going to hit a wall at some point. Instead of investing in our communities and in infrastructure, the Liberals are doing nothing and yet still adding significantly to the deficit.

• (1115)

[*English*]

I want to be clear about that.

In the last election the Liberals' platform said that, because interest rates are low, this is the time to get some loans, have a small deficit, and spend money on infrastructure because we have a deficit in infrastructure. That was true then and is still true. That was their logic.

That spending on infrastructure should have helped to increase growth in our country, but what we are seeing right now is that deficits are bigger than expected and there is no spending on infrastructure. Projects are not there. Money is not being spent in our cities, villages, and provinces. We do not know exactly why the money is not being spent but the deficits are higher. Why? What is the logic behind that? It is the complete opposite of what the Liberals said they would do in the last federal campaign. As the finance critic, I am worried about that, because it is not sustainable.

The Liberals are not doing what we need in our communities to help families: create more public transit; build bridges, roads, arenas, and pools, and everything that makes the lives of our citizens easier; increase the possibility of business and trade and help people to get start-ups and have the numeric infrastructure and Internet connections. High speed Internet in some regions is still a big problem. It is not there.

We are worried about the way the Liberals are not doing what they promised to do. They are not spending on infrastructure and they are not creating growth in our economy.

This may surprise the House, but I am also worried about the fact that, in his last economic update, the finance minister's document said that the public debt charges that they were expecting, the interest we are paying on our debt, will increase from \$24.2 billion for 2017-18 to \$32.8 billion 2022-23. In five years, there will be an increase of \$8 billion in the interest on public debt charges. That is a lot of money, and it will probably get worse.

Those numbers, the provision or the prediction, are based on a really low interest rate. The actual interest rate, or the provision, is about a 25-point increase per year or less. However, all the experts say that the interest rates will go higher than that, so those numbers are wrong. The economic situation is that the Bank of Canada will be in a position to increase the basic interest rate much more. Therefore, those figures will get worse, and we will pay much more than that. People who are listening to this should look at those numbers. It is not what experts say will happen.

[*Translation*]

I want to say it again. It may surprise the House to hear that the NDP finance critic is worried about this, but in the economic update delivered last week, we learned that the projected interest charges are basically unrealistic. Between 2017 and 2018, we will be paying \$24.2 billion in interest on the debt. That is a lot of money. In 2022-23, so five years later, we will be paying an estimated \$32.8 billion in interest on the debt. That is an increase of over \$8 billion in five years in interest alone. That probably will not happen; it could be even worse.

Those forecasts are based on current interest rates and very small yearly increases in interest rates for the next few years. Everyone agrees that, considering the current economic situation, the Bank of Canada will not be able to keep interest rates as low as they are at the moment. Interest rates will likely go up by over 25 basis points per year. The figures presented are unrealistic, and after the next federal election, we will be worse off than the Liberals are claiming today.

With regard to last week's economic update, I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the House to something that I find very worrisome as a progressive and as someone who believes in public services. It has to do with what is known as direct program spending. The government has allocated \$139.1 billion for direct program spending for 2017-18, \$140.1 billion for the following year, and then \$140.2 billion for the next. The Liberals have basically frozen this spending. They are increasing direct program spending by only \$1 billion from 2017-18 to 2018-19. The following year, in 2019-20, that amount will go up by only \$100 million, which is next to nothing.

Government Orders

With federal employees' labour contracts and collective agreements, which the government must obviously respect, and with inflation, which means that everything will cost more, we know full well that a spending freeze means cuts. The government cannot give the federal employees who provide services a 1.5% raise while failing to increase direct program spending. That will mean austerity measures and cuts to services for Canadians. That is not what the Liberals were elected for. It does not bode well for the future. Cuts and austerity measures may be imposed on public services, which are already barely meeting their obligations and the needs of Canadians.

The Liberal government tries to come across as progressive and Keynesian, but it is nothing but a facade, and the cracks will start to show in the next few years as the Liberals face a difficult choice: either reduce services, or run an even higher deficit than projected.

I just wanted to draw people's attention to this, because it is something we will have to keep a close eye on.

I want to say this in English as well, in order to bring it to the attention of the people who are listening. In the economic update last week, the direct program expenses outlook for 2017-18 were \$139.1 billion. The following year they would be \$140.1 billion. The year after that they would be \$140.2 billion. It is almost a freeze in the direct spending in program expenses of the Liberal government.

We all know that we have to respect the working contracts of civil servants, people who work for the federal government. Those contracts, that collective bargaining, includes increased wages of at least 1.5%. We also have normal inflation. With the increase of wages and inflation, those numbers mean the Liberal government will have to impose austerity. It will have to impose cuts in public services because it is not sustainable. We cannot increase the wages of public servants, but we all agree it is normal to do. We have to respect those contracts, but those numbers worry the NDP. We do not want a policy of austerity. Even the International Monetary Fund's recent study said that austerity was not working. This is not something we want, not something we propose, and this is not something, a progressive party movement, we want to see from the federal government.

• (1125)

After these warnings, the only thing left to say about the budget implementation bill is that there is not much to it, and what there is is extremely disappointing. It offers no plan for investing in affordable social housing. It does not restore the eco-energy retrofit program as promised. It does not propose a national daycare program, the program that families in Quebec and across Canada would probably find the most useful.

In the NDP's opinion, the budget implementation bill is more important for what it does not address than what it does. It contains no serious measures against tax evasion. The tax loopholes used by CEOs are still completely legal and permitted. There is nothing in the bill against tax havens, which cost us anywhere from \$5 billion to \$8 billion a year.

Let us keep in mind that interest on the debt could rise by \$8 billion over the next five years. However, we could save \$8 billion a year if we made the slightest effort to stop doing

business with tax havens or renegotiated all of our tax treaties with them.

One strange thing about Bill C-63 is the fact that it authorizes the Minister of Finance to invest \$480 million in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. That is right, the Government of Canada will buy \$480 million worth of shares in an infrastructure bank to build infrastructure in Asia. I was under the impression the Liberals wanted to build infrastructure in Canada, but instead of coming up with cash to build what we need here, they are authorizing the Minister of Finance to invest \$480 million over there. The Liberal government could end up building more infrastructure in Asia than here at home. How absurd.

We do not understand why the government wants to get involved in the Asian infrastructure bank. What is it hoping to get out of this? Why is it investing money over there? What kind of return will there be? As progressives, we have other concerns. Will this bank promote infrastructure privatization in Asia? Will it respect environmental standards and workers' rights?

Speaking of workers, the Liberals are going to be extremely pleased with themselves for giving leave to people who are victims of family violence. That is one of the measures in Bill C-63. However, that is unpaid leave. As we all know, victims of family violence tend not to be independently wealthy and are, in many cases, dependent on their violent partner.

Instead of saying that it will give unpaid leave to victims of family violence, the government should say that it is doing nothing because that does not exist. The Liberal government is trying to pull the wool over our eyes yet again.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I always find it interesting when a New Democrat talks about balancing budgets and has concerns with deficits and debt. We all know the commitment the former leader of the New Democratic Party made, going into the last election, which was a guarantee to balance the budget. If we listen to the New Democrats talk about it, there is no possible way they could have balanced the budget. Now, with their new leader, Jagmeet, perhaps the member could tell us the current NDP policy on balanced budgets. Being the finance critic, perhaps he could enlighten Canadians.

I want to emphasize something, and it can be found in the fall statement, "Progress for the Middle Class". It makes it very clear on page 3, It says that when it comes to the G7 real GDP growth over the past year, Canada has outperformed our peers, whether the United States, Germany, France, Japan, the United Kingdom or Italy. We are just under 4%. The United States, which is the closest to us, is at 2.2%. Over 400,000 jobs have been created in Canada.

Government Orders

The government's plan of investing in our middle class, giving tax breaks, and increasing the Canada child benefit and the GIS for our children and seniors is working. We are seeing more employment. We are seeing a much more active economy compared to our peers. Could the member explain why the New Democrats do not support these wonderful initiatives?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my tireless colleague for the question. He has an excellent attendance record in the House.

Unfortunately, inequality is reaching an all-time high in Canada. Over the past 30 years, Canadian workers have helped grow our economy by more than 50%. Productivity and wealth creation have gone up, but workers' income has stagnated. Their purchasing power has not gone up, but their debt has.

We live in a country where inequality is growing faster than it is in the United States. We live in a country where the CEOs of the 100 largest companies in Canada earn the equivalent of the average Canadian's annual salary by the morning of January 2. I hope that those CEOs were not too hung over from new year's eve and were able to wake up and realize how privileged they are.

We have a Liberal government that is doing nothing to address this problem. On the contrary, they are keeping tax loopholes open for CEOs, which is costing us \$800 million a year. They are still there. Despite their election promise, the government is doing nothing about this. The 100 wealthiest Canadians have more than the 10 million least fortunate Canadians. This is nothing to brag about.

Unfortunately, all too often, any jobs that are created are low-paying jobs, with no benefits or retirement plan. When these jobs do have retirement plans, the Liberal government attacks them, rather than protecting them. If the Liberal government really cared about workers, it would change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to make sure that situations like the one with Sears never happen again, so that the pension funds of workers who gave 25, 30, or 35 years of their lives to a company cannot be stolen by a major corporation like Sears. That is the result of the Liberals' inaction.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I once again commend my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his work.

The bill implements the budgetary measures of this government, which, as we know, plans to run a deficit that is twice as high as what it promised. The question that I want to ask my colleague has to do with the fact that the government is attacking the most vulnerable members of our society.

Since taking office, the Liberals have cut the tax credits that we created for families, including the arts and fitness tax credits. The Liberal government also did away with the public transit tax credit. Who would have thought? We, the Conservatives, want to help people who use public transit, but the Liberals did away with that tax credit.

On top of all that, we recently learned that the Liberal government, which has an insatiable appetite for spending taxpayers'

money, wants to make it harder for those who are ill to access tax credits. This affects people with diabetes and those with mental illnesses.

How does the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie feel about the Liberal government's direct attacks on the most vulnerable members of our society?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question. My answer is simple. I am absolutely outraged that a finance minister can make money off of bills introduced in the House. I am outraged that he is trying to get out of a scandal by writing a big, fat \$5 million cheque. I am outraged that he got nothing but a slap on the wrist from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in the form of a \$200 fine. Ouch, that must hurt.

At the same time, my colleague is quite right. The government is going after people who are suffering. I do not agree with all the tax credits the Conservative Party brought in, but yes, there were a few good ones.

My wife has diabetes. Luckily, she has pretty good insurance coverage and does not need the tax credit. However, I do see what it takes to manage it in her day-to-day life. For people with low incomes who do not have insurance, that tax credit was absolutely crucial. Since last May, 80% of people who suffer from type 1 diabetes and apply for the tax credit are being denied. Prior to that, 80% of those tax credit claims were approved.

The Liberal government is claiming that nothing has happened, that there have been no changes in the directives or the regulations. In that case, why is the government now rejecting all applications for the tax credit?

Every year, I organize a help desk in my constituency office to help people prepare their income tax returns. We see people with very low incomes, many of whom receive social assistance or earn minimum wage. I live in Montreal, which has public transit. The only tax credit those individuals could apply for was the public transit tax credit. They might have gotten \$150 back at the end of the year, and the Liberal government abolished it. I do not understand that measure at all.

• (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his passionate speech. It is always an honour to hear him talk about these important issues.

I would like to ask my colleague several questions. We know that the Liberal government has always talked very proudly about how it is helping the middle class and those striving to be a part of it. It is giving a tax break to people making between \$45,000 and \$200,000.

Does my friend know how much of a tax break people making less than \$45,000 got? What if they do not have any children? What about one-income families, a married person with no children who is making \$80,000? What about a family with two income earners making \$40,000 each? How much of a tax break would they get? Would they get the same as a single person making \$80,000?

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his efforts to help workers and retirees. His fight represents the values that are essential to progressives and, of course, our entire New Democratic movement.

His question is entirely legitimate. Under pretext of helping the middle class, the Liberals have attacked them instead, by reducing their purchasing power, while maintaining measures that benefit our society's wealthiest and most privileged. Let us talk about their famous low-tax plan for the middle class. My colleague's question is entirely legitimate. Let us keep in mind that those earning less than \$45,000 a year got zero. They got nothing at all.

Does the Liberals' definition of middle class only include those who earn \$45,000 and more?

I would like to hear their views on the honest workers in our riding who earn \$30,000, \$32,000, \$38,000 or even \$42,000 a year and get absolutely nothing. People without children have been completely abandoned by the Liberal party. Yes, we need to help families, I have a family, I like families, but there are people who decide not to have children. If they do not have any children and earn less than \$45,000 a year, they get nothing, zero, nada.

I will come back to my Liberal colleague's questions about balancing budgets. The NDP takes a balanced view. We consider both the expense column and the revenue column. In the revenue column, there are many things that could be done. We could crack down on tax havens and tax evasion, stop subsidies to oil companies, and raise taxes on big corporations like banks, which have enjoyed years of handouts from successive federal governments. That would allow us to keep offering robust public services and social programs.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

I am happy to speak today about our government's budget implementation bill, which is an important step in providing opportunities for Canadians and strengthening our economy. It provides a legislative framework to implement key measures from budget 2017.

Just over a week ago, our government provided its fall economic statement. It shows that our plan to grow the economy is working. The economy has created over 472,000 new jobs since late 2015, and we have seen the unemployment rate drop from 7.2% at the beginning of 2016 to 6.2% in September 2017, the lowest rate since 2008, or in almost 10 years.

I have talked with many young people in my community on their concerns about the youth unemployment rate. While it remains higher than the national average, is it as its lowest rate on record at 10.3%. While I would like to see us keep beating that record and reducing it further, I am happy to see that we have made such improvements.

Budget 2017 is the next step of our government's plan. Our plan is to make smart investments. Like many of my colleagues, I have

heard from constituents that they want to see our government invest in the future in smart ways to create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities.

Budget 2017, which follows in the footsteps of budget 2016, offers immediate help to those who need it the most. In my community, at my poverty reduction strategy consultation, in my discussions with the Sisters of St. Joseph, and at the rainy day multi-faith walk along Danforth Avenue in support of the Chew On This campaign of Dignity for All, along with the Danforth Jewish Circle, Eastminster United Church, and Glen Rhodes from that church, the Madinah Masjid Mosque, and the Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation, I heard about the need to address child poverty.

In Toronto, the child poverty rate was 27% in 2016. The Canada child benefit is one direct means our government is using to address this issue by directing it at the families who need it the most. It is non-stigmatizing, portable, and progressive, which means that those people who need it the most will receive a larger benefit. Also, it is non-taxable, and so the amount people receive is what they will get to keep.

I heard some anti-poverty advocates express concern that this program was not indexed. As a result, every year, its assessed value against the cost of living has gone down. In fact, this was raised by Canada Without Poverty in its presentation to the finance committee's pre-budget consultations. The good news is that its advocacy was heard. As of this coming summer, the Canada child benefit will be indexed. This will be an important step in removing child poverty across our country.

On Monday of this week, I had an opportunity to speak at a conference organized by Food Banks Canada. I was able to thank its representatives for their advocacy and work in putting together the annual HungerCount report, which provides important data and insights into food insecurity across Canada. Last year's report recommended an increase in the working income tax benefit, as have the reports and plans of action of Dignity for All.

As part of our government's fall economic statement, we announced that the working income tax benefit would be increased. That tax benefit helps to offset the financial barriers faced by those joining or rejoining the workforce by supplementing the earnings of low-income workers. Starting in 2019, this benefit will be increased by an additional \$500 million annually.

Our government's fall economic statement showed how much the economy has grown, with hundreds of thousands of new jobs being created and the lowest youth unemployment rate on record. It included important anti-poverty measures through the indexation of the Canada child benefit and an increase to the working income tax benefit.

● (1140)

All of this good news is why I am happy to speak to our continued work to grow the economy and help provide opportunities to Canadians through the budget implementation act, Bill C-63.

Government Orders

I would like to focus on division 8 of the budget implementation act, which makes changes to the Canada Labour Code that would allow federal employees some greater flexibility in recognition of the family responsibilities that many of them must balance with their work.

My two children are 19 months apart. As any parent knows, particularly a parent of two children who are close in age, the early years of balancing work with family responsibilities can be very chaotic. In my own experience, I was lucky enough to be able to negotiate with my employer some flexibility in my workplace. In my situation, that made all the difference, allowing me to be more efficient at my work while managing my very busy home. Given my experience and having seen how flexibility can work, I am pleased to see flexible work arrangements added to the Canada Labour Code. A federal employee will now have the right to request a flexible work arrangement. The employer's response now has to be based on prescribed reasons for the decision, and there can be no penalty against the employee for having asked for this opportunity. This will remove the fear that some employees might have about the negative impact of making such a request. It is a step forward in recognizing the needs of employees, which can change over time. I should add that this allowance is not just for family responsibilities, but also for federal employees to seek flexible work arrangements based on whatever their circumstances may be. They just must set them out clearly according to certain rules set out in the proposed changes to the Canada Labour Code.

An issue that is important to many federal employees as parents or as carers for elderly family members is how to attend needed doctors' appointments of their family members. I know from my own experience that I have received my share of telephone calls from my day care to tell me that my child was sick and that I needed to leave work to pick the child up. That can be very difficult to manage against my work obligations. Therefore, I can see the need for what is another major change to the Canada Labour Code, the granting of up to three days of leave every calendar year for employees to carry out their responsibilities related to health care or the care of any of their family members. This will provide some extra peace of mind and assistance to federal employees. Because this comes up as we head into parent-teacher interview season, I should add that the three days of leave also applies to employees' responsibilities related to the education of any of their family members who are less than 18 years of age. That can help them attend parent-teacher interviews or to meet other school-related needs.

This year our government announced Canada's first gender-based violence strategy. I am happy to see that, as part of this budget implementation act, it takes into account family violence by making amendments to allow leave for any employee who is a victim of family violence, or is the parent of a child who is a victim of family violence, for up to 10 days. The leave is to enable employees, in respect of such violence, to the following: (a) seek medical attention for themselves or their child in respect of a physical or psychological injury or disability; (b) to obtain services from an organization that provides services to victims of family violence; (c) to obtain psychological or other professional counselling; (d) to relocate temporarily or permanently; or (e) to seek legal or law enforcement assistance, or to prepare for or participate in any civil or criminal legal proceeding. While my wish is that this will become an unused

provision as a result of our strategies to eliminate family violence, it gives me quite a bit of peace of mind to see that these changes can provide extra support to survivors of family violence.

● (1145)

People in Toronto—Danforth have reached out to me to ask our government to take the necessary steps to eliminate poverty. The announcements forming part of the fall economic statement that will result in the indexation of the Canada child benefit and an increase to the working income tax benefit are two tangible and important means to reduce poverty. There is much more work being done to address poverty, including our national housing strategy, which will be released shortly; our government's poverty reduction strategy, which is taking into account the feedback that was received through consultations; and the national food policy, which I eagerly await.

I am pleased to support the budget implementation act, which would provide more opportunities to Canadians and would grow our economy. The changes to the Canada Labour Code would bring some of these long-needed changes to bring flexibility into the workplace.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech on the second part of the budget implementation act.

I know that the members on that side of the House like to talk about how high the employment numbers are. Statistics Canada does not agree with their findings. I have two StatsCan tables: composition of employment gains and contribution to decreasing unemployment rates. StatsCan shows that participation rates since the current government was elected and brought into power have gone down every single year. It accounts for two-thirds of the decrease in the unemployment rate, so it is not that so many new jobs are being created, because as the population grows they have to create a certain number of jobs every single month. What is actually happening is a lot of people are simply dropping out of the workforce and therefore the unemployment rate is going down. Just for this year, if we look at the job creation numbers we see that 11 out of every 12 jobs were in the public sector and one out of every 12 were in the private sector. How can this be sustainable?

● (1150)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, what we see is that as a government we are investing in new technologies, in clean technologies, and we are creating jobs for the future and that is what we are seeing on the ground. In a city like Toronto I am so pleased to have seen that, just yesterday I believe it was, we were declared a UNESCO media arts significant location for our work that we are doing in new technologies and in getting our stories told in new technologies. That is where we are creating so many jobs as well as across the economy.

Our numbers were very clearly set out in our fall economic update. I believe the number in there was 472,300 jobs. These are good jobs. We are getting people back to work.

Government Orders

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to sit with the member for Toronto—Danforth on the all-party cycling caucus. She joins me in understanding that we have soaring health care costs, soaring greenhouse gas emissions that we have to deal with, and infrastructure costs.

We have talked about cycling as being a part of the solution. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has acknowledged that we need a plan like other countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Germany. They have accelerated people riding bikes and lowering their impact. They have set clear targets so that they can lower emissions. This has been supported by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, by Canada Bikes, and even by the member's own city. The City of Toronto endorsed my bill, Bill C-312, for the call for a national cycling strategy.

Does the member support a national cycling strategy? If so, will the government move forward with supporting my bill and move forward so that we can take on the greatest challenge of our time and that is lowering our impact on the environment and of course at the same time lowering our health care and infrastructure costs?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way is speaking to an issue that is close to my heart. I am an avid cyclist. I cycle around as my main mode of transportation in my community and around the city. I absolutely believe that it is an important part of building out how we can get people moving, make cities safer, and help the environment. I absolutely do support any infrastructure that works toward promoting cycling. I was very happy to see that in fact in our investments in the City of Toronto, the federal investments that went to public transit also went to support cycling infrastructure. The investments created new bike-share stations and bike parking stations at subway stations, and also went to some further pathways and trails that had been requested by the city. These are all tangible ways that we make it easier for people to get around our communities on bicycles.

I absolutely always support 8 80 Cities, ways for people from eight to the age of 80 and more on either side to get around our cities safely. I absolutely support cycling as a strategy.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is trying to take credit for the increased job creation in Canada. However, the truth of the matter is that the one method it said was going to be very effective was its infrastructure program. We know that the parliamentary budget officer confirmed in August the Liberals are failing to get the funding for important infrastructure out the door. Infrastructure Canada's grants and contributions to provinces for infrastructure projects are essentially flat compared to last year. In my riding, people ask me all the time where that money is and when it is going to stimulate the economy the way the government said. The economy is actually being stimulated right now from the efforts of small businesses in Canada.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. I guess one just has to look for it.

In my community, I have seen water infrastructure being built. In East York, there are new pipes going in. We can see those projects happening. I have seen new bike-share stations, which I just referred to, being put in place. There are over 13 housing projects that have

received funding just in my community. I am not sure why the member does not see any of this funding in her community, when I certainly see tangible results in my own. Perhaps it is a matter of going out to see the construction going on just down the street.

•(1155)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand in the House today to speak on our budget 2017. It is exciting, to be quite honest.

I am the member of Parliament for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, which is on the outskirts of Halifax and Dartmouth.

Nova Scotia has the largest number per capita of veterans and military in the country, and my riding has 23%, the most in the province. A lot of my time is spent learning how we can support them. An important part are town halls and meetings with various legion members and their families. Many of them are also military members or veterans.

I am happy to mention that a couple of months ago I was appointed to the veterans committee. It is very important to me and I am very happy to be taking part in it.

In my riding we have many seniors. We hold a lot of records for the number of veterans and seniors. From 2011 to 2016, we had a 33% increase of seniors, the greatest in the country for those 65 years and older. That identifies the need to support our seniors.

In our riding, while the number of seniors over the last five years has increased, the numbers of youths have decreased by about 5%. That is not a good formula. We have to make things happen. I strongly believe that this budget will allow us to do that.

Also in my riding are a lot of young families with many young kids. We need to create infrastructure to allow us to support those individuals.

It is extremely important to talk about our veterans. Many things are happening, although more needs to be done. This morning I met with the ombudsman of veterans affairs and the ombudsman of the Canadian Armed Forces. We now have an opportunity to drill deeper on some of the issues.

One thing our government has promised, and we will fulfill, is a lifetime pension. The details, as we indicated in the budget, are being worked out. We hope to launch it before the end of the year.

Government Orders

The other piece about veterans is their transition after release. It is probably the most difficult and challenging piece. Our government has already done many good things in this area, but we need to do a lot more. We need to make sure that it is a seamless process for a military member who is being released for whatever reason. Whether it is for medical reasons or not, we must make sure that we do it right.

We are not doing it right. Approximately 10,000 military members are released each year, and 27% of them have challenges transitioning. More importantly, 60% of that 27% are not on medical release. We have a lot of work to do in this area and we will be concentrating a lot of our energies here.

The government has put an educational component in place with respect to the military. When veterans are released after six years they will receive \$40,000 for transition and rehabilitation, and after 12 years they will receive \$80,000. Those represent investments in creating that transition that is so important, and we have so much more to do.

We have also invested in family resource centres. It is crucial for more interventions in the short term to support our veterans.

The federal government cannot solve it all. The provincial government and the municipal government also have some responsibility. They are on the ground. The family well-being fund brings veterans into the community. This allows different organizations to apply for funding for services in their communities for veterans. That is extremely important.

● (1200)

The other one, of course, is the centre of excellence we have talked about for PTSD and medical issues. We need to do more in that area, and we need to do it quickly. We have committed to that type of centre. What is the centre? It cannot be just bricks and mortar. There have to be services. We have to keep data and have tracking. We have to know what is happening in other countries so that we can take best practices and apply them here.

We just announced the joint suicide prevention initiative, which is another great example of our government taking a horizontal approach to supporting our military and veterans. We have the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs working together to tighten the seamless approach we want.

The second piece I want to talk about is seniors. I spent a lot of time this summer visiting every seniors residence in my riding talking about some of the services and what we are trying to do. We have already changed the retirement age to 65. Some of them are now seniors and are recognized as seniors, whereas under the former government, they were not. We know that is extremely important as well.

We also put in place for seniors compassionate care benefits. Any family member or relation of someone who has a terminal illness can apply for extra weeks of compassionate care benefits. It has gone from six weeks to 26 weeks, which is extremely important.

The accessibility tax credit is another one that is extremely important. If we want people to stay in their homes longer, we may have to make some adjustments. I am sure some members have seen

the television ads about the chair that goes upstairs. That is an example. We have to do all kinds of different things structurally to make sure people can stay in their homes longer. The national housing strategy will also greatly help seniors. The investment in the national health care program is another one that will assist in that area.

The third point I want to talk about is youth. As I said before, we have fewer youth in my riding than five years ago. We need to change that trend. Last year I had a youth council, and I will continue that this year. It is an opportunity for them to help us as a government, to help us as MPs, understand some of their needs.

We have put in place the working income tax benefit for those families making low incomes. They can use that money for education. We have created an employment strategy that will help 33,000 youth develop job skills and will create 15,000 green jobs. We have doubled the number of summer jobs in the last two years for young people.

I cannot leave without talking about the CCB. All of us in this chamber, all 338 MPs, have families in their ridings that have received extra funding to use for education, sports, and all kinds of challenges these families have. In my riding alone, Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, the families of more than 15,000 kids are receiving money tax-free. That is a major investment. I am hearing that at the door. Nine out of 10 families across this country are receiving more money; 300,000 kids are now out of poverty. That is impressive. That is the type of government we have.

Let me summarize. In the last two years, we have had 450,000 new jobs. We put a national strategy in place, with all the provinces and territories, for the CPP, something the last government could not do, but we did it. We are working on national strategies: a national seniors strategy, a housing strategy, and small business. This government and this budget—

● (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Maybe the member will be able to finish up his thoughts during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite gave a very passionate speech about the Liberals' perspective on their budget. He mentioned the doubling of the number of summer youth employment jobs. He is very proud of that. However, what he failed to mention was that university students need a solid summer of work. They need to know that they are employed throughout the summer. When the Liberals doubled the number of job opportunities, they cut back the number of weeks available in any of those positions by half. From what I understand from my calculations, that means twice as many jobs but half as much employment time. As a result, many university students, and even high school students, were not able to take those jobs, because it meant it limited other opportunities. How can he say that this is a good move on behalf of the Liberal government?

Government Orders

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the record. Not only have we doubled the number of jobs, we have doubled the funding. Not only have we doubled the funding, we have put a process in place that will best meet the needs of people. The student going to university can still have 16 weeks. The one in high school will get 12 weeks. The other one will get eight weeks. It is a program for the people on the ground. That is the difference with our government. We are meeting the needs of the youth.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the 450,000 jobs, but we are not seeing those jobs in places like Port Alberni, which has the highest poverty rate in British Columbia.

The Liberal government made a clear promise that it was going to cut subsidies to oil and gas, which is over \$2 billion. It made a promise that it was going to take real action on climate change. Instead it has adopted the same targets the Harper government had, but without a plan. We are seeing an increase in fires and flooding in our communities, and certainly in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni.

The previous government put forward a plan, a home energy retrofit program, and although it was short-lived, it was heavily subscribed to. It was a great opportunity for homeowners to get involved in taking action to tackle climate change. It created jobs for tradespeople.

The Liberal government promised that it would move forward with a home energy retrofit program. We have great opportunities in my community in Cumberland. I was just talking to Jason Jackson, from Hakai Energy, and he said that any money would inspire people to get going on doing their part.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments concerning his region. However, we have to look at this government if we really want to see change on carbon. The environment is one of our strong agendas. What is important is that we put in place a carbon tax. We are the ones working closely with the provinces to make a big change in that area.

Who is doing the ocean strategy for our coastlines? The Liberals are. We are not talking about it; we are delivering on commitments. That is the difference between our government and the former one.

We are looking at creating national strategies, not for tomorrow, and not using a band-aid approach. We are using an approach that will guarantee that structures will be in place for Canadians for the next 30 or 40 years. That is our plan. It is a solid plan, and Canadians are behind us 150%.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, how can investing half a billion dollars in the Asian infrastructure bank help Canadians?

• (1210)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, the member should look in the mirror, because he just used the word “investing”. Investment means investing in people. It means investing in infrastructure. It means investing in jobs. That is what it means, and that is what we are doing.

He should ask himself how many young kids in his riding are receiving the Canada child benefit, the CCB. There are thousands. I guarantee that it is 10,000 and probably up to 20,000.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to be joining the debate on the budget implementation act, part 2. It is Financial Literacy Month. The Minister of Finance announced it just yesterday. It was great, because the minister has demonstrated an amazing ability to look after his own personal finances. I definitely know he will not be the one announcing ethical literacy month any time soon.

I have been listening to the debate in the chamber on the tax brackets. Many members have said, “We have lowered taxes on the middle class.” In fact, do member know who the Liberals lowered taxes for the most and who received the greatest benefit? It was that member, and that member, and that member. Who did not get a tax break? It was those people, all the people watching CPAC right now. That is because the so-called new tax bracket to tax the 1% did not tax any of us more. We got the full benefit of the tax break for the middle class. I do not think members of Parliament are part of the middle class, though.

Those are just talking points. It is just spin. Middle-class Canadians did not get a tax break, because what the government gave with one hand, it took away with the other hand with higher carbon taxes, by nickel-and-diming them on different tax credits, and through higher CPP and EI premiums.

I want to spend a little time on the employment numbers the government likes to use. Just this year we saw employment numbers showing that 11 out of 12 jobs were created not in the private sector but in the public sector. That is not sustainable in the long term. We actually have to create jobs in the private sector to pay for jobs in the public sector. That is how it works.

The Liberals promised a \$10-billion deficit. It is \$20 billion. They are afraid of saying that word. Every single member so far has avoided even mentioning it. There is not even a plan in the budget to return to balance.

Before I continue, Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my very good colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. I am sure members are pleased that I will not be able to use the whole 20 minutes to pillory this budget.

On the deficit, we know that they have no plan, because they are not even considering it. They have no intention of ever returning to a balanced budget, which is why they are so happy to spend. That is also why the employment numbers scare me so much. There has been a 2/3 reduction this year in the unemployment numbers. The Liberals crow about this, saying that the unemployment rate is going down. It is because the participation rate is going down. There are fewer people looking for work. Two-thirds are not looking for work anymore. I cannot blame them. They are being nickel-and-dimed on taxes, so why would they? Why would they continue working if they cannot make an honest buck without having the government take the honest buck? It is shameful.

Government Orders

Another part I want to talk about is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The member previously said it is about investment. Well, there is a great Yiddish proverb on this: "On his words no building could be built." That is exactly the record of the government. It is not going to get infrastructure built. It is actually going to fail at this. It is going to create well-paying middle-class jobs in Pakistan, in Tajikistan, and in China, which leads this infrastructure bank. It is not going to create it here for middle-class Canadians, because every single Canadian company can already bid for work. We did not need to join them and waste half a billion dollars in middle-class taxpayer dollars on this. They could have bid for the work already.

Let us compare that to the government's record in Alberta. Twenty-seven out of 174 infrastructure projects are completed so far. The Liberals are two years into their mandate, and all they have to show for it is 27 projects completed. That is not me saying that. It is on the government's website. The government is saying that.

There are two programs: clean water and waste water funds, and public transit and infrastructure funds. Let us compare that to what the infrastructure bank is paying for. It has loans to 21 projects. This is where it becomes really ridiculous for Albertans.

• (1215)

This infrastructure bank, the one we are going to put half a billion dollars into, is going to finance what? It will finance pipeline projects in other countries. Let us look at this: Bangladesh natural gas infrastructure, an efficiency improvement project, 36 inch pipe, 181 kilometres; Azerbaijan Trans-Anatolian natural gas project, TANAP for short, is going to be financed through this Asian infrastructure bank. Let me get this straight. We will loan money to pipeline projects in Azerbaijan and Bangladesh, but we will not support energy workers in Alberta.

Who are the victims of these types of government decisions on that side? Alberta energy families are the victims of this decision to finance infrastructure projects, pipelines overseas in Asia, helping middle-class Chinese workers and middle-class Bangladeshi workers, instead of Canadian middle-class workers. That is shameful. They are the victims of this type of decision-making.

It goes on. Those are not the only countries. We have to look at it more broadly as well. Speaking of Canada's foreign interests, what kind of interests could we possibly have in financing this bank with half a billion dollars? Let us look at it.

Our ally Japan, with whom we would like to have a better relationship and a free trade agreement, heads up the Asian Development Bank. Do we choose to go there? No, we are going to go to the bank controlled by the biggest shareholder, the Chinese Communist Party, where a 76% vote is necessary to approve a project and where the Chinese government holds the biggest stake. It has been said that it is not a multilateral bank but a vehicle to pursue China's interests. Why are we financing China's foreign policy?

It has been said of the appointment process at the AIIB, which is the acronym for this bank, when compared to the World Bank, when compared to Japan's ADB, the development bank I just spoke of, that China has veto power over the appointment of the AIIB president.

That type of influence does not exist at these other multilateral bodies of which Canada is a part.

I have to ask this question. Why are we giving away half a billion dollars of middle-class Canadian taxpayers' dollars? We taxed people in Alberta, people who did not have jobs, energy families, convenience store workers, restaurant workers, to then give the money to middle-class workers in China to literally build a pipeline over there. These projects have been approved over there.

We crow about projects being approved here, but in this budget the government is going after the energy industry again. It is repealing one of the tax credits that the energy industry uses. It is in subclause 19(1) of this budget implementation legislation. The government is phasing out the first \$1 million and no longer will the CDE be able to be reclassified into a CEE.

This is another kick in the shins to energy families. It is a kick in the shins to Albertans, who are the victims in all this. They are the ones being targeted by this. These are junior oil and gas companies, which have been taking advantage of this to defray some of the exploration costs involved in drilling wells. They are the ones being targeted by this. At a time when the industry is struggling, the number one employer in Alberta is being targeted with the elimination of a tax credit.

The government is giving the money from Alberta taxpayers to China to build a pipeline in Azerbaijan or maybe future pipelines. However, when it comes to Canada, the government tells us we cannot do that; we have to look at our GHG emissions, look at our communities and what they think, which are all fine points to make, but why is it financing these projects overseas?

Does the government not see the drastic hypocrisy in putting forward such a budget implementation bill? The Liberals expect to raise an extra \$145 million on the backs of energy workers and oil and gas entrepreneurs in Alberta, and I find that shameful.

Obviously I cannot support this bill. I cannot support this bill because I do not see anything in it for Alberta's middle class. I do not see anything in it for Canada's middle class. I just see a government project in division 2, this Asian infrastructure bank agreement to transfer half a billion dollars worth of wealth to build pipelines in other countries, among other projects. I ask myself why. Why do Albertans have to pay for all this? Why do middle-class Canadian workers have to pay for this?

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• (1220)

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned deficits, as if the Conservative government ran none. They ran them as high as \$50 billion and ran them almost every year they were in office, so I find the comments a little hypocritical.

Second, when he talks about growth and the state of the economy, would he care to comment on a decade of the lowest growth that Canada ever saw? It languished at about 1%, while Canada right now is poised, on an annualized basis, for GDP growth of 4.5%; while Canada has gained more than 400,000 jobs, 60% of which are full time; while the secretary general of the OECD said about Canada:

You are talking about being the highest-growing in the G7, you are talking about a performance that has been steadily positive even as there have been slippages in many other OECD and G7 countries, and you have seen very steady job creation.

That was said by the OECD. That is the record.

I would pose this to the member. After a decade of languishing, after a decade of our economy not growing, why can he not get on-board a plan that is finally getting our economy rolling?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, he must have missed the great recession of 2008 and 2009, when his party demanded more spending. In fact, had Parliament and the government adopted the Liberals' plan, there would be even more debt, probably double or triple the debt. It was a Conservative government that limited the damage that the other parties could have done to the economy and to middle-class Canadians.

He must have also missed the GDP forecast for the future in the budget, which showed that the GDP will be lower than in the 2015 budget. In fact, the economy will go down and there will not be as much growth. It will be lower than what was expected in 2015. We have one year of juiced-up GDP and then it goes lower than what it was expected to be in 2015. Every private sector economist is saying there are difficult waters ahead, and the government is not ready for it. It is just racking up deficits and debt year after year, with no plan whatever to return to a balance.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding and certainly on the west coast of British Columbia, with Vancouver housing prices skyrocketing, it is spilling over to Vancouver Island and affecting housing prices. More and more people are vulnerable. They end up living on the streets. Groups like the Port Alberni Shelter Society or Dawn to Dawn in the Comox Valley are trying desperately to find housing for the most vulnerable, the people living on the street.

The Liberal government made an announcement of \$11.2 billion over 10 years for housing initiatives. However, when we look at the details, we find out that it is only \$20 million this year and \$300 million by the next election. Does he find it a little misleading when the government makes announcements like this, and does he support the government following through with its promise to cut loopholes for CEOs that cost taxpayers in Canada over \$750 million, when that money could be used for affordable housing?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, it is difficult. He lives in an area where there is a difficult housing market, especially for young

people trying to buy their first house. I remember being in the same position of trying to buy my first condo in downtown Edmonton when I lived there, one that would accept kids, because I had children then. The Liberal government is known for this. It makes a promise, and when we look at it much more closely, we see the promise is a lot smaller or in the fine print it is not what we expected.

When Liberals say they are going to create well-paying, middle-class jobs, I guess their caveat should have been that they meant to say they would finance the Azerbaijani trans-Anatolian natural gas pipeline project, because that's where they were going to create middle-class infrastructure jobs. We know from the PBO there were \$2 billion that they could not spend and only 27 projects were approved and completed in Alberta. It is a shameful record that the government has created for itself after two years.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to follow the eloquent speech given by my colleague, the member for Calgary Shepard.

The bill before us implements the measures announced in the last budget. This gives us a chance to talk about Canada's economic situation, and more specifically the economic update the government tabled last week. I will come back to that.

My speech today will show how badly the government is mismanaging public funds, in the Conservatives' opinion. This government makes choices that beg for close scrutiny, but above all, it makes dubious claims about those choices, which are not yielding the results it was hoping for. This is why we strongly condemn them.

During the last election campaign, one political party had the bad, yet admittedly novel, idea of promising Canadians that it would put the budget back into deficit. That party was the Liberal Party.

The Liberal platform claimed the government would run modest deficits for three years and balance the budget in 2019. The Liberal campaign promise was a tiny deficit, barely \$10 billion, and a balanced budget in 2019, which is an election year.

Canadians fell for it. Unfortunately, they now realize that those promises have not been kept. Here we have a budget that projects a \$20.2 billion deficit according to the latest numbers from the parliamentary budget officer, who analyzed the data very objectively and concluded that Canada's deficit is double what the Liberals promised Canadians.

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The government also promised to balance the budget in 2019. There is nothing in this budget about a timeline for balancing the budget. If memory serves, I do not believe a Canadian government has ever, in times of economic prosperity, perpetuated a deficit without a plan to balance the budget. We have seen that kind of thing during world wars, unfortunately. We have seen it in times of major financial crises, such as when inflation was approaching 10% in the 1970s, but I do not remember another government ever running deficit after deficit with no plan to balance the budget.

In our opinion, not only is this a broken promise, but, even worse, it is very bad news for Canada's youth, our children and grandchildren, because they will be paying for it in the future.

Why are we so worried about deficits? It is because the deficit is growing and, if the government's attitude does not change, it will grow to \$1.5 trillion, or \$1,000 billion, by 2050. Our children and grandchildren will have to foot the bill. The current government has taken the wrong approach to governing.

The Liberal government's record is as follows: broken promises with respect to small deficits and the return to a balanced budget; a large deficit that is double what was projected; no timeline for balancing the budget.

The government says that it has reduced the tax burden for Canadians, but that is not true. Just one month ago, the Fraser Institute released a study indicating that 80% of families pay \$840 more in taxes today due to this government's bad decisions.

Not only will the soon to be implemented carbon tax result in higher taxes for Canadians, but the tax credits introduced by our government were abolished. The first on the government's chopping block were the family tax credits, including credits for children's sports and arts activities. It also eliminated the tax credit for the purchase of textbooks.

It even eliminated a green credit introduced by the Conservatives. The late Hon. Jim Flaherty, a former Conservative finance minister, introduced a tax credit for users of public transit. It was an effective way of encouraging and helping people to use public transit in their community. The Liberals, who continually boast about being environmentally friendly, eliminated the public transit credit.

● (1230)

Over the past few months, we learned that the government wanted to attack the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged among us: the sick. It decided to impose stricter eligibility criteria for the tax credit for people with diabetes or mental illness. It is despicable for a government to go after sick people.

Our government created a tax credit to help people suffering from type 1 diabetes. Earlier, an NDP member was talking about his wife who has diabetes. We know it costs a lot of money, around \$15,000 a year. Our government created a tax credit to help those people, give them some breathing room, and ease their suffering. This government is making the eligibility criteria stricter.

When we were in power, 80% of the people who applied for the tax credit got it. Today, under the Liberals, 80% of people who apply for it do not get it. Attacking the sick is unbecoming of a government and that is what the Liberal Party is doing.

These people crow over their lofty principles as they claim to have created the Canada child benefit to help children. The Prime Minister takes the floor every day. Yesterday, it was funny, he was so proud to be providing numbers. He talked about the number of children in the ridings of Richmond—Arthabaska and Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, as if he himself had invented family allowances.

Remember that this government implemented a new system, the Canada child benefit, but they forgot a small detail in the budget: inflation. They forgot to calculate inflation. That meant that in the end, Canadians were going to have less money in their pockets than they had under our program, the universal child care benefit. Each had their own point of view and their own game plan. We supported children.

The Prime Minister rises in the House to say that 23,283 children today receive such and such amount. However, children also benefited from our measures when we were in power. The big difference is that we had a balanced budget, which is not currently the case with the Liberals.

When we run a deficit, we are forcing our children and grandchildren to pick up the tab. Sure, this is a family-friendly measure designed to help children. I hope it helps them, anyway, because they are going to have to pay for it later thanks to a Liberal government that cannot balance the budget. This government may be focused on families and children, but it is also making them foot the bill.

I also remember the Liberals promising to change the tax system and make the rich pay more. They were going to be like Robin Hood, robbing from the rich and redistributing that wealth to the least fortunate among us. That is what the Liberal government said it would do. Two years on, what do we see? The exact opposite has happened.

As we said earlier, 80% of families are paying \$840 more to the Liberal government. The richest Canadians were supposed to pay more tax. Our teary-eyed Prime Minister said that wealthy people like himself were going to pay more tax. Two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance said that wealthy people like himself were going to pay more tax. The truth is quite the opposite.

The richest Canadians are paying \$1 billion less in tax today than they paid under the Conservative government. Those are not my words or the Conservative Party's. That is from the Minister of Finance, who knows exactly what is coming in and what is going out. He calculated that, because of the Liberal government's measures, the wealthiest Canadians are paying \$1 billion less in tax each year than they were under the Conservatives. That is the reality.

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What is more, those who stand to benefit the most from the tax reform are those who earn between \$144,000 and \$200,000 annually. They are the ones who win the kitty. However, nothing has changed for those earning \$45,000 or less a year. I am sorry to say it, but those who earn \$150,000 a year are not part of the middle class. Those who earn \$45,000 a year need every penny so that their family can have a decent life, but the government is giving them absolutely nothing. Those earning between \$144,000 and \$200,000 a year win the kitty. People in the top 1% are getting a \$1-billion tax cut. That is the reality of the Liberals' record.

That is why we have to be very careful. This government says one thing, and does another. That is why we think that the bill is no good. We invite all hon. members to vote against it.

• (1235)

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my learned friend from the other side, and there were some inaccuracies in what he said. He mentioned that the Conservatives introduced the child benefit during their regime, but that was taxable. Under the Canada child benefit, we are giving more tax-free money to nine out of 10 families than the previous government did. The member also mentioned that we had not considered inflation. Probably the member forgot that we are now two years into our governance and we are linking the Canada child benefit to the cost of living increases.

I did not hear the member talk about affordable housing for seniors. In the riding of Nepean in Ottawa, 10,000 people were on the waiting list for affordable housing. We have made a great many investments for seniors. A few years back, a report stated that in Ottawa and the eastern Ontario region, 2.5% of patients accounted for 35% of hospital expenses. Fifty per cent of that 2.5% were seniors. Therefore, we have transferred more funds to the provinces with the condition they be used for senior care and mental illness.

Finally, does the member recognize that the increase in our GDP growth is the best among the G7 countries due to the investments we have made.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am certain that my colleague will be very pleased to read the document I am holding.

This Fraser Institute document reports that 80% of families are paying \$840 more with the Liberals in power. That is the reality. The member spoke about the debt-to-GDP, or gross domestic product, ratio and said that it is the best among G7 countries. I have two things to say about that: first, the Liberals never mentioned it in their election promise regarding possible tax cuts.

This reminds us that, when we were in government, we left the house in order with a \$2.5 billion surplus. Even better, Canada was the first to emerge from the economic crisis. We were the best country in the G7 and we had the best debt-to-GDP ratio. That was the legacy of the Conservative government. This government is headed in the wrong direction by spending money it does not have and creating deficits.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, before the budget was tabled last spring, the NDP sent a letter to the Minister of Finance, outlining some of our great ideas on how the government could help Canadians, the middle class, and those striving to join it. Perhaps the Conservatives may not have agreed with all of that list, but one the thing I think they would have agreed with was to bring back the eco-energy retrofit program, which was a Conservative policy. It would provide money for Canadians across the country, leveraging hundreds of millions of dollars. People spent so much money in stores across the country and it cut down greenhouse gases in their communities.

Could the member comment on why the Liberals have not started this program again? It was such an obvious success of the past Conservative government.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I want to pinch myself when I hear an NDP speaker talk about a great program tabled by the Conservatives. I thank him so much. We had many of them.

The philosophical approach of the Conservatives was to let people decide for themselves. This was why we had so many tax credits to help children, families, and those who used transit, those who used buses and metros in big cities. If they wanted to use those, we would help them. This is why we also had some great tax credits for people who were sick. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has failed to recognize that. The government thinks that the best way to deal with people is to tell them what is good for them and what is not good for them. That is not the way we see things.

We welcome the fact that the NDP supports some of our policies. Two years from now we will apply them again.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the name of my riding is quite long, but I am very proud of it because I represent four RCMs, those of Avignon, La Mitis, Matane, and Matapédia. I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

As I was saying, I am the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, which was represented by an opposition member for nearly 25 years. During that whole time, it was represented by a Bloc member. It was a particularly difficult period because we did not have the federal government's ear and were not represented at the decision-making table to make sure that important initiatives were carried out. During that time, particularly the 10 years that the Conservatives were in power, my riding went through some really tough economic times.

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Jobs were lost and businesses closed their doors in my region, mainly because of the budget cuts within federal departments and agencies. It was a particularly dark period. That is why I decided to get involved in politics. I told myself that I was going to use my experience to work hard so that my region had a place at the decision-making table. Today, the Liberals are in office because our platform was and still is excellent, as reflected in our previous budgets.

I would like to respond to what my colleague said earlier. To us, the important thing is that the debt-to-GDP ratio, which was 32.5% when we came to power, has gradually gotten smaller. Now it is 30.5%, and it will continue to shrink. That was one thing we promised to do. Based on our projections, that ratio will reach its lowest point since the 1970s. We brought it down to that level thanks to a healthy economy and a plan that is working. Revenues are up, and people are confident, so they are investing and consuming goods, which is a huge help to Canada's economy.

Not long ago, Ms. Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said that she hoped Canada's approach would go viral. That is true, and that is what we would like to see because our plan is working.

As I said before, I represent a riding in the Lower St. Lawrence region that straddles the Gaspé and includes 57 exceptionally vibrant municipalities. The residents of those municipalities have been especially proud these past two years because, thanks to our budget and our platform, we have invested \$77 million in various projects there. The region has not seen that kind of investment in years.

We are seeing economic growth. Jobs are being created and the economy is booming. Of course there is still work to be done, but in two years' time, we have managed to attract investments totalling \$77 million. I also know that this is going to continue, because there are still some excellent projects on the table. I support them, and my government is going to support them. I can assure the House that we are in an excellent and very positive situation.

Here are some specific examples of projects that have come out of the budget measures we implemented. In my riding, in Sainte-Flavie, right next to the Mont-Joli airport, for those who know the Gaspé region, we have the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, an internationally recognized French-language ocean research institute. Last June, I had the immense pleasure of welcoming the Minister of Fisheries to announce a \$27 million investment, which will give the institute the research labs and infrastructure it needs to conduct important research and examine what is happening in our oceans in order to predict trends.

• (1245)

On top of this \$27-million investment, the minister also announced more jobs. During the 10 years the Conservative government was in power, this institute was on a downward spiral. Jobs and investment were cut, which worried us greatly. Our announcement was a tangible demonstration of how much our government values research.

On a side note, when we came into office, the Prime Minister released a letter to federal public servants saying that we care about them, that we value research, and that we need their research

findings to inform our decision making. This letter took a huge weight off their shoulders. The effect was amazing. Now they are truly motivated.

I was present at the institute when my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, made the announcement. There was a "Stop Harper" sign outside the building. This is an important anecdote, because the institute needed a chance to turn things around. Now it has that chance, thanks to our investments and the measures we implemented in this budget. Investments are being made, and jobs are now being created. I am very proud that those jobs are in the regions.

There is a major regional airport in my riding, Mont-Joli airport, that makes it possible for me to return to my region as often as possible. Scheduling conflicts can make that a challenge at times, but the airport needed to be developed because it is an important infrastructure that allows workers to travel to our region. We are committed to investing in extending the runway at the Mont-Joli airport. We have also allocated funding for decontaminating the land around the airport so that the City of Mont-Joli can acquire the land and sell it for development.

We have also invested in the environment. For example, the banks of the St. Lawrence have eroded over the years. Obviously, climate change has had a significant impact. Some do not think that climate change is having such a serious or direct impact, but back home there is no denying it. The Minister of the Environment has invested in a project to protect 20 kilometres or so of banks by planting vegetation to shield from the high tides.

Furthermore, we invested in transforming churches into cultural centres. We also invested in our communities. I count myself lucky to have two Mi'kmaq communities in my riding, Listuguj and Gesgapegiag. People in those communities are much happier when we talk to them these days, because the dark days of the Conservative reign are over. I just spent some time with some of them yesterday here in Ottawa. We met with the Minister of Fisheries to talk about some development opportunities. Sizeable investments have been made in their communities, specifically to give them the infrastructure needed for their development.

We also invested in water supply and waste water treatment systems. We also made sizeable investments, in partnership with the Government of Quebec, in our arenas. We have invested in more tourism-oriented projects, such as lookouts, so that when tourists are passing through the Matapédia valley, they can stop and take the time to see the beautiful landscapes along the river. We announced some measures regarding investments in a series of lookouts so that tourists can enjoy the magnificent views in the Matapédia valley.

In Carleton-sur-Mer, thanks to our budget measures, visitors can access the magnificent Mount Saint-Joseph and its beautiful parish church. We are investing several million dollars in this tourist attraction.

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In closing, over the past two years, our government has invested a lot of money across Canada. I am particularly proud of our government and our Minister of Finance, and this is only the beginning. We continue to implement our amazing platform.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have a man who goes by the name of Elvis in our community of Port Alberni. Elvis has an alcohol addiction. He used to drink daily, and every day the ambulance, fire department, or police were called to pick him up. They would take him to the hospital and a doctor or a nurse would evaluate him, and sometimes X-ray him. Elvis would then go back to the street. It would cost us roughly \$2,000 a day in services to take care of Elvis.

The Port Alberni Shelter Society raised money from the public and community groups and found Elvis a place to stay. It costs us \$425 a month for Elvis to live in this place, and he has been living there for five years, saving hundreds of thousands if not millions of taxpayers' dollars.

The government has talked about delivering money to housing, but we are not seeing it, and every community has an Elvis. Every community know this same story. We urgently need to get people off the street and save taxpayers' money. We need to make sure there are no more Elvises waiting for a place to live.

Will the government take seriously and urgently the vulnerable people living on the streets in our communities? We have been waiting for too long.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks. He obviously cares about his constituents and the person that he mentioned.

The Government of Canada shares that concern. We have announced and taken steps to invest in infrastructure and affordable housing to give the less fortunate better access to quality housing.

I often talk about my riding. Two or three weeks ago, I was at home in Pointe-à-la-Croix to announce funding to properly renovate a building that houses some 60 affordable housing units for people in the community. I could give other similar examples because this sort of thing is happening all across Canada. We care a lot about this issue.

Investments have been made and others will be made to give Canadians who are not as well off access to affordable housing.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the member's government has said a lot of great things about fighting climate change, sentiments that I share. The trouble is, the government's actions have been very inadequate. In fact, we are seeing greenhouse gas levels going in the wrong direction, going up rather than down.

I want to ask the member about one hugely successful program the previous Conservative government started, the ecoENERGY retrofit program. For a small investment, the federal government was able to leverage a lot of spending by people across this country, getting

businesses in every community more and more business as a result. I have heard this from builders and businesses in my community.

This program brought down greenhouse gases across this country. However, the current government has refused to bring that program back. It was such a successful program and easy win for everyone, it would get full support within the House if it returned. Why has the government refused to bring it back?

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. He knows and he said that our government cares about the environment and must make concrete investments to deal with climate change.

To answer his question, I have another real-life example, and I talked about this earlier. Thanks to the program that was implemented by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, our government was able to invest tens of thousands of dollars to protect some 20 kilometres of the St. Lawrence River shoreline. Plants were planted to protect the bank from high tides. There are many other examples like this.

I would like to remind members that we signed the Paris agreement. There is a lot of work to be done, but it is worth doing and continuing our efforts. I look forward to other announcements like this from the minister.

• (1255)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of the budget implementation act to implement the second phase of the plan that the minister and government laid out for Canadians in budget 2017. Two years into our mandate from Canadians, it is abundantly clear that the plan we laid out, which the Minister of Finance has been executing, is working. In our riding of St. Catharines, we do not have to look far to see the real impact that our policies are having on our community.

Prior to and since my election, I have had the opportunity to work with many people in great organizations. An example of that is the YWCA Niagara Region, whose representatives I will be meeting later today. I look forward to talking to them about the great work they do in Niagara and across the country. However, prior to my election, they ran an excellent program known as the cardboard house. They set up a cardboard house. We were able to walk through the few rooms in this small house and see the statistics on the poverty levels in Niagara. Prior to my election, one statistic that caught my eye was child poverty in Niagara. That number was 25%. Of the children in the Niagara region, 25% were living in poverty. That is unspeakably and shockingly high.

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I was proud to be part of the campaign with our Prime Minister that recognized the plight of child poverty in Canada. During the previous election campaign, we committed ourselves to implementing a policy that would help raise some of those vulnerable Canadian children out of poverty, and in December 2015 we introduced the Canada child benefit as one of our first pieces of legislation as a government. Since July 2016, when the CCB came into effect, it has been helping hundreds of thousands of Canadian children across the country. In St. Catharines alone, as of July 2017, over 15,100 children have received this new and tax-free benefit. In St. Catharines, payments average \$600 per month, amounting to more than \$5.4 million dedicated to helping some of the most vulnerable and to making life a little easier for middle-class families and those working hard to join them. This is an example of our government listening to Canadians.

This past summer I had an opportunity to participate in a fundraiser run by the YWCA Niagara Region. Prior to that fundraiser, it invited me back to the cardboard house, which was in the Pen Centre, a local mall in St. Catharines. I looked back again through the statistics, and many of them were too high. A lot more work needs to be done. The one statistic that caught my eye was that child poverty in Niagara was no longer 25% but 15%. As I said, that number is still too high, but it is a 40% reduction in child poverty in St. Catharines and the Niagara region within two years. We cannot argue with statistics. It's basic math: the more money we put into the hands of middle-class families and of those who are struggling, the more we reduce poverty. This is the result we get when we listen to Canadians and put in place a plan that is in the best interests of the country.

Reducing poverty and bolstering the middle class was a central tenet of our plan. It was at the core of budget 2016 and continues to be a core guiding principle of budget 2017 and the budget implementation act we are debating today. We do not have to look far to see supportive statements indicating that our plan is working, but I think one supportive statement in particular bears discussion. The Governor of the Bank of Canada is responsible for setting the monetary policy of our central bank. His job is essential to the successful operation of our economy, and his opinion holds enough weight to shift the entire stock market. He is independent, but was appointed on the advice of the former government. During his remarks of July 12, he noted that our economy was strengthening and the economic outlook strong. However, it is interesting to see his reasons for making those remarks. He credited our government's commitment to targeted stimulus spending as the reason for continued growth in our economy. He noted specifically that the Canada child benefit was "highly stimulative".

● (1300)

We cannot ask for much more validation than that. The Bank of Canada governor, appointed by the previous Conservative prime minister, has credited our plan for growing the economy, which is exactly what we said it would do.

Perhaps the opinion of the Bank of Canada governor is not enough, so let us hear from Greg from St. Catharines.

I ran into Greg on the streets of St. Catharines. He said hello to me and said "Thank you, Chris." I was perplexed by that and asked

why he had said that. He told me that it was because of the Canada child benefit.

Greg's daughter and grandson live with him. While his daughter works, he takes the opportunity to spend a lot of time with his grandson. It is evident the money his daughter receives from the Canada child benefit makes life easier for the entire household. They have more money for groceries, activities, making things just a little easier day by day. These are real constituents benefiting from our plan.

If the governor's comment and Greg's story are not enough, perhaps we should talk about Laura.

Laura is a single mom in St. Catharines. She works full time, but despite working full time and being a single mom, she gives a lot back to the community. As many parents can attest to, life is hard enough when they have kids. Obviously, as we have talked about on all sides, it is more difficult when there is just one parent. However, for all the single parents out there, life is not always so easy. The CCB helps supplement her income, allowing her to put money where it needs to go, allowing kids to be kids, to play sports, and enjoy outing with friends.

Again, the proof is in the testimonials, and the proof is crystal clear that our plan is working. Bill C-63, which would implement the next phase of budget 2017, will continue to improve the lives of everyday Canadians.

I want to turn for a moment to talk about poverty on a wider scale.

Last week, the finance minister tabled the fall economic update, which included further measures to boost the Canada child benefit. This will continue to contribute positive results to the economy.

However, the minister also made note of a new commitment to the working income tax benefit. Addressing poverty on a wide scale requires addressing the core of the problem. While it was announced that 450,000 new jobs were created since late 2015 and we had the strongest economy in the G7, we must dedicate resources to those Canadians who are down on their luck and need help. The working income tax benefit does just that.

Utilized as a refundable tax credit, the working income tax benefit provides important income support, helping supplement the income of low-income earners. By allowing low-income workers to keep more of their paycheques, the benefit encourages people to enter the workforce and allows them to establish a level of stability, decrease their need for social assistance, and to get back on their feet to break the cycle of poverty.

This has been our goal since the election, advancing an agenda that would serve to expand the middle class and make the lives of Canadians families a little easier.

Government Orders

To recap, today we are debating legislation that would implement the next phase. Our CCB has been successful in its intent to reduce poverty of over 300,000 children. We have witnessed the impact it is having on middle-class families and, as such, we have committed to bolstering it further by tying it to inflation a year early, adding an additional \$5.6 billion in support over the next six years.

As I mentioned, our economy is first in the G7 with respect to growth, and the Bank of Canada governor has clearly stated that our policies have contributed to the strength of our economy. Over 450,000 jobs have been created since late 2015 and we are expanding the working income tax benefit to help some of our most vulnerable, giving them the opportunity to regroup and get back on their feet, while not sinking them further into poverty.

These are the types of commitments and policies Canadians expect. The people of St. Catharines have had a direct benefit from our policies. I am proud to be part of that plan and carry this forward. I encourage all members to vote in favour of Bill C-63.

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, the member mentioned his first name during his speech. I want to advise him that this is not appropriate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my speech, I will address the issue of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is part of this omnibus legislation, but I want to give a member of the government the opportunity to comment on this.

This budget implementation bill authorizes the spending of close to \$400 million on Canada getting into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, where we would own less than 1% of the shares. It would be controlled by China as an agent of its foreign policy objectives, ultimately building infrastructure in Asia to advance Chinese strategic objectives.

Does the member feel that it is in the interests of people in St. Catharines to spend close to \$400 million for 1% of the shares in a bank that will build infrastructure in Asia as a way of advancing China's strategic objectives?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, what the hon. member has not mentioned is that many other countries have joined, including France and Australia.

What is important to the residents of St. Catharines is getting Canadians to work, getting Canadians to benefit not only within Canada but abroad. We are an exporting nation. There are only 35 million or 36 million of us. We need to look beyond our borders for success. We have done so well at that over our history. We have one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7 because the Canadian brand is strong.

This is an excellent opportunity to build that brand abroad in Asia, where we have some of the largest economies in the world, emerging economies that need infrastructure. This will be an excellent opportunity for Canadian companies to bid on that, create jobs, and, again, grow the middle class.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks.

Based on his last answer, it costs \$400 million to build a foreign investment bank. I think this is too expensive. There must be some other way to build Canada's brand abroad.

That being said, there is a question I have wanted to ask for some time. As we saw yesterday, the Liberals like to boast that they have lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. What methodology did the Liberals use to come up with this figure? Could my colleague tell us a bit about their calculations?

My colleague loves throwing numbers around, but he does not really give any details about how they calculate these figures. Can he tell us exactly how the Liberals came up with the figure of 300,000 children?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the number comes from the Library of Parliament's independent study on that.

The member talks about "being rich". It is rich that he would criticize the CCB. I believe that the plan the NDP ran on would have lifted 80,000 children out of poverty. However, a fight for austerity and to balance the budget at any cost was not a message that resonated with Canadians.

Ours worked. It is proven by independent research. We would be more than happy to share the study by the library with the member. It is having a great impact in my riding, in his riding, and across the country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a follow-up to the member's comments earlier with respect to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The member talked about the importance of engaging around the world and of building Canada's brand in Asia. I certainly believe it is important for Canada to seek partnerships with like-minded countries in Asia and to seek partnerships that advance our strategic interests.

However, the government is proposing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on an entity that is fully controlled by China and exists to advance its strategic objectives. That is not building Canada's brand; that is building China's brand in Asia.

Could the member justify that kind of spending, close to \$400 million of Government of Canada spending, when people at home would rather see investments that actually benefit them?

Government Orders

•(1310)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it would be irresponsible for the government to not engage in the largest economy in the world. This will benefit Canadians. This will have results. Our plan is having results and it is working. We have the fastest-growing economy in the G7. I hope the member supports the budget implementation bill.

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address what is indeed a very large piece of legislation, the government's budget implementation act. I hope to have the opportunity later on in my remarks to talk about the general budgetary policy of the government.

However, as deputy shadow minister for foreign affairs, I want to talk about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in particular, and contextualize that a bit with respect to what we in the official opposition think is a better basis for a relationship with countries in Asia and with China.

Before I do that, I will be splitting my time with the excellent member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Those following along at home can find, on page 239, of their copies of the budget implementation bill the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank agreement act. Although the bill is long, this section of the bill is relatively short. I would draw it to the attention of members and those who are interested in this. This is the part of the legislation that has the Government of Canada acceding to or joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is a China-based and China-controlled investment vehicle that builds infrastructure throughout Asia, but does so in a way that is aligned with the strategic interests of the People's Republic of China.

A lot of Canadians would wonder why Canada would be getting into this bank, spending a whole bunch of Canadian taxpayer dollars to become part of an investment bank that is designed to advance the strategic interests of another country. As I talk about this, I want to be very clear about what I think our relationship should be with China.

In the official opposition, we support strategic engagement with China that reflects our interests and our values. That does not mean trying to have the best possible relationship, or trying to be part of every club or trying to make the other side feel as good as it possibly can about us. Rather, it is about continually looking for opportunities in the context of that relationship which advance our interests and values. We believe that is the approach we ought to take with respect to our relationship with the People's Republic of China.

This section of the budget implementation act would have Canada joining this investment bank. It would provide for Canada's getting about 1% of the shares. China has over 30% of the shares. We would have very little influence or control in the direction.

Paragraph 5 of the division of the bill dealing with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank says, "The Governor in Council may, by order, amend the schedule to take into account amendments to the Agreement that are consistent with the purpose and functions of the

Bank." Therefore, this act would provide substantial control to the minister to exercise outside of statutory changes.

Paragraph 7 says:

The Minister of Finance may make payments out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund to the Bank in respect of Canada's initial subscription of shares in an aggregate amount not more than US\$ 375,000,000, or any greater amount that is specified in an appropriation Act.

Therefore, this would authorize, as I had said in questions and comments, close to \$400 million. I should have specified we are talking about U.S. dollars in that context. We would be spending a lot of taxpayer money to buy shares in this bank that makes investments in Asia in infrastructure and is fundamentally controlled by the People's Republic of China.

There are a lot of problems with that. One problem is simply a basic question of value for taxpayer money. Why would we not be spending that money at home and/or in ways that advance our strategic interests? Why is it somehow necessary for us to have such a good relationship with China that we effectively give it so much money for it to control?

•(1315)

However, this is also a problem because we have major concerns about the transparency of this investment bank and the lack of human rights protections in its activities. These are precisely the concerns that have led our partners, including the United States under the Obama administration, to choose not to participate in this investment bank. Again, this is because they question the value for taxpayer money, and, in particular, they have concerns about transparency and human rights, things that the government talks a great deal about but we do not see much action on.

In that context, I would like to draw the attention of members to this infrastructure bank's engagement in Burma specifically. There has been a great deal of discussion in the House about the human rights abuses happening right now against the Rohingya people, as well as other minorities in Burma. However, Canadian investments in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will be used in projects over which we have no direct control, in environments with significant human rights problems, and without the kind of transparency about those projects or protections in place that we would expect. How do we know how Canadian tax dollars will be used in Burma as a result of our membership of this investment bank? We do not have any kind of transparency or protections around how that money would be used.

There are, of course, alternatives. There are international investment vehicles that build infrastructure and encourage economic development that have the kinds of protections we would expect and that are more aligned with the kinds of strategic objectives Canadians would identify with. We are already participating in those kinds of vehicles. However, for us to choose to spend close to \$400 million U.S. on chasing the approval of a foreign power using that money to build infrastructure in Asia, very clearly, is not something that Canadians want.

Government Orders

I challenge members of the government, if they think this is a great idea, to take this particular section of the budget implementation act, buried on page 239, to their constituents, put it in their local papers and ask people in their ridings what they think of it. I suspect that even in very traditional Liberal ridings in this country, members of the government would find that voters do not want close to \$400 million, and perhaps more in the future, going toward this particular approach. We should be working to create jobs here in Canada and advancing Canada's strategic objectives and values, but this proposal is fundamentally at odds with our strategic objectives to advance our values vis-à-vis human rights, as I have spoken about, and shows a lack of respect for human rights.

Of course, there are many other things in this budget implementation act that I could speak about, such as the continuing failure of the government to live up to its commitments. Yes, it promised deficits, three years of \$10-billion deficits followed by a balanced budget. It has more than doubled its deficit projections for each of the first three years and has no plan to ever return to a balanced budget.

This budget implementation act does not let up on the government's attack on small business. Liberals continue to say, for example, that they will make changes with respect to income sprinkling and passive income that will have a negative impact on small business. I want to be very clear on this issue of income sprinkling. Before the election, there was a structure in place that allowed all Canadians to split their income. It was transparently fair and equal. Couples could share their income with each other for tax purposes, however they earned that income. That reflects the reality that couples share their money. The government did away with income splitting and then tried to use the fact that wage-earners cannot split their income as a justification for not allowing people in small businesses to do it. Why do we not just allow income splitting for everyone?

In particular, for the reasons I spoke about in regard to the infrastructure bank, and also more broadly, in regard to the problems with the government's fiscal agenda, Conservatives oppose this legislation.

• (1320)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I noticed that my friend on the other side failed to mention some of the major improvements the government has made. It increased the Canada child benefit, which has led to an increase in GDP and made Canada the best performer among the G7 countries. He talked about the deficit, but he failed to mention our promise to keep the debt to GDP ratio lower than what it was. We are on course to do that. Why does he not recognize those facts?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my friend across the way is upset that I did not mention all of the different issues in the budget implementation act. I certainly would take issue with the government's policy with respect to families and I disagree with the member's statement about their impact. However, of course I cannot discuss all of the measures in the budget implementation act. It is very long, if the member has not noticed.

I focused my attention on the particular issue of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. I am sure the member would not want to talk about this in his riding, because if he asked constituents

in his riding and other ridings here in Ottawa, I am sure they would not be very keen on seeing hundreds of millions of their tax dollars going to building infrastructure, not here in Canada and not toward advancing Canadian strategic interests, but in Asia as part of a PRC-controlled development bank that does not have the kind of transparency and human rights protections that we need. If the member thinks this is a great idea, I would like to hear him talk about it.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to understand that investing in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank helps us close the infrastructure gap in the Asia-Pacific region. This could lead to more business opportunities for Canadian businesses. That is one of the reasons we want to renew our involvement on the international stage, the same way we got involved in the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Australia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have all invested in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. If it makes sense for these European Union countries, why would it not make sense for Canada and give us access to the same opportunities?

I would like to know what the member thinks about the participation of the other countries I have just mentioned. France, Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom are all participating in development in Asia, because they recognize that it is important to their national interests.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will note for the benefit of the member that the U.S. is not a member of the bank and that the Obama administration raised concerns about transparency and human rights. This highlights a fundamental difference in the foreign policy approach taken by the government and the official opposition.

The question they want us to ask is, what is everyone else doing, so we can do it too. The question we want to ask is, what is right in terms of our values, and what reflects our national, strategic, and economic interests? On both of these scores it is very clear that this proposal fails.

The parliamentary secretary spoke about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the World Bank in the same breath, but we have to take a critical approach and look at the differences between these vehicles. One is transparent and seeks to have human rights protections in place, and one transparently does not. It is simply not enough for the government to try to create some kind of equivalence between the values advanced by a PRC-controlled institution and those advanced by a western institution. We should not buy into a false moral equivalency between the kinds of systems that exist or are propagated by these strategic vehicles.

Government Orders

•(1325)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his contribution here. I was very impressed that he actually spoke on the budget implementation act. I have seen many Liberal members stand today and not even touch the act itself.

In regard to the Asian infrastructure bank, perhaps he could just reinforce those points. Canadians do want to see infrastructure reinforced here in this country. Could he explain the expectations that many of our constituents have on how their money is spent?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, Canadians want to see investments in infrastructure here in Canada. I think they do want to see us engaged internationally, but in a way that reflects our values and interests. They do not want us to write blank cheques to institutions that we do not control and that reflect neither our values nor our strategic interests.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the upper Ottawa Valley riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I take this opportunity to thank my constituents for the trust they have placed in me to represent their interests in the Parliament of Canada. I am here to serve them.

Democracy is under attack in Canada with the tabling of Bill C-63, the omnibus bill before this chamber today. It is under attack by a complicated financial piece of legislation that is 254 pages long. The budget bill before us, Bill C-63, should be split into 10 bills, rather than the single bill that was dumped onto Parliament.

Only by allowing the Conservative government-in-waiting, and all Canadians, the opportunity to properly scrutinize government legislation will Canadians be assured that the federal government deficits are not being used to pad the pockets of party insiders. The omnibus bill requires extensive and proper study. Huge dollar amounts are being spent and taxed in this legislation. Canadians, who are alarmed at the constant erosion of their personal liberties, are being over-regulated and overtaxed, and they see this type of interventionist, budget deficit legislation as the wrong direction for Canada.

This legislation claims it will be “closing loopholes surrounding the capital gains exemption on the sale of a principal residence”. What exactly does that mean for the average, middle-class Canadian, who is so unlike the current finance minister? The finance minister controls, through some complicated tax avoidance scheme, a private corporation that owns a villa in the south of France for his personal use and enjoyment, something he conveniently forgot to disclose to the Ethics Commissioner until now. He was forced to confess it after a CBC story outed him, which resulted in his pleading guilty to breaking the law.

For a family struggling to make ends meet and trying to start a business out of their home, does it mean they will lose their personal capital gains exemption? Average, middle-class Canadians cannot afford the cost of setting up complicated tax avoidance schemes using half a dozen numbered companies to hide a French villa, and who knows what else. If their home business fails due to over-regulation and over-taxation, will they get to claim a tax deduction against their high income tax bill?

What will be the dollar value of the tax collections quota that the new tax collectors hired as a result of the most recent economic update are required to shake down from taxpayers? Were they hired to go after home-based businesses or can Canadians expect other tax increases by stealth? For example, there is the decision to go after family owned campgrounds. How many taxes does the Liberal Party intend to collect from closing the so-called personal residence loophole?

Every proposition has a price tag. We know that the government has a figure. Average, middle-class Canadians have a right to know what it is.

What about the line in the bill with respect to beer made from concentrate on the premises where it is consumed? Unlike the finance minister, who heads to his private villa in the south of France to pursue his taste for fine French wine, for the average middle-class, working man, Canadian beer is their beverage of choice. That is certainly the case in the upper Ottawa Valley. The Liberal complaint seems to be that someone might otherwise be getting a slight break on the price of a beer. As usual, the Liberals have the wrong approach and they have hired a bunch of new tax collectors to pursue their wrong approach.

Why is wine made from concentrate not a tax target in Bill C-63? Why is beer only being overtaxed by this finance minister? The Conservative approach to this manufactured excuse to raise taxes on beer is to lower taxes specifically on beer that is already subject to high taxation. In the last few years the upper Ottawa Valley has seen the growth of a vibrant craft brewery trade. Typical of the liberal, deficit-obsessed big government mentality, the success of the craft breweries have made them a Liberal tax target.

•(1330)

A lot of hard work goes into starting a small business, something that is not appreciated by a government that has \$212,234 to spend on a glossy front cover for its deficit budget document.

Democracy is under attack in Canada. It is under attack by an arrogant Prime Minister through his refusal to be held accountable during question period in Parliament. It is under attack by his unwillingness to fire his finance minister, who has so far admitted that his personal fortune has increased by \$14 million since he took office. I say so far, because Canadians are in the dark as to the full extent to which the finance minister's personal financial holdings have increased and continue to increase.

Government Orders

Now that the finance minister has admitted to breaking the Conflict of Interest Act by pleading guilty to his convenient lapse of memory regarding his European villa, his removal should be automatic. His continued refusal to disclose the vast holdings in his collection of numbered companies sends a clear message that he is hiding something from Canadians.

Rather than practise open government, the finance minister has acquired a Liberal insider from Toronto as his chief of spin, Ben Chin. Who is this Ben Chin who has been hired by the finance minister to spin the truth for him? Chin is a failed Toronto Liberal Party candidate who was rewarded for losing to an NDP candidate with a position as an insider and a fixer alongside Gerald Butts, the Prime Minister's current hatchet man, when he was at Queen's Park in Toronto.

Chin's claim to fame happened after he landed a plush patronage job at the Ontario Power Authority at a \$247,000 salary, paid for by Ontario's overtaxed electricity ratepayers. One of the schemes he was able to set up was a twisted conservation incentive program called Air Miles for Social Change. Data mining is one of the reasons loyalty programs are set up. The personal information acquired has an attractive resale value to groups like political parties.

The Ontario Power Authority's initial deal with Air Miles was intended to be only from the spring of 2010 until the end of that year, but there was an option for the OPA to extend that relationship. Under Ben Chin's supervision, the program was extended.

One of the beneficiaries of the Ontario Power Authority's new relationship with Air Miles was the charity World Wildlife Fund Canada, then headed by current Prime Minister insider—surprise, surprise—Gerald Butts. The Ontario Power Authority provided the option for participants in designated conservation programs, who were Air Miles collectors, to pledge their Air Miles rewards to—surprise, surprise—the World Wildlife Fund Canada.

In the context of today's discussion regarding omnibus tax-and-spend legislation and who benefits, a powerful statement is being made by the ethically challenged finance minister when he turns to someone with a reputation as a Liberal insider like Ben Chin. Chin adds to the finance minister's shattered reputation.

Chin and Butts, since they were associated with the Liberal Party in Toronto, are responsible for energy poverty that is now a fact of life in Ontario: heat or eat.

Rather than address the real reasons for energy poverty in Ontario, this is a government that goes into huge deficits with Bill C-63 to send borrowed Canadian dollars to China for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

What about infrastructure in Canada? I know of more than a dozen municipalities that desperately need infrastructure repairs in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. They do not have the luxury of endlessly raising taxes or unlimited borrowing to fix their streets and sewers.

Governments should be concerned about the needs of Canadians first before chasing foreign money schemes that are designed to make the rich richer.

This is what a smart observer had to say about the finance minister's new spin doctor:

Ben Chin's electricity career helps to illuminate the real purposes driving those with their hands on the levers of power in Ontario's electricity system.... Ontario was establishing itself as a massive electricity exporter, selling enough discounted and often free power to neighbouring jurisdictions to power substantial cities.... The conservation PR that Chin was engineering was focused on a different kind of power.

Democracy is under assault in Canada by the federal government's fiscal policies.

● (1335)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned what she considers to be the omnibus nature of this budget implementation bill. I do not doubt her expertise about omnibus bills. For 10 years she was under the Harper Conservatives, who dropped the largest BIA in the history of this Parliament, so she knows a fair bit about omnibus bills.

We are not modifying the navigable waters act, as those members did while in government. As far as I am concerned, everything is related to the budget.

I would like to ask my colleague what specifically in Bill C-63 does not relate to the budget. I have heard her talk about taxes, about excise taxes. I have heard her talk about everything that is related to the budget. How can she frame this to be an omnibus bill when everything is related to the budget and its implementation? Again, I do not doubt her expertise about omnibus bills. She has seen a lot of them.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, well, the omnibus bill goes all over the board. It goes from the principal residence to division 10 of part 5 and the Energy Efficiency Act. This is a particular part of the omnibus bill with which we in the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have special familiarity.

We have the provincial people implementing a similar takedown of taxes from taxpayers at the federal level now, and the practical solutions to Ontario's energy problems were never the focus of the people who have the levers of power today. They weave their way around the House and outsource everything from the government sector in many ways, such as the Asian infrastructure bank in which the outsourcing is not even going toward Canadian infrastructure but toward wealthy people in Asia and the companies there.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the debt levels, and that we should not be investing so much in infrastructure. I guess I would congratulate her in that she really does not feel that we should be investing in any infrastructure in her community.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: In Asia.

Mr. Mike Bossio: No, she did not say in Asia. She actually talked about debt levels and related them to infrastructure in general.

Government Orders

Also, regarding connectivity, she and I have had numerous conversations about the need for broadband infrastructure. Therefore, I am very happy to hear her say that she really does not feel that money should be spent in her own community, which would certainly leave more for the rest of us.

Would she agree that the need is not really there in her own community for any infrastructure or broadband Internet?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I think it must be opposite day, because that is exactly the opposite of what I was saying. We actually need money being spent in Ontario and, yes, for broadband, because government is expecting us to do everything over the Internet, but it is not quite available.

Instead of investing in roads and broadband, the Liberals are putting money, according to this omnibus piece of legislation, into the Business Development Bank. However, instead of developing businesses that are going to help Canadians, it is taking that money overseas or using it to have more so-called green social infrastructure manufactured, which only increases poverty and drives up the need to have more tax credits for the poor who cannot afford it.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, during the member's speech, I Googled "hypocrites", and it led me to the "Real Change" website of the Liberal Party platform. There was a specific section with respect to omnibus bills, which said:

We will not resort to legislative tricks to avoid scrutiny....

[The previous government]...used omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly reviewing and debating his proposals. We will change the House of Commons Standing Orders to bring an end to this undemocratic practice.

Well, we are dealing with an omnibus bill. I am wondering what the member thinks of that.

● (1340)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, we can just look at the Liberals' platform, and essentially everything they said they were going to do is exactly the opposite of what seems to have transpired. Welcome to opposite day in Canada. I do not think the Liberals understand the difference between being transparent and being invisible.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my friend, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

I will be speaking about the budget implementation act, 2017, no. 2.

First of all, I would like to say how proud I am to represent the people of Gatineau in the House. It is an honour to have been chosen as their spokesperson in this chamber of Canadian democracy. Every day, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and as MP for Gatineau, I try to promote the interests of my constituents within the Government of Canada.

The first thing I would like to say is that this bill is part of a larger movement or trend, part of our government's wider plan to promote greater work-life balance. It will also help ease the burden of young families and our families in general. This is a well represented group in my riding of Gatineau. A recent study found that the population of

Gatineau is younger, and that its income and rate of growth is higher than the Quebec average. The riding's people work hard and have helped build Canada through their participation in the federal public service. The people of Gatineau have worked hard in the forestry and resource sectors. They have created wealth. My constituents work, and most importantly, live and raise their families in the riding of Gatineau.

Our government's efforts and policies are appropriate for the people of my riding and have a positive impact on the citizens of Gatineau. It is very difficult to achieve work-life balance today. There are problems with transportation, and there is stress. Even with two incomes, our families' debt levels are higher than the national average. The government must take action.

Our election platform and the bill before us today are meant to ease this burden. I would remind the House that we cut taxes for the middle class. When we talk about the middle class, this includes the people of Gatineau. One of the first things we did was to cut taxes for the middle class. We dropped the retirement age. Mr. Harper wanted to raise the eligibility age for retirement to 67, but we brought it back down to 65.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, the Canada child benefit and the enhancement we just announced in the fall economic update will help all Canadian families. It will give them room to make some choices, whether regarding child care, registration in cultural activities, leisure activities, and so on. The Canada child benefit is the most important social program of my generation for future generations, for the families and children in Gatineau and across Canada.

We enhanced the Canada pension plan. I applaud the Quebec finance minister's initiative, which will adapt the Canadian reform to Quebec society. The Canada pension plan will get a boost from coast to coast thanks to the federal government's efforts. This means that young workers and young families can rest assured that they will have a better and more secure retirement. What they save now will be returned to them at the end of their working lives.

● (1345)

Of course, there is also the working income tax benefit. Just like everywhere else, some people have trouble getting off social assistance. They find it difficult to choose between getting back into the job market and continuing to receive social assistance. Thanks to measures we just announced, this tax credit will be enhanced, which will make it easier for people to choose to go back to work and contribute more to society because they know they will get a tax credit, they know the government supports them, and they know that, financially, going back to work makes sense.

Government Orders

The bill we are talking about today will make life easier for people working in federally regulated industries. There will be more flexibility around vacation and annual leave. People will have up to 10 days of bereavement leave if they lose a loved one, and they will have an additional three days of unpaid leave to attend to family responsibilities. That is one way we are showing compassion for our workers and for people who are having a hard time balancing work and family responsibilities. Those responsibilities can be toward our parents, our children, or even ourselves. We have introduced important measures.

Our government will continue to make life easier for Canadian families. It will also continue to make it easier to raise a family and to deal with the stress associated with two incomes, the stress caused by personal debt, and the stress caused by job insecurity in our country.

We are well aware of these realities in Gatineau and elsewhere. As the member for Gatineau, I will continue to urge my government to take action and do what is necessary to help families in Gatineau and Quebec find work-life balance.

I will close on a more personal note. Tax measures alone will not allow people in the riding of Gatineau and the Outaouais region achieve work-life balance. We need to invest more in our roads and infrastructure, including those we share with other levels of government.

We have taken a big step forward with the Rapibus extension that I recently announced with my friends and provincial and municipal counterparts. This will make life easier for many people in Gatineau. We must continue to find solutions for the western part of Gatineau and extend this transit system to the eastern end of the city.

Another initiative that must be undertaken by our government, in co-operation with our friends in Ottawa, Ontario, Quebec, and Gatineau is the construction of a sixth interprovincial bridge, this one in the Gatineau sector. That would allow a young single mother who works in Tunney's Pasture to get to the Cheval-Blanc sector of Gatineau more easily to watch her daughter's soccer game, for example. We need to reduce traffic by improving transportation, something that the programs we will put in place will accomplish. With the help of the federal government, life will be greatly improved for the people of Gatineau.

I am very pleased to be part of this government, this movement, and this trend. I once again thank the people of Gatineau who gave me the honour of representing them.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite talked about wanting to lessen the stress on middle-income families. One thing this bill will absolutely do, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said this earlier, is create serious challenges with respect to the work-in-progress provisions. Often times, people will seek to have a lawyer represent them in court but do not have the money to pay for it and a lawyer will often take the case based on contingency fees. This bill will force taxes to be paid on work that has not yet been done, has not been billed, and may never be paid. Does the

member not agree that this is the exact opposite of reducing stress? This is increasing stress on a very vulnerable population. What does he have to say about that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from British Columbia for the question. Obviously, if he thinks that the federal government is advocating anything other than tax fairness, well he is wrong. The government is advocating tax fairness, equal treatment of income in our corporations. That is indeed what is being done in the provision here. If the firms we consult did not bill for the work, that would have a positive impact on their tax situation. I believe the question does not really apply, here.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member across the floor mentioned something that was interesting to me when he talked about pensions and what the government has done, namely lowering the eligible age back to 65 from 67, which we welcome. Also, I do not think what was done with the CPP is enough, but it is for our children and our grandchildren going forward.

One thing he did not state is that there is something in the bill that a lot of workers have, a defined pension benefit plan, which will give them a stable income when they retire. However, the government wants to change that to what it calls a "defined target plan", which would give them instability. Why is the government attacking these middle-class people, and those who are striving to join them, who have defined benefit plans?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, let me be very clear: as I stand here let me say that our federal public service pensions, those that are subject to the plan in question, will remain in place forever. They will be there for current and future employees. It is not by lowering our standards for pensions that we are going to ensure a better retirement for Canadian society. I think that my colleague is talking about a bill that will be debated here in Parliament and I look forward to having that discussion. To me, federal public service pensions are sacrosanct.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we in the official opposition have said that the government's policies tend to hurt those precisely who they were intended to help. That could not be more clear, given the example that my colleague ended his speech with. He spoke about a single mother who wants to be able to use public transit to take her daughter to soccer. I have a great idea for how we can help her. We could make transit passes tax-deductible. Wait. That was a measure the current government cancelled. It is increasing taxes precisely on the groups it talks about helping.

When we talk about children and families, I want to very quickly ask the member this. Does he think it is fair to the next generation to run deficits in perpetuity? If not, when will the government balance the budget?

Statements by Members

● (1355)

[Translation]

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Madam Speaker, what is fair to the next generation is ensuring that they have a retirement and that is what we just did by improving the Canada pension plan. As far as public transit is concerned, there needs to be a public transit system, like in my case that goes to the Cheval-Blanc neighbourhood, to help this young single mother.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Gatineau for his speech.

[English]

I am very proud to rise this afternoon to speak on Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures.

I want to start by acknowledging that we are gathered here on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

This is the first time I am actually making a full speech since my good friend and mentor Arnold Chan passed on September 14. I do want to take this opportunity to remember him and to reflect on his enormous contribution to Canada, and express my continued support and love to the Chan-Yip family.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on directing such a great job on our economy. I know there is limited time for me to speak before question period, so I want to just have the first part of my speech contextualize the position of our economy today, two years since our government took office.

It is very clear that our policies are indeed working. In the past four quarters alone, the Canadian economy grew at the fastest rate since 2006. The average growth was 3.7% for the past four quarters. The economy created 450,000 jobs since late 2015. That is a remarkable number to reflect on.

The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since 2008. This economy is projected to continue growing with a forecasted growth of 3.1% annually, the fastest growth rate in any of the G7 countries.

We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 nation. The economy is directly benefiting from our progressive economic policies. Our aim is to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, and build a middle class that will be the engine of this country. We want to ensure that no one is left behind, and, yes, that will mean that those with the ability to pay more ought to pay more.

Members may recall the measures that our government has put in with respect to where the economy has now landed. First, with respect to the middle class, we have lowered taxes on the middle class. We have put more money into the pockets of people who drive the economy. We have cut taxes for nine million Canadians.

The Canada child benefit has been an enormous source of strength to our economy. I look forward to picking up on that and elaborating more on its benefits to my riding.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park will have seven minutes remaining in his speech when the House next comes back to this topic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[English]***OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of two great community organizations.

The Central Association of Punjabi Writers of North America celebrated its 30th anniversary. Its members gather once a month to release their books and share their literary creations. Its dedicated members make invaluable contributions in preserving and promoting the Punjabi language and Punjabi culture.

I would also like to congratulate the Sanjha Vehra Women's Association on the success of its 13th annual breast cancer fundraiser held in my riding of Surrey—Newton. The event raised thousands of dollars for the breast health clinic in Surrey.

I ask all members to join me in wishing these two outstanding organizations continued success.

* * *

● (1400)

WELLINGTON COUNTY 4-H

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 100 years, young people in Wellington County have been pledging their heads to clearer thinking, their hearts to greater loyalty, their hands to larger service, and their health to better living.

As a former 4-H member, it was an honour to speak at the 100th anniversary of 4-H in Wellington County last Saturday night in Arthur, Ontario.

For 100 years, Wellington County 4-H has proudly supported youth and agriculture, using the hands on philosophy of "Learn To Do By Doing". Whether learning a new skill, developing leadership skills, or making lifelong friendships, 4-H in Canada has created a lasting legacy for generations.

I congratulate Wellington County 4-H on a century of preserving our agricultural heritage and protecting our rural way of life. I thank all club members, leaders, and alumni for all they have done for agriculture in Wellington County and in Canada.

* * *

TONY DI GENNARO

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this coming Sunday, Tony Di Gennaro would have begun his third term as councillor for Brunswick in the city of Kirkland. Sadly, this summer he was taken from us suddenly.

Tony was a conscientious and deeply hard-working people's representative. As Kirkland mayor Michel Gibson so rightly said, "He was a model councillor, the one you want."

Statements by Members

Tony was close to his constituents, curious about their views, and attentive to their concerns, always listening with an open mind. His business experience and community service were invaluable assets to Kirkland City Council.

The last time I saw Tony, he had just completed an evening of door-to-door and was heading into his favourite place after home, Café Maurizio. He had a spring in his step because meeting and talking to people was what he loved to do.

We send our deepest sympathies to Tony's wife Helen and daughter Melissa. May they find comfort in knowing the love people had for their husband and father, and the high esteem in which he was held.

* * *

WOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, later this month, we will be debating my private member's bill, Bill C-354. The bill calls on the government to consider wood when building federal infrastructure, applying a dual lens of lifetime cost and greenhouse gas reduction.

First, we are witnessing a revolution in the architecture of large buildings around the world, tall wood buildings that are beautiful, safe, and cost competitive. The government loves innovation, and Canada is at the forefront of this mass wood innovation in North America. Government procurement will help our industry thrive and stay ahead of the curve.

Second, the government made commitments in Paris to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Much of that footprint is in our buildings and how they are constructed. The carbon captured in wood could significantly reduce those emissions.

Finally, building with wood will support our forest sector. Unfair softwood tariffs in the U.S.A. have hit this industry hard, and expanding our domestic markets will help workers across the country keep good, well-paying jobs.

I ask everyone here to support Bill C-354.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past 11 years, close to 930 journalists have been killed for reporting the news and bringing information to the public. In nine out of ten cases, the killers go unpunished. These figures do not include the many more journalists who suffer attacks, including torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, intimidation, harassment, and sexual assault. Society as a whole suffers from impunity, because access to reliable, quality information is the very cornerstone of democracy. That is why the United Nations proclaimed November 2 as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. I would therefore like to pay tribute to journalists, both here and abroad, whose work promotes just and inclusive societies, and I salute our government's efforts to support press freedom and the safety of journalists.

[*English*]

SPECIAL OLYMPICS SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight an outstanding constituent who has done some great work in my riding, Hayley Wall.

Hayley is running a new program for children and youth in Weyburn through Special Olympics Saskatchewan. The active start program is for children ages two to seven and teaches them basic motor skills, while the fundamentals program will build on those skills for children ages seven to 12.

I have always been a huge supporter of Special Olympics. In 2018, this organization is hoping to expand its reach and impact among youth by 16% and will be asking the federal government for funding to help meet that goal.

I strongly encourage the government to do whatever possible to make this happen, as these incredible athletes, coaches, volunteers, and families provide a tremendous benefit for all Canadians.

I am so proud of all those who participate in the Special Olympics, whatever their role might be. I am especially proud of Hayley Wall for the outstanding work she has done for the youth in Weyburn. I congratulate Hayley.

* * *

● (1405)

EVERYDAY POLITICAL CITIZEN AWARD

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to recognize the nomination of Jan Rowan for the Samara Everyday Political Citizen award.

At age 12, Jan received one shilling for Lent, and much like the good and faithful servant in the parable of the talents, Jan felt the challenge to increase its value by helping the less fortunate. That shilling grew into eight decades of social justice work.

Jan has been a Girl Guide, a Cub Scout leader, and she has raised money for Ronald McDonald House, the Cancer Society, and United Way. As a member of the Raging Grannies, she used song to enhance public awareness. As a union leader, Jan walked picket lines seeking fairer wages and working conditions.

In the 2015 campaign, at age 85, Jan out-canvassed and outworked many people many decades her younger.

Jan is truly an everyday political citizen and much deserving of this recognition.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

QUEBEC MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you may know, Quebec is holding municipal elections this Sunday. On November 5, the voters of Pontiac will elect 41 mayors, 243 councillors, and 2 prefects. More than 500 residents of Pontiac have thrown their hat in the ring.

[English]

I would like to thank all candidates for their participation and for reminding us that all politics truly are local, especially in the Pontiac.

I also want to remind everyone of the importance of voting. Municipal elected officials deal with issues that affect us in a concrete and direct way every day, be they urban planning, the local transit, local road networks, or recreation. However, the participation in the last Quebec municipal elections averaged 47%.

[Translation]

I urge all voters in Quebec to exercise their right to vote this Sunday. Let us not do things by halves. Together, let us cast our ballots, as democracy requires of us.

* * *

[English]

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be attending the 70th annual Ontario Psychological Association's public service awards event this evening. The ceremony honours those who have contributed greatly to improving conditions for the most vulnerable among us. The OPA itself has been recognized at the highest level for groundbreaking work with Canada's military heroes.

Today, I am pleased to announce that my bill, Bill C-211, has received second reading in the Senate. However, more work is needed. Just as we witnessed in the House, the support of all our Senate colleagues is needed to ensure we see my legislation through.

Tonight, as I attend the OPA event, I will carry the message that we are all working collectively to see that Bill C-211 gets passed as quickly as possible and that we all recognize that lives depend on it.

Every day, I am touched by those who are suffering, those brave enough to put a face to my bill. I am deeply committed to honouring their bravery, their strength, and their perseverance as we work together to ensure those who need help get help.

* * *

MADD CANADA

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of MADD Canada's holiday awareness campaign, Project Red Ribbon. I am pleased to welcome MADD Canada to the Hill today from its base in Oakville to celebrate the campaign's 30th anniversary.

For three decades, the red ribbon has represented a commitment to drive sober during the holiday season and is a tribute to the innocent victims and survivors of impaired driving.

From November through to January, MADD Canada distributes red ribbons and asks Canadians to wear or display them as a symbol of their commitment to always drive sober. This red ribbon reminds us all that the deaths and injuries caused by impaired driving are 100% preventable. We can all do something to stop them from happening.

I was honoured to sponsor today's Project Red Ribbon launch on the Hill, and I ask everyone to join me in wearing a red ribbon for safe and sober driving.

* * *

● (1410)

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no relationship is as important as Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples.

Our government is fully implementing Jordan's principle, using the definition and scope suggested by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. We have approved approximately 20,000 new service requests for children under Jordan's principle. More than 99% of the requests received have been approved. We are continuing to identify as many first nations children in need as possible to ensure they receive care quickly.

At the end of the day, this is about closing the socio-economic gaps between indigenous and non-indigenous children in Canada.

We will continue to work with first nations partners to build capacity in communities and identify more children in need to ensure we put the health and safety of children first.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, 100 students from Ellen Fairclough Public School in my riding of Markham—Unionville are visiting Ottawa. I had the opportunity to attend a Remembrance Day service with the students and teachers before arriving here today.

We are forever grateful for Canada's veterans and their sacrifices. The generous service of Canadian Armed Forces members during times of war and peace have helped define and shape our country. I am thankful I was able to honour those who have served our country and thank those who serve in uniform.

I hope the students of Ellen Fairclough Public School leave Ottawa today with a greater interest and appreciation for our veterans and civic institutions.

POLAND

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to celebrate a very special day for over one million Polish Canadians.

On November 11, we celebrate Polish national independence day, commemorating the anniversary of the restoration of Poland's sovereignty as the second Polish Republic in 1918. Our two countries share common values of freedom, peace, and democracy, and fought side-by-side during the D Day invasion to liberate Europe.

Polish Canadians have made a remarkable contribution to our social, economic, and political foundations in Canada. Mississauga is home to over 30,000 members of the Polish diaspora.

In honour of this day, it is my pleasure to invite all my colleagues in the House to join us this evening at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building as we welcome Poland's new ambassador to Canada. I welcome Ambassador Kurnicki. I am looking forward to seeing everyone tonight.

[Member spoke in Polish]

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the beautiful northwest of British Columbia. Some of the proudest, strongest, and most ancient first nations have made this territory home since time immemorial.

Despite insidious and bad-faith policies from the federal government that continue to this day, the first nations I am proud to call friends continue to struggle for justice and economic sovereignty.

I have just two examples. Today in Terrace, British Columbia, the nation-to-nation summit is showing leadership by bringing together government, industry, and first nations leaders to create opportunity and success for all people in the northwest. It is also shown in the leadership of the Nak'azdli First Nation, which is creating safe housing opportunities for its people.

Far too often, first nations stories are only told when the tragedy of colonialism is manifested. I am privileged to witness the tireless and dedicated work that benefits not only the first nations of the north but all Canadians.

* * *

ACCIDENT ON HIGHWAY 400

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, OPP Sergeant Carey Schmidt said that it was one of the worst crashes he had ever witnessed in terms of its absolute carnage and destruction. Late Tuesday evening, 14 vehicles, including two fully loaded fuel tankers, were involved in a major crash near Cookstown on Highway 400. It is being reported that at least three people died, including a father of nine from North Bay.

I trust I speak for all members when I say to the families who have lost loved ones or those who were injured to please know they have our deepest sympathy and are in our thoughts and prayers.

Oral Questions

I would like to thank the many first responders who answered the call and acted so quickly and professionally. Events like these can be traumatizing to all involved. To the first responders on scene and those who witnessed this terrible event, it is okay to ask for help. Reach out to someone sooner rather than later, talk to colleagues, family, and friends. There are mental health professionals ready to assist if they need help for the healing to begin.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government announced the launch of the national action plan on women, peace, and security. This plan will ensure that women are involved in all aspects of the peace process.

[English]

Seventeen years ago, the United Nations passed Security Council resolution 1325, committing to include women equally in peace processes. Gone are the days when warlords met behind closed doors to divide the spoils of war and call it a peace agreement. Women are not an add-on, but central to peace building. Women are not just victims of violent conflict, but the solutions to sustainable peace.

[Translation]

We know that when women participate fully in the peace process, communities are more engaged and peace agreements last longer.

[English]

I would like to pay tribute to all the women who are or have been military and civilian peacekeepers, and all the women who risk their lives so our daughters and sons can live in peace and security.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner clearly said that many ministers are using the same loophole that the finance minister used to hide his assets. However, the Prime Minister assured us that the finance minister was the only one to do so.

The question is simple: how many other cabinet ministers are using the same loophole and who are they?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to have some trouble with numbers. What I can say is that two is less than five. Those are the numbers. What we can say is that we want to continue working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner so that our government can be certain that it does not have conflicts of interest. That will continue to be our approach. We will work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. That is the government's method.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister can help us out. Am I getting warmer or colder? It is more than one, but fewer than five. Is it four? Is it three? Is it two? Why can this minister not just answer simple questions?

Who are the other ministers and how many are there?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in this chamber, I had a member of the opposition come over to tell me not to take it personally because what happens here is just a game.

For our government it is absolutely not a game. We are working to improve the lives of Canadians. For those 300,000 children who are being lifted out of poverty, for their parents, it is intensely personal. They care about our country and they care about their families.

We will not play the games of the opposition. We are going to work on behalf of Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one here thinks that it is a game to expect ministers to be held accountable, to be open, and transparent. However, there are some ministers who have been playing a game. It was called "Hide the assets". In the case of the finance minister, it lasted two years.

All that the opposition wants to know and all that Canadians want to know is who are the ministers who are using similar loopholes, how many are there, and when did the Prime Minister know this was going on?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong, and he knows he is wrong. I disclosed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner and will continue to work with her. We will not play the games they are playing. We will continue to work with Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Shame on you, Bill, you're being dishonest. You're being very dishonest.

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Carleton and others to listen to the answers, as well as the questions, of course. We need to hear both and, as Speaker, I need to hear when people say things that break the rules of the House. Therefore, we need to listen.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will not be playing games. We will focus on Canadians.

For the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, we know that for the 16,090 children who have received the Canada child benefit, an average of \$700 per family, it is not a game. It is helping their families. That is what we are working to do, and we will continue to do so.

• (1420)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy if the minister could tell me how I am wrong. Am I wrong when I say that the minister hid his assets for two years? Is the Ethics Commissioner wrong when she says there is more than one minister, but fewer than five? Are Canadians wrong to expect a little bit better from this finance minister and this Prime Minister?

Once again, simple questions deserve simple answers. Who are the other ministers that are using the same loophole the finance minister used?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I can say that the member opposite is wrong when he says that I did not disclose all of my assets. I worked with the Ethics Commissioner, as all of us on this side are committed to doing. We will continue to do so.

What I can also say is that Canadians were right when they decided to elect our government, because they knew that we would focus on them, and not focus on playing games that are not to their advantage or their families' advantage. Happily for them, our country is in a much better situation with higher growth and a better situation for their families across this country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I have to ask the hon. member for Brandon—Souris to remember not to speak unless he has the floor. I know he has a great baritone voice, but I only want to hear it when it is his turn to speak.

The hon. leader of the opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I am wrong, then so too must be the Ethics Commissioner who fined the finance minister for not disclosing his assets. Is that some kind of a compliance fine that she issued him?

My last question for the finance minister would be that if he actually if he did disclose his assets for the past few years, will he be asking for his \$200 back?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member opposite is: wrong again.

What happened here is that I disclosed all of my assets, and in fact there was an administrative error that we satisfied the commissioner with the \$200 fine I paid.

We are trying to work to help Canadians and not play the games that the members opposite are trying to play, because we know that was what we were elected to do. For all of those Canadians who looked at what we announced last week, the level of growth our country is seeing, and the improvements we are going to make in the Canada child benefit and the working income tax benefit, we are going to tell them that we are working for them.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, “Failing to Strike the Right Balance for Transparency” is the punchy title of the Information Commissioner’s report, which indicates that the Liberals are once again breaking their relatively clear election promise to make representatives of the Prime Minister’s Office and other ministers’ offices subject to the Access to Information Act.

They could have accomplished that with Bill C-58, but the bill falls far short of the mark.

Why is the Prime Minister backtracking rather than forming a government that is truly open and transparent?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after more than 30 years, we are the first government to modernize the Access to Information Act, and we are applying it to ministers’ offices through proactive disclosure.

I understand why the NDP does not like proactive disclosure. When we were in opposition and the Prime Minister was the leader of the Liberals in opposition, he led the charge on proactive disclosure of MPs’ expenses. The Conservatives signed on to it quite quickly, but the NDP members were dragged kicking and screaming to disclose their expenses to the Canadian public. They did not like proactive disclosure then, and they do not like it today.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): That is coming from the party of the sponsorship scandal, Mr. Speaker.

The Information Commissioner dropped a bombshell yesterday. The Liberals’ new no access to information bill, Bill C-58, will make things even worse than they were under Stephen Harper and Jean Chrétien. Ethics, cash for access, and open government were all promises made, and all promises that were broken. From the sponsorship scandal to missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls, all of this came to light through access to information.

Will the minister listen to civil society, immigration groups, and first nations, and fix this bad bill?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to be the first government in more than 30 years to modernize the Access to Information Act. I want to be very clear on a specific issue the hon. member raised in regard to indigenous peoples.

I will be very clear that we will support an amendment that would require departments to seek approval from the Information Commissioner before refusing a request. This would ensure that broad requests would not be refused simply because they were broadly applied in their descriptions. We want to ensure that this modernization of access to information strengthens the regime, and we are open to narrowing the application of this clause.

● (1425)

ETHICS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, exactly no one in first nations communities believes what the minister just said.

Liberals seem to have invented a whole new game. It is called “Ethics Bingo”. How many Liberals have secret numbered companies they have not told Canadians about? Is it one? Yes, there is one. Is it two? Oh yes, at least two. Is it three? Tell me when I get to the right one and we can all yell “bingo” together. Enough with the games.

Here are the Prime Minister’s pre-end zone instructions to his ministers:

...you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality...and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.

When are they actually going to live up to those words, or are they just meaningless words written on paper?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that our government is committed to living up to the highest standards. That is why we are working with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that in all of our situations, she understands all of our assets. That is why we are taking her recommendations, as we all have, in order to move forward and ensure that none of us has conflicts of interest. We know that is the way we get to do the work we were hired to do by Canadians, which is working to continue to grow our economy and making sure that we have a fair situation where people get the benefits of that growth. That is what Canadians are seeing. That is what we will keep doing.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, are these ethical standards if the Liberals cannot even enforce the bare minimum they should be following?

[Translation]

The Prime Minister is showing his contempt for the House, which is calling for explanations for his ethical lapses and those of his government.

However, the facts are clear. This Prime Minister is still under investigation for his trip to the Aga Khan’s private island. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has identified one, two, three, four ministers who are using the loophole in the Conflict of Interest Act.

The commissioner is also concerned about the role the minister played in Bill C-27. This government said that it would live up to the highest ethical standards.

Why then can the government not even enforce the bare minimum?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We know that is very important. We believe that the best way to ensure that we are not in a conflict of interest is by working with her. That way, we can do the work that is important for Canadians. That is our approach. We now have the highest rate of economic growth and the lowest rate of unemployment in a decade. That is good for Canada and Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the opposition was levelling baseless accusations. Today, the Liberals are accusing the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner of providing false information about their own minister's situation. I wonder who are the ones making baseless accusations in the House.

My question is simple: now that we know that his finance minister is in a direct conflict of interest, I would like to know why the Prime Minister misled Parliament and all Canadians.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I spoke with a member of the opposition. He told me that it was not personal, that what happens here in the House is just a game. For us, it is not a game. It is really important to Canadians. We know that for the 300,000 children lifted out of poverty, it is intensely personal. We will continue to work with Canadians to improve Canada's situation. That is our goal.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is absolutely right. Canadians' trust is not a game. It is to be safeguarded, but right now, the minister is undermining it. For the past three weeks, the Prime Minister has gone on ad nauseam about how he trusts the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Now that the commissioner is saying there are two, three, or maybe four ministers playing the same game as this minister and hiding their assets from Canadians, all of a sudden the Prime Minister is saying she is wrong.

My question is simple. Was the Minister of Finance actually in conflict of interest? When did the Prime Minister know about it?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is very important. That is what we have done. We have a lot of respect for her. Our government believes that this is the best way to ensure we are not in conflict of interest. We will continue to follow this approach because that is how we get to do the important work for Canadians. This really is not a game. It is very important to families across the country.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the finance minister has been exposed for hiding his assets in numerous multi-numbered companies, the Ethics Commissioner has stated that there are up to five other ministers who may be doing exactly the same thing.

There is an unnamed senior government official who has decided to refute these claims, suggesting that the claims are actually wrong and her office is not correct in what it is saying.

I would like to know this. The minister talks about trusting the Ethics Commissioner. Is there a senior government official over there who will actually say that there is no other minister in the same position he put himself in?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know on this side of the House that some of the members of the opposition have a tough time counting.

What we know is that the number two is less than the number five. What we can say is that there are two: one member who divested all

of the assets 18 months ago and another member, me, who has divested his assets most recently. It is quite clear. It is up there on the website to see.

We will continue to work with Canadians and not play these games.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask all members to try to be careful about using things that cause disorder. We know that everyone here can count very well. Let us not suggest otherwise. Order. That is enough.

The hon. member for Milton has the floor.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing we can all agree on is that the Minister of Finance needs help in one thing in counting: he better count on getting some better communications advice.

The Prime Minister said this week:

...I am not trying to blame the Ethics Commissioner, I am trying to trust the Ethics Commissioner. That is what opposition members need to do.

That is exactly what we are doing as well. After weeks of misleading and memory lapses, the Government of Canada has shown that it does not trust the Ethics Commissioner, but I think Canadians actually do.

The minister put himself in a direct conflict, and he broke the law when he failed to disclose—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thinking about counting for the member for Milton, there are 25,630 children in her riding whose families are getting on average \$520 more through the Canada child benefit. Those are the numbers that we know matter to Canadians.

With respect to working with the Ethics Commissioner, we will continue to do so because we know that is the right way for us to fully allow us to do our work, exposing all of our assets, which all of us have done, including me, working with her and taking her recommendations to make sure we can get on with the important work we are doing for the people of Milton.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Time.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry to restrain himself and be assured that it is done evenly for everybody in terms of time.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told the House yesterday that Liberals trust and honour the work of the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister has been telling us all week to trust the Ethics Commissioner. Now the Prime Minister's Office is telling us she is wrong about the number of Liberal ministers using conflict loopholes.

We trust the Ethics Commissioner.

Just how many ministers have gamed the spirit of the Conflict of Interest Act?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear that members opposite trust the Ethics Commissioner, as we do.

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We have worked with the Ethics Commissioner to make sure that we can ensure all of our situations are fully exposed and that she can provide recommendations for us on how we can ensure we do not have conflicts of interest. I can say from my standpoint that was an important exercise to ensure I do not have conflicts of interest.

We will continue to do that. That allows us to get to the work we want to do on behalf of Canadians.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is blaming everybody but the finance minister or himself for the scandal that is before us. The Prime Minister is all but directly blaming the Ethics Commissioner, blaming the Ethics Commissioner for the finance minister's several inexcusable lapses of judgment and for the Prime Minister's own willingness to look the other way.

Why is the Prime Minister misleading Parliament about other ministers' actions?

Is the Prime Minister's Office calling the Ethics Commissioner a liar?

• (1435)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we have the highest respect for the Ethics Commissioner and will continue to work with her to make sure that her work, which is so important, can continue to be done in a respectful way. That is our approach. We know that the approach to disclosing all of our assets to her is important. Taking her recommendations, which we have done, is important. That will allow us to continue to help all Canadian constituents across the country, including those who live in constituencies of members across the aisle.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-47 on the Arms Trade Treaty has numerous flaws. For instance, it does not impose any firm legal limits on the authority of the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the approval of arms exports. Furthermore, it does not cover exports to the U.S., which account for 50% of our arms exports.

Experts who appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development talked about the serious concerns they have.

Will the government agree to amend the bill, or even better, withdraw it and start over?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our election promise to join the Arms Trade Treaty. Regulating the illicit trade in weapons is essential for the protection of human rights.

Bill C-47 would put into regulation the criteria that must be considered before authorizing export permits. As with all regulations, all Canadians will be able to provide input into developing these criteria.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to join the treaty, we would first have to respect it.

[*English*]

Experts have testified to the serious problems in the bill to implement the Arms Trade Treaty. Two detailed reports have been issued that insist that the government's Bill C-47 does not reflect either the spirit or the letter of the treaty. Nothing in the bill would prevent future arms deals with human rights abusers.

I ask the minister again. Will the government amend the bill or withdraw it and start over?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to assure members of this House and all Canadians that we are delivering on our campaign commitment to join the Arms Trade Treaty. Tackling the illicit trade in weapons is essential for the protection of people and of human rights. Bill C-47 would put into regulations the criteria that must be considered before authorizing export permits. As with all regulations, all Canadians will be able to provide input into developing these criteria.

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ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): It is actually laughable, Mr. Speaker, to hear the finance minister talking about counting, because the thing he has been counting since he became the finance minister is the mountain of cash that he has made off Morneau Shepell shares and dividends.

The Prime Minister does have a problem. He either agrees that the Ethics Commissioner is right that the finance minister broke the law, or he disagrees with her and says everything is fine. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot suck and blow at the same time.

The finance minister has been found guilty and fined by the Ethics Commissioner. How could the finance minister betray the trust of Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner. We believe that is important. It is important also to focus on how Canadian families are feeling right now. They are seeing the highest growth rate they have seen in a decade. They are seeing more than 450,000 new jobs created over the last couple of years. They are seeing the lowest rate of unemployment that they have seen, again, in a decade. This is a good situation for Canadians. We know there is much more to do. That is why we said we were going to index the Canada child benefit two years in advance. That is why we are putting in place an increase in the working income tax benefit. These are important things to help our country move forward.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who is telling the truth, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner or the Prime Minister? I do not trust the Prime Minister, so I will go with the commissioner, as the Prime Minister has asked us to do every time a Liberal scandal has erupted over the past two years. However, we see through the Prime Minister, who is using the commissioner to distract from the real problem, namely the Minister of Finance and all his cover-ups.

Why is he defending the indefensible? What is the Minister of Finance hiding in his numbered companies?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our strategy is to continue improving the lives of Canadian families and the middle class across the country. That is what matters. That is why we introduced the Canada child benefit, which makes life better for 300,000 children. That is why we improved the working income tax benefit for Canadians who are seriously struggling. We will continue to work for Canadians.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister thinks he can make difficult questions about his secrets go away by lashing out personally against those asking those questions. Earlier today he made belittling comments about our deputy leader and others who are simply doing their jobs. The only thing that will make these questions go away is for the minister to finally answer them. The minister was hiding \$20 million of Morneau Shepell shares in only one of his holding companies. Can he please tell us what else he is hiding in his other holding companies?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said to this House, I believe it is important that we work with the Ethics Commissioner. That is important. That is, in fact, exactly what I did. By exposing all of my assets, 100% of my assets, to the Ethics Commissioner when we came into office, I was able to get recommendations from her on how to best move forward to avoid conflicts of interest, as the other members of our government have done. We know that is the way we get to do the important work for Canadians, not to play games or go for personal attacks that really do not advance the cause of any Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the finance minister is getting irritated by the process of accountability around this place, but he did not reveal all of his assets to the Ethics Commissioner; he kept hidden his offshore company in France. That is why she found him in violation of the law and required that he pay a punitive fine. Now he is hiding other assets within different holding companies. He could make these questions go away if he would simply tell Canadians what he is hiding in his vast network of numbered companies and trust funds.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member for Carleton does not actually know what an asset is, but all my assets were exposed to the Ethics Commissioner. What I can say is that we continue to work on behalf of Canadians, and we will continue to do so.

For the member opposite, the member for Carleton, what I can say is for the more than 16,000 children in his riding who are getting the

Canada child benefit, an average of \$430 per family, we are proud that we are able to help those families.

The Speaker: I ask all members to please not question the intelligence of other members or their understanding of basic concepts.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

YOUTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Youth brags about working to give young people better opportunities, but according to Generation Squeeze, government spending on youth programming is down \$19 billion compared with 40 years ago.

This is mystifying, given that youth today are worse off than people their age were 40 years ago, despite being more likely to have post-secondary degrees. They certainly have no shortage of needs, including funding for post-secondary studies, access to affordable housing, help to cope with growing food insecurity, and a national day care system, to name but a few.

When will the Minister of Youth finally put his money where his mouth is and support youth?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can say that we are very proud of our historic investments in young Canadians across the country.

First, we boosted the Canada summer jobs program by an unprecedented \$300 million. Next, we made a historic investment in education by increasing funding for student grants by 50%. Recently, we invested \$400 million to create co-op placements for young Canadians.

We fully understand that an investment in youth is an investment in our country's future, and that is exactly what we will keep doing.

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*[English]***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been exactly one year since Parliament ordered the Liberal government to stop defying the Human Rights Tribunal and immediately flow that \$155-million shortfall on child welfare. The government refused, saying that it would be like throwing confetti. No, it is about protecting children like 12-year-old Amy Owen, who, before she died wrote on Facebook, "I am just a kid and my life is a nightmare."

To the minister, stop defending the same feeble funding formula for child welfare established by Stephen Harper. Why will the minister refuse to flow that money that was ordered by the Parliament of Canada?

• (1445)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to bringing equity for children in this country. As it relates to child and family services and the gaps that exist there, we recognize that we are facing a national crisis in terms of the way indigenous children are overrepresented in the child welfare system.

As of this week, I have called for an emergency meeting of all appropriate partners. The provinces, territories, indigenous leaders, first nations, Inuit, and Métis will get together and we will solve this crisis together.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was saddened to read today that the leader of the official opposition has adopted Stephen Harper's approach to the opioid crisis. He is proposing that people with addiction issues should be arrested and incarcerated instead of being provided the help they need to stay alive and work toward a healthy future. The fact that the Conservatives want to reinstate Stephen Harper's failed strategy is irresponsible. People with addiction issues need help, not incarceration.

Will the Minister of Health please update this House on her efforts to address the opioid crisis and provide needed support—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his work and his tireless efforts in this matter. Like him, I was extremely disappointed yesterday when I heard the opposition leader's outdated belief. Unlike the Conservatives, our government is actually supporting law enforcement where it matters. Rather than prosecuting those with mental health and addiction issues, we are disrupting illegal drugs at the border and diverting people out of the criminal justice system.

With Bill C-37 and C-224, our government is taking a compassionate, evidence-based approach to reduce barriers to treatment and encourage innovative measures to prevent overdoses and save lives.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party is, and always will be, associated with the sponsorship scandal.

Canadians believed that the Liberals got the message, but they did not get it at all. The Liberal government is introducing a bill on access to information that would prevent the excellent work of journalists, people like Daniel Leblanc and others, from revealing

Oral Questions

things like the sponsorship scandal. We are not the ones saying so. Yesterday, the Information Commissioner said:

...I went back to the request...that uncovered the sponsorship scandal and that request would not meet their new requirement under [this bill].

Why does the Liberal Party want to hide other sponsorship scandals?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the Conservatives promised to reform the Access to Information Act. They did nothing for 10 years. Their government was the first in the Commonwealth to be found in contempt of Parliament. We will take no lessons from the most secretive government of all time.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the President of the Treasury Board will have a lot more respect for the Information Commissioner. She said yesterday that the access to information reforms are smoke and mirrors from the Liberal government; while it is promising transparency, these reforms actually turn back the clock on the rights of citizens. It was the Information Commissioner who said that.

Is the Liberal Party preparing other sponsorship scandals that it wants to keep under wraps?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are the first government in 30 years to want to update the Access to Information Act, and we will work with the Information Commissioner to do so.

[English]

In fact, let us be very clear. For the first time in history, our government is giving the commissioner order-making power. For the first time in history, we are actually applying the Access to Information Act to ministers' offices and the Prime Minister's Office. The Conservatives did nothing to modernize the act in 10 years. We are getting it done.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has placed the Ethics Commissioner in an impossible position, first by withholding information from the commissioner, then by claiming that she supported everything he did, but she fined him for not complying with the act. Instead of insulting MPs and insinuating that female elected representatives cannot do math, why does the finance minister not just come clean and answer the questions?

• (1450)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say for the record that I hold the Ethics Commissioner in the highest regard. We believe that it is important that we have an officer of Parliament who helps all of us here in the House to ensure that we can expose our personal assets and do it in a way that allows us to take recommendations on how we can assure that we do not have conflicts of interest. That is our continuing approach.

I will continue to work with her, as I have thus far. As I have said to this House, I have gone farther than her recommendations to make absolutely sure that in my position, there cannot be even a perception of conflict.

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Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister did not go further. He was fined by the Ethics Commissioner for breaking the rules. Instead of owning up to it, he is clearly irritated and throwing insults. I think the finance minister may need a little break at his French villa over the next few weeks.

Seriously, this is a very serious issue when the Minister of Finance is hiding assets. I have a simple question. No insults, please. What else is the finance minister hiding in his other numbered companies?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is nothing. The answer is that I have exposed all of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner.

What I can say for the record—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The members have heard the question asked and they need to hear the answer, whether they like the answer or not. Most members in all parties are able to sit through question period like adults and not react to things that may be provocative, or not. Let us allow the rest to do it as well.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that, in fact, my state of mind is not irritated but actually encouraged with the economy that we are seeing for Canadians. We have seen, over two years, a very positive change in our economy. We have seen, in two years, a very positive change for middle-class Canadians and families across our country. That is what we are here to do, so we will continue to do the good work and not play the games that the other party is playing.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, marijuana growers in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia have formed a co-op to advance their rights. They are concerned that the government will not license growers who farm outdoors and that licensing will go only to large corporate indoor growers. Indeed, Liberals on the health committee already voted down an NDP motion to allow provinces to develop production regimes that would support local economies.

As the government moves to legalize the recreational use of cannabis, will it stand with and support economically important, small-scale outdoor farmers across Canada and ensure that they have a future, yes or no?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced a comprehensive framework for the strict regulation of the production, distribution, and consumption of cannabis. We have been working collaboratively with our provincial and territorial partners. Health Canada administers a very effective system of licensing for those who meet the requirements of that regulation to ensure that what will be consumed by Canadians is of known potency and purity. Those rules are important for the health and safety of all Canadians, and we will continue to promote them.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the *Hanjin Seattle* cargo ship debris spill in my riding, I tabled a motion to address coastal debris. Still, community groups are leading cleanup efforts without any help from the current government. Government officials have indicated that there is a near-complete legislative and regulatory void for coastal debris cleanup, and that there is no dedicated fund.

The Liberals love talking about their world-class oceans protection plan, but nothing is happening. I have a simple question. Will the minister create a permanent dedicated annual fund for coastal debris cleanup?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right, we are very proud of our oceans protection plan, which now has approached its first-year anniversary and we have announced over 50 measures. With respect to ships that lose cargo, it is very clear that they are responsible for the cleaning. That is the situation with the *Hanjin Seattle* that my colleague is referring to.

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ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the finance minister said that our deputy leader cannot count, when in fact he is the one who is 100% over his promised deficit levels. He said that others do not know what assets are, when he is the one who just forgot to report his asset, an offshore company in France, to the Ethics Commissioner.

Instead of lashing out at others, why does the finance minister not just let go of all the secrets and tell Canadians what he is hiding in all of his holding companies?

• (1455)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I was speaking to the member for Milton. I want to be clear that I was not questioning her numeracy skills. I have the highest respect for the member for Milton, who I know has had a positive business career. What I am questioning and what I would question for the member for Carleton is the numbers that he is actually focusing on. In his case, the numbers he should focus on are the more than 16,000 children in his riding who are getting the Canada child benefit, on average \$520 per family. This is what we are doing for Canadians. We are making families better off so that they can actually move forward, to have confidence—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only way to know if he is making Canadians better off instead of just making himself better off is just to reveal what investments he has held over the last two years in his vast network of holding companies and trust funds. We just recently found out that the minister was taking \$65,000 a month in dividends from a company that he simultaneously regulated. He introduced a bill that would help that company.

The only way to put all of this to bed and put an end to these questions for the minister is for him to come clean and tell us what he is hiding in those—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to repeat, we have a process in this House that we work with the Ethics Commissioner so that we can expose all of our assets to her and that is in fact what I have done. In terms of disclosure, 100% disclosure is the highest number we can get. That is what I have done. That allowed her to give me recommendations on what we should do to ensure that we do not have conflicts of interest. That is what we expect all 338 members of this House to do. We will continue to respect the Ethics Commissioner. We will continue to work on behalf of Canadians, which is what we were elected to do.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that minister hid an offshore company in France, and then he hid \$20 million of Morneau Shepell shares from Canadians. Now that Canadians know he held those shares, because of investigative journalism and not because of his transparency, he has admitted that it was not the right thing to do, has sold those shares, and is now saying he will give back the ill-gotten gains. We need to know what other inappropriate investments the minister might be hiding in his holding companies. Why does he not tell us what is in those companies?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to repeat, working with the Ethics Commissioner is the approach we have in this House. It is to respect the officer of Parliament who has that duty. That is what we will continue to do. It allows us to do the work we have been asked to do on behalf of Canadians. We will not get distracted by the games from the other side. We will not get distracted by the personal attacks. We will continue to be focused on Canadians.

That focus is working. Canadians are in a much better situation two years later than they were when we came into office, so we will continue to do that good work on behalf of them.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's story is the story of immigration. Those who choose Canada bring with them their unique culture, skills, and an entrepreneurial spirit that strengthens our economy.

My family immigrated to Canada 18 years ago to build a better life for our son. We sacrificed, we worked hard, and now I sit in the House as the member for Scarborough Centre.

Could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship please update the House on how our government's historic immigration levels plan will continue the tradition of welcoming newcomers to Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to Canadians that we will fix the immigration system to grow our economy and reunite families and eliminate the backlogs that were left behind by the Conservatives. Our multi-year immigration plan is the most ambitious yet. It supports GDP growth, attracts more investment into Canada, creates additional jobs for Canadians, and boosts innovation.

We on this side of the House understand that immigration, together with a welcoming society, is what has made Canada—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Durham.

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ETHICS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is the hon. member for Toronto Centre, but it is not honourable to suggest that our deputy leader cannot count. It is not honourable to suggest that our finance critic is obtuse. It is not honourable for the member to deny his own mistakes and his own omissions. When will the hon. member do the right thing and apologize to Canadians for his mistakes?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I will continue to do with Canadians is listen to their issues, make sure that we are addressing them, and move forward not only to ensure that we have a high level of economic growth in the country but that Canadians see the benefits of that growth for themselves and their families. That is what we have been doing for the last couple of years. While the members of the official opposition have been playing games, we have actually been trying to work for Canadians.

The good news is, it is working, with a higher level of economic growth than we have seen in a decade and a lower level of unemployment than we have seen in a decade. We have over 450,000 more Canadians working. Jobs matter.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's big city mayors have sounded the alarm. One in five renters spend more than half their income on housing, and 1.5 million families cannot find affordable housing.

In Montreal, 25,000 families are on the waiting list for social housing, and in Toronto, 58,000 community housing units are in need of immediate repair.

As the minister prepares to announce the details of his housing strategy, will he commit to investing the funding necessary to maintain and expand social housing stock?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no issue on which I stand with a prouder sense of commitment and accomplishment than on the issue of housing. Not only in the first budget did we double the amount of money going to provinces and our partners in the municipalities, but we have now committed to a 10-year program to create the first ever national strategy for housing.

Oral Questions

This is going to be a game-changer. We have consulted widely with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We have listened to their needs about repairs, about construction, and about subsidies. We will be delivering the best housing policy our country has ever seen. I can only hope the party opposite does not vote against it once again.

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[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said from the start, no relationship is more important to our government than our relationship with indigenous peoples. That is why the Prime Minister announced the dismantling of the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

[English]

As we all know, far too many indigenous children end up in the child welfare system in Canada. We know the system is broken, and we know the system must be fixed. Could the Minister of Indigenous Services please update the House as to what is being done to protect the health and safety of indigenous children?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital for his question and for his leadership of the indigenous caucus.

I believe that all members of this House are disturbed by the disproportionate rates of indigenous children in the child welfare system, over 50% by the most recent census. We have some of the highest rates of indigenous child apprehension in the world. That is one of the reasons I have called an emergency meeting, along with indigenous leaders. First nations, Inuit, and Métis leaders have asked for provinces and territories to come together with child welfare experts and advocates. We will find solutions, and we will work together to promote prevention and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that the Liberals are centralists. They centralized decision-making on regional economic development in Toronto, and they centralized political decision-making on issues such as the elimination of the political lieutenant for Quebec in Ottawa. They are now preparing to centralize the arts by transferring a wide range of artifacts from Quebec City, the bastion of the Canadian francophonie, to the nation's capital.

Will the member for Québec promise us that he will fight in cabinet to reverse this decision?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Parks Canada primarily exhibits the objects under its care

at Parks Canada-administered national parks and national historic sites in every province and territory.

In 2012, Parks Canada decided to build a purpose-built collection facility to ensure the sustainable care and management of the collection not currently on display throughout Canada. There are approximately 31 million artifacts under Parks Canada's care, and 60% of the collection is under threat due to inappropriate environmental storage conditions and lack of appropriate security.

We are working to ensure the protection and preservation of the collection and its display throughout the country.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, displacing artifacts like that and bringing them here is an outrage.

Bill C-63 revealed that the government wants to start taxing pot. That is another way of stirring up trouble in Quebec and lining their own pockets. We know that Quebec, not Ottawa, will have to pick up the tab for costs related to health and security.

Will the government promise to leave that money to Quebec, or will it once again try to line its own pockets without even doing a thing?

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been working very closely with our provincial and territorial partners. There have been ongoing discussions with the provinces and territories about the appropriate taxation and price regimens to be put in place. That is part of an ongoing and important discussion. That discussion has been characterized by close co-operation and collaboration between all parties.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to call that answer vague would be an understatement, and I am nowhere near convinced. If the government does not provide health and security services to the people, it should hand that tax revenue over to the provinces, which do.

On another matter, today the media reported that Quebec's religious neutrality law could be challenged as early as tomorrow. Quebec has the right to make its own decisions about rules governing the relationship between the state and its people. That is a fundamental right.

Will the government respect Quebec's jurisdiction, as stated in the motion we adopted, and will it promise not to pay for any legal challenge to Quebec's religious neutrality law?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our position on the issue has always been clear. We will always promote and protect rights and freedoms because we believe in the importance of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is not for the state to say what a person can or cannot wear.

We are currently examining the application of the law. I thank my colleagues for their support on this issue.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Christine Muttonen, President of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: The House Leader of the Official Opposition has the usual Thursday question, following which we have a question of privilege to be raised and then two points of order, including one from her.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise my point of order at this point, before I go on with the Thursday question.

I rise on a point of order regarding comments just made during question period. The Minister of Finance said directly that our deputy leader did not know how to count. Our deputy leader has been a member of Parliament here for nine years. She has a law degree from Osgoode Hall Law School. She has been a CEO. She clearly knows how to count, and so much more.

These are some of the reasons, many times, women do not want to get involved in the political process. When maybe things are tough, insults like that—“Bimbo”, “You don't know how to count”, “You're not smart”, “You're a puppet”—are hurled at women politicians and at women in general.

I hope that is not what the Minister of Finance was trying to do, but I would like to give him the opportunity to apologize to our very qualified, very smart, and very capable deputy House leader.

The Speaker: The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition will know that I did address this point at the time. I certainly do encourage members to be judicious in their comments at all times in the House. I thank the hon. opposition House leader.

I think now she has the usual Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Government House Leader if she could please tell us what business is happening for the rest of this week and next week before we go back for our Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning we started second reading debate on Bill C-63, the budget implementation act. We will continue debate on this legislation this afternoon.

Tomorrow we will commence second reading debate of Bill S-5, concerning amendments to the Tobacco Act.

Privilege

On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of next week, we shall continue with debate on the budget bill. Last Thursday I indicated to the House that we would allot four days of debate at second reading, which means we would expect the vote to send the bill to committee to take place on Wednesday evening. I would like to thank opposition House leaders for their co-operation in finding agreement on this timeline.

[Translation]

On Thursday, we will resume debate on Bill C-45 on cannabis, and hope to conclude the debate at report stage. We will also be working to pass Bill C-17 on the Yukon before the next constituency week.

* * *

● (1510)

[English]

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning the issue of contradictory information given to members regarding the number of cabinet ministers who are currently using a conflict of interest loophole to avoid divesting personal investments or putting them in a blind trust. This contradictory information has been provided by an officer of Parliament, the Ethics Commissioner, and by the Prime Minister.

The Ethics Commissioner has said that a number of Liberal cabinet ministers hold controlled assets indirectly, but the Prime Minister contends that only the finance minister does and that he is now in the process of selling shares in Morneau Shepell and setting up a blind trust in the meantime. When pressed to clarify if the Prime Minister was correct in his assertion that the Minister of Finance is the lone minister exploiting a loophole, Ms. Dawson's office confirmed via an email from her spokesperson, Jocelyne Brisebois, which states:

The Office still maintains that there are fewer than five ministers who have controlled assets and no we were not wrong about the information provided in our statement to you. We can say fewer than five ministers, including [the finance minister].

That is, she says the commissioner's office was not wrong.

However, on Tuesday, the Prime Minister insisted in the Commons that the finance minister is the only one of his 30 ministers who is currently exploiting this loophole.

On page 111 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May, it states that, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

On February 1, 2002, the Speaker then ruled on a matter in regard to the former minister of national defence:

The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar alleged that the Minister of National Defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew that prisoners taken by Canadian JTF2 troops in Afghanistan had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in question period on two successive days...

The Speaker considered the matter and found there was a prima facie question of privilege. He said:

Privilege

The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.

The authorities to which Speaker Milliken was referring include but are not limited to the following. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states on page 115, “Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a *prima facie* breach of privilege.”

When the Speaker, in 2002, accepted the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House, he stated that “Nevertheless this remains a very difficult situation.” The Speaker then referred to the first edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 67:

There are...affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges...the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; [or that] obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the House in the discharge of their duties...

The Speaker went on to say:

On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air. I therefore invite the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar to move his motion.

On February 17, 2011, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and other members argued that a minister had made statements in committee that were different from those made in the House or provided to the House in written form. These members argued that the material available showed that contradictory information had been provided. As a result, they argued that this demonstrated that the minister deliberately misled the House and that as such a *prima facie* case of privilege existed.

In a ruling of March 9, 2011, the Speaker then pointed out:

...when asked who inserted the word “not” in the assessment of the KAIROS funding application, in testimony [before the committee] the minister twice replied that she did not know. In a February 14 statement to the House, while she did not indicate that she knew who inserted the word “not”, the minister addressed this matter by stating that the “not” was inserted at her direction. At the very least, it can be said that this has caused confusion. The minister has acknowledged this, and has characterized her own handling of the matter as “unfortunate”. Yet as is evident from hearing the various interventions that have been made since then, the confusion persists. As the member for Scarborough—Rouge River told the House, this “has confused me. It has confused Parliament. It has confused us in our exercise of holding the government to account, whether it is the Privy Council, whether it is the minister, whether it is public officials; we cannot do our job when there is that type of confusion”.

• (1515)

In the case raised on February 17, 2011, the contradictory information involved information provided to a committee and information provided to the House. In this case, we have information provided to the House that is contradictory to information provided by an officer of Parliament.

On page 222 of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, it states that “Committees are regarded as creatures of the House.”

The House of Commons publication *Committees Practical Guide* states that committees are central to the operations of the House of

Commons and allow for detailed examination of complex matters, which offers an opportunity for members to hear from Canadians and experts on topics of national concern and to have these representations placed on the public record. They provide a means for members to probe into the details of policies and programs, thereby further developing an expertise in certain areas.

The Privy Council Office, and some governmental documents, refers to the officers of Parliament as “Agents of Parliament,” thereby emphasizing that they carry out work for Parliament and are responsible to Parliament, and as a means of distinguishing them from other officers and officials of Parliament. It also emphasizes their independence from the government of the day. These officers of Parliament carry out duties assigned by statute, and report to one or both of the Senate and House of Commons. The individuals appointed to these offices perform work on behalf of Parliament, and report to the chambers, usually through the Speakers.

I argue that information flowing from an officer of Parliament holds as much weight as information flowing from a standing committee, and when this information is contradictory and confuses Parliament, as it has, there is a need to direct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to look at this in the guise of a breach of privilege.

The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner issued a statement today that said:

The Globe and Mail reported this morning that the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is at odds with the Prime Minister over how many cabinet ministers currently hold controlled assets indirectly. This is, in fact, not the case.

The Office did not wish to give an exact number when asked how many cabinet ministers indirectly hold controlled assets. The Office indicated fewer than five, giving a general sense of an upper limit to the number, meaning it could be one, two, three or four.

This does not clarify anything, and it certainly confuses the issues further. I ask that you find a *prima facie* question of privilege here. I am prepared to move the proper motion to allow the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to get to the bottom of this matter.

If you have any doubts, Mr. Speaker, I refer you to a ruling given on March 21, 1978, at page 3,975 of *Debates*, which is also referred to in Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, at page 227, where Speaker Jerome quoted a British procedure committee report of 1967, which states in part:

...the Speaker should ask himself [I am sure he meant to say himself or herself], when he has to decide whether to grant precedence over other public business to a motion which a Member who has complained of some act or conduct as constituting a breach of privilege desires to move, should be not—do I consider that, assuming that the facts are as stated, the act or conduct constitutes a breach of privilege, but could it reasonably be held to be a breach of privilege, or to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should, in my view, leave it to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I submit this matter to your wise judgment.

• (1520)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has a point to make on this.

Points of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have full confidence in the Ethics Commissioner. We will review what the member has brought forward to the House and report back in due course.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the indulgence. I only offer a small commentary, in addition to what we have heard.

My friend has pointed out that the Prime Minister made a statement in the House that there was only one of his ministers, the Minister of Finance who was using this ethical loophole, this numbered company. We have to take members at their word that, when they speak in the House, that word is speaking the truth.

We then had the unfortunate situation in which the Ethics Commissioner, when contacted by the media to clarify if the Prime Minister was in fact correct that there was only one of his ministers who had broken his own promise that things would be divulged, had to then essentially correct the Prime Minister saying that her earlier statement was still true.

Now the reasons she has as Ethics Commissioner to keep the number somewhat vague, as less than five but more than one, is something that is at her discretion. That is not for us to judge.

The concern we have not only is the potential case in which the Prime Minister may have misled the House of Commons on an important issue facing Canadians, but it is also that—after so many weeks upon weeks of Liberal ministers, including the Prime Minister and the finance minister, saying how much faith they had in the Ethics Commissioner—in effect they are using Parliament and parliamentary privilege to undermine the Ethics Commissioner's own statements to the Canadian public.

Canadians are wondering what is going on within the Liberal cabinet. This is important in terms of our being able to do our jobs as opposition members on behalf of Canadians. Our job, primarily, is to hold the government to account, to find out what the government is and is not doing, and to find out whether it is keeping good faith with Canadians.

I will remind the Speaker and all members that, in both their mandate letters and in the declaration from the Prime Minister, the instruction was crystal clear: they were not to simply follow the letter of the law, of the Conflict of Interest Act, but also the spirit of the law, and second, they were to make available all of their personal assets and holdings to the fullest public scrutiny.

That is what the Prime Minister of this country promised us. That is what the Prime Minister later went on to contradict, both in word and deed.

I look forward to your ruling on this, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to finally settling this matter, which can only be done, by the way, by the Prime Minister, his finance minister, and the other ministers in his cabinet who have been holding secret accounts in numbered companies, withholding that information from Canadians, which has put them in an obvious case of conflict of interest, from my perspective and that of others.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will take this under advisement and return to the House in due course and good time.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED ACTIONS OF MEMBER FOR SPADINA—FORT YORK

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to bring to your attention a grave and disturbing matter that occurred yesterday while riding the House of Commons bus.

I stand with a very heavy heart for this point of order because it was exactly for that reason I went into politics, to be a voice for the most vulnerable and fight for the rights of women, especially immigrant women, and bring their voice to Ottawa to fight against racism, agism, and sexism.

Now I will state the facts.

I was sitting on an outside seat when the member for Spadina—Fort York entered the bus. The member stopped and hovered over me. He began to wave his hand in my face, chastised and intimidated me for something I said in the House earlier in the day.

Yesterday, during question period, the Prime Minister was giving one of his non-answers to a question about the government transferring up to half a billion dollars into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, while at the same time the PBO reported the government was behind on infrastructure spending within Canada. With great emotion and pride, I said “Canada is our home”. For some reason, the member took issue with my statement and began to intimidate me for raising it, making suggestions to alternative statements I could have made.

I did not have time to give you the proper notice of a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, but I reserve the right to do so. I do so for the following reasons.

Responding to threats was among the first matters of parliamentary privilege dealt with in Canada. Page 198 of the second edition of Joseph Maginot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* tells us of an incident in 1758 where the Nova Scotia House of Assembly proceeded against someone who made threats against a member.

In a ruling on September 19, 1973, Mr. Speaker Lamoureux, at page 6709 of the *Debates*, stated that he had:

no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats and attempts at intimidation.

Mr. Speaker Bosley, on May 16, 1986, at page 13362 of *Debates*, ruled that the threat or attempt to intimidate could not be hypothetical, but that it must be real or have occurred. I have a whole bus of passengers who witnessed this whole incident.

On March 24, 1994, at page 2705 of *Debates*, Mr. Speaker Parent said:

Government Orders

Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no member of Parliament can do his duty as expected.

This attempt to intimidate me was directly linked to what I said in the House earlier in the day, and that, Mr. Speaker, should be grounds enough to warrant a favourable ruling for a question of privilege.

Hiding behind a prime minister who claims to be a feminist does not give the member the right to intimidate another member of the same House of another party. Female members of all three parties were on the bus. They witnessed everything he did and how he intimidated me. Therefore, I reserve the right for a question of privilege with proper notice.

● (1525)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to thank the hon. member for her intervention. We will look into it, dig a little deeper, and get back to the House if we deem it necessary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Scarborough—Rouge Park, I once again rise to continue the discussion on Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures.

I was talking about the economy, and I highlighted some of the work of our government had done with respect to tax fairness.

I now want to touch on something that is very close to my heart and certainly something that affects each and every member, which is the Canada child benefit.

In July of this year, according to statistics that were recently provided to me, 9,170 payments, benefiting 16,160 children, were made through the Canada child benefit in Scarborough—Rouge Park. An average payment in Scarborough—Rouge Park is \$630 per month, or \$5.754 million just for this year. If we look at it over four years, it works out to a significant amount of money. I am quite proud to say that this has had a game-changing effect in my community and I am sure in other communities across the country.

● (1530)

Many people in my community are unable to afford to send their children to extracurricular activities. There are housing issues in Toronto. In the eastern part of Toronto, especially, housing is quite expensive, with a high cost for basic services such as the Internet and telephone. The Canada child benefit will assist many families to support their children better than they were able to before.

This is a very important aspect of our platform. Enhancements to this were proposed recently in the fall economic statement by the Minister of Finance, such as the acceleration of indexing of the Canada child benefit to inflation in two years, starting in July of 2018, with an additional \$5.6 billion in support of Canadian families over 2017-19. For a single parent, with two children, making \$35,000 a year, this will mean an additional \$560 more next year.

In addition to the Canada child benefit, there are also enhancements to the working income tax benefit. It is a refundable tax credit that cuts tax for eligible people in the workforce and encourages others to get a job. It will be an additional \$500 million per year, starting in 2019.

I want to dive into the substantive parts of the legislation and talk about several aspects of it.

First are the amendments to the Canadian Labour Code to improve the rights of workers. We have introduced these measures to ensure people can have flexible work arrangements. All employees working for more than six months have the right to ask for changes to the number of hours they work, the location, and schedule, among other things if they work in a sector that is regulated by the federal government.

Employers must respond to requests within 30 days and employers are prevented from disciplining employees. If the employer does not accept their request, it is required to give a written rationale for its decision and refute the request on legislated grounds.

We have expanded family leave to three days to aid family members suffering from health issues, or for educational purposes, as well as leave for victims of family violence who can receive 10 days of leave to seek medical or psychological help, family services, relocation services, and to seek law enforcement assistance.

Also important is the introduction of five days leave to engage in traditional indigenous practices. I sit on the indigenous affairs committee. It has been a great opportunity to learn important aspects of indigenous culture. Over the last two years, it has been clear to me that the current workplace environment and systems in Canada do not reflect, respect, nor give space for the traditional practices of our indigenous brothers and sisters. It is important to ensure those in the workforce are able to take time off to engage in traditional indigenous practices.

These are very important measures.

● (1535)

To quickly summarize, this is a very important aspect of our platform. It is the second phase implementing the budget introduced by our finance minister, which has been great for the economy, as it has allowed for a more equal playing field and reduced the gap between the poor and other Canadians. It is aimed at enabling Canadians to live in harmony without having the large income disparities that we see in other countries, which often trigger social unrest.

Government Orders

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to call to the hon. member's attention a big concern of mine about unpaid domestic leave.

I want to hear the member's response to the fact there will be a barrier to people actually accessing unpaid domestic leave. Nine percent of women in a domestic violence situation are controlled by their partner economically. The member can imagine the impact of someone coming home with less pay than their a partner who is abusing them. Although I understand the intention, I am concerned that in reality it will not be accessible to the people it is intended to help.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the brilliant point by my friend from Saskatoon West.

However, this is an amendment to the Labour Code and not necessarily to the EI system or to the other social security measures that we have. It is an important first step. For example, in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park, our constituency office often deals with situations of domestic violence, and one of the difficulties we face is that once someone needs to move or take time off to address the domestic violence situation, they are sometimes threatened with losing their job.

In my opinion, this is a very important first step in addressing that, as my hon. friend can concede. It is the direction we need to go in to ensure that working people have time to be able to take care of themselves. In the meantime, I believe the Canada child benefit will be of assistance and will certainly assist those single parents who may need that help in situations like these where they are in transition.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has done a fantastic job advocating for his constituents on important policy matters.

One of the things I believe the government has been so successful at doing is focusing its attention on Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. We have realized some of the benefits of doing that, for example, the 400,000-plus jobs that have been created and the resulting increased disposable income and, as my colleague just made reference to, the Canada child benefit. All of that extra money is put into the pockets of individuals who really need it, causing them to spend more in the community and strengthening our economy.

What are my colleague's thoughts on the government's focus on Canada's middle class and the benefits resulting from doing that?

• (1540)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the Canada child benefit, for example, has had a very important effect on the economy. In fact, it has helped ignite it. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 10 years, we have created 450,000 jobs in the last two years alone and, as I said in my speech, the unemployment rate remains quite low and the growth rate quite high. It is a very important observation.

However, in the past during times of great economic growth, income disparity widened. The people making good amounts of money were making even more money, and the people on the

margins were making less. Income disparity widened in what were probably some of the best times in history, and one thing that our government aims to do is to narrow that gap and ensure that the disparity between the rich and the poor does not increase. We aim to create an equal playing field so that children, regardless of the circumstances they are born into, have the same rights and opportunities in life and will not be limited in what they can and cannot do because of the financial circumstances of their families.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my colleague, the member for Peace River—Westlock.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to round two of the 2017 budget implementation bill, also known as *The Wizard of Oz* act, as the government yells, “Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain”, in an effort to distract Canadians from the ethical meltdown the finance minister has been having with his conflict of interest scandals. Unfortunately, for the man behind the curtain, the finance minister, Canadians are paying attention to his actions and the fact he was just fined by the Ethics Commissioner for not bothering to follow our conflict of interest laws.

I cannot help but think of what other *Wizard of Oz* characters we might be reminded of by the government: someone like the “Tin Man” without a heart, who is raising taxes on Canadians with diabetes and those suffering from mental illnesses; perhaps a “Dorothy” looking for a home, just not in southern France; and, of course, there is the “Scarecrow” who desires nothing else but a brain. This could apply to any number of cabinet ministers, whether it is someone using government resources to help a family member in a municipal election in Calgary or mistakenly claiming the military glory of soldiers, or perhaps starting Phoenix when we all knew it was just not ready, but I digress.

Much like the tornado that swept through Kansas, the ethical storm encompassing the finance minister has cast the Liberals into disarray. After spending the summer attacking small businesses and entrepreneurs, including mom and pop shops, farmers, and doctors, and declaring them to be tax cheats who need to pay more, the Liberals are pouring money out the door, trying to get Canadians to forget.

The Liberals have suddenly reinstated the previous Conservative government's small business tax cut. They make bigger, more grandiose promises, accumulating even more debt on the backs of our children and grandchildren. They are spending like mad and claiming their plan is working. They beg us, “Please, do not look at the man behind the curtain. Everything is fine. I know you want to talk about the ethics issues, but maybe you would like some money instead,” they cry.

The minister has the audacity to argue that massive spending increases were part of the plan all along, that the wizard knows best, but Canadians are not buying this. They know that the Liberals are broke and that the tax hikes just fuel their relentless spending and nothing else.

Government Orders

Here we are, after last week's fall economic update and the Liberals' re-profiling of another \$2 billion in infrastructure spending to next year, and their banking of billions in a one-time accounting adjustment, with their finding themselves with a few extra billion to spend this year. That is how they spin the story anyways.

The Liberals forget it is not really extra money, but rather that the deficit that will come in \$8 billion above their campaign promise, instead of the \$12 billion they originally thought. It is like someone taking \$20 from the right pocket, putting it in the left pocket, and then trying to convince themselves they are now \$20 richer.

The Liberals say it is okay, because we have record growth, hundreds of thousands of jobs, with the majority of them in the private sector. Unfortunately, the parliamentary budget officer's report crushes this Liberal spin like a house dropping on the wicked witch of the east.

First, there is the claim that the majority of jobs are in the private sector. According to the PBO report that just came out following the fall economic update, just 4% of job growth was in what the PBO classifies as the private sector; 47% was in the public sector; and 49% was in self-employment.

It is ironic that the Liberals spent months attacking self-employed entrepreneurs, trying to hike their taxes, calling them tax dodgers and accusing them of exploiting loopholes to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, and now they are claiming responsibility for creating these wonderful new jobs.

Note as well that the other half of the job gains is due to public sector hiring. That is not to say that public service work is not valued. Even MPs contribute once in a while, but it is ridiculous to assume that economic growth can be sustained through public sector growth.

As for the drop in the unemployment rate, well, the PBO notes that 0.6 points or 7.5% of it was due to people simply leaving the workforce, having given up on trying to find a job. We know that the employment numbers are not great and are mostly independent of what the Liberals have done.

Maybe economic growth is the high point. Let us look at economic growth.

The growth so far this year was driven by record levels of household debt spending and a rebound in the energy sector from the lows of last year. Canada's real GDP growth is projected to slow to just 1.6% in two years. That is hardly the state of economic nirvana the Prime Minister promised when he took the country's finances deep into the red.

• (1545)

What about that pesky deficit? The Liberals pegged it at \$18 billion this year, while the PBO says it is more likely going to be \$20 billion. Who is right? I tend to believe the PBO's crystal ball above the Liberal's spin.

The PBO further projects that there is only a 10% chance that the budget will be balanced in 2019. If we remember, that is when the Liberals said they would balance the budget by. Put another way, there is only a 10% chance the Liberals will keep a key campaign

promise from the 2015 election. Imagine if Canadians had known the odds of the Liberals keeping their other election promises. They would have known there was a 0% chance the Liberals would keep their promise on electoral reform, a 0% chance the Liberals would keep their promise to reform access to information, a 0% chance the Liberals would keep their promise to act ethically and responsibly with respect to Canadians and our democratic institutions, but a 100% chance the Liberals would break their promise to keep the deficit to just \$10 billion a year.

Besides misleading Canadians by making promises they had no intention of keeping, the Liberals are asking us to blindly follow them further down the red-ink brick road. With 1.6% real GDP growth, and deficits ballooning up to \$20 billion, it means that in the event of a fiscal shock, such as the Americans pulling out of NAFTA or a housing market meltdown, the Liberals have left no room to manoeuvre.

If only Canada had a previous government on which to draw parallels. If only we could determine what happens if the government spends recklessly, borrows indiscriminately, and casts aside any respect for fiscal responsibility. Right, we do have that. Trudeau senior spent like a drunken sailor, with apologies to drunken sailors for the comparison. The words "fiscal responsibility" at that time apparently did not translate into both official languages. Subsequent governments needed to cut programs mercilessly for health care transfers and other services to make up for the sins of the father. It seems the Prime Minister has not learned, and Canadians are now doomed to pay the price.

What might we get instead from this trip down the red-ink brick road? Let us look at the numbers from the PBO. By 2021, public debt charges will cost about 11% of total federal expenditures, or roughly \$37 billion a year in interest payments, which is \$13 billion above what it is now.

There is a saying that for every Liberal policy, there is a victim. Let us see what this money spent on interest could have been spent on instead.

Remember when the Liberals promised, and then reneged, on their \$3 billion for palliative care? They could have kept that promise 12 times over every year.

They could finally go ahead and purchase the politically motivated sole-sourced Super Hornets and still have money to buy dozens and dozens of F-35s every single year.

According to the numbers provided by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, in 14 months we could solve homelessness in Canada.

With that money, we could provide free tuition for every single student in Canada. We could fund pharmacare for the entire population and have money to spare.

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That money would not go as far as it used to, because it would not be enough, unfortunately, to cover the electricity overcharges from the Ontario Liberal Party's green energy scam. A dollar does not go as far as it used to.

The last thing I want to touch on is the PBO's warning on economic downward risks. The PBO says “the most important risk is weaker business investment” and that “increased uncertainty and/or weaker confidence could restrain firms from expanding capacity.”

With the red tape strangulation death of energy east, the total amount of disinvestment from energy companies alone has reached \$56 billion. C.D. Howe is saying that business investment in Canada is at its worst level, compared to the U.S., in 25 years. It said to increase investment, we need “faster and more certain regulatory processes, affordable electricity and lower taxes”. What do we get? We get more regulatory red tape and uncertainty, higher prices for electricity because of green schemes, and higher taxes.

In the book *Glinda of Oz*, which is the final book written in the series by Oz creator Frank Baum, it is revealed that the witches knew all along that the man behind the curtain was a fraud trying to distract us from the truth. We know that this fall economic statement wizard is a fraud as well. There is no progress for the middle class, just higher debt, higher taxes, and a future of slow growth and uncertainty.

• (1550)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in closing, the member mentioned higher taxes due to our government, but our government is lowering taxes on small businesses. It is at 10.5% currently and will go down to 9% in 2019. I want to ask the member what he means by higher taxes. We have lowered taxes for the middle class from 22% to 20.5%, and we have also increased money for those families that need it the most. I want to ask which taxes he is talking about that are increasing.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, that is almost like a softball question: what have the Liberals done to raise taxes? I would like to thank my colleague.

The Fraser Institute has shown that the Liberal middle-class tax cut has actually resulted in 81% of the so-called middle class actually paying higher taxes than before.

Under the previous government, we had promised to lower the small business tax to 9%. The Liberals at the time, during the election, said they would do the same and copycat the NDP. What happened when they got in? In the first budget, oops, no small business tax cut. In the next budget, oops, there was no small business tax cut. It took small business people from around the country rising up against the incredible, insulting tax attack on small businesses for the government to finally come through on its promise from two years ago.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his very well documented speech. He provided a very nice overview of the current economic situation.

I was also pleasantly surprised to hear him talk about the savings we might make that could help us provide, for example, a more affordable education to our young people. I commend him on that.

I am sure I know the answer, but does my colleague think that combatting tax evasion is one of the things the Liberals have yet to address? We see incredible cases of tax evasion in Canada, but it is also being done right before our eyes in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the NDP is right. What is going to happen in 2021 if the spending stays the same is that we will have interest payments of \$36 billion. That is money taken away from students. That is money taken away from the poor. That is services we could be providing across the country. Instead, we are going to pay it to foreign banks in the form of interest.

With respect to tax evasion, we have seen what the government's policy and focus is on. It is focusing on sufferers of type 1 diabetes. It is focusing on people suffering from mental illnesses. These are not the tax evaders in the country. These people need help, not taxes, from the current Liberal government.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member from the Liberal Party is talking about how the Liberals are lowering taxes. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know, at least in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, that small businesses are suffering. They know what tsunami is about to hit them with increased taxes, whether it be 54% to 73% or even personal income taxes. We know what happened with the disability tax credit. It was eliminated altogether for those with diabetes.

I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks the cumulative effect will be on these affected individuals and businesses in his local area. Is he hearing from his constituents how damaging this is to families?

• (1555)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear what is happening in my constituency. We are having issues with unemployment. People are coming to our office every day saying that they cannot take any more. It is one more straw that breaks the camel's back. Instead of a straw, the current government is dumping a bale of hay on the camel's back, with higher taxes on small businesses and taking away tax credits, and it goes on. Canadians cannot take any more. The government needs to take a hard look at what it is doing and the damage it is doing to average, everyday Canadians. It needs to take a step back, stop the tax increases, and stop the wasteful spending.

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Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to stand today to talk about the terrorizing of the middle class, which is what I think is going on here.

The Liberals have gone on and on about how they are the champions of the middle class. We are not sure what they define as the middle class. I can tell members a little about the people where I come from. I come from northern Alberta. We are a hard-working bunch. We are typically in the farming and forestry industries and the oil patch and those kinds of things.

What was most interesting to me about this budget implementation bill was when the Liberals came out with the ways and means motion. I was reading through it, and what I came across was very interesting. I must say that it is dry reading, but when I was near the end, I ran across the meaning of beer. I never thought that as MPs, we would be discussing the meaning of beer, but the meaning of beer is in the current budget.

Beer is definitely something folks in Canada consume. I think about \$22 billion a year is consumed, and this translates into revenue for the government of about \$6 billion. Where I come from, beer is a big part of everyday life. It is a part of what I would consider middle-class Canadians consume. It is in contrast with maybe champagne or wine. I think the vast majority of Canadians consume more beer than wine. If I would make a comparison, I would say that there is somewhat of a class distinction, perhaps, between beer and wine. I would say that the middle class would more likely drink beer than wine.

When the government decides that it is going to define beer, it defines it as “any product (other than wine...)” which to me is very interesting. Why would the government want to define beer as other than wine? I looked at this through the lens of the middle class particularly. This is what the government wants to talk about all the time. This is the budget for the middle class. It is the government that champions the middle class. Why would it want to define beer as anything other than wine? Well, it made sense to me. We need to ensure that the middle class is getting its fair share, and I have laid out the fact that the middle class consumes beer.

An hon. member: What do you have against beer?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I do not have anything against beer. I am saying that the middle class consumes beer. I asked why the middle class would be taxed on beer. What are the Liberals doing with the tax on beer? They are raising the tax on beer. This is the government that continually says it needs to stand up for the middle class. I made the argument that the middle class drinks beer. Why is the government raising the taxes on beer?

It goes on from there. The middle class drinks beer and understands that taxes are being raised, but then the Liberals come up with a formula for how they are going to tax beer. Believe me, it is quite a doozy. The formula is $A \times B \times C =$ the tax that has to be paid on beer.

Why would there need to be a difference in the tax rate between beer and wine? It seems to me that there would be a fairly simple way of taxing beer and wine, if we need to tax beer and wine. It would seem that the product of concern we are trying to tax is the alcohol. Every bottle of beer I have ever bought says right on it

0.5%, 5%, or 7% alcohol. It seems to me that it would be fairly easy to figure out the volume of alcohol, and we would have a standard rate. For a volume of alcohol, this is how much tax there would be.

However, no, the minister must get involved to determine what kind of beer we are dealing with or what the percentage is. Therefore, in the equation I mentioned earlier, $A \times B \times C$, A is for the quantity and litres of beer concentrate, and B is the particular method by which the beer is diluted, as approved by the minister. This is very interesting to me.

• (1600)

Why does the minister need to approve the production of beer on a particular case? Why would that manipulate the changes in the rate of tax that a particular beer company pays? Perhaps it is because one of those numbered companies that we continue to ask about may actually be a beer brewing company. That would be why the minister has to get involved in beer production. He needs to ensure that his beer company does not have to pay as much tax.

• (1605)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: We used the same formula as Harper.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Either way, Mr. Speaker, they were standing up for the middle class. I assume they were trying to lower the taxes on beer, which would make sense if they were trying to stand up for the middle class. However, no, the minister has to get involved with the dilution of beer.

We can see that already, just in my short time speaking about the meaning of beer, that the Liberals definitely do not have the best interests of Canadians at heart.

The Liberals said that they would bring in a carbon tax. It takes energy to produce beer. That means those breweries have to be heated. We live in Canada, a cold place, and believe it or not, it takes a lot of water to make a bottle of beer. All that water has to be kept warm somehow. Now, there is a fermentation process that happens when beer is produced and that creates a bunch of heat in and of itself. However, we still need to keep the rest of the building warm, so therefore we need to use some form of energy, typically natural gas or coal. This kind of energy is now going to be taxed with the carbon tax. This is adding an additional cost to our breweries, which is also increasing the price of beer.

In my last few remaining minutes, I want to talk a bit about the document that was given to each of us when the government tabled its new budget. Interestingly, I thought for sure that if this was a budget for the middle class, it would be straightforward, easy to understand, with no bafflegab in it.

Page 154 of the ways and means motion talks about the provision of information by a master pension entity. I am sure many middle-class Canadians, many Canadians in my riding, have no idea what a master pension entity is. I started to read through it, and I will read some of this so people back home understand what we have to deal with every day when it comes to the Liberal government.

Paragraph (d), on page 156, states:

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...an amount of tax deemed to have been collected under any of subsections (5) to (7.1) by another participating employer of the pension plan in respect of a specified supply of the other participating employer to the pension plan during a fiscal year of the other participating employer that ends in the preceding fiscal year, provided that the other participating employer is related at any time in the preceding fiscal year to the particular participating employer, less the amount, if any, determined for B under paragraph (c) of whichever of those subsections is applicable in determining that amount of tax...

This is the budget for the middle class. It is completely understandable and straightforward, lowering the costs for everybody and ensuring that at the end of the year, people will only have to pay \$800 more than they paid last year. That is what is going on in the budget and that is what we are going up against today.

I know my colleagues and I in the Conservative Party will adamantly vote against this budget because it does nothing for the middle class.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that the budget and the bills were hard to understand at times. Legal texts are hard to understand. I have to give him credit, as his speech, in and of itself, was hard to follow. Trying to connect the dots has been a great exercise for me, with all the various avenues he has taken.

At the beginning of his speech, he questioned the definition of “middle class”. I understand he defines it in terms of what people drink. Is it beer or is it wine? I come not from the middle class but from a background where I was one of those working hard to join the middle class, and we enjoyed red wine a lot. That does not define us in any way, shape or form. Nor do the kinds of products we consume.

However, on this side, our definition of “middle class” is more with respect to the capacity people have to pay their bills at the end of the month. That is what is defining our ambition as a government, to ensure families that need it the most get the most money at the end of the month so they can pay their bills, raise their children, and have the opportunities all Canadians deserve for success. That is why we made the Canada child benefit more generous, more progressive, and tax free, while the Conservatives were sending it to millionaires. If that is their definition of “middle class”, then when they increased the TFSA limit, who were they targeting? Was it the middle class? Therefore, I would like to know his definition based of what people earn and their capacity to make ends meet more so than what they drink.

I have a comment for clarification. As we are talking about Bill C-63 and beer, we have done this. A beer concentrate has been developed. We do not want to tax it as a spirit; we want to tax it as the volume of beer it creates. We received this from the industry. We followed through on it, and stakeholders are happy about it.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, every family looks at whether they can pay their bills at the end of the month. The government is raising taxes on everyday Canadians. The average family is paying \$800 more a year in taxes. Besides that, it is adding, on average, \$500 per person to the national debt of our country every year. That means when we are born, we are born with a \$23,000 debt just for being alive and for being Canadian. “Welcome to Canada. You now have a \$23,000 debt.”

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hate to correct my friend, but we have to get the

terminology right. It is the middle class and “those working hard to join it.” I found out that when Liberal colleagues use that exact phrasing, including the Prime Minister, they get a cookie every time. Therefore, if Conservative colleagues are looking for the same opportunity, here is a question about the middle class, which is the obsession of the 1% finance minister, or the 1% of the 1% finance minister, because I want to get the numbers right.

The Liberals promised to curb a loophole in the Income Tax Act whereby people would be paid in stock dividends rather than by salary and would receive a much more beneficial tax treatment. They promised to shrink and close that loophole. It costs the treasury about \$800 million a year. Compare that to some of the attacks the Liberals have made on small businesses, where just one portion of what they were going after. They called those “loopholes” and inferred at times that small businesses were tax cheats. That was meant to bring in about \$220 million to the treasury. By actually fulfilling the campaign promise, on which the Liberals ran, to close down these CEO stock option loopholes, they would have brought in almost four times as much money.

How many middle-class Canadians does the member know in his riding who are not paid by salary or by hourly wage but by stock options from the companies for which they work?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I did not research it, so I do not know how many people in my riding are paid by stock options. However, what I did research was the price of beer and how many Canadians consumed it. It turns out that 44% of Canadians consume beer. It is interesting that when it comes to beer, nearly a majority of Canadians enjoy their beer. The government is raising the taxes on that significantly, in perpetuity. Therefore, I appreciate the comments we received from the member, but when it comes to closing tax loopholes, obviously the government is closing the tax loophole on beer, ensuring we have to pay a tax on beer.

• (1610)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Those in Waterloo region are very fortunate. The national unemployment rate is 6.2%, a nine-year low. Kitchener's unemployment rate is just 4.5% and it is experiencing an almost 5% job growth.

Our plan seems to be working. Canada's economy is the fastest-growing economy in the G7. Canada's economy is growing faster than it has in a decade. Job growth is among the highest in a decade. In just two years, over 450,000 jobs have been created. Canada has the lowest unemployment since 2008.

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Youth unemployment is the lowest on record. In 2015, the national unemployment rate was around 7% and youth unemployment was double the national average. In my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, our doubling of the Canada summer job program has meant that for the past two summers, we have made a half a million dollars available to help social service agencies and private enterprises create summer jobs for young people, which will help them build their work experience, their resumé and equip them with the necessary skills they will need after graduating to secure good, well-paying jobs.

As a result of the excellent growth of our economy, government revenues have grown by more than an estimated \$6.5 billion annually, on average, improving our budget to the extent that we are able to index the Canada child benefit two years ahead of our original plan.

In the last month for which I have figures, the Canada child benefit has meant that in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, a total of 10,770 payments were made, benefiting just over 19,000 children. That is more than \$6 million a month that moms and dads in Kitchener South—Hespeler have to buy clothes for their kids, shoes, school supplies, nutritious food, and learning and recreational activities. That money can now be spent locally in my riding.

Not only do nine out of 10 families in Canada now have more money to spend, not only have 300,000 children been lifted out of poverty, but economic experts, including the governor of the Bank of Canada, tell us that the Canada child benefit has been highly stimulative, which means that it has been very good at growing our economy. That should not surprise anyone.

The North American economy, Canada's economy included, is consumer-driven. When parents' responsibilities require them to spend on necessities for their children, the economy improves and grows, sales increase, profits rise, and employment increases. Therefore, the Canada child benefit helps parents raising the next generation and, at the same time, helps grow our economy.

As promised in our election campaign platform, we are lowering the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% to help small businesses invest, create jobs, and grow. Dan Kelly, with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said, "This decision will pump hundreds of millions of dollars back into the small business community, helping them create more jobs and grow the economy." Therefore, not only have we improved the situation of families with children and caused the economy to grow, thereby improving business, but we have also reduced the tax burden on household businesses.

We have also been investing in transit, such as the Waterloo region LRT. We are investing in Canada and Canadians. Over the past year, I participated in a number of announcements and investments in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, and I would like to outline some of those now.

There was a \$15.8-million investment in Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. As a result of this investment and investments like it, students, professors, and researchers will work at state-of-the-art facilities to advance the country's best researchers. They will collaborate in specially

designed spaces that support lifelong learning skills and training. They will work in close proximity with partners to turn discoveries into products and services. In the process, they will train for and invent the high-value jobs of the future. Their discoveries will plant the seeds for the next generation of innovators.

● (1615)

We will be investing \$2.7 million in 3E Nano Inc. of Kitchener. 3E Nano produces a window coating that will make it easy to defrost car windows and make windows more energy efficient by increasing energy retention or rejection without reducing clarity.

We will make a repayable contribution of up to \$3 million to Grand River Foods Ltd. in Hespeler to increase production and explore new export opportunities.

Our government will provide \$96 million to widen Highway 401 from six to ten lanes for a distance of approximately five kilometres, between Hespeler Road and Townline Road. The work includes new high occupancy vehicle lanes and the replacement of two bridges at Hespeler Road and Franklin Boulevard over Highway 401. Once completed, the project will help improve safety and traffic flow by easing congestion and providing faster and more reliable travel and commute times on one of Canada's most important trade corridors. The addition of high-occupancy vehicle lanes will promote environmentally friendly transportation, such as carpooling and the use of public transit. By widening and improving the highways, we can get products to market faster, adding to the growth rate and continued success of our current economy.

We are also building an innovative economy that will create more good jobs for the middle class today and in the future. As part of our innovation and skills plan, we are investing nearly \$1 billion over five years to create jobs and accelerate innovation through superclusters.

Superclusters are innovation hotbeds. They are areas of high growth, like Silicon Valley, that bring together the most talented people, the newest technologies, and the fastest growing companies. This is what we want to create in regions across Canada.

This legislation will take the next steps in our innovation and skills plan, an agenda that focuses on people and addresses the changing nature of the economy to ensure that it works for all Canadians. It will enact several key parts of our plan, including \$600 million in new financing for clean technology firms and \$400 million to put into place the venture capital catalyst initiative.

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I want to conclude by mentioning some of the initiatives that our government has put forward. We have put forward an economic plan that has created 450,000 jobs in two years. The unemployment rate was at 7% when we took office and it is now down to 6.2%. The economy is growing faster, at an average pace of 3.7%. Canada has the fastest growing economy in the G7. Nine out of ten families have benefited from the child benefit, and we have lifted over 300,000 children out of poverty.

I want to share that record with the members of the House to show that our record is successful, it is working, and it is working for most Canadians.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really important as parents that we talk to our kids about financial literacy. Our government put that concept forward and I think the Liberal government has put some resources toward it.

When we teach our kids about financial literacy, it is important that we tell them not to borrow money on credit cards to a point where the debt cannot be paid down.

We just had the government's fall economic update. The Liberal government promised a small \$10 billion deficit. This time around it is \$20 billion. In the last two years, the deficit has been closer to \$30 billion. The Liberals brag about all of the money they are handing out to Canadians, but the reality is that this year alone a family of four will be further in debt by \$2,222 approximately. During bad times the Liberals like to spend money. Now they say we are in good times so they are spending more. The deficit is twice the amount they promised. That is Liberal ideology.

Does the member believe in financial literacy for children? If so, does he believe in financial literacy for the government, because it is putting us further in debt even in good times?

• (1620)

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, that gives me an opportunity to talk about this further and to address the member's question on financial literacy. One thing I want to say is that the way we grow our economy is by making investments in our middle class and in business. We have lowered the tax rate on small business from 11% down to 10.5%, and will be lowering it even further to 9%. We are lowering taxes on businesses, increasing investment, and increasing infrastructure. The latter include the highest numbers we have seen, with billions of dollars being put into infrastructure. I have seen in my riding how that will help our region. Investments are the way to grow the economy.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to the hon. member's attention to one concern that I have, which I hope we can correct at some point very soon. That is the fact that the proposed 10 days of unpaid leave of absence for victims of domestic violence might not help very many people. I will point out what I have shared with the member's colleague.

For the many women in particular who are in abusive relationships, 90% of them are also economically controlled by their partner. We can imagine a scenario in which an individual has taken unpaid leave from their job to deal with an issue, to maybe see a lawyer or to take care of some issues in order to be safe, and then come home at the end of the month and their pay is less than what it should be. That will create an unsafe scenario in some families.

I really want to call my colleague's attention to how important it is that this leave be paid if it is to be an effective policy piece by the government. I would like the member's comments on that.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, I want to express support for this bill and address the question of the hon. member. As a result of the bill, the Canada Labour Code would allow for greater flexibility in terms of vacation days, holidays, and bereavement days. This is something that we wanted to do to ensure that the labour code is particular to the times we live in. We want to continue to work with all of our colleagues to look at ways we can help all Canadians with work-life balance. I want to work closely with my colleague and all members of the House going forward.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague hit the nail on the head when he said that we are investing in Canadians and that it is paying off. When he goes door knocking in his riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, what is he hearing about those investments, particularly the Canada child benefit and the other investments we are making in Canadians?

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: Mr. Speaker, I have friends on BBM, where we have a group chat. In our case, the topic was to alert all parents out there that the Canada child benefit would be increasing again in 2019. They were very happy to hear that because they know that the cost of raising their children is increasing and that this will go directly to their families to help them with that and to ensure that they spend more. That spending will go directly to our economy and will continue to boost it.

• (1625)

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-63. We know that when it passes, this very important legislation will continue the government's plan to ensure progress for the Canadian middle class.

We are keeping our promise and delivering on what Canadians want us to do, to build an economy that works for Canadians and their families. A strengthened middle class means that hard-working Canadians and their children will reap the benefits of their work and will be prepared for the economy of tomorrow.

A vital component of that is supporting our small businesses, which are the lifeblood of the Canadian economy. Just last month, the government announced that it intends to lower the small business tax rate to 10%, effective January 1, 2018, and to 9%, effective January 1, 2019. We will make sure that the small business rate is effective in encouraging businesses to grow, buy new equipment, and hire more workers.

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I would now like to focus on the state of our economy and the recent measures in the government's fall economic statement, which is a continuation of the government's plan in its past two budgets and last year's fall statement. The government's plan to invest in people and in our country's future is based on the belief that when we have an economy that works for the middle class, we have a country that works for everyone.

The Canadian economy is the fastest growing in the G7, with an average growth of 3.7% over the last four quarters. This is due in large part to increased consumer confidence, a direct result of programs like the Canada child benefit that put more money in the pockets of moms and dads, so they can pay off debt, buy hockey equipment, or buy healthier food. Everywhere we look, there are signs of progress for the middle class. The economy has created over 450,000 jobs in the last two years, and the unemployment rate has dropped to its lowest level since 2008.

Canadian economic growth has accelerated sharply since the second half of 2016. Over the last four quarters, the Canadian economy has had its fastest rate of growth in more than a decade, and growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, significantly above expectations at the beginning of the year.

These gains, coupled with a better than expected fiscal outcome in 2016-17, have resulted in a really positive improvement in our budget outlook. In fact, Canada's fiscal outlook has improved by over \$6.5 billion annually, on average, compared to what we were expecting in March, and the federal debt to GDP ratio has been placed firmly on a downward track, with Canada's net debt to GDP ratio projected to remain the lowest in the G7.

How did we get here? In the short term, we did what Canadians asked us to do, by making smart investments to grow the economy, and strengthening and growing the middle class. We asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a little more so we could cut taxes for the middle class. We increased the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors. We introduced a new tax-free Canada child benefit, CCB, to replace the previous child benefit system.

The CCB provides greater support to those who need it most: low and middle-income families. Sixty-five per cent of families receiving the maximum CCB amounts are single parents, of whom 90% are single mothers. Nine out of 10 families are receiving more support under the CCB than under the previous system. The CCB has helped lift 300,000 children out of poverty, and by the end of this year, child poverty will have been reduced by 40% from what it was in 2013.

In the fall economic statement, the government proposed strengthening the CCB by making annual cost of living increases starting in July 2018, a full two years ahead of schedule. The government had previously committed to indexing the CCB to inflation starting in 2020, but a growing economy and improved fiscal track means that the government can deliver on this commitment a full two years ahead of schedule.

We are also strengthening the Canada pension plan, reaching an historic agreement with the provinces that will increase the maximum benefit by 50% over time.

However, there is more work to do, and as our plan helps grow the economy, we are investing that growth back in the middle class and

those working hard to join it. For those working hard to join the middle class, such as young single workers just getting a foothold in the workforce, the government proposes to offer even more help by further enhancing the working income tax benefit, or WITB. The WITB is a refundable tax credit that supplements the earnings of low-income workers. It provides important income support and helps ensure that work is rewarded. In the fall economic statement, the government proposed to further enhance the WITB by \$500 million annually, starting in 2019. This enhancement would be in addition to the increase of about \$250 million annually that would come into effect in that year as part of the enhancement to the Canada pension plan.

• (1630)

The enhancement proposed in the fall economic statement will give a needed boost to over 1.5 million low-income workers as they work long hours, sometimes in more than one job, to advance their careers, support themselves, and their families. Whether this extra money is used to help cover the family grocery bill or for work-related expenses, the improved benefit will help low-income working Canadians make ends meet.

The investments we have made in people, in our communities, and in our economy will put more money in the pockets of those who need it most, create more well-paying jobs, and give Canadians greater confidence in their future.

Our budget is a call to action. It calls on each and every one of us to take this moment in history and to make it ours. That is why I would strongly encourage all members of the House to support this legislation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last member quoted Dan Kelly from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. It is amazing that he would quote him, given what the CFIB has said about the government's plan and continuing intentions to attack small business. Indeed, Mr. Kelly stated:

These proposals, while intended to target the wealthy, will hurt middle-class business owners from every sector of the economy. These are shop owners, farmers, doctors, financial planners, homebuilders and trades in all sectors...

As well, Perrin Beatty, the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has said:

In 10 years at the Canadian Chamber, I've never seen an issue that has generated greater concern among our members.

That is quite incredible. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Speaker, before I do, I wonder if you would see whether we have a quorum in the House at the moment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): On that point of order, we do not have a quorum. Please ring the bells.

Government Orders

And the bells having rung:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We now have a quorum.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Mr. Don Rusnak: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quoting articles from when the government first put out its proposals. I have often said that no government in history has put out proposals and asked for consultation as we have with the minister's tax fairness plan.

We have listened to and heard Canadians. We have made changes to the tax plan. The minister has said from the beginning that he did not want any unintended consequences in terms of tax fairness, and I think that is what has been delivered.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on that point.

The government has told me when they do their polling and focus groups, a lot of their supporters love the notion of consultation. They should ask a more specific question about meaningful consultation. If we remember the actual history of the small business tax proposal, it went out for weeks and even passed the deadline, with the minister saying, "We did it the way we intended to do it."

It was only when other controversies began to arise, such as when reporters discovered the French villa that had not been disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner, for which the finance minister has now been fined, and when we found out about his numbered companies and a cloud of concern and suspicion started to grow over his head, that the Liberals suddenly developed some humility about what they had been proposing.

The irony is that the loopholes the finance minister had accused small business of using were not loopholes in a legal sense, but were intended to allow for succession, and the finance minister was employing other ethical loopholes and had arranged his own affairs to avoid taxation by putting his assets in numbered companies and moving them to Alberta. It is an interesting way for him to conduct himself.

My question is this. The Liberals campaigned on a promise to close a stock option loophole that exists. However, it only applies to the 1%, generally speaking, this loophole that allows someone to be paid in stock options and to pay a much lower tax rate. The Liberals campaigned and said they would shrink and close that loophole. When I looked through the 300-plus pages, I do not see that happening. I do not see that promise being kept. I am wondering, if not now, then when? Will it take a little more scandal and controversy to bring the finance minister and the government to fulfill its promise to Canadians?

• (1635)

Mr. Don Rusnak: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, but I disagree with the premise of it.

I went out and spoke to members of the business community in Thunder Bay—Rainy River throughout the consultation period. We received answers from the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, small business groups across the riding, and small businesses in Fort

Francis. We brought that information to the minister and the department to get the right piece of legislation before this House.

I do not know if the member consulted with his business community, but I certainly did in my riding, and I encourage all members to consult with their members across their regions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Essex, Softwood Lumber; the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Public Transportation; the hon. member for Drummond, Official Languages.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be sharing my time this afternoon with my friend from Vancouver East, who I know will bring great illumination.

For my friend from Thunder Bay, before he ducks out, I held consultations with my business community in Smithers and in Terrace and received copious amounts of correspondence on his government's ham-fisted, wrong approach to the small business community. If he hearkens back to where this all generates from, he will remember that the Prime Minister, when campaigning for the job of prime minister, said that there is a large number of small businesses that are only set up to avoid paying taxes. I remember hearing that and thinking how offensive that is. It came to me later on as to why the Prime Minister and perhaps the finance minister might think that. It is because the people they associate with use the small business tax code exactly for that purpose. However, when I think of small businesses that I represent in northwestern British Columbia, I think of actual small businesses that take the risk, go out into the marketplace, and try to make some money to feed their family and employ other Canadians.

I know it is a radical thought for the Liberals that this is actually what a small business does. However, some of our Liberal colleagues who are maybe entitled to a few more entitlements than others think of small businesses in a different way. If we followed from their philosophy, then their small business tax plan made perfect sense until we actually applied it to the real world and saw that their changes would inhibit farmers from passing on their farms, fishermen from passing on their businesses, and forestry companies. All these are small businesses that I represent. Only when pushed into scandal and controversy of their own making, did the humility and the ears start to open up a bit for the Liberals and they said that maybe they did not get this small business tax thing right.

Therefore, let us look through the bill at hand today. There are 330-odd pages of something connected to the budget. It would change 20 different laws in Canada, most of them financially connected. We can say this is an "omnibus light" I suppose, yet within these 330-odd pages there are a bunch of things we do not find.

Government Orders

Let me start with the good stuff because that is a shorter list. With respect to the Canada Labour Code, some new flexibility has been brought in for people to take leave to allow workers to make adjustments in their personal life. In a modern economy in 2017, this is welcome. There is also some small support for a geothermal industry. As we know, and as my colleague from Vancouver East knows, there is the whole Site C controversy. We know that when governments make bad energy policies, other good energy options are suddenly forgotten. A bit more geothermal industry in Canada and British Columbia would be welcome.

Let us move to what the majority of this bill would and would not do. In the context of where we are in the Canadian economy, we saw the surprise shrinkage in the last quarterly report of 0.1% of GDP down. That kind of took everyone a bit by surprise. The Liberals are going to have to update some of their talking notes about the robust economy. What is that economy founded on right now? We see Canadians carrying around still the highest personal debt rate of any G7 country, at 167% of disposable income. That is enormous. That is worse than it was in the U.S. at the 2008 financial crisis, just to have some context of where the Canadian personal debt load is harbouring right now. We do not see anything in this bill that would address that.

We also see the exorbitant use of offshore tax havens. The Liberals will get up again and again and say they are going to go after those tax havens and that they have hired more CRA auditors to go after them. The problem with their logic, that they know is a problem, is that the CRA auditors are going after small businesses and individuals because the tax havens, the ones that the Liberals have since signed on, are legal. They allow Canadians to legally offshore if they can afford it. If they are in the top per cent of a per cent, they can pay the lawyers and they can pay the fancy accountants to move their wealth off to a place like the Cook Islands. Therefore, it is kind of strange that the Liberals would sign a new tax haven treaty with a place like the Cook Islands. I do not know about other colleagues in the House, but the small businesses and the middle class and those working hard to join it, people whom I represent, are not able or interested in offshoring their wealth to the Cook Islands. Maybe it is friends of the finance minister who do this kind of thing, or maybe the Prime Minister himself. I am not sure, because we do not know a lot of what they hold, which is again the context of where we are in talking about all of this today.

We also see the stock option loophole. I had a small business before I entered politics and when I contracted out I did not pay people in stock options. When I talk to my middle-class friends and those working hard to join the middle class, I am told that they are not paid in stock options because it is not a normal procedure. In the last election, we New Democrats had actually said that it costs the treasury every year about \$800 million, give or take, according to Statistics Canada and Finance Canada numbers. That is \$800 million of forgone tax revenue.

• (1640)

We said that does not really generate anything for the Canadian economy. I know it generates more Ferrari sales. It might get a person another villa in France. However, it does not actually do anything for the working people of this country. Maybe we should close those loopholes.

Who agreed with the NDP on this? The Liberals agreed with us. Imagine that; they just cuddled right up to that policy on the left and said to Canadians, “Yes, us too”. We probably should have known better. When we appoint a finance minister like this one, the idea that he would ever do anything to hurt any of his friends at the country club should have been obvious to everybody.

The stock option loophole remains. It is going to cost us another \$800 million this year, and next year, as it did last year. People want to know: what benefit does that get us, how many more kids does that help out of poverty, and how many more seniors does that help? Does it help on innovation? No, it does not, because there is a way to close that loophole that allows the true innovators in the tech sector or pharmaceuticals to start new companies off in a proper way, using stock options, not the Bay Street crowd, who just do not need that third villa or that fifth Maserati.

The question to the government is whether it actually believes anything it campaigned on. We are two years in. We are at the midway point. We see what it did to electoral reform. It was the thinnest of veils. When it came down to the point of actually delivering, the Prime Minister said something that hits the arrogance metre at a new level. He said that it was his decision to make, and he chose to make it. That is fascinating. That is a new structure of government that I am not used to, where people elect an individual member of Parliament, that party goes on to form a government, and suddenly the prime minister is bequeathed with all this power, so that he gets to make the electoral decisions he wants. We see that around poverty and other issues.

Let me return to this not-omnibus, near-omnibus bill, and it was the finance minister who sponsored this bill. We have asked him, time and again, to tell us something simple, in order to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest—which is the Prime Minister's standard, by the way: not just not being in a conflict of interest but not giving the appearance of being in a conflict of interest.

We know the finance minister has at least five numbered companies. For Canadians who do not have numbered companies, which is most Canadians, a numbered company allows members to avoid things like with the Ethics Commissioner. Members can have shares that they control—which they would not be allowed to do if it was in their name—in a numbered company, and as soon as it is moved into a numbered company, they can keep control of those shares that are now in a numbered company and beyond the touch of the Ethics Commissioner.

That is fascinating. The finance minister owns other numbered companies. He has two options when he will not tell us what is in them. One of the options is something the minister does not think he needs to do. The Prime Minister said ministers' personal affairs should bear the fullest public scrutiny. That means the public should know what is going on with the personal affairs, the financial affairs of everybody in cabinet. That is broken.

Government Orders

The second option is, with those numbered companies, if the finance minister actually followed through on that commitment that he made too, we would find out that there are other conflicts of interest. We saw this with the whole charade around Bill C-27. We saw this when we offered up a vote to the Liberals. Everyone can remember this; it was just recently. We asked for two simple things. We said that we thought an apology is owed from the finance minister for this entire ethical mess of his own making. We also said we should close those ethical loopholes that have been exploited.

What did the Liberals in good standing do? One after another, they all stood and said no. Canadians are a forgiving people in my experience. If people screw up and it was unintended and they say, “Sorry about that, I didn't mean to do that; here's my apology and here's how I'm going to make good”, most Canadians I know would respect that. That is about being a person of integrity, or a party of an integrity.

What we see from the party, from information, to access to information, and on down the line, is a government that does not believe in its own commitments that it made.

I know our friend from Winnipeg North will be tempted to jump up and say, “Oh, we're such a wonderful government.” However, he has to bear in mind that the promises he made to Canadians, the promises the Prime Minister made, in offering so much hope and change, are starting to look a bit weak, as day after day goes on and promise after promise falls off the attention, and the Liberals' latest argument is that it is better than Stephen Harper's government. I wonder how that pitch would have actually worked. The best argument the Liberals use, to be precise, is that Stephen Harper did it too.

If the Prime Minister had gotten up said this was his commitment to them, that he would do more or less what Stephen Harper did, when all those Liberals voters went out to vote, I am not sure the Liberals would be sitting where they are right now. That is the way elections go.

• (1645)

Having to get parties to actually keep their promises is the job that we are doing now, and on the bill before us, the Liberals missed an opportunity to get it right.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is so much I would love to say in response to the member's speech.

To start off, NDP members like to say that they take this high road in politics. I was in third-party status when we had to bring the NDP kicking and screaming into proactive disclosure. Nothing has happened with the Minister of Finance or any other minister, and I would suggest any member of this House, in regard to violations against the code of ethics. At the end of the day, the Minister of Finance has been very clear.

As we are focusing on Canadians and real life in Canada, and the member challenges what I would say, I would tell the residents of Winnipeg North that we are giving child benefits, giving guaranteed income supplement increases, taking children and seniors out of poverty, giving middle-class tax breaks, and having a tax on

Canada's wealthiest. Also, we have had historic negotiations on the environment and on the Canada pension plan. This government has done more in two years than the former government did in 10 years, and every time we do something, the NDP members are consistent in saying no and voting no.

My question is this. Why does the member not stand up for the constituents he represents and vote yes when there are good initiatives coming from the government?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, if the member will let me know when those good initiatives show up, I will be there.

My friend from Winnipeg is good at spouting the talking points. However, here is one the Liberals did not talk about: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is buried in here.

When a government has pride about something, is really excited about something, and wants Canadians to know about it, then it lets it stand alone in its shining glory. When it is not so proud of something, it bumps up this Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank from \$256 million to \$480 million—of borrowed money by the way, because the Liberals are running \$20-billion deficits to do this. However, they plop this into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which does not even have similar safeguards to those the World Bank uses when it comes to human rights; when it comes to the environment, as my friend just mentioned; or when it comes to anything remotely close to being accountable to the Canadian people who are footing the bill for the whole exercise.

The member wants to talk about accountability and transparency and his love for his government's initiatives. I know this does not exist in the talking points, but how about he actually start walking the talk? That would be a good start.

• (1650)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found it quite shocking what was just said in the House by one of the members from the Liberal Party on this issue around how the Minister of Finance has not been seen to have done anything wrong. Maybe the member can confirm for me because I may have read the news wrong, but last I checked, the Minister of Finance was actually fined. He was seen as doing something wrong by the Ethics Commissioner, and he should be paying the price for that. However, maybe I got the message wrong.

On the point the member was making with regard to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, I share his concerns. This is a government, on the other side of the House, that has made these pronouncements about investment in infrastructure in Canada. Last I checked, China is not a province. Last I checked, China is not part of our sovereign nation. Could the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley comment on that, and how, I am sure, he agrees with me that we should be investing in infrastructure in Canada and not abroad?

Government Orders

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister's plan is the opposite, which is to make Canada a province of China. If we look at the way the Liberals have gone through reviews of state-controlled companies from China buying up technology and aerospace firms, and firms that work alongside the military, we see it has been the Americans who have been raising far more concerns, even in the pick-up of a concrete and construction company that China is looking to buy right now. When I say China is looking to buy, I mean the Government of China. However, it is the Americans who are saying that, if we allow that sale to go ahead, they have concerns with the company and it will not be allowed to operate in the United States anymore, but go ahead and let the purchase go forward.

As for the finance minister, he has been fined. The Liberals stand up day after day and say that the finance minister has done everything right, and in fact, he has gone beyond. Why did he go beyond? It is because he got caught. What type of integrity is that when one does the right thing after being caught?

I have seven-year-old kids, and we talk about this kind of stuff. We try to guide them along the way to do the right thing out of the gate, so then they will not have to pay a fine, admit all these things, and start to suddenly make new-found charitable donations after realizing there is an investigation into their ethical behaviour.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-63. Budgets and budget implementation bills really tell us a lot. They tell us where a government's priorities lie, the political will of the government, so to speak, and how it will tackle the major issues that communities are faced with today. There are a few priorities and initiatives in this budget implementation bill that are welcome, but when we talk about a 329-page document containing 20 pieces of legislation embedded in this giant bill, a few are simply not enough.

New Democrats have been very clear about what we had hoped to see in this budget implementation bill. We wanted measures that make substantial strides in making our country greener and more equitable, measures that would make significant improvements in workplaces so that Canadians could have a better quality of life and seniors entering retirement would not see their savings ripped out from under them, such as what the government is doing in Bill C-27. We wanted an expansion of our health care system. There are a lot of seniors in my community who say they cannot afford their medications. There are a lot of people in my constituency who say they want dental care to be part of our pharmacare system. None of that is in this 329-page budget implementation bill.

The government is so good at saying there is a new nation-to-nation relationship and it wants to do right by the indigenous community. What do we not see? We do not see real action to address historic systemic discrimination against indigenous peoples in this budget implementation bill. We do not see any actions there. The government, despite all of its lofty rhetoric, fancy Facebook posts, tweets, social media, and so on, has failed once again, in my view, to adequately prioritize these important areas for Canadians.

This can be seen not just in Bill C-63, as I mentioned. We can also see what the government is trying to do in Bill C-27 and other tax measures. I will get into that a little. The government suggests that it

is making the tax system more fair for Canadians, and yet its consultations—on the small business tax changes, the provisions in Bill C-27, which go after seniors' pensions, and the lack of action in Bill C-63 to address the real issues of the day—show otherwise.

Over the last 30 years, workers have helped our economy grow by some 50%, and yet salaries are stagnating and retirements are becoming less secure. Now the inequality gap in Canada between the richest and the majority of Canadians is growing faster and wider than in other developed nations. The richest 100 Canadians now have the same wealth as 10 million less fortunate Canadians combined. Canada's top 100 CEOs now make 193 times more than someone earning an average wage, and these CEOs had already out-earned the average Canadian's annual wage by 11:50 a.m. on January 3 of this year.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, Canada loses at least \$8 billion a year through tax evasion and avoidance by the richest and largest corporations; 91% of this lost revenue goes back to the top 10% of income earners; and 50% of that goes to the top 1%.

• (1655)

New Democrats have been clear that regressive tax measures, such as the CEO stock option loophole, which costs the treasury an estimated \$800 million per year, need to be closed. By the way, the Liberals promised that during the campaign. They said they were going to close the stock option loophole. What happened after the election? It was not on the agenda anymore.

The Liberals continue to fail to deliver with Bill C-63. The increasing use of tax havens to avoid taxes costs the treasury an estimated \$7 billion per year. The NDP has called for action. The Liberals have yet again failed to deliver in Bill C-63 so that we can direct that \$7 billion into much-needed support for Canadians in each of our ridings. The Liberals refuse to do that, and they justify it every day in the House with their talking points, pretending that they are doing right by Canadians.

We saw during the consultations that they floated ideas that do not address the main issues of the day, the things they promised during the campaign. Instead, they chose to target the small business community.

If that was not enough, the government then attempted to target low-earning retail workers, many of whom are minimum wage earners who are just trying to survive in an era when housing costs are increasing and they cannot afford to put food on the table. That is the government's priority.

Government Orders

I think the government did that so it could cast a shadow over the real agenda. They did it so that their friends on Bay Street would not have to be faced with the tax measures they promised they would bring in after they formed government. They did it so they could protect their friends and the well-to-do. As it happens, the Minister of Finance is among them, as we see in the ethical scandal he is mired in right now. Every day we learn more, although sometimes less, because he is working so hard to hide all that information. We are learning, though, that the finance minister is making a decision on Bill C-27, on pension benefits, so that he can, it turns out, benefit himself and his family with the shares he holds in the company.

We also learned that the finance minister is using numbered companies to avoid paying taxes. Is it any wonder the government has turned a blind eye to the priority of tackling where the low-hanging fruit is in terms of redirecting those monies to the treasury?

I do not see measures in Bill C-63 that many of the people in Vancouver East would like to see, and that I would venture to say many Canadians would like to see. Young parents and working mothers, who are often impacted the most, need better access to affordable, high-quality child care, yet we do not see any provisions in the bill for a national child care program. It would be an enormous benefit for women who need child care. It would benefit not only their family units and the children in terms of early childhood development but would benefit our overall economy. The government has failed to deliver on that.

I fail to see in this legislation anything to do with safe, secure, and affordable housing, which a lot of people are struggling with. The government talks a good talk about delivering a national affordable housing program, but where is that in Bill C-63?

Let me close with what Dr. Cindy Blackstock said:

There's nothing new in the budget for First Nations children and their families, in child welfare, or their implementation of the Jordan's Principle, even though they've been found out of compliance with legal orders to stop that inequality. It's a moral issue: is Canada so broke that the finance minister and the Prime Minister have made a deliberate choice to discriminate against little kids?

Bill C-63 misses the mark.

● (1700)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier in this debate, the member for Oshawa talked about financial literacy. Unfortunately, he is regrettably confusing the situation of an individual with that of a country, which is more akin to a business. When one is confident in one's business or one's country, it can be wise to borrow so as to invest in needed infrastructure and to invest in Canadians. I am sure that he was not suggesting that Christine Lagarde, of the IMF, or the World Bank are financially illiterate when they say that Canada's approach is one that should be emulated around the world and should go viral.

In the interest of financial literacy, I would like to know the member's plan. When the New Democrats pushed for a progressive agenda back in 2015, under an austerity bound Conservative budget, how would they have achieved that progressive agenda? We are pushing that forward with the approach we have taken, which is working for the Canadian economy and for a more prosperous and inclusive economy.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, Liberal members need to review what they promised during the campaign and the things they are failing to deliver on. It is now two years into the election cycle, and the list of broken promises the Liberals have brought forward is astounding.

On tax measures, the government likes to say that it wants to bring in measures to benefit the middle class and those working hard to join it. How about working hard to deliver for Canadians and less for those who are French villa owners, because that is what the government is doing.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard over and over again, and even through question period today, the government's response to our questions about misbehaviour on that side of the House. The response has been to trumpet the child benefits they have given to Canadians and how wonderful they are. They have even given us numbers, for each riding, as to how much each family has grown in income, with \$500, \$600, and \$700 of income. This has been said over and over again for the past two years. I think it is the only thing they think they have actually accomplished, yet at the same time, we have been told that every family in Canada is now paying \$800 more a year in taxes. That is not even including a lot of other things that are coming into play on the tax front.

How do you see their record as far as actually enabling Canadians to have more money to spend versus their fear that the taxman is coming to take it all away?

● (1705)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind the hon. members to pose their questions through the Speaker. It makes it a lot easier.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I come from Vancouver East. We are not a particularly rich riding. In fact, we are one of the lowest-income ridings in the country. What my constituents consistently have said is that they want a government that will support them by providing the necessary services they depend on. For example, the seniors who are trying to go into retirement were not expecting the government to bring in a bill, Bill C-27, that would actually rip the pension they have earned right from under them so that companies, like the one the Minister of Finance has a personal interest in, would benefit.

My constituents have said that they want to see a national child care program so they can afford to go to work and support their families and their children can get the best support in early childhood development in those early years. We do not see that.

Government Orders

Housing affordability is a major issue in my community. It was the Liberal government back in 1993 that cancelled the national affordable housing program. As a result, our country lost more than half a million units of affordable housing. The Liberals campaigned on bringing back a national affordable housing program. It is now two years in. They say to wait for it, that it is coming. Why is it not here now? Do the people who are homeless today not deserve housing? Why is the government making them wait if it is really going to bring back a national affordable housing program?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here this afternoon with other passionate speakers we have heard from today on Bill C-63. I would like to present my humble view on Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, 2017, no. 2, which is the second and final piece of legislation to implement budget 2017.

Budget 2017, much like budget 2016, is built on a number of transformational measures our government has put in place that are benefiting Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Our government's commitment to the middle class and those working hard to join it is unwavering. Budget 2017 is delivering results in my riding, my dynamic and beautiful riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge, and across Canada.

We see the results of our plan with an economy that is growing at rate of over 3%. More importantly, approximately 450,000 Canadians now have jobs, most of them full time, and they are now able to provide a better future for their families.

[*Translation*]

In my riding, Vaughan—Woodbridge, we are seeing the impact the Canada child benefit is having.

[*English*]

In just a one-month period, families in my riding received a total of 9,140 payments that benefited 16,110 children, with an average payment of \$470, and a total payout of \$4.3 million. That is change. That is hope and hard work. That is keeping a commitment. On an annual basis, that is nearly \$52 million going to families in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. Those are monies that are going directly to help families pay for educational expenses, clothing for their children, and children's sports activities.

In fact, I am proud to say that the Governor of the Bank of Canada commented this week at the Standing Committee on Finance that the Canada child benefit provided a boost to the Canadian economy, a boost to the gross domestic product, of 0.5%. That is something to be applauded.

Our government believes that better is always possible, and I am proud to say that we have now committed to indexing the Canada child benefit, the CCB, a full two years early. Due to a strong economy, the fastest growth rate in the G7, and prudent financial management by our Minister of Finance, the member of Parliament for Toronto Centre, starting in July 2018, families will see their CCB indexed. This measure alone will provide Canadian families with an additional \$5.6 billion to support them over the 2018-19 to 2022-23 period. For example, a single parent of two children, making \$35,000 a year, will receive \$560 more next year. It is tax-free,

monthly, very simple, and very effective. They can use this money for books, skating lessons, or as winter approaches, warm clothes.

Governing is about helping families, and I am proud to state that the CCB has lifted approximately, looking at the data from 2013 to now, 300,000 children out of poverty in our country. Again, that is something to be applauded, and I would hope my colleagues on the other side would applaud that and vote for that.

When we speak about growing the economy and increasing the potential growth rate of the economy to improve the standard of living for all Canadians, the focus must be through the lens of innovation. Innovation is something that was absent in this House of Commons for the last 10 years. We need a focus on innovation and on helping companies in Canada innovate, grow, commercialize, and yes, earn money for their shareholders and do well.

Our government is delivering on this agenda. In the past few weeks, the minister of innovation announced the superclusters agenda, something that has been applauded by individuals and stakeholders from coast to coast to coast. It is something I am very proud to support, because it is the right thing to do to increase the capacity of this economy and to get Canadians working in good, high-paying jobs.

In the budget implementation legislation we have before us, we will include this innovation through further investments through the business development corporation. It will include \$600 million in new financing for clean technology firms and \$400 million that will be put in place for the venture capital catalyst initiative.

• (1710)

When we are thinking about clean technology and venture capital, we are thinking about incubators. We are thinking about people taking risks. We need to be there, partnering with these individuals.

When I think of clean technology, and I see what is happening globally with the amount of renewable energy being put in place to run facilities, whether it is a hospital or a school, Canada needs to be at the forefront. Even today, the Prime Minister was in Toronto with representatives from Alphabet, looking at how technology was transforming the world. We are partnering with these entities.

If we look at our skills training and immigration programs, we want the best and the brightest to come to Canada. We want to harness that human capital. Clean technology is about that. That is where we are going. If I could use a hockey analogy, that is where the puck is going. I was glad to play ice hockey for 20 years of my life, and, to me, that is where we need to be going.

Again, this financing will be put in place with the Business Development Bank, with an increased capital contribution of \$1.5 billion to \$4.5 billion.

Our government believes in tax fairness. During consultations with small business owners, manufacturers, and professionals, including my own extensive consultations with leading tax experts, we found that tax fairness, done right, both strengthens our economy and our middle class. That is what we will do, and what we are doing.

Government Orders

On this front, Bill C-63 phases out billed-basis accounting practices for designated professionals, but for the law profession, I want to note that we are protecting legal services provided through legal aid or on a pro bono basis, as well as measures are put in place for contingency fee arrangements. In addition, we will give professionals a five-year period to adjust to the new rules. This is both fair and right. This has been done after extensive consultations with these designated professionals.

I have the privilege of representing a riding that contains thousands of private businesses. In fact, the city of Vaughan, which I have the pleasure of representing, along with the member for Thornhill and the member for King—Vaughan, contains nearly 13,000 private businesses. It is one of the most entrepreneurial cities in Canada. I am proud to state that in 45 days from now, people will be able to take the subway, arriving in the city of Vaughan from the city of Toronto. Those decisions were made in prior years. We are executing them and we are quite happy. I would like to invite members of Parliament in the GTA to visit the riding, take the subway, and come visit our great bakeries, restaurants, and tourist attractions.

I am proud to be part of a government that invests in small businesses and that will lower their taxes from 11% in 2015 to 9% in 2019. Promise made; promise kept. It was in our platform, and we have fulfilled that commitment. Businesses will receive up to \$7,500 of tax savings. They can choose to invest that in human resources, human capital, or capital equipment, return it to their shareholders, or invest to grow their business. That is what is growing our economy. That is what it means to deliver on our campaign commitments.

As a trained economist, someone who worked on Bay Street, someone who worked on Wall Street, but, more important, someone who grew up on Main Street, in very humble surroundings, I understand that businesses are the main drivers of economic growth and job creation. Our government is committed to ensuring that businesses, whether it is the local bakery, the manufacturer, or the tech startup, operate in an environment that allows them to be successful. More important, as a competitive individual, it will allow them to win and compete globally and take a market share.

Canada is considered an open economy, dependent on trade and global investment. We need to strengthen our bilateral and multi-lateral relations with our trading partners in other countries throughout the world. We succeed as a country, as a nation and its people, only when we have the foresight to make those policy choices that focus on measures to grow the economy for the long term, not short-sighted policies like augmenting the long-form census, like the prior government did. We need to make decisions based on evidence, based on what works and what does not work. We can only know that with good data. Thankfully, our government put the long-form census in place again.

Trade and investment has literally lifted hundreds of millions of people on this globe out of poverty. In Canada, it has improved the standard of living for millions of Canadians.

• (1715)

As part of Canada's commitment to its global partners, we will now move forward as the first North American member of the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank. I am proud of this. There are currently 57 founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, including Australia, China, France, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and the United Kingdom. I challenge the members on the opposite side, because I have heard some of the questioning on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, why we should not be a partner with it, why we should not be at the table there. The Germans are there, the Brits are there, the Italians are there, the French are there, the Australians are there. Why should Canada not be there as well? I have heard that question. I was very disappointed in the other side.

This represents a long-term economic opportunity for Canada and Canadian companies to explore new commercial opportunities. We know that jobs connected to trade on average pay higher and provide better benefits to Canadians. We see that through our ports, whether someone is a longshore person, whether it is in the Port of Halifax, the Port of Montreal, the Port of Vancouver, the Port of Prince Rupert. I am proud that in September we had the preliminary application of the comprehensive European free trade agreement and that our government continues with its global partners. We must do so.

[*Translation*]

It is clear that the government's investments in people, our communities, and our economy are working.

[*English*]

We have the fastest-growing economy in the G7 and that is something we should be proud of. We are reinvesting the benefits of that growth back into the people who contribute most to that success.

Our economy is growing faster than it has in a decade, growing 40% faster than the United States or Germany. We all know that as a country we must always assist those who need a hand on occasion and are working hard to join the middle class. Yes, we talk about the middle class, but what does it really mean? What does it really mean to put in place policies to assist them? There are the Canada child benefit, cutting taxes for nine million Canadians and providing over \$20 billion of tax relief over a five-year period, and increasing student loans for low- and middle-income Canadians. I can go on and on.

Government Orders

As a nomination candidate, I argued for an increase in the working income tax benefit, and I was very proud to say that our government will move forward with an enhanced working income tax benefit. This benefit is a refundable tax credit that would support low-income workers and provide important financial support to low-income Canadians to improve their financial outcome when working. This is important. A work income tax benefit encourages the labour force participation rate to rise. It was first introduced in a Liberal government under former prime minister Paul Martin, and augmented by the other side but the idea came from us.

In 2015, there were 1.4 million Canadians who benefited from the working income tax benefit, and our investment of an additional \$500 million in this expansion is an investment that is, for me as a sort of policy wonk and an economist, something I fully support. This is something that is moving people off welfare to work, encouraging people to join the labour force. It is something very important, that is transformational. It gives people who may be in a precarious job situation, part-time workers, and those earning \$16 or \$17 an hour a bit more cash at the end of the year, some money for them to put more food on the table and pay for school supplies for their kids. That is what our government, which I am proud to be a part of, is fighting for every day. That is what I fight for in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge. I know my riding is blessed with many entrepreneurs and we are doing phenomenally well with a number of investments from all three levels of government. At the same time, any government should only be judged by how it treats those who are less fortunate, those who need a bit of assistance.

There are many items in Bill C-63, and one of them is to include legislation on flexible work arrangements for federally regulated entities. That speaks to the changing nature of work and the changing nature of responsibilities that families have, whether that is for bereavement leave, for when someone gets sick, or a family member having to augment his or her work-life balance. It is something that we recognize and that is contained in Bill C-63. We all should be proud of it. I hope other employers, even in the private sector, where possible, could put it into effect.

● (1720)

In Bill C-63 we have also introduced changes to the tax code that will ensure that the sale of principal residences by all Canadians remains unchanged, but at the same time that there are no concerns raised by the sales of residences in Canada by non-residents in particular, so that our Canadian housing market will remain strong and stable. We have ensured improved tax fairness for homeowners, something I am very proud of.

In Bill C-63, we have made changes to the Bank of Canada Act, specifying that the bank may make loans or advances to members of the Canadian Payments Association. We clarified some rules regarding CDIC, specifying that the Bank of Canada and CDIC are exempt from stays, where obligations are secured by real property or immovables.

Budget 2017 is the next step in our government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow the economy, and provide more opportunities for the middle class and those working hard to join it. If we look at the foundations we have put in place, Bill C-63 continues the investments we need to make in our

economy for Canadians. Whether it was increasing the guaranteed income supplement by nearly \$900 million so that over one million single seniors are better off today than they were in the beginning of 2015, our government was there. Whether it was listening to the provinces and hammering out an agreement on an enhanced Canada pension plan, we were there and got it done. Whether it was listening to auto manufacturers' concerns and changing their program through the auto innovation fund to remove the strings attached to as to whether the terms of the funding provided is a grant or a repayable loan, we were there, because we know that we need to be at the table in today's economy. Whether it was our skills agenda, we made the strategic investments that we needed to make. Whether it was ensuring that low and middle-income Canadians have access to Canada student grants or assistance so that they can get the education they need for better jobs, we were there.

I am also proud of the Minister of Immigration who yesterday tabled the government's increased immigration levels. I do not really want to use the word "immigrant", because my parents were immigrants. I look at them as newcomers, newcomers whose hopes and dreams are being fulfilled in Canada on a daily basis.

We know the demographic challenges that we face here in Canada. We understand them quite well. We know the retiree-to-worker ratio and understand that we face demographic headwinds. The only way to solve these challenges it is to bring newcomers to Canada. Canadians from coast to coast to coast are accepting, diverse, inclusive, and tolerant. They will welcome these folks and build an even stronger country.

I was very proud to rise today to talk about a number of measures contained in Bill C-63, which builds on budgets 2016 and 2017. Our government has laid out a road map with the measures in Bill C-63 and has continued to grow our economy, with an unemployment rate now at the 6% level, something we have not seen in many years, with full-time jobs and the labour force participation rate ticking up. Even the governor of the Bank of Canada commented that our labour force productivity over the last two years has increased to levels not seen in over 10 years.

Private Members' Business

As an economist and someone who is fiscally responsible, I know that the government has done everything with an eye to maintaining Canada's AAA credit rating and a strong fiscal foundation. Our fall economic update shows that we have been able to lower the debt to GDP ratio, the anchor I look at, which will be trending below 30%. It is something that we can all be proud of. It is something that we need to keep our eye on as a government to measure how our investments are doing in growing the economy at over 3%, a rate that has not been seen in a number of years, and creating full-time jobs, over 15,000 a month, and ensuring that we make key investments in the industries where we know that growth is happening and where our innovation strategy is taking hold.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, allow me to say that the hon. member used the Liberals classic talking point, “the middle class and those working hard to join it”.

I say this facetiously, but in Canada there are people who are bilingual and those working hard to join them. The hon. member is one of those and I commend him on his efforts to learn French.

[*English*]

The member addressed an issue with which I totally disagree, and he forget a few very important elements. He talked about the fact that families had more money in their pockets. However, he forgot to say that this money was not available now. We are borrowing this money from our children, because the government is creating a deficit. Our government gave many tax credits to help families with sports activities, artistic activities, student loans, and all of that, but the Liberal government cancelled those.

The member also raised the issue of Paul Martin as the one who killed the deficit in the 1990s. He was a great prime minister, but unfortunately the current Prime Minister is recreating the deficit, and that is wrong.

The member also talked about the 1% who paid more taxes. That is not true. The finance department concluded in a report a few weeks ago that the 1% paid \$1 billion less.

Speaking of millionaires, could he identify a Canadian millionaire who hired two nannies and sent the bill to the Canadian taxpayers?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the beautiful province of Quebec for his question.

[*English*]

The results of our plan speak for themselves. Whether it is on the job front, the unemployment rate, or wage gains that Canadians are making, the evidence is clear. Two years in, we have created 450,000 new jobs. We have just indexed the CPP, which is a transformational measure to help Canadian families and reduce poverty. We will continue working on that front.

We will continue working with Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We will continue consulting and working with all our stakeholders to ensure we get things right. We are listening to everyone. Our economy is going the right way. The country is doing

great. We will continue to do the good work that Canadians expect us to do.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge will have seven minutes and 35 seconds coming to him in questions when we take up this bill again.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FEDERALLY FUNDED HEALTH RESEARCH

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to support the private member's motion that is being brought forward by my friend, colleague, and neighbour down the way on federally funded health research.

This study will be focusing on lowering drug costs, but also looking at increasing access to medicines in Canada and around the world. Like my hon. colleague, I too have noticed that there is a knowledge transfer problem in Canada. In the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Economic Development, we have heard similar testimony to what he is presenting on the problems around intellectual property.

The issue currently before us in the House is a symptom of a much larger problem. I support this study, because it is the first step to addressing a problem, which is admitting that there is a problem, and this problem may affect the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

Intellectual property is relied on more and more to protect the fruits of service economies such as ours. However, a cumbersome and outdated IP regime can in fact make it even more difficult to protect intellectual property, and worse, it can stand in the way of life-saving medical services.

Perhaps the most worrying example of this problem is in regards to the recent Ebola epidemic in Africa. As the member for Kitchener Centre has mentioned in his speech, Canada played a large role in developing a vaccine, yet due to an intellectual property dispute with an American company that purchased the commercialization licence from the government, the vaccine sat in laboratories for months when it could have been saving lives. This is why the study is so important. It is about more than knowledge transfer. This study is about saving lives.

Private Members' Business

We all want to see each investment the government makes reach its fullest potential, especially when it applies to investments within health sciences and research, but it is particularly a tragedy when taxpayer-funded medical research sits on the shelf unused when, in fact, this IP should be flying off the shelves. Not only should this research be available to Canada, but as the motion states, it should be accessible around the world.

The health sciences program at the University of Guelph is an increasing draw for students from across Canada and around the world. Many people do not think of Guelph as a centre for health research, but when we put it in the context of health of animals and vaccines that protect animals from diseases, it starts making sense. Guelph has done this for over 190 years.

Many of these students, both graduate and undergraduate, who are studying at the University of Guelph are working at the Centre for Cardiovascular Investigations to learn about the human heart. They start with looking at hearts of smaller animals and then they apply their studies to the human heart. The CCVI was developed to find innovative ways to fight heart disease. It received funding through grants from numerous sources, which include the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and other sponsors that are essential to support the great work of the professors and students working in this area.

To name just a few examples of the incredible medical research going on at the University of Guelph, Jeremy Simpson's work is studying heart failure symptoms that apply to women differently than men. I recently visited his lab, and I had presentations from his researchers on what they are doing around heart diseases. They are looking at the gender-based differences between heart disease in women and men, and are helping women survive heart conditions that up until now were thought to be the same as heart conditions found in men.

Dr. Petrik's lab is focusing on developing novel therapeutics for the treatment of late-stage ovarian cancer. For women who have ovarian cancer, it is very difficult to detect, but the research he is doing is actually almost at the breakthrough point. He is collaborating with researchers in the United States and around the world, and we are hoping for his breakthrough soon so that we can end this terrible disease that affects so many women in Canada.

Professor Glen Pyle's laboratory uses molecular research to treat heart failure.

I could go on and on. There are a lot of examples of the type of research that could significantly increase benefits to the public. This is all to say that the brilliant research being conducted in my constituency of Guelph and across Canada must benefit Canadians but also help people around the world.

● (1735)

It would truly be a tragedy if any one of these research projects were to run aground because of difficulties on IP regime, or funding, or other barriers to access to market.

It is our responsibility to address this problem. Whether the cause is a lack of awareness about IP, which is often the case, or bureaucratic licensing disputes, no medical breakthrough should sit

idle in a lab when it could be saving or improving lives. This serious problem is at the centre of the hon. member's motion and should, if approved by the House, be a central issue for the health committee to study.

I am proud to say that our government has already shown leadership on this issue. Canada recently became the 20th country to accede to the Marrakesh Treaty, allowing the treaty to come into force. The treaty aims to bring the global community together to better address growing demand for published materials for those with print disabilities.

With proper funding and protection, Canadian intellectual property could contribute so much more to the world. Canada has a proud tradition of leadership in the field of medicine. From doctors Banting and Best, who developed life-saving insulin to treat diabetes, to Dr. William Penfield, who developed a surgical method for treating epilepsy, known as the Montreal procedure, Canadians can be proud of their work.

If Canada is to carry on in this great tradition and remain on the cutting edge of medical advancement, we must revisit Canada's intellectual property regime. We in the House owe it to Canadians and the world to make sure life-saving medical advancements are available to those in need.

I would like to express for my colleagues, constituents, and stakeholders that the motion is not about assigning blame or fault. The motion is about making the most of Canadian ingenuity and innovation in the field of medical research. We cannot accomplish this goal by pointing fingers. We can accomplish this goal if we harness the unique strengths of businesses, governments, universities, and colleges. Each has a role to play and each has strengths to contribute. It is my sincere hope that the health committee study initiated by the motion will bring together all these stakeholders and suggest some solutions to this growing problem. We are looking for a new strategy to streamline Canadian medical IP.

I would like to again thank the member for Kitchener Centre for putting forward this important motion for debate. His experience as a pharmacist and the work he has done in helping the people of Kitchener Centre will now continue on, to looking at broadening the scope to all of Canada, in fact, looking to help the world.

Canadians are rightly proud of their health care system, which itself depends upon research and discovery. I implore all my colleagues in the House to support this important motion so the legacy of Canadian medical innovation and advancements can benefit Canadians and the rest of the world. I am very pleased to present my support for the member for Kitchener Centre.

Private Members' Business

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of Motion No. 132, brought forward by the member for Kitchener Centre. As the shadow minister for health and as the vice chair for the Standing Committee on Health, I believe that a study on ways to optimize health research funding and lower the costs of prescription medications would be both timely and insightful.

The motion calls on the Standing Committee on Health to study better ways of increasing public benefits from federally funded health research, with the goals of lowering drug costs and increasing access to medications both in Canada and across the globe. I fully support the motion.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

I believe that Canada's health researchers are among the best in the world and that Canada is internationally renowned as a leader in health innovation, research, and development. Making sure that federal research funding is being used as efficiently as possible just makes sense. In a similar vein, I believe all Canadians should have affordable access to the prescription medication they need, and I am very eager to do research on the subject.

[*English*]

Canada is recognized across the globe as a world leader in health research with very strong capabilities in the field of vaccines. Canadian researchers are responsible for breakthroughs in the fields of cancer, HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, polio, multiple sclerosis, and diabetes research. The list goes on.

These discoveries have saved lives and continue to do so today. This week, a major international research collaboration discovered 72 new genetic markers that contribute to the risk of developing breast cancer. This international group included many Canadians. This discovery more than doubled the number of known genetic markers for the disease. We have some of the best research institutes in the world and Canadian innovations continue to move at a rapid rate.

I agree with the intent of this bill, and I would like to thank the member for bringing it forward at this time. A well-rounded study on this issue would be valuable to parliamentarians and all Canadians. It could lead to increased efficiency in how medical research funding is used.

There is always room for further innovation. I believe Canada can continue to be a leader. Strong, well-placed research funding can go a very long way to foster innovation and results.

Furthermore, we need to assure that the findings of this research will be made available at a reasonable speed. I believe that we should always be working towards getting the most from our research funding, and that taxpayer dollars be used in the most efficient manner possible.

[*Translation*]

As in many other health-related fields, I believe we have much to learn from the health research and funding structures used in other countries. Prioritizing health research on common issues and fostering international collaboration on health research projects

would eliminate a lot of overlap and could lead to major studies. International collaboration is one way to use research funding efficiently and promote positive working relationships with researchers in other countries.

[*English*]

The second portion of this motion speaks to the need for further study into lowering the costs of pharmaceutical drugs in Canada, and how to make them more accessible in Canada and globally. All Canadians should have reasonable access to the prescription medications that they need. Today, 88% of Canadians have some form of pharmaceutical coverage through either private or public insurance plans. This gap leaves 12% of Canadians with no prescription medical coverage or inadequate coverage.

I believe that lowering the cost of prescription medications, through strategies such as bulk buying, would go a long way to making sure Canadians can access the medications they need. However, we need to co-operate with our provincial partners as well, since they have jurisdiction in this area. As with all matters related to health, we will have to tread carefully.

I am pleased to be involved at health committee with the study on pharmacare and the costing the parliamentary budget officer did on that program. We could use our volume leverage within Canada to save \$4 billion in prescription drug costs. That would be a huge advancement for Canada.

There are a number of very expensive medications to treat rare diseases and, in many cases, these are either not covered or they put undue stress on the insurance companies that are trying to provide them. This is an area where research into how to either replace those medications with more cost-effective ones or to address the root cause of the diseases would be helpful.

Today at health committee we were pleased to have folks speak to us about the problem with antibiotics and the resistance to them from over use. Organizations across Canada are looking at what needs to be done to address this problem, which is actually a global problem. They pointed to the need for research. They need to have research into antibiotics and how to reduce the bacteria from becoming resistant. We need global co-operation on that effort. This is another key area where we would see the need for the kind of research the motion sets out.

Canadians have made many discoveries in research. The member for Guelph just talked about a few of them, one being Banting and Best and the insulin discovery. Everyone in the world knows Canadians played a part in that. Canada shines in my other areas. The ebola plague is one. Canada came up with the research, the solution, and provided the vaccine that saved thousands of lives.

Points of Order

Canada has clearly established itself in the world as a leader. We have the capability to go ahead. This motion would bring the encouragement that we need to go ahead and fund and direct the research to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and to continue growing our leadership in this area.

One thing I will talk about is the Naylor report on fundamental research. It covered the area of health research and talked about the increased funding that would be needed. It also talked about many recommendations. That report was issued earlier this year. I have not really heard much from the government about that and what it intends to move forward with this. With our aging population and with the trend going from acute disease to chronic disease, there is an ever-increasing need for health research to address these conditions.

Once again, I would like to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for bringing the motion forward and for his ongoing support of medical research in Canada. Dedicated and prioritized health research funding, coupled with more accessible prescription medications, is worth specific study at the Standing Committee on Health.

As members may know, I recently became the shadow health minister and so I am getting up to speed on many of these files. The pharmacare study apparently started over a year ago, so it is quite a task to absorb the summary evidence that was given.

As I saw today, the antimicrobial resistance study that we are doing also began before I became the shadow health minister. We certainly are doing work that touches on the issues raised by the motion. I look forward to working with the health committee to study this issue in-depth.

Once again, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the motion. I want to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre for bringing this forward. It is my pleasure to say that we will be supporting the motion.

* * *

● (1745)

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED ACTIONS OF MEMBER FOR SPADINA—FORT YORK

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my absence, I understand that a point of order was raised earlier this afternoon while I was at committee doing work on behalf of the minister I serve. I understand that the member for Richmond Centre has concerns about an interaction we had on one of the buses that shuttles back and forth between our offices, following our duty here in the House.

I do not share the characterization of the events as they were reported to have taken place, and will stand that by. However, it is not a question of what I feel, it is not a question of my perspective, but a question of the perspective and the point of order raised by the member for Richmond Centre.

No member of this House should ever feel intimidated. No member of this House should ever feel that an exchange with a member of the opposition or even a colleague leaves them feeling

intimidated. I regret that the member felt intimidated. I have no other course of action to take than to apologize directly.

Regardless of my intent, regardless of my behaviour, if the member felt that she was intimidated, that is wrong. I take full responsibility for her feeling that. Her feelings do matter. I do respect them. I do respect this House. I will conduct my business more appropriately in the future.

Again, I apologize to any member who felt intimidated by any interaction I played a part in. Again, it is not my feelings that are stake here, it is not my sentiment, it is hers. I respect them as they have been presented to the House and I do apologize. I will apologize to her directly as well.

● (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As is the procedure in the House, the member's apology is accepted. We will come back, if need be.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is fine that the member came in here to make a response, but even more importantly, it would be way better if the member for Richmond Centre were present.

When a member comes in at the end of a day, when the House is not really sitting, when there are not a lot of people here during private members' business, the apology almost rings hollow.

The apology should be made in the presence of the member for Richmond Centre. I hope the Speaker sees that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the proper procedure and appropriate response is to apologize as soon as possible. As I said, I have no hesitation in apologizing to her directly and no hesitation in taking responsibility for the way in which my actions have left a member feeling.

As I said, no member should ever feel unsafe or intimidated. I apologize for whatever contribution I made to her feeling that way. She should not feel that way. I take this matter as seriously as she does and as seriously as the House would expect me to.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will leave it in the member's hands.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although we accept the parliamentary secretary's apology, I want to emphasize that he should be apologizing not for the way the member for Richmond Centre feels, but for the way he, the parliamentary secretary, acted. That is a very important distinction.

[*English*]

As the Speaker has said, the custom of the House is to accept apologies and deal with it afterwards. I think it is worth pointing out that when it is a parliamentary secretary who represents a minister of the crown, it is absolutely appropriate that the opposition feel comfortable doing their jobs of questioning and holding the government to account without being accosted by someone who is representing cabinet.

Points of Order

I hope this will provide an opportunity for members of the other side to reflect on that kind of action and to recognize that no one party in this House has a monopoly on righteousness and appropriate behaviour. With that, I will not question the member's intentions and will accept the apology. Just know that when we hear words to the effect, "apologize if I offended someone", that is certainly not the way we hope people would go about this type of thing in the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind the hon. member that as a practice, the member has apologized, and the practice is to accept the apology.

I will leave it in the hon. member's hands to treat it the way he will.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think any member should bring attention to the presence or absence of any other member in the House. Whether the member for Richmond Centre is here or not does not affect the sincerity, appropriateness, or timeliness of the apology. All members are deemed to be here. That is my understanding.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That is a technical point and it makes sense. I will accept that. Thank you.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, to be explicitly clear, I am not in any way contesting that she felt intimidated. I take the allegation very seriously.

I do not agree with the description of the events, and I have the right to disagree as to what happened. However, that is not the issue. It is not a question of how I interpreted the events. Anything I did, everything I did, that left her feeling that way deserves an apology, and I explicitly and without reservation offer that apology. It is her feelings that matter, not my interpretation and not my perception of the events.

If she felt intimidated, if anyone in this place feels intimidated by exchanges inside or outside the House, that is wrong. I take full responsibility for that, unequivocally. The issue as to what exactly happened is not the point of order that was raised; rather, it is the sentiment that she raised around feeling intimidated.

No member of this House should ever feel intimidated. We all have to take responsibility for heckling, for side remarks, for casual remarks made on the bus. It is not appropriate for anyone to ever feel that. That is why I am apologizing, and I will make every attempt to deliver it directly to the individual in question.

* * *

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

FEDERALLY FUNDED HEALTH RESEARCH

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, close to eight million Canadians do not have drug coverage, because Canada is one of the few industrialized nations that offers universal health care without offering medicare.

Without medication, there can be no treatment. Health care without drugs is inconceivable. Of course, the NDP supports the motion even though it may seem redundant. In fact, a report of the Standing Committee on Health released on September 25, 2017,

showed that a universal pharmacare program is the best tool for reducing the cost of medications in Canada and therefore increasing their accessibility.

Other studies and reports, such as that of the parliamentary budget officer, came to the same conclusion as the Standing Committee on Health. The parliamentary budget officer's report on the federal cost of a national pharmacare program, which was released on September 28, reveals that a national pharmacare program would actually save Canadians \$4.2 billion a year.

Professor Marc-André Gagnon, an expert in public policy at Carleton University here in Ottawa, estimates that the government could cut its spending by half. There would be savings of more than \$1 billion from the elimination of administrative costs associated with private insurers. Do members know that 100 or so generic drugs in Canada cost 54% more than in the United Kingdom, France, or the United States? Why is it so expensive to get care in Canada? I will tell you why.

The cost of newly approved medications is set by a federal body, the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. This board examines the price of medications in other countries and uses the median price to set the Canadian price. However, the countries used for comparison purposes are those with the highest prices in the world, so we end up with unnecessarily high prices. According to a report issued by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, total drug expenditures in Canada grew by 185% in 2015. Although Canadians are spending more money on treatment than people in other countries, only a very low percentage of that money goes to fund health research.

The percentage of revenue from the sale of drugs that goes to research is three times higher in other countries than in Canada. This money is therefore not even being put back into research and finding ways to improve health. Nevertheless, the pharmaceutical industry leaders promised to increase spending on research and development in exchange for the patent reform of the 1980s. They pressured the government for new rights to patents and a longer period of protection, and they got it. However, in return, those same industry leaders did not to keep their promises. This tells us one important thing. The artificially inflated prescription drug prices have not led to increased investments in research and development.

The government needs to increase funding for health research in Canada and act on the recommendations of the Naylor report. An expert committee, led by David Naylor, published a report on April 10, 2017, recommending that the federal government invest \$1.3 billion in research and reform how research activities are overseen. In countries that have a universal pharmacare program, the price of both patented and generic drugs is negotiated with the pharmaceutical companies. Buying drugs in such large quantities gives these countries a lot of bargaining power. Depending on the plan, they negotiate the bulk price, establish budgets, hold competitive bidding processes for companies, consider bundling several drugs, and so on.

Points of Order

Most drug expenditures in Canada come from thousands of private plans wherein people have absolutely no power to negotiate lower prices for drugs. Workers and employers are the ones who pay for the drugs, not the insurance companies. A universal pharmacare program would give the federal, provincial, and territorial governments more power to negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies, which means that it would also cut costs. Drug reimbursements would increase and the process would be simplified.

● (1800)

Private plans cover millions of people in different ways. This has consequences because, in 2015, more than one in five Canadian households were not taking their prescribed drugs because they cost too much. All doctors are aware of the health problems that arise when patients do not take their medications because they are too expensive. For example, a one-year supply of a cholesterol-lowering drug costs less than \$15 in New Zealand and more than \$140 in Canada. That is not acceptable.

With a public, universal pharmacare program, prescription drug prices would drop. With a public, universal pharmacare program, the process would be simplified because there would no longer be so many private players proposing countless plans and sometimes preventing the consumer from making an informed choice. A universal pharmacare program would create a list of insured drugs based on patient health. A single list based on sound evidence would help ensure that drugs are used properly, while taking into account their therapeutic value for patients.

It is estimated that 80% of new drugs offer no added therapeutic benefit compared to less expensive drugs already on the market. This statistic is backed by a brief that was submitted to the Standing Committee on Health. Universal pharmacare would have many benefits for the provinces and territories. Take Quebec for example. If we had an entirely publicly funded universal pharmacare program, the Quebec government alone would save an estimated \$1 billion a year. Currently, Quebec residents are required to join their employer's private plan or their spouse's employer's plan. The problem is that, for some types of employees, the cost of these private pharmacare programs represents a significant proportion of their salary.

On top of the potential savings to Quebec, a universal pharmacare program would relieve employers of a huge cost, enabling them to be more competitive and offer higher salaries and added benefits. A new agreement that came into effect on October 1, 2017, between the Government of Quebec and generic drug companies will result in \$1.5 billion in savings over five years. That is the first step to reducing the price of drugs in Quebec. However, implementing a universal pharmacare program would allow Quebec and the other provinces and territories to save even more and offer additional benefits.

Access to essential drugs is a human right recognized by the World Health Organization. That is why we absolutely must find a way to lower the cost of prescription drugs so that all Canadians can get the treatment they need without going bankrupt. A universal system would be fairer for Canadians. It would provide free drugs to the least fortunate. In Ontario, barely 40% of employer-sponsored insurance plans provide 100% coverage for drugs. A universal

pharmacare program would eliminate discrimination related to access to medication. In some provinces and territories, only people on social assistance, seniors, and people with certain illnesses are covered by the public system. In other provinces and territories, coverage is based on income.

According to the Canadian Labour Congress, coverage under Quebec's private prescription drug plans depends on a certain number of factors that have nothing to do with medical needs, such as a person's age, income, employment status, place of work, and even where they get their medication. A national pharmacare program would reduce inequality in terms of access to drugs. Comprehensive, evidence-based, national pharmacare standards would ensure that all Canadians have equal access to prescription drug coverage.

In closing, an Angus Reid poll showed that over 90% of Canadians support the creation of a universal pharmacare program. Canadians want it, and the government would save billions of dollars, so what is the government waiting for?

● (1805)

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak to motion No. 132 and support the exceptional work my colleague, the member for Kitchener Centre, has done on this important issue.

This motion highlights an issue that could have monumental consequences: the future of advancements in the field of public health, and the future of Canada's health care system. I fully support this cause, because it is dear to my own heart. I believe that federally funded research has real benefits that warrant consideration, and I am certain that an in-depth study by the Standing Committee on Health would support that conclusion.

Before moving to Canada to complete my translation degree, I worked as a registered nurse in Lebanon during the civil war. I witnessed some horrific scenes. I cared for many patients who not only suffered the usual ailments we get here in the West, but also had to live under constant threat of violence. I saw everything from debilitating infections to the unimaginable suffering experienced by victims of physical and psychological violence.

Precise surgical procedures, effective treatment of viral and bacterial infections, and our understanding of mutations: all of these were made possible through medical research, which enables us to understand the complexity of the human body and the pathogens that cause disease.

Points of Order

In Canada, we are extremely privileged to have access to a universal health care system that gives Canadians access to health care anytime, anywhere in the country thanks to a joint funding system involving several levels of government. This system is not perfect, but it is the envy of many countries around the world. We must continue to have these conversations if we want to improve our social services. We are constantly evolving in terms of how we envision services and how we make them available to the public, especially in health care. That is of utmost importance.

I believe Bernie Sanders recently visited Toronto to study our health care system, talk about the situation in the United States, and draw inspiration from the Canadian model. Some critics may go so far as to say that our system has led to unexpected budgetary complications because it is unsustainable. That is what makes research so important. We can revolutionize how health care services are delivered and the cost of delivering them.

I support this motion because I believe it will highlight the need for government to support health research. When federal governments invest in health research, we get real results. The discoveries have profound implications for our health, safety, and quality of life. Vaccines, the laser, the MRI, touch screens, networks, and the Internet are all examples of innovations that benefited from federal investments.

It has been proven that government assistance and investments have a positive effect. The development of new technologies, such as those I just mentioned, can affect our daily lives and promote innovation in our society. All of those inventions are used in hospitals and have helped to revolutionize the health care system.

In addition to benefiting the health care system, government investments also help to create new jobs. I am thinking of senior researchers and their teams, lab technicians, equipment manufacturers, and all those who support them in one way or another.

Jobs are also created indirectly through the new technologies, new companies, and new industries that offer new products or services as a result of these extraordinary discoveries. All of these things help to encourage and support the Canadian industry.

● (1810)

We have global leaders in medical research right here in Canada. Research is essential in many industries.

[*English*]

As many speakers to this motion have said before me, we can reduce the costs associated with the production and delivery of drugs. We can reduce the cost of providing services through enhanced and more targeted treatments. This would result in the most efficient delivery of health care services, which is good news for our patients. Of course, let us not forget that the most important aspect of health research is the results. The Canadian public benefits from innovation in medical procedures, our advancements in pharmaceuticals and vaccinations, and our understanding of diseases. We build the foundation for a healthier and more informed population. The health and well-being of all citizens is central to poverty eradication and is a laudable goal that we should never give up, no matter how skeptical we may be.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on comments made by the hon. member for Calgary Shepard during the last session of this debate. He raised the point of rare diseases, and that is an extremely important component for this debate today. He made reference to Alport syndrome, which, up until that point, I had never heard of, even having worked in the medical profession for many years. We have a duty to our citizens and to the people of the world to create a better life and to relieve human suffering. If left to the market, so to speak, or up to chance while we wait for the private sector, some of these serious ailments may not be addressed either adequately or at all. This is not meant to be a criticism of any of our medical institutions or leaders in medical research here or around the world; it is simply an observation that there is a great number of individuals who are left with little to no hope because there is virtually no information on their relatively scarce conditions, leaving little incentive for researchers to pick them up. We need to fill this gap. We need to understand that it is as important to find a cure for, say, Alport syndrome as it is for cancer or HIV. We need not qualify or quantify suffering. This is an arduous task as there are thousands of rare diseases but we have to start somewhere.

It has been mentioned a few times already by other speakers on this subject, but I would be remiss if I did not address the progress made toward the eradication of infectious diseases around the world already. Smallpox is the first and only human disease to be eradicated through human intervention. Rinderpest, a disease that affected cattle, was declared eradicated as of October 14, 2010. This was the first and only disease that affects livestock that was eradicated by human undertakings. Current interventions aim to eradicate polio, malaria, measles, and rubella and the list goes on. Medical research and human intervention are the only way forward. No one else is going to do this for us. We have a common goal and federally funded research can play a positive role.

Before I finish, I would like to make reference to a particular event I had the privilege of attending that was showcasing medical research here on the Hill, only about a month or so ago. There, I learned a great deal about CRISPR genome editing, something used in both health and agriculture, if I understand correctly. In relation to health, one of the areas where it is being utilized is in the fight against HIV. Using CRISPR, scientists were able to eliminate HIV in live animals because HIV DNA can be excised from the genomes of living animals to eliminate further infection. What marvellous genius this idea is. This is what we are working for and striving for, to support the empowerment of our brilliant innovators and scientists who will change the landscape of medicine and public health.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

I want to thank everyone who spoke before me in favour of the motion, and above all, I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for bringing this to our attention here in the House.

*Points of Order**[English]*

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to Motion No. 132 regarding federally funded health research. The intention of this motion is to recognize the importance of health research. This is a motion of which I am proud to speak in favour.

This motion ultimately seeks to better health research in our country and to ensure that there is stable health research to keep Canadians up to global standards. When it comes to drugs, Canadians demonstrate strong support for health research. According to several polls conducted by Research Canada, Canadians overwhelmingly care about health research and understand the role that this research plays in improving health and, through innovation, finding cures for the future.

I want to take the next few minutes to highlight what this motion means for Canadians. First, Motion No. 132 instructs the health committee to study ways of increasing benefits to the public resulting from federally funded health research. Second, the motion has a goal of lowering drug costs and increasing access to medicines both in Canada and globally. This motion would ensure that Canadians have access to innovative and state-of-the-art medicine.

The motion seeks to reach the goals of this study within the deadline of one year after it is adopted. While I am in favour of this motion, I want to highlight that the health committee has been studying national pharmacare for over a year, and the study is still ongoing. That is why I, along with my Conservative colleagues, would recommend amending this motion to remove the timeline. Further, because there is currently a study in the works on national pharmacare, it seems that this would overlap with the work already being conducted at the health committee. In order to give the study adequate time, I do not believe a one-year timeline is sufficient. From coast to coast to coast, every member would agree that we want what is best for Canadians. We want to ensure that Canadians have the best of the best when it comes to health care. That is why investing in health research is so important.

Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. We want the elderly to be able to afford their medicine. Health research is vital and leads to the better well-being of Canadians. I am a strong advocate for science and knowledge-based research that makes life better for all Canadians. I remain focused on the health and safety of constituents and understand how difficult it is for those who live with disabilities and illnesses. That is why the previous Conservative government was looking into bulk purchasing in 2014. The purpose of this was to ensure that drugs were less expensive for those who rely on them. We know that drug prices fall mostly under provincial jurisdiction. However, it is essential that federal and global health research be conducted. Canadians deserve this.

Fostering partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors, as well as with provinces and territories, will result in an even stronger health sector. Ensuring that we work with the provinces to integrate all partners into the development and implementation of a planned agenda for health research, as well as maximizing the impact of health research dollars, will mean our research and knowledge is the best it can be for all Canadians.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research is Canada's federally funded agency for health research. According to Research Canada's third public opinion poll, 84% of people say health and medical research makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy, recognizing that the economy is the most important issue facing Canadians today.

• (1820)

Further, it noted that even in a recession, a large majority of Canadians would pay out of pocket to improve health and research capacity, and 89% of Canadians believe that Canada should be a global leader in this area. This is an issue people care about.

Budget 2016 invests in high-quality scientific research via \$95 million per year in additional funding to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Budget 2017 invests \$140.3 million over five years starting in 2017-18, with \$18.2 million per year ongoing for Health Canada, the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, and the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health. This is all done with the goal of lowering drug prices. Canada is envied around the world when it comes to health research, but I know we can do better. We can always find new ways for knowledge to be translated more quickly to prevent disease, diagnose it more rapidly, and treat it more effectively.

Again, I am in favour of this motion. However, there is one recommendation I would like to make, and that would be amending the motion to remove the one-year timeline. The reason I suggest this amendment is twofold. First, this motion would lead to a study that would likely be studied at the same time as national pharmacare. National pharmacare does not currently have a timeline it must reach, therefore it would not be fair to set a one-year timeline to this motion. Second, there are a number of issues in the health portfolio that require immediate attention, such as the opioid crisis.

According to the Ontario Drug Policy Research Network, in Ontario in 2015, 734 people died of an opioid-related cause, averaging approximately two people every day. This number totals far more than the 481 people who died in motor vehicle accidents in 2014. Over 80% of all opioid-related deaths in 2015 were accidental. Almost 60% of the accidental deaths occurred among youth and younger adults aged 15 to 44 years. Fentanyl use increased by 548% between 2006 and 2015 and is now the opioid most commonly involved in opioid-related deaths. It is obvious that the opioid crisis is a pressing issue that needs immediate attention.

It is for that reason I believe setting a one-year timeline to this motion will not work. As it reads, the timeline would not allow for a full year of study of this issue, the reason being that there are other studies currently in the queue and issues that can and will arise that require immediate attention. I recommend the timeline be removed. This motion is well intended, and aims at studying ways to lower drug costs. This will benefit vulnerable Canadians who need them.

Ultimately, I support this motion. The nature of health research requires a long-term and sustainable funding commitment. It is important work that needs to be done for Canadians, and I thank my colleagues for presenting this motion. The work done by health researchers improves the financial and human burden that illness creates. Canadians deserve the best, and that starts with their health. That is why I am pleased to support Motion No. 132. I appreciate the member for Kitchener Centre bringing this forward.

• (1825)

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all members of this House from all parties who spoke to Motion No. 132.

As I said initially, the purpose of Motion No. 132 is to improve outcomes and to increase the public benefit from federally funded health research.

While I am proud of the work I have done on this motion, there are many others who have been working on improving Canada's health research regime for much longer than I have, and I know they stand ready to assist the health committee and the government as we move forward to improve health research here in Canada.

I would like to thank the following people and apologize to anyone I may miss: Jack Nickerson from Doctors Without Borders; Rachel Kiddell-Monroe and Chloe Hogg from Universities Allied for Essential Medicines; Dr. Michael Clarke from the University of Western Ontario; Richard Elliott from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network; Alison Krentel from the Bruyère Research Institute; Deb McFarland from Emory University; Angela Quinlan, Marilyn Coolen, and Marguerite Keeley from the Grandmothers Advocacy Network; HealthCareCAN, the Health Charities Coalition of Canada; and all of those working in health research here at home and around the world who have spoken to my team about health research and global health initiatives over the last year. It has been an honour to work side by side with them to ensure that people everywhere are supported by medicines and medical innovation.

Some of the brightest minds of this generation are working tirelessly to eradicate disease, find better treatments, and advocate for policies that will lead to better health outcomes for all. These researchers and advocates deserve to be lauded, and the least that we can do as policy-makers in this House is to ensure that they have the research tools they need to succeed.

As we speak, health researchers here in Canada are working to tackle antimicrobial resistance, playing a leadership role in a global effort to contain the threat posed by a generation of drug-resistant microbes. Canadian researchers are researching infection, healthy pregnancy, cardiovascular health, diabetes, respiratory health, cancer, tuberculosis, and obesity. They are also working on the latest preventative, diagnostic, and treatment approaches to neuro-degenerative diseases causing dementia. Quite simply, they are working on the treatments and cures that will make our families and communities healthier. Taxpayers, researchers, and patients alike deserve to know that there is an efficient and effective system to ensure that the benefits of federally funded research reach those who need them the most.

In the words of Andrew Petter, president of Simon Fraser University, "Innovation isn't a magic bullet, it requires a work plan".

Adjournment Proceedings

Motion No. 132 offers this House and our government the opportunity to step back and examine Canada's work plan. As we invest in science, strengthen health systems, and set priorities for a generation of researchers, I hope that all members of this House will come together to commit to ensuring that policy-makers have a firm grasp on Canada's research priorities and that Canada has the best research framework possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 8, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[*English*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been up in the House numerous times, pushing for the government to secure a fair deal on softwood lumber, urging it to protect the good-paying forestry jobs that tens of thousands of Canadians rely upon. We have debated this issue in this place several times, and I have repeatedly urged the government to take all necessary steps to prevent a trade war with the United States over softwood lumber exports.

It is imperative that Canada secure a fair deal with the United States, a deal that respects our regional differences and protects high-quality Canadian forestry jobs.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, two years later, the Canadian government continues to fail in its ability to get a deal. Today the U.S. department of commerce has announced its final decision, with massive unfair anti-dumping and countervailing duties reaching as high as 27%. These tariffs and our government's inability to secure a trade deal have led, and will continue to lead, to devastating job losses and damage to this vital Canadian industry.

A report released by the Conference Board of Canada at the end of May, 2017 stated that U.S. softwood lumber duties would result in the loss of 2,200 jobs and a \$700 million reduction in Canadian exports over the next two years. Softwood lumber is a vibrant part of Canada's forestry sector. For many rural communities, it is the backbone of their economies. According to Canada's labour force survey, in 2015, the forest industry accounted for 300,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The Canada-U.S. softwood lumber dispute first began back in 1982. For 35 years, the American industry has argued that Canadian producers benefit from subsidization, a claim that has been defeated time and again in trade tribunals. Over the years, there have been several managed trade agreements, but upon their expiration, Canadian exports have seen more duties applied, and Canada has spent approximately \$100 million on legal fees to defend our position.

The 2006 agreement was renewed in 2012 and expired last October, again, after the Liberal government failed to negotiate a new agreement. It seemed to be spending more time denying its own responsibilities and blaming the previous Conservative government than it did ensuring that workers in the forestry sector had the job security they so desperately needed. Like the huge hit lumber companies took in 2006, due to these tariffs, our industry is again reeling, and it is the forestry workers who will suffer the most.

After years of being unable to negotiate a fair deal, Canadians are left feeling unsure and, quite frankly, abandoned by their government. There seems to still be no path forward. After the last agreement expired, the government waited two months before introducing a compensation package, which the NDP welcomed. However, I must point out, it contained nothing to improve EI benefits for workers who lost their jobs because of this dispute. The \$867 million support package was a good short-term measure for industry and forestry companies, however, Canadian forestry workers need long-term solutions.

Canadians deserve answers from the government, not more empty promises, hallow words, and talk about "a good deal, not just any deal". We quite frankly cannot be sitting here two years from now with still no deal in place. We need a deal to protect these workers and the communities they represent and for which they provide an economic benefit.

How long will these middle-class Canadians have to wait for the government to fight for them?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that our government is seized of this issue. We understand the impact that this is having on the individuals, the communities, and the provinces that will be impacted by the end of this deal, which unfortunately has

resulted in some of the actions of our trading partner. We are committed to getting a deal, but that does not mean a quick deal. It means the right deal and we will continue to fight and defend Canada's interests.

On the issue of responding, the member opposite raised the issue of our responses that relate to EI in her question during question period, and raised it tangentially in her address tonight. I am thankful to address this issue.

This government is sensitive to the ongoing situation. The EI program is designed to respond to economic changes, such as the ones we are experiencing. Flexibility is built into the program to allow us to respond to deteriorating situations in sectors in particular economies, as they emerge on a region-by-region basis. When a region's unemployment rate rises, the entrance requirement is reduced, and the duration of benefits increases, as it has in many of these communities.

EI is there for unemployed Canadians when they need help the most. Our government is backing that process, and making sure that Service Canada and a whole-of-government approach is at work, working directly with individuals, communities, mayors, and provincial governments to make sure that we provide the appropriate support, training, and transition supports for the interim as we move toward a full-time job.

Last year, we also made a number of other changes to improve the EI program so that it is more accessible generally across the country, particularly in areas that are facing distress. For example, we reduced the two-week waiting period to one week. This measure eases the financial pressure on families waiting for benefits to arrive, and workers who are expecting their benefits to be delivered quickly, even though they have been unemployed through no fault of their own.

We also implemented a new, more flexible, "working while on claim" pilot project. Some of these industries get short-term contracts and people return to work in the interim for short periods of time. We do not interrupt their benefits and their eligibility for benefits. Thus, we have created more flexibility to accommodate their situations, to make sure that affected areas are given the most sympathetic and understanding approach to how benefits are modelled, and model them after the experiences that they are directly involved in and engaged with now.

Adjournment Proceedings

On June 1, the government also announced \$867 million extra to invest and support forestry industry workers and their communities that had been affected by the U.S. measures that had targeted our softwood lumber industry. This includes close to \$90 million to mitigate layoffs, to support workforce adjustment to help affected workers transition to new opportunities in the short term, to sustain their presence in those communities, and to re-engage with the industry in the long term.

We will be temporarily extending the maximum duration of work-sharing agreements from 38 to 76 weeks. This is again in order to help those communities sustain a critical mass of workers in the industry with flexibility, so that they can continue to receive benefits and share work, if possible, to retain other benefits with skilled workers in that sector.

The work-sharing program is designed to help employers and employees when there is a temporary reduction in the level of business activity. It supplements the income of EI-eligible workers who agree to work reduced hours temporarily.

We have also taken additional steps, including providing \$50 million over two years to affected provinces through amendments to labour market development agreements. This will help displaced workers in the forestry sector with the training and employment supports that they need to transition to new jobs temporarily, sustain the workforce in the communities, sustain communities, and ensure those impacted have the presence of the Canadian government and programs there to sustain the practice and the industry. This will also sustain the quality of life and the social fabric of the communities that have been impacted.

Service Canada is now implementing this national action plan for softwood lumber to respond to the needs of workers affected by this labour dispute. The government is committed to getting a good deal and a strong deal. What we hope is that the deal delivers the certainty and stability that the previous deals had to softwood lumber. It is a critical part of communities across this country, a critical part of our country, and workers should not feel abandoned because this government—

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Essex.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that we are here on the exact same day that these duties have been made permanent by the U.S. At the time that the government introduced this package of programs and money, it was viewed to be a temporary fix.

There will not be enough money, or these programs will not extend long enough, to sustain the job losses that will be seen in these communities. There needs to be a new package going forward to address the very serious issues that are now going to be faced on a permanent basis.

I understand that the government will, of course, pursue this legally. It has cost us a great deal of money to do so in the past, will cost us a great deal once again, and will take a great deal of time. In the meantime, Canadian families, forestry workers, and communities are left wondering what the government will now bring forward.

I wonder if the member opposite can now speak to where we go from today and what packages will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the issues that the member opposite has raised are perhaps best dealt with by the trade minister or the ministers engaged in negotiations with the United States.

The issue that I was brought to the House on related to a question the member asked earlier in question period regarding EI benefits and our approach to making sure workers are supported. The member has asked if this government is committed to getting a good deal. The answer is yes. Is the government going to continue to negotiate? Absolutely.

With respect to the characterization of the changes as being permanent and lasting forever, I cannot even count the number of times we have encountered this situation, where a deal expires, punishing duties are imposed, trade organizations knock down those measures as being unnecessarily punitive and ill-founded. We move back towards a civil and appropriate conversation with our American trading partners to make sure that workers on both sides of the border are supported, the industry is supported on both sides of the market, and trade is managed in a responsible way. Those remain the goals of this government. Those remain the goals of the individuals of our government seized with that.

If the member would like to discuss more EI situations as they develop, we would be happy to—

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in responding to me about the cancellation of STC, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport said the federal government delegates this responsibility to the provinces and the private sector.

That is all well and good, but if a province refuses to take responsibility and the private sector declines to take responsibility, which is contrary to a letter I received from the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and municipalities lack the capacity, what are people supposed to do? Not go to the doctor or the hospital? Not attend post-secondary education? Not visit family and friends? Beg for rides from neighbours or strangers? If every level of government is unwilling or unable to provide support, who should vulnerable people turn to?

People across western Canada, from British Columbia to Manitoba, and in northern communities in Quebec and Ontario, have already raised the alarm that we are on the cusp of a remote and rural transportation crisis. Isolating people in northern, rural, and remote areas contributes to poorer health outcomes and poorer quality of life.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have seen the impacts and heard testimony of the real dangers of no affordable, safe transportation systems when we heard the stories of missing and murdered women, primarily indigenous women, on the Highway of Tears in British Columbia. The Liberal government committed to help people there stay safe.

In my home province of Saskatchewan, the consequences of losing our provincial bus service are already becoming clear. In the months after the closure, several people died trying to get between cities. One of my constituents was unable to access the medical treatment she required in another city. Elderly people all over the province of Saskatchewan are losing their independence for want of a bus service.

The member opposite and many people outside the province of Saskatchewan believe the STC to be some sort of luxury, that somehow a subway in Toronto or light rail in Vancouver are worthier of federal support and leadership. In reality, it is not a luxury and much more important, in my home province of roughly one million people, it really does function as our subway.

In Saskatchewan, 50% of the population live outside urban centres. We face today, as we have always faced, unique challenges because of this. We need affordable transportation that people can access. The province of Saskatchewan has roads enough to circumvent the earth seven times. Saskatchewan people need to know that at least the federal government cares about the safety of everyone living in the province.

Even a cursory reading of the STC financial statements will reveal that the Saskatchewan Party government spent years inflating the costs, and then exaggerated its budget for the future. It eliminated a service that for many people living in remote, rural, or northern communities was absolutely essential.

I call upon the government to answer one question. If the government delegates responsibility to a province that is unwilling to live up to that responsibility, and the private sector is unable to take up that responsibility, then what are the people of my home province who require that service supposed to do? Will the federal government step forward, find a role, and lead?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon West for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of her community.

We have said time and time again that no relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with indigenous peoples. It is why our government has taken immediate action to better serve indigenous people and their communities, such as a new gender-based violence strategy, changes to the child and family welfare system for indigenous children, safe housing, shelters, and also working with the Province of British Columbia toward safe transport on the Highway of Tears.

Our government is making concrete investments now, including \$2.6 billion over five years, to close gaps in education funding between on and off reserve, and as part of our gender-based violence strategy, construction of five new family shelters for those fleeing violence. We are committed to seeing all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action implemented, with

more than two-thirds of those under federal or shared responsibility already under way.

We do recognize the need for safer transport for rural and indigenous communities. With respect to intercity bus services, the provinces must play a leading role in overseeing this sector. Under the federal Motor Vehicle Transport Act, the federal government has indeed delegated the regulation of interprovincial bus carriers in federal jurisdiction to the provinces and territories. This includes establishing conditions of entry or exit of routes, and regulating rates and routings.

We agree that safe transport is key, and we do encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to consult with indigenous groups, municipalities, and other stakeholders to find innovative, alternative options for assisting with the provision of safe transportation services for Saskatchewan's people and communities.

● (1845)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to stress that, if there is any way, the people of Saskatchewan really need the federal government to extend a hand, to lead, and to offer to help us in some way.

People in my province have watched what happened on the Highway of Tears in northern British Columbia, and they are seeing how the federal government stepped in and helped out with safe transportation. Perhaps the federal government could look at this as an issue for first nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in my province, which is a relationship that the member has stated, and we have heard, that the government values as most important.

However, when we look at the issue, whether it is as access to health care, as a feminist issue, or as a public safety issue, I call upon the government to do something. Will the government work with the people of Saskatchewan to keep our people safe?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Speaker, again, our government recognizes the need for safer transport for rural, isolated, and indigenous communities. Our government is working to advance reconciliation and renew that nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous people based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We encourage the Government of Saskatchewan to engage indigenous communities, other communities, and other vulnerable stakeholders in conjunction with the remaining bus service providers in the province to develop a strategy that addresses the need for rural transportation services in the province.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise once again on the subject of the Official Languages Act and respect for our official language minority communities across the country.

Adjournment Proceedings

On June 1, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage about her rather dismal record when it comes to official languages. A number of issues were raised, including the partisan appointment of Madeleine Meilleur, which was quite a fiasco. Despite all her great qualities, Ms. Meilleur was not the right choice for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages. She finally came to that conclusion herself and withdrew. Another issue were some errors that appeared in the French version of the Prime Minister's biography, not to mention the fact that the use of French is dwindling in the public service. A report was recently published about that.

Let us talk about the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. For nearly four days, we had no Commissioner of Official Languages. That is unbelievable. June 17 was the end of the interim commissioner's mandate, and during all that time, we had no idea what was happening. Parliamentarians and Canadians had no Commissioner of Official Languages to address their concerns to. It was a dark time in the history of official languages, and right on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act, which is coming up next year.

Four days later, the Minister of Heritage finally decided to extend the mandate of Ghislaine Saikaley, the acting commissioner of official languages. She has a new six-month contract now that the first six-month acting period has ended. The Minister of Canadian Heritage seemed to indicate that it would take roughly four months for everything to be resolved. July, August, September, and October have passed. We should have a new official languages commissioner by now, but we do not. Today, November 2, we still do not have any news about the process for appointing the official languages commissioner. The deadline is fast approaching and there is no progress, unfortunately.

What is more, the use of French is declining in the public service. This year, the commissioner received three times as many complaints about linguistic requirement violations in the federal public service. The absence of bilingualism in some management or supervisory positions prevents public servants from working in French. This is quite serious. I could go on about this because there is a lot to say on the matter, but since I am running out of time I will talk about something very serious that happened last week.

After supporting the bill on the bilingualism of Supreme Court justices three times, the Liberals unfortunately decided to vote against it now that they are in power. It is incomprehensible. They have no reason to oppose a bill that seeks to enhance the appointment criteria for Supreme Court justices to make sure they understand both French and English, the two official languages. That is why I have introduced two more bills, Bills C-381 and C-382, that seek to improve access to justice in both official languages.

• (1850)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Drummond for giving me an opportunity to recap what the Government of Canada has done to promote our two official languages.

[English]

Language of work in the federal public service is an important matter. Federal institutions must ensure that their workplaces are conducive to the use of both official languages. The federal public service must reflect the Canadian population it serves. Although much progress has been made over these years, more work and efforts are required before we can reach our goals and our vision.

The Clerk of the Privy Council has taken the initiative to examine the use of Canada's official languages in the federal public service, and to propose concrete measures to further foster the use of both official languages in the workplace. That is a good thing.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada has pledged to develop a new multi-year action plan for official languages that will come into effect on April 1, 2018. To that end, we held Canada-wide consultations on official languages, which allowed us to identify courses of action and initiatives that will inform the development of the next action plan for official languages. The plan will re-energize the government's efforts and strengthen the tools it can use.

[English]

The Government of Canada is tangibly reaffirming its commitment to improving the delivery of federal services in both official languages. For example, we announced a revision of the official languages regulations on communications with and services to the public. The President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Canadian Heritage are working closely to ensure that we are considering the best options to modernize the official languages regulations in an open manner, based on the consultations with all concerned parties.

The member for Drummond is undoubtedly aware that there will be a technical briefing on progress in this regard on Monday morning, at nine o'clock, at 131 Queen Street. We sincerely hope to see him there.

• (1855)

[Translation]

I will use the member for Drummond's question as an opportunity to remind the House of a few facts. This year, we held an interdepartmental forum that engaged the provinces and territories on francophone immigration issues and develop a concrete strategy to strengthen francophone communities outside Quebec.

This initiative was just one of the many concrete actions we have taken to support official language minority communities, such as the restoration of the long-form census, new investments in the Canada Council for the Arts and in our film industry, and the modernization of the court challenges program of Canada.

[English]

May my colleague, the member for Drummond, be assured that the Government of Canada is taking practical measures to protect our official languages, promote their use in Canadian society, and support the vitality of official language minority communities.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I will make every effort to attend the briefing, where I hope to ask many good questions.

I would like to come back to what was said about the use of French as an official language in the public service and the failure to respect linguistic duality. The Commissioner of Official Languages told #ONFR that she received three times the number of complaints:

In the past five years, the number of complaints filed with our office has risen steadily. We have also noted a new phenomenon: an increase in complaints from the federal public service, which represented more than half of last year's complaints. That is very concerning.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned some of the aspects studied by the government. It must now take concrete action to ensure better access to both official languages in the public service. First, there should be an official languages commissioner—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is proud to foster the vitality of francophone and anglophone minority communities and to promote the use of our two official languages in Canadian society, including in the federal public service.

[*Translation*]

We firmly believe in the importance of providing federal services in both official languages wherever necessary and of having workplaces where our two official languages are on an equal footing. We will work with departments and federal institutions, including the Clerk of the Privy Council, to ensure that our institutions continue to reflect the two official languages and Canadian values.

[*English*]

Our official languages are very important to the Government of Canada. We will continue to take concrete measures to protect our official languages.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

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