



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 272 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, to lay upon the table the case report of the Public Service Integrity Commissioner in the matter of an investigation into allegations of wrongdoing. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

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[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Federal Financial Support to Provinces and Territories: A Long-term Scenario Analysis”.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the parliamentary budget officer entitled “Federal Personnel Spending: Past and future trends”.

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[*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 response to 15 petitions.

FIREARMS ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-71, an act to amend certain acts and regulations in relation to firearms.

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian section of ParlAmericas respecting our participation in the 14th plenary assembly and the 44th meeting of the board of directors of ParlAmericas, held in Medellin, Colombia, November 15-17, 2017.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports from our standing committee.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, in relation to Bill C-47, an act to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code, with amendments permitting the accession to the Arms Trade Treaty and other amendments. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “Focused, Independent, and Patient: Building a World-Class Canadian Development Finance Institution”. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Health, in relation to Bill S-5, an act to amend the Tobacco Act and the Non-smokers' Health Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Routine Proceedings

In tabling this, I want to thank all the members of the committee and all the people who made presentations to the committee to help us understand the impacts of smoking and vaping. We learned that every 14 minutes someone in Canada dies of a nicotine-related illness, and that every day 100,000 young people start to smoke. This bill would help to discourage that trend. Again, I want to thank the committee and all those who participated.

The committee amended this bill, and I think we made it better. The report was passed unanimously by all parties. In the end, I am confident that this legislation will have an immediate impact and make Canadians healthier and safer.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition calls on the Liberal government to change the federal summer jobs program. The petitioners say that it currently renders Canadian employers who believe in legal protection for preborn children and traditional sexual morality ineligible to apply. They call it unconstitutional discrimination being done in an Orwellian manner by the attestation that has been put in place. The petitioners are calling on the government to eliminate it.

The petitioners also say that if the government is permitted to discriminate under this program, a precedent will be set allowing discrimination in other government programs.

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour and pleasure of presenting a petition signed by over 2,000 people. They are concerned about railways that cut through cities and neighbourhoods across Canada, forcing people to take long detours or cross railways unsafely. The Minister of Transport has an obligation to take action and remove barriers between our neighbourhoods by creating safe, well-defined level crossings and foot bridges.

[*English*]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today signed by many Ontario residents.

The petitioners point out that section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms identifies, among other things, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and freedom of belief as fundamental freedoms. The petitioners are calling on the Prime Minister to defend the freedoms of conscience, thought, and belief, and to withdraw the attestation requirement for applicants for the Canada summer jobs program.

● (1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today signed by residents of British Columbia in my riding of Burnaby South.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to immediately prevent the Kinder Morgan pipeline from being built through their community. Dozens of people are being arrested in an effort to try to stop this pipeline, and many of them have signed the petition.

I am calling on the government to make sure it pays attention to this petition and to make sure it answers my constituents.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first is an electronic petition, e-1135.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to take note of the fact that Canada is the only G8 country without regulations dealing with animal testing. There are no enforceable rules or regulations for publicly funded facilities to ensure that animals used in research are humanely treated.

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Justice to bring forward legislation that would ensure that Canada falls in line with other industrialized countries in requiring licensing and regulation of scientific laboratories, suppliers, and teaching centres where animals are used in live testing.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition is also from constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. They are particularly concerned with the issue of shark finning. Shark finning is not legal in Canadian waters, but the sale, distribution, and use of shark fins remains legal.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons assembled to take action to prevent the use, sale, and trade of shark fins to protect the species globally.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on sex selection.

The petitioners highlight that the three most dangerous words in the world are, "It's a girl". The petitioners point out that, tragically, gender-based violence against girls begins even before they are born. They also point out that ending a pregnancy based on gender is discrimination.

The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn the practice of discriminating against girls by the use of sex selection.

*The Budget***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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 19 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kenora.

I rise today in support of budget 2018. The budget is an affirmation of the two elements that drive a healthy economy, as well as a free and resilient democracy. Those are equality and growth.

In his 1961 address to the UN General Assembly, President Kennedy remarked, “conformity is the jailer of freedom, and the enemy of growth.” For too long, Canada has sat complacent in the face of pay disparity between men and women. For too long, Canada has continued the trend of marginalizing our indigenous agency. Empowering these groups would not only restore equity, but also add fuel to Canada's growing economy, which our government, in budget 2018, is prepared to do.

Women represent half of Canada's population, and their full and equal participation in Canada's economy is essential for our future growth. Removing the systemic barriers to women's full economic participation would support the economy and strengthen the middle class. This must start with equal pay.

In Canada today, women earn 31% less than men do. To put it another way, the median income for women is \$28,000, compared with \$41,000 for men. The reasons behind the gender wage gap are deep-rooted and complex. Closing the gap will require leadership and a comprehensive approach, involving multiple tools. One of the main causes of the gender wage gap is the undervaluation of the work that has traditionally been done by women. Requiring equal pay for work of equal value is an effective way to fix this gap. To help address this issue, the government proposes to bring in a legislated proactive pay equity regime in federally regulated sectors, which would apply to over one million Canadian workers.

Furthermore, we must encourage women to pursue careers in male-dominated and often better paid red seal trades. Also, to ensure that women are increasingly able to model leadership to other aspiring female tradespeople, the government is allocating \$19.9 million over five years, starting this year, to pilot an apprenticeship incentive grant for women.

We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. Canada must not grow wealthy to the exclusion of indigenous Canadians. We must advance reconciliation. Budget 2018 takes further steps to improve the quality of life of indigenous people in Canada, and it supports a new approach to recognizing and implementing indigenous rights. The government proposes to invest an additional \$5 billion over five years to ensure that indigenous children and families have an equal chance to succeed in life, to build the capacity of indigenous governments, and to accelerate self-determination and self-government agreements with indigenous peoples, based on the recognition and implementation of their rights.

To address the funding pressures facing child and family service agencies, while also increasing prevention resources for communities so that children are safe and families can stay together, budget 2018 proposes to provide more than \$1.4 billion in new funding over six years, starting in 2017-18, for first nations child and family services.

We must also recognize equity between generations, and the duty we have to ensure that future Canadians may enjoy the same or better environments than we do today. Canada has committed to conserving at least 17% of its land and inland waters by 2020, through networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. Both protected and conserved areas would ensure healthier habitats for species at risk and improve biodiversity.

Growing the economy and protecting our environment go hand in hand. To achieve the growth of both, our government has taken action. Responding to the critical and urgent need to take action on climate change, Canada's first ministers, in consultation with indigenous peoples, adopted the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change in December 2016. To support the implementation of this historic national plan, the government has allocated \$5.7 billion over 12 years, including \$2 billion for the low carbon economy fund, to combat climate change.

● (1015)

When Canadians are at the cutting edge of technology, not just Canada but the world stands to benefit. From the invention of insulin to the Canadarm, research in fundamental science has contributed to them all. This is why the government proposes to make significant new investments to ensure that Canada's current and future scientists and researchers have the funding and support they need to do their work. Budget 2018 proposes an investment of \$3.8 billion in Canada's research system to support the work of researchers and provide them with access to the state-of-the-art tools and facilities they need to do their work.

The Budget

Encouraging innovation is essential to securing the fruits of the future economy, but currently the government provides supports for all types and sizes through a vast and complicated array of programming. In an effort to make the services provided more responsive to the needs of businesses, in particular small businesses, the government has accepted the recommendation by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth. We will be reviewing all innovation programs that serve the business community to support greater efficiency and business growth.

In January, our government launched Innovation Canada to provide a single point of contact for Canadian innovators and entrepreneurs looking to grow their businesses. Linking businesses with the right programs can mean the difference between their success and failure. The industrial research assistance program is a perfect example. IRAP has helped thousands of Canadians develop innovative technologies and successfully commercialize them in the global marketplace. To enable IRAP to support business research and development projects, the government proposes to invest \$700 million over five years starting in 2018-19, and \$150 million for every year ongoing. This funding will support hard-working Canadian entrepreneurs to create jobs as they grow and expand their businesses, getting them through the valley of death.

Protecting and promoting Canadian intellectual property is an essential step to promoting Canadian business. To accomplish this goal, budget 2018 proposes a new intellectual property strategy to help Canadian entrepreneurs better understand and protect intellectual property and to get better access to shared intellectual property. Budget 2018 proposes to invest \$85.3 million over five years starting this year, with \$10 million ongoing in support of the strategy.

Furthermore, to better enable firms to access and share intellectual property, the government proposes to provide \$30 million in 2019-20 to pilot a patent collective. This collective will work with Canada's entrepreneurs to pool patents so that small and medium-sized firms have better access to the critical intellectual property they need to grow their business. This is proof that our government is listening to Parliament, as this was the third recommendation of the technology transfer report tabled by the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, on which I am honoured to serve.

Our plan is working. The government's efforts to support equality and growth have yielded clear results: nearly 700,000 jobs, an ever-decreasing debt-to-GDP ratio, and ending 51 long-term boil water advisories on reserve. While this is laudable progress, our work is only beginning. Albert Einstein said that we cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them. Budget 2018 breaks the chain of conventional thinking to prepare Canada for success in the 21st century.

• (1020)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a big deal about this budget being a gender budget. The words appear in the budget I think 360 times. However, in terms of the dollars that have been put in, there is hardly anything there.

I remember being on a special committee on pay equity. We tabled the report, and the government response was that it would

come with legislation. Therefore, it is disappointing to see that in the two years since then, the only thing it has done is to reannounce it is going to bring legislation, and no dollars have been put in place.

If we look at the priorities of the government, there is half a billion dollars in infrastructure for roads and bridges in Asia, but nothing for women in Canada when one in three women are victims of violence, and \$5 billion for climate change, but only \$20 million per year to eliminate violence against women. Why is the government all talk and no action on the gender file?

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I would direct the member for Sarnia—Lambton to pages 100 to 119 of the budget. In those pages, we talk about \$1.4 billion in new financing over three years available through BDC, in addition to an increased \$200 million from \$70 million of investment in women-led technology firms over five years through BDC's women in technology fund. There is \$250 million over three years through Export Development Canada to take advantages of the opportunities in the global workplace to help women entrepreneurs reach their potential globally.

Also, to support women in agriculture, we are creating and launching a new lending program from Farm Credit Canada to support advisory services for women.

The capital venture plan also opens up the door for women to get financing through \$1.5 billion in the venture capital market in Canada. This is focused on helping female entrepreneurs reach their potential, to say nothing of the skills gap and helping women with getting apprenticeships: \$3,000 over two years plus a \$2,000 bonus, if they achieve their goal in achieving apprenticeships in critical areas.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has announced very few measures for the regions, specifically Quebec regions and the riding of Jonquière. That will directly affect regional industrial development. For example, the lack of icebreaker services can have a tremendous negative impact on our regional economy. There is no new money to address this situation. The government keeps saying how great its budget is for middle-class families, but if the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean's regional economy is hobbled because the government does nothing to remedy the icebreaker situation, that will have a negative impact on our economy and families in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

The Budget

•(1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, in talking about regional development, the government is supporting the regional development agencies nationally and looking at a one-door approach through Innovation Canada. If one looks up Innovation Canada and puts in their region, postal code, and the problem they are looking to solve, we have a way to direct entrepreneurs into funding streams and the programs that will help them, including export services through the new TCS export development programs.

We have increased funding to IRAP, with 15 new regional officers to help businesses that are trying to innovate in their field. Through Innovation Canada, we will help Jonquière and all regions in Canada through our innovation support systems.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I know that, like me, the member for Guelph has a particular interest in innovation, science, and technology. I wonder if he would like to comment on the investments announced in budget 2018 in Canadian universities and research and innovation.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, with my thanks to the member, we do share a passion there. It was good to see research finally taking a gain through this budget. Research has been denied access to funding for years through the previous government. Now we have opened up the door to researchers to help with primary research leading to growth in our economy.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here as the voice of the very unique riding called Kenora. Today, I am going to speak on behalf of the Kenora riding, which is a third of Ontario's land mass. It is one of the largest rural ridings in our country. It is unique in that I represent 55 communities, but 42 are first nations, so that is a third of the first nations in Ontario. Because of that, we have some unique challenges as northerners and rural Canadians.

I want to remind the House that 20% of Canadians live in rural Canada. They make their living in agriculture, mining, forestry, tourism, and of course some of the service industries that we all know of. As a rural caucus, we have been talking to the government about announcements related to infrastructure. If we want to grow our economy and to grow Canada, we are going to have to find ways to be successful in putting in infrastructure and the improvements that rural Canadians expect, so they too can be competitive in a new generation of technology and where work has to go.

I will use the example of broadband and the push by the rural members of our caucus to convince the government to not only hear us but to move toward making those changes. In today's economy, we cannot do business in rural Canada without modern technology. Without modern technology, the reason that people leave the rural parts of Canada to move to the cities is obvious. They go to school or they are looking for employment. It is very difficult to make business decisions when the modern, more basic technology that most people take for granted does not exist in northern Ontario, and in lots of parts of rural Canada.

I want to start by highlighting our progress so far. Over the last two years, Canada's economic growth has been fuelled by the hard work of many Canadians combined with historic investments in people and in communities. Therefore, it is exciting to know that since November 2015, we have created a significant number, some 600,000 new jobs in Canada. That is something we should all rejoice in because that is what we are here in this place to do. Whether as members of the government or in opposition, we are here for one reason and one reason only, and that is to improve the lives of Canadians both in our own ridings and across the country. It is good news, and we should rejoice that we are leading the G7. We should feel good about this accomplishment. The unemployment rate is the lowest in 40 years. We should see that as a significant accomplishment and one that shows the government's policies are having an impact.

However, I do not think it is fair to say that everything is government related. It is all about whether businesses and Canadians in general have a view that they can progress and prosper, and whether they agree with the kinds of policies and direction that a government is taking.

Canada's strong fiscal fundamentals mean that our government has the confidence to make the investments in our future that will lay a solid foundation for the next generation of Canadians. I have said in most of my speeches, in the riding in particular, that every decade or two decades or so, Parliament and Canadian parliamentarians have to conclude that it is time to reinvest in Canada's infrastructure and its development, and to spend the resources to prepare the next generation to be competitive.

I see this budget, as I have seen the last two budgets, as being from a government that is looking long term and to the future. I want to make sure that the government, when it looks long term, thinks about the reality that more people will move to rural Canada in the next generation if the technology is in place for them to be there. Most of us who live in the north live there because we like the lifestyle. We have a tradition and a culture that is different from that of urbanites. We want to keep our children there and keep working there, and we need the technology and the infrastructure. We need the support of Canada, and the Ontario government in this case, for these things to happen.

The Budget

•(1030)

I will just use the example of my riding, which is a bit unique. Out of the 42 first nations I represent, as of today 22 are still isolated. They have no roads. If one asks the question, “Why are first nations in regions like mine not having the opportunity to create an economy?”, it is pretty simple. They have both hands tied behind their backs as far as building an economy goes. They have no broadband, no infrastructure such as roads, bridges, or grids to these communities, and are still basically living with the technology of 100 years ago, so it is not hard to imagine why it is a challenge. It is one that this government is working very hard to change in first nation communities.

I commend the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Indigenous Services for working as hard as they have to change the perspective and the opportunities of first nations people in ridings like mine. Without the help of the governments to develop the infrastructure everybody already has in urban Canada, ridings like mine will not progress and build the economy we have a right to have, like every other Canadian.

I call on the Ontario government. There is an election coming, which is great, and I hope to see northern policies coming out of the different parties that reflect the needs of northerners and rural Canadians in the province of Ontario, which I happen to represent.

I want to talk for a few minutes about the uniqueness of this budget. The uniqueness of this budget is really about looking to the future. Part of that is about making sure women can enter the workforce in many different ways. We have put significant amounts of dollars in this budget to move women to a place where they have more opportunity to participate in the economy. That is good straight economics. There is no fancy way to put this. If we can get more women in the workforce and equal pay for work of equal value, we can all rest assured that they can compete with men at any level. That is basically the premise of this budget.

However, I want to remind people, those of us who have daughters who are now young women with great educations and the opportunities to be successful, that we have to put the tools in their hands so they can be. This budget works toward that. We have the most educated women in any country in the world, so there is absolutely no reason why they cannot be successful. This gender budget is really about putting in the pieces to see if this can move to the next level. This is not to say that we have not gotten anywhere, because we have gotten a long way down the road, but we still have a long way to go.

With the few minutes I have left, I want to end my speech today talking about issues important to all Canadians. As people know, I represent a region—not a riding—the size of France. In that large region, we have the most fresh water of anybody in Ontario, if not North America. If anyone were to take a little ride on an airplane with me across this vast region, they would see that it looks like there is more water than there is land because there are lakes and rivers everywhere.

I am very encouraged that we are now looking to scientists to give us advice on water quality and the importance of water. Most of my constituents around the region, quite a few of them, are in the

tourism business, and it is all about water. Not only is it important for us to leave our children with a pristine environment and a Canada they can be proud of, but it is also good economics to make sure the environment is protected. When we go fishing we want to catch a fish we can eat. When we go boating we want to go swimming without worrying about getting some sort of disease from the water. All of these things are extremely important to northerners, who I see as the people who think about the environment every day because we live within it.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Science for some of the work we are doing on the scientific side of things. I just went to the International Joint Commission's conference the other day, and I learned a lot about science and what we are doing. I want to commend them for that.

•(1035)

I look forward to the government continuing to see rural Canada as a great opportunity for economic opportunities for Canadians.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member for recognizing the beauty of his area, the riding that he represents. I, too, represent an urban-rural riding. A large part of my rural riding is made up of farmers.

The agricultural industry in our nation is a very important part of not only our economy but preserving our environment, yet this budget is virtually silent on its support for the agricultural sector, whether that is primary agriculture, food processing, or any of those things that will benefit our farmers and, in the end, benefit all of us as Canadian citizens in terms of the quality and the quantity of food they are able to produce.

Could my colleague comment on why this budget is so silent on its support for our agricultural sector? I am not talking about subsidies. Our farmers do not want subsidies. They simply want a level playing field, where they can compete with adequate trade opportunities, and our current government is ignoring them. Would my colleague like to comment on that?

Hon. Robert Nault: Mr. Speaker, on the one hand my colleague is saying that he is not talking about subsidies, which means he just does not want to pour more federal money into farmers to make them less competitive but wants to make them more competitive. I will take the member at his word that this is not what he is talking about, and that what he is looking at is trying to make sure farmers and their products are sold abroad.

Without putting it in the budget, it is clear that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of International Trade have been working very hard with our agricultural community to make us competitive so that we can sell our products abroad. We have had a number of trade agreements put in place so that we can sell our products abroad. That is what the member is asking for. That is what the government is doing.

The Budget

Agriculture also has to be competitive through our transportation system. The Minister of Transport is working very hard on a bill that I understand is stuck in the Senate but that is intended to improve the transfer of goods across the country so that agricultural products are competitive.

That would be the way to proceed, if I take the member at his word that he is not looking for subsidies for farmers.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague talk about infrastructure and investments in rural regions, and yet we are not seeing any investments in public transit. We also still do not know how the Liberals' much vaunted infrastructure bank is going to work. People are afraid because we have heard that small municipalities may never benefit from the infrastructure bank, since it will not fund projects worth less than \$100,000.

How, then, can the government help small municipalities in Salaberry—Suroît like Dundee, Huntingdon, and Très-Saint-Rédempteur, which are not serviced by the transportation system that goes to the greater Montreal area, for example, where people work? Not everyone has a car. How are young people supposed to get to their college or university classes if there is no public transit? It is really hard in remote areas.

The budget does not mention anything about public transit or reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a national public transit plan. That could help reduce our ecological footprint, make it easier for young people to get to school, and help people get to work so they can earn a decent living for their families. None of this is in the budget, so I have to wonder how the budget will help the regions.

[*English*]

Hon. Robert Nault: Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the member for giving me an opportunity, if she is not aware, to inform the House that the rural caucus has been working for a year and a half now with the Minister of Infrastructure on a particular issue that we think is extremely important for rural municipalities and rural Canadians.

Just this last month, and in fact just this week, I announced in my riding, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure, that small municipalities of under 5,000 will now only have to pay their portion of the infrastructure dollars under the northern rural component at 7%. We put that in specifically because we recognize that small municipalities are going to have a difficult time participating in our infrastructure program.

The last one, communities under 100,000 are going to be able to access the rural and economic infrastructure program at 17% versus the third-third-third that everybody else does, and the way the Tories used to do it.

We are listening and we do want municipalities and first nations to participate in growing rural Canada. That is why we have reduced the formula for them, and the amount of money they would have to put forward in any proposal. I think that is great news and the beginning of their being able to put proposals together that they can to afford to pursue.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak to the budget. I would like to note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

I rise as the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, a riding that is half-urban and half-rural, split by the mighty Red River that flows from the United States all the way up to our seaport at Hudson Bay and Churchill, which we have heard so much about. The people of Kildonan—St. Paul are hard-working, fair minded, and just like this budget, striving to do better. I am going to start by looking at the provisions of the budget that have impacted my own jurisdiction of Manitoba and then take some time to have an opportunity to discuss its implications federally.

Manitoba has been very fortunate to see a significant increase in transfer payments. Overall, transfer payments are up \$289.6 million. Equalization gets most of that money allocation at \$216.5 million. Health is also up at \$56.5 million, and social services and programs will receive \$16.6 million more.

The situation is that the federal government has been very generous to Manitoba; however, with a Conservative government provincially, we have not necessarily seen the rollout of those innovative and supportive measures as quickly and dynamically as we had hoped and see in other jurisdictions. One can remember from the past the legacy of the Harper Conservatives who instead of looking at investments, looked at conserving funds and innovation.

In addition to overall transfer payments we're looking at a significant investment in one of the most brilliant architectural structures in Canada, the Canadian Human Rights Museum, a global award-winning structure I hope everyone has had the opportunity to come and visit. Besides the alabaster walkways and the garden of tranquillity, which has 52 pieces of columnar basalt, the content of the Human Rights Museum is even more dynamic and beautiful, as it is time for Canadians and the world to reflect on human rights and move forward in terms of reconciliation.

Additionally, we received funding for a national microbiology lab, which we are going to be expanding with the establishment of a centre for innovation and infectious disease diagnostics. Again, it builds on the strength of the microbiology lab. It builds on our other centres within Winnipeg and we are so proud that we have a government that is supporting Manitobans and in particular, Winnipeg.

In addition, I want to note that Manitoba will benefit from the Canada workers benefit and the Canada workers benefit disability program. In fact, finally we have seen an increase to our economic development agency, an agency that we have been working with that provides seed money or a bit of extra to create jobs and stimulate innovation.

The Budget

This is a budget that for the first time really recognizes the significance of our indigenous people, known to us as the Métis. The Métis are a fundamental foundation partner in Manitoba and we see in the budget \$516 million for Métis over 10 years and \$325 million for employment and training programs. It is high time that we had a Liberal government recognize the significance of the Métis people in Canada.

• (1045)

When I look at the budget in a broader sense, as a woman and a scientist in earth science, I am thrilled with it. I spent most of my professional career in exploration and development in the mineral sector. I see this as a budget that takes the steps to provide the framework for removing the most important barriers to development, with the establishment of certainty. We see this with pipelines, but we also see it for hard rock projects. It is absolutely essential that we have a rights recognition process with indigenous people across Canada, so they become partners in the projects and are integral in receiving the benefits, including resource revenue sharing from projects across Canada.

In addition to establishing a positive framework, finally, we are moving forward on the front of indigenous relationships. Most significant is the fact that our Prime Minister has indicated it is the most important relationship we have as a government. I am very proud to be part of a government that recognizes this

With respect to economic growth, we are doing fairly well. We have created 600,000 jobs. We are close to recovering from the crash in resource commodities that hit us about three years ago. We have been working hard to eliminate child poverty. We are helping small business through tax cuts, innovation, and science moving forward. We are helping low-income workers.

I specifically want to thank the government and the Minister of Finance for recognizing the importance of the mineral exploration tax credit. For explorationists working on the hope they will make a discovery, this tax credit is essential. It will keep Canadian explorationists looking for more resources that can be utilized for economic development and the benefit of indigenous peoples and all Canadians.

With respect to gender, we finally see a government that understands and is moving forward by taking positive steps. Parental sharing will make a significant difference. We need only look at the great work Quebec has already done in paving the way, with 80% of Quebec fathers using the provision, while the rest of Canadians, males or other partners, are only engaged 12% of the time.

In addition, the government has indicated it will bring in pay equity legislation. We are moving forward on this very significant flag, with essential programs that will be coming forward. Also, we are going to be boosting women's labour participation in trades and apprenticeships.

In the extractive industries, in which I am particularly interested, we can look at their sustainability reports and global reporting initiatives and statistics. Most of our companies are the best in the world. We are clearly the leaders in hard rock and the oil and gas industry. However, the reports indicate we have not seen significant advancement in gender equity.

For example, Cameco, which has the best record, has only 24% women in its workforce. Hudbay has 20% women in its workforce. Barrick has only 15% women in its workforce. Vale has only 12% women in its workforce. We need to do so much better.

On indigenous people, 25% of committed money in the budget will go to indigenous peoples. We are proud of that. It is needed. We know the significant challenges.

In regard to science, this is the largest single investment in fundamental research in Canadian history, and we can all be proud of that, versus the Conservative strategy in the previous government of muzzling scientists. That is hardly the way we see a progressive country moving forward.

How are we doing? When we look at global rankings, we are seventh globally in social and environmental issues; third in the number of high-quality universities; second in tolerance and inclusion; first in tolerance for religions and immigrants; second in access to advanced education; and first in low homicide rates. It seems like the Liberal government is on the right track.

• (1050)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague neglected to mention the huge deficit this budget would leave. This year alone the deficit will be \$18 billion. The interest costs alone in 2018-19 will be \$26 billion. By 2022, the interest costs are projected to be \$33 billion. If we look at page 340 of the budget document, the department-by-department spending, it shows there is no department in the entire Government of Canada that spends this much money. The Liberal government, during a time of economic prosperity and economic growth, is spending more money than it is taking in, to the tune of \$18 billion this year.

How can we possibly trust the government with our economic management when it continues to spend more money than it takes in during a time of economic prosperity? We should be paying down our debt, not adding to our debt, during these good economic times.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question, which is an important one, our fiscal balance is an important issue for all Canadians, particularly those in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul.

The fact is that what we saw with the previous government was years of restraints and cuts. In the Phoenix pay system alone, 2,000 workers were cut from that program. Workers were cut not only in the Phoenix system but across government in general. It is important that we provide basic services, something that was maligned and left behind.

Investments are required. Has it been working? Absolutely. Six hundred thousand new jobs have been created. At a time when Canada faced a significant blow with the downturn of natural resources and commodity prices, measures had to be taken.

The government is working its way out of deficit and building to a balanced budget.

The Budget

•(1055)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest. She mentioned pipelines and indigenous people and how the top priority of the Prime Minister was to re-establish and rebuild a relationship with first nations. Talk is cheap.

In my province of British Columbia, the government has approved a pipeline without the consent of first nations. The Minister of Natural Resources has even said he would use military force to facilitate the construction of this pipeline. What does the member have to say about that?

With respect to true reconciliation with first nations people, is it really her government's plan to threaten the use of force to facilitate its projects through communities without consent?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, a relationship with indigenous people is essential toward creating a situation where projects can advance. Are we going to have consensus on a project? Very unlikely. There will always be those opposed, like the NDP, versus those who want to see development in a modern, scientific, careful manner, like our Liberal Party for example.

It is important that we look at a way to work with and respect the rights of indigenous people. I am proud that we will be accepting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which includes free, prior, and informed consent. This does not mean 100% consensus. The member may not be aware of that.

It is important for us to consult. Consultation and working with communities is not as the member suggests, at no cost. We have invested an enormous amount of money, time, deliberation and resources to ensure we have the right plan.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to attend a B.C. land surveyors annual general meeting. This used to be a man's game before, but now more and more women are coming forward and entering the profession. My own mentor in land surveying and the fellow who I articulated with, Mr. Hans Troelsen, brought in a scholarship and bursary to encourage more women to get involved in the land surveying profession.

Could the hon. member tell me how this budget will help women who want to participate in professions like land surveying and engineering?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, this is an unprecedented budget. It encourages women to take those steps forward in apprenticeship in trades, in the mineral sector, in surveying, by showing it is possible.

More needs to be done, but this government will make it happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. I am always very happy to meet with them when I am in the riding. I am confident that the measures in budget 2018 will be highly beneficial for them again this year.

On this day of budget speeches, I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to some fundamental issues that are important

to many of my constituents whom I have met over the past two weeks.

I will first talk about women and entrepreneurship. Those are the key terms in the new budget, and we can be proud of that. Support is provided for women-owned businesses so that their businesses can expand, so that they can find new clients and gain access to more export opportunities. That will be possible thanks to improved access to investments for women entrepreneurs. They will have access to \$1.65 billion over three years through the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada.

The allocation of \$105 million over five years through the regional development agencies will support women entrepreneurs. Those investments are essential for our communities' economic growth. The riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin is made up of families, young people and seniors, but it also includes many industries, as well as small and medium-sized businesses. That is why I am pleased that this budget will support them better, while providing a unique vision for entrepreneurs.

Under budget 2018, \$2.9 billion will be invested over five years to help companies innovate and to put Canadian companies at a competitive advantage. I am very pleased that this government is investing over \$500 million to advance cybersecurity and funding a new national cybersecurity strategy, because this issue is top of mind at the Standing Committee on National Defence, of which I am a member. We absolutely need to create a safe, reliable, and accessible Canadian centre for cybersecurity. This centre will give the government, in addition to Canadians and businesses, access to a centralized source of specialized advice, guidance, service, and support on cybersecurity issues.

Furthermore, I am proud to support official languages, and this is reflected in my speeches in both the House and in committee. I am very pleased that budget 2018 allocates \$400 million in new funding over five years in support of the action plan for official languages 2018-23. I met with members of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, and I know what they need. They reacted positively and enthusiastically to this announcement. This funding will enable them to carry out several projects and to fulfill their mission in the years to come. This funding is awarded in different ways, including support for community organizations that provide services to community members, that welcome newcomers, and that work in early childhood development. There will also be funding for recruiting and retaining French and ESL teachers.

The Budget

•(1100)

I taught English as a second language in Quebec's far north and at the four high schools in Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. I can speak to the importance of learning both official languages. It is especially important these days for young people to master both French and English. It will make it easier for them to join the work force no matter which field they get into.

Help for seniors was also a big part of the discussions when I had coffee with my constituents on March 13. Those who attended were quite open and keenly interested in knowing how the new federal budget was going to help them in the day-to-day. What seniors go through matters to me personally and that is why I try to meet with them every chance I get.

I have made it my mission to advocate for the well-being of seniors. That is why I am pleased that \$20 million is being allocated over five years for community projects to support people living with dementia and family caregivers. This funding will certainly help seniors living with this reality as well as their loved ones in gaining access to mental health support measures.

I am also pleased with the changes coming to the Canada pension plan in 2019, which will have a very positive impact. The changes include increasing retirement benefits under the CPP enhancement for parents who take time off work to care for persons with severe and prolonged disabilities, raising survivor's pensions for individuals under age 45 who lose their spouse, providing a top-up disability benefit to retirement pension recipients under the age of 65 who are disabled, and increasing the death benefit to its maximum value of \$2,500 for all eligible contributors.

These changes, which are intended to improve our seniors' quality of life, speak to our government's appreciation for their considerable contributions to our country's development. Concrete action has been taken, and our government will continue to take the necessary steps to ensure a more secure and dignified retirement for our seniors. We want all of our seniors to receive the benefits they are entitled to and high-quality services that meet their needs.

•(1105)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to listen to the speech by my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. I knew he had been a teacher, but I was interested to hear that he used to teach English as a second language in four high schools in his riding. That may explain why he was elected.

Like my colleague, I think it is important for Canadians to speak both official languages. The corollary is that the government also needs to operate in both official languages. However, a day or two ago, the media reported on a website that had been hastily translated, to put it politely.

I would like to hear what my colleague thought when he saw the news that the Canadian government had, in this particular case, failed in its responsibility to provide Canadians with sound, accurate information in both official languages, with no linguistic errors.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind remarks.

I would like to remind my colleague of the \$400 million in funding. These much-needed funds are what community organizations have been asking for. They will be used for cultural and artistic activities and radio stations, which he is very familiar with; community newspapers serving Quebec's English-language communities; the recruitment and retention of teachers of French and English as a second language and for schools of minority official languages. We must keep the legacy of both our official languages alive. This funding goes a long way in doing that.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned seniors and pensioners. I am just wondering how this budget helps any of the pensioners today that are going through a bankruptcy and losing thousands of dollars on their monthly pensions because of inadequate bankruptcy laws. He mentioned the Canada pension plan. That does not do anything for today.

The seniors out there are wondering how many more Sears, Wabush Mines, or Stelco situations they have to go through before any of these laws are changed.

•(1110)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, the deficit has been reduced to \$12.3 billion. Thus, the federal GDP ratio should decline to 28.4%. I would like to remind members that Canada has the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio by far of any G7 country.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about seniors. I would like him to talk more about them, given the fact that seniors are growing in numbers. Baby boomers are continuing to retire and we see the need to provide these services in advance for seniors.

Also, the member is so passionate about both of our official languages. I have the opportunity to sit next to him at the defence committee and occasionally he will teach me French.

[*Translation*]

I have a question for my colleague. Can he tell us what the government has done for seniors?

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. His French is very good. The courses are paying off.

Canada's 11-year national housing strategy was announced in 2017, and the \$40 million plan is in place. The Canada housing benefit will take effect on April 1, 2020, and provide support to seniors for rental housing.

Furthermore, the investment of \$6 billion over 10 years announced in 2017 will improve access to home care services in the provinces and territories. This most appropriate of measures will make it possible for seniors to receive the services they need at home if they so wish, and in a community environment that can provide this care. This measure also represents additional assistance for caregivers.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your leadership. I will be sharing my time with the incredible member for Milton.

It is a real honour to make comments today regarding the 2018 budget.

Canadians are looking to the budget with great hope that the government will be responsible in its spending, that its focus and priorities will be balanced and prudent, and that it will be careful with their tax dollars. The budget is about what we do with the resources, the taxes that are collected by the government from Canadians. Are taxes going to go up or down? Will things become more expensive and less affordable?

This is a political place where we have very interesting debates at times. However, it is important that we listen to some of the experts. One of those experts is the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It is important that we rely on the unbiased professional critique of this budget.

We have seen huge announcements in this budget. This is the third budget that the Liberal government has introduced. It has one more budget to bring in, in another year. Is the government doing a good or bad job? Is it responsible or irresponsible? We have seen hundreds of billions of dollars in announcements that have been made over the last almost three years, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has provided an important critique.

After the budget was presented, it was recently reported that budget 2018 provides an incomplete account of the changes that the government has made to its \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan. The PBO requested the plan, but it does not exist. Roughly one-quarter of the funding allocated for infrastructure from 2016-17 to 2018-19 was not spent and will lapse. The money was announced but was not spent. The mystery for Canadians is how these announcements can be made, how we can have a growing deficit, a growing debt in Canada, yet the money is not being spent. Where is this money going?

The Fraser Institute provided an analysis on this budget. It stated:

In the midst of serious concerns over Canada's economic prospects, and challenges emerging from the United States, [the] Finance Minister[s]...2018 federal budget does nothing to address these problems. In some respects, the budget makes matters worse by continuing the government's self-destructive policies of chronic deficit-financed spending and new taxes on entrepreneurs.

It does not sound good.

Andrew Coyne stated:

Once upon a time the federal budget was about the budget of the federal government. It was an annual opportunity for Parliament and the public to examine the federal government's program of expenses and revenues for the coming fiscal year.... All that is now in the past.

It sounds like what the Prime Minister said at the beginning, that budgets balance themselves. We all know they do not, and it is no mystery why we have this growing problem.

John Ivison of the *National Post* wrote, "as the Liberals have proven over the past two years, policies are adopted to get elected, not necessarily to be implemented." We continue to hear announcements of hundreds of billions of dollars with no action taken.

I am particularly concerned that there is almost no mention of seniors in the budget. I am the critic for palliative care and income security for seniors. I listened intently to my colleague on the other side when he spoke about seniors. In budget 2018, there is no mention of seniors. He spoke about the national housing plan. That is reliant on the provinces buying into that plan, but the provinces have not bought into it. Again there are a lot of big announcements and confetti in the air, but no substance in those announcements. Just as we heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer regarding the billions of dollars for a national infrastructure plan, that is fizzling. The Liberals are not getting it done.

● (1115)

As for seniors, the mystery is why there is no priority for seniors. We have heard announcements about how important seniors are to the government, but in the budget document, they are missing. There is no mention of seniors and the importance of seniors, except for one time. There is no minister advocating in cabinet for seniors. In the shadow cabinet on this side, in the official opposition, we have two members of Parliament appointed to deal with the issues of seniors. Why is that? It is because we have a growing aging population, and it is very important that we take care of our Canadian seniors. At least it is on this side of the House. Therefore, we encourage the government, as do stakeholders across Canada, to appoint a minister for seniors so that there is a strong voice at the cabinet table. Because that voice is missing, seniors continue to be ignored.

There were dollars in the previous two budgets for palliative care. Palliative care is end-of-life care that Canadians need. Seventy per cent of Canadians who need palliative care do not have access to it. That is why, with the passage of Bill C-277, this Parliament unanimously supported providing palliative care, but we have to have the dollars appointed to it in the budget, and they are missing. The dollars used to be there. They are gone. Hopefully the government will consider an amendment to its budget to include those dollars again for palliative care, because we will continue on a trajectory where we have Canadians not having the palliative care that is needed.

The healthy seniors pilot project was announced for New Brunswick on page 173. I would suggest another amendment to include the west. Where are most Canadian seniors going to retire to spend the last years of their lives? It is on the west coast in the Vancouver and Victoria areas. The west coast is where the climate is much more favourable. Accessibility is better year-round. Flowers actually are growing right now in that area, and people have already started to cut their lawns. Spring is coming to this cold, white area, but that is where seniors like to retire. Why was the west not included in a pilot project? It is because this is the government's riding. It is a partisan appointment, and dollars were appointed based on politics, not on the needs of seniors.

The Budget

The other issue is the Canada summer jobs program, mentioned on pages 56 and 250. We had a very sad vote here in the House yesterday. Each of us, as members of Parliament, have received our list of applicants. I am going to be digesting that and going over it carefully, but it has really changed. It is not on par with previous Canada summer jobs programs. I looked very carefully, and it is primarily for commercial applications. The not-for-profit organizations have provided job experience and are very important to bless our communities. It is all gone, it appears.

I am concerned that this has affected my opportunity to carry out my responsibility as a member of Parliament. Every year for the last 14 years, I have gone over that list. Because of the government's discrimination against Canadians, because of its bias, it has introduced the new values test. Quality job experiences for our youth have been lost. It is not fair. It is not equitable. There are going to be fewer job opportunities because of what the government has done. It is not on par with previous years. Hopefully the government will consider an amendment to that too.

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on my colleague's comments on the student summer jobs program, a program that has virtually doubled since this government took office.

The Prime Minister, his cabinet, and caucus have recognized just how important young people are to Canada and are enhancing that program, providing thousands of additional jobs for young people.

I want to bring to the attention of the member and those who are putting in applications that they should look at the supplementary information. The attestation that is often referred to has supplementary information regarding that specific question. It references the core mandate. This is the primary activity undertaken by an organization that reflects the organization's ongoing services provided to the community. It is not about the beliefs of the organization. It is not about the values of the organization.

From discussions I have had with individuals, this is not preventing organizations such as church groups and so forth from being able to apply for the student summer jobs program. Would the member not agree that it is really important, as we move forward with this fantastic program that provides thousands of jobs to young people, that we ensure that misinformation is not being circulated by members of this House?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that I would agree with the member that misinformation on this important issue should not be disseminated by this House. I would say that it is the misinformation the government has provided on this issue that has created a great amount of confusion.

Canadians need clarity. Canadians need fairness. Our country needs, particularly from Parliament, a lack of discrimination against Canadians. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and those rights apply to all of us.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member may or may not know that housing is a passion of mine. Homelessness and housing in my community sort of pushed me to take that big step to put my name forward, and here I am today.

I appreciate my colleague's comments. The only new money in housing is \$11 billion over 10 years. The rest of the money the federal government often talks about is money that is supposed to be coming from provincial governments. We have not heard anything. We are almost hearing crickets when it comes to that conversation. Communities are wondering when the government is going to start to act and pull that forward.

Federal governments have pulled out of housing over the last 30 years. We are nowhere near where the investment was 30 years ago. I want to give my colleague an opportunity to talk about the fact that the government says that it is spending \$40 billion but half of that has to come from the provinces. We have not heard anything about those conversations to date.

• (1125)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her commitment on the issue of housing and the homeless. We need to take care of vulnerable Canadians. We need more than empty announcements.

We need a government of action, a government that does what it says it is going to do. Announcements announcing what is going to happen in the year 2035 do not help Canadians now. If there is going to be an announcement, it has to be a real announcement with real funding for this year.

I am saddened that there are so many homeless Canadians who need help and would have received help through the Canada summer jobs program, but because the government requires these organizations to bow the knee, and these organizations said that they could not bow the knee, the homeless will be hurt through the Canada summer jobs program.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand today and discuss the budget put forward by the government. It would be remiss of me not to point out the fact that there has been a stunning rejection of this budget by everyone who has been watching the financial situation of Canada, indeed by my constituents in Milton, Ontario.

We can look at the issues from a higher level, and oftentimes in the House of Commons, that is exactly what we do. We think about the bigger picture, about the financial health of Canada and the security of Canada. If we argue on that basis alone, this budget is failing incredibly, just like the government has been such a failure for Canadians, middle class or otherwise.

If we take a look at what the government's record has been and where we are going in the future, what we see is that there is no plan to balance the budget for 25 years. We see, as well, that there have been material hikes in personal income taxes in the past two years. We have seen the introduction of a national carbon tax, an aggressive attack on small business, and associated risks around NAFTA. These are the things being spoken about in places like the *Financial Post*. Mr. Martin Pelletier had a very good article this morning about the fact that while the government may beat its chest and say that we have a great economy and are doing well, the reality is that there are storm clouds on the horizon. The government's approach has been to do nothing but spend more. It is not saving or putting money aside, as the Province of Quebec has done. It is spending more.

The Budget

In the high-level picture, why it is important to ensure that we balance the budget? I give members the example of Ontario versus Quebec. For the past number of years, the Province of Quebec has shown fiscal restraint, and what do we have today? It is able to lower income taxes and pay down its debt for the first time since the 1950s at such an extensive level. What do we have in Ontario? We have a government that has announced that it is going to continue to spend us into oblivion, tacking even more billions in debt and deficit onto my kids, who live in Milton, Ontario, and onto the kids who live all around Milton, Ontario.

This can all be boiled down to a fundamental difference between the government and what we believe on this side. The government believes that it should be the be all and end all of everything in this country. It believes that it is there to actually create public sector jobs to employ the entire country. What it does not get is that true economic growth and true job growth come from allowing and unleashing the private sector to create these jobs. That is what works in this country. It is a proven fact, from the time we were in government, that getting these jobs going is what makes our local economies and our country in general more prosperous.

What do I see in this budget? Well, I see the promise made to constituents, my constituents and those across the country, that we are going to do targeted infrastructure spending to spur the economy. That makes sense. We like infrastructure spending for the reason that it creates private jobs that will continue to spin off into the economy. They are not jobs created in Ottawa. They are jobs created in Milton, Ontario. What has Milton, Ontario, seen of this infrastructure money? Not an awful lot. What I see in this budget is the fact that the Liberals are pushing off into the future \$4.2 billion in infrastructure spending and are still showing deficits in the billions of dollars this year. Automatically, my mind goes to what they are spending it on. What are they possibly doing?

Milton, Ontario, my home, is a growing community. The majority are small-town families. Actually, the biggest proportion of the growing population was under age 10 at one point in time, and we can see that from the schools that are newly being built, and of course, the portables that go with them to house how many children there are in Milton right now. Parents tend to work outside of the riding of Milton. They tend to work in Mississauga and other places all around. There are some stay-at-home moms. There are some moms who go to work. There are some stay-at-home dads, and there are some dads who go out of the house to work as well. It is a wonderful mix.

As I put myself in their shoes and I talk to them about what is in this budget for them, I actually do not see a lot in there. What are they getting for their higher taxes? What are they getting for these bloated deficits that their children, who they are placing all their hopes on, are going to receive?

• (1130)

There is an interesting article in the newspaper today talking about the issue with respect to employment in the country. There are over 400,000 jobs that need to be filled. We hear about a labour shortage, a crisis, but we also have people who are searching for jobs. There is a mismatch in skills. There is nothing in the budget that addresses the issue of people going into jobs and employers who do not know

what skills they need, and there is no communication. When we were government, we recognized that, understood that. We put resources into making sure that at least parents knew what skills were going to be needed for the future. Employers knew what they were going to need from people and knew to interpret the experience they needed to help them in their companies.

In the few minutes I have, I want to talk about one major funding announcement that was not in the budget this year. It came very recently from the government, and it has to do with the deployment of our national forces to Mali for a peacekeeping mission. It is well known that the UN asked the Prime Minister and the government two years ago to take part in the Mali mission. In November, the Prime Minister was pressed when he had a conference in Vancouver to talk about peacekeeping. He was pressed about when he would be announcing the peacekeeping initiative. He said at the time that he had to take it seriously and had to think about it, and the decision would come. He recognized that he would be putting soldiers and sailors "in harm's way".

Knowing this decision was being made, knowing that the Liberals were in the process of it, I find it odd that they did two things. They cut the money in the financial update in the fall that would be going to the military. They cut the amount of money they would have for military equipment.

Indeed, when I look at the budget, I always go to the table of contents, because that is where we usually get the top line of who is getting what in the budget this year. Eagerly, I took a look at part 3, "Upholding Shared Values", and there was nothing in there for national defence. I scanned part 4, which is "Security and Access to Justice", and there was nothing in there for national defence. This made me upset and angry and very concerned, and for this reason. Yesterday in the House of Commons, I asked the Prime Minister a question, knowing that oftentimes we are given advice about the risk associated with personnel deploying to dangerous war areas. This is a dangerous war area. There has been 162 peacekeepers lost since 2013. Last year, there were 220 incidents of attack against the blue helmets, which was more than happened in 2015 and 2016 combined. It is not getting better. It is getting far, far worse, and the targets are the men and women in blue helmets.

The targets will be our Canadian Forces. That is recognized by the government, and it is recognized by the opposition. More importantly, when I asked the Prime Minister yesterday, he gave assurances to the House that he would have mitigation in the form that the forces would have all the equipment and all the support they need.

However, where is it? It is not in the budget. It is not in the Liberals' budget within National Defence, because they have not been given that money; they have had money taken away. There is a big problem when we decide to send our men and women overseas without the appropriate equipment and supports. The way in which the Liberals announced it yesterday, with the minister saying one thing and the chief of the defence staff contradicting and saying another, I have great fears for this mission that they will be undertaking. We know this is a very dangerous place. It is a place that is dissolving in terms of democracy, and it has been for a very long time.

The Budget

There have been two coups in Mali. There is insurgency, not just in the north but in the central part of Mali as well. We have a situation where blue helmets are being targeted, and yet we are “happily”, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, accepting the UN invitation. I would hope that the Prime Minister has a lot more to say, as opposed to happily sending our men and women into a very dangerous place without having the appropriate equipment. I cannot understand why he thinks that the most important decision a prime minister ever takes about sending our men and women into harm’s way is a request from the UN that he happily gave.

On a last point, I have done much reading about the importance of women in peacekeeping, and I fundamentally believe in it. However, I believe in it where there is communication in communities and where there is intelligence gathering. In this case, 80% of the forces are being used to protect the other forces.

● (1135)

My fear is that the Prime Minister has negotiated perks with United Nations with respect to his desire for the security seat. As a result, he has decided to send our men and women into the most dangerous mission in the world without support, without money, without resources, and without equipment. We will hold him to account.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as a member of the defence committee, I could not disagree any more than humanly possible with the comments I have heard from the other side of the aisle, particularly as it relates to the latter part of the member’s speech.

The truth of the matter is that this government has put forward a very ambitious and aggressive plan, “Strong, Secure, Engaged”. It focuses exactly on what the member has been critical of, the people, the needs of the people, and what they require to be participants throughout the world as we engage in various conflicts.

What we saw from the previous government was a scaling back in our commitments to NATO, and a scaling back in our commitments in the other aspects of how we get engaged. However, we know that when Canada is engaged in helping to build up other parts of the world, we become more successful and secure as a result.

The minister was at our committee meeting this morning, and he pointedly said that all aspects of “Strong, Secure, Engaged” are fully funded. This is not a government that takes lightly its commitment to its military, and I reject the notion that is coming from the other side.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I think that both the member and I can agree on the fact that the Mali engagement is going to be a very complex one. There is no way that the current defence budget has enough resources to support our men and women on this dangerous deployment. I fully expect that in the supplementary estimates, either (A) or (B), we will see an increase in requests for funding. I will invite the member to describe to me then exactly why he felt he could say today that they are fully resourced as they stand.

With respect to this mission, I think it is important to note that the Prime Minister wants to raise his profile and say that Canada is back on the world stage. It is the Liberal point of view, which is fine. It is what he says to Canadians. However, the reality is that choosing where to go is a matter of the health and safety of our men and

women in uniform, and that is where they have made the mistake of choosing Mali. The UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations has admitted to the Security Council—where the Prime Minister wants to have a seat, by the way—that this mission needs to be re-evaluated, that it is too dangerous. It is by far the most dangerous mission that the United Nations has.

I have great faith in the capabilities of our men and women, but they need to be sent into places where they can help, not be the ones who are put up there with targets on their backs.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to know what she thinks about the Liberals’ failure to invest in agriculture. We have heard almost nothing about it and we cannot really find any mention of agriculture in the budget. Our farmers are really worried these days. They have been very vocal. There are no investments in local distribution or in buying local. There are no measures to make it easier to transfer farms to family members, for example.

Young farmers are suffering and there may be a rural exodus in areas such as Salaberry—Suroît if the government does not do something and does not support our farmers, who account for one out of eight jobs in Canada. There are many agronomists, farmers, ranchers, and vegetable growers who no longer know what to do. Even with all the trade agreements that the government is negotiating, the budget makes no mention of any compensation.

What does my colleague think about that? What should the government do to provide more support for Canada’s agricultural industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments. One would think that Milton, Ontario, because it is a suburb of Toronto, would only be an urban area, but it is not. We have some rural farming as well, so I know fully the importance of it to the community.

One glaringly obvious point is the fact that the government is tone deaf when it comes to the importance of agriculture in this country, and I will tell the members why.

During the announcements that the finance minister, I would say cruelly pushed out in July of last year in his attempt at throwing a wide net of grabbing as many tax dollars as he possibly could from small business, he went after the small farmer and farm families. I visited many cities and constituencies in Atlantic Canada, which, as we know, are all held by the government. The palpable anger in those communities about the lack of understanding of what a farmer does and how important a farmer is to their community, to our country, and to our economic well-being was brought to my attention.

I hope that the government would listen a little more carefully, because the Liberals have shown in their budget that they have no interest or appetite for anything in the agriculture industry.

The Budget

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg Centre.

It is a great pleasure to rise to speak in support of budget 2018. The measures proposed in budget 2018 will have a substantial and positive impact on my riding of Oakville. I look forward to seeing the benefits roll out in my community next year and for the years to come.

Since coming to office, one of our government's highest priorities has been growing our economy. Now, with the highest growth rate in the G7, we are taking steps to ensure that all Canadians feel the benefit of Canada's economic growth. Budget 2018 presents a message of equality and growth for Canada that translates into smart investments for Oakville and Halton residents. This budget proposes targeted progressive projects that will build a more equal, competitive, and sustainable Canada.

In the months leading up to the budget, I had the opportunity to speak with many people in my riding, constituency organizations, residents, chambers of commerce members, and stakeholders, in Oakville about their concerns and priorities for the upcoming budget. While the stakeholders came from all backgrounds and perspectives, many common themes emerged through those discussions. Oakville's stakeholders voiced their support for investments in job creation and advanced manufacturing, investments in research and development, and government action to further promote gender equality and enhanced environmental protection.

Among the many exciting investments proposed in 2018, there were a few I would like to highlight that in particular relate to my riding of Oakville.

For many Canadians, being a parent and raising a family is the most important part of their lives. New families in Oakville rely on maternity and parental benefits for support during the critical period in early childhood when they need to take time off work to care for their children. Budget 2018 makes it easier for parents to share child care responsibilities through a new EI parental sharing benefit. This encourages both parents to take time off through a "use it or lose it" incentive of five additional weeks. This encourages greater equality when it comes to the challenge of sharing child care responsibility, and helps to distribute family and home duties between parents. I look forward to seeing Oakville families benefiting from this program.

Our government has always been clear that we need to do more to protect our natural environment. Our quality of life rests on the commitments we make to protect Canada's parks and other natural wild spaces, both today and for the future. That is why we have proposed \$1.3 billion over five years to implement a number of key measures, including the creation of a joint \$1 billion nature fund. This will be done in partnership with corporate, not-for-profit, provincial, territorial, indigenous, and other partners. The fund will make it possible to secure private lands and support efforts to protect species. The fund also proposes to establish a connected network of protected areas with our partners.

Another important aspect of the fund is that it will establish better rules for the review of major projects that will protect our natural

environment and waterways. Oakville residents cherish our green spaces like Sixteen Mile Creek and Bronte Creek Provincial Park and want to make sure we are putting in protections to preserve them for future generations. These new measures will ensure just that.

When I was speaking with my constituents, a key priority was increasing available funding for research and development. There is an incredible amount of innovation happening in Canada. It is vital to support our research and development in order to grow our economy and remain competitive on the world stage. Through budget 2018, the government will provide a historic level of new funding in support of Canadian researchers. This package of research support was informed by the recommendations in Canada's fundamental science review. It is about more than just funding. It is about moving toward a modern research system defined by greater collaboration between disciplines and researchers from across the globe.

Budget 2018 is making an investment of nearly \$4 billion to support the next generation of Canadian researchers creating advancements in a wide range of fields. The Canadian Institutes for Health Research will be receiving \$354.7 million over five years to support advancements like new technology to diagnose disease earlier, or new medicines to treat patients.

As the chair of the health research caucus, I have had the opportunity to hear first-hand from many Canadian researchers who have been worried about their job security and the future of their research projects. They will benefit immensely from this new funding. As someone who used to review grants on a CIHR review board, it was often challenging to deny projects that we knew would be of benefit to Canada because of limited funding. This funding is a much-needed shot in the arm for Canadian researchers and our research institutions.

• (1145)

We are also looking to increase support for collaborative innovation projects involving businesses, colleges, and polytechnics, such as Sheridan College in my riding, by proposing \$140 million over five years through the college and community innovation program.

As the member of Parliament for Oakville, home to Ford Canada, and as chair of the Liberal auto caucus, I also want to highlight how budget 2018 will support the automotive industry in Canada.

The Budget

Driven by the operations of five global automotive manufacturers and over 660 diverse automotive suppliers, the automotive industry is Canada's largest source of manufacturing exports and trade. As part of our pre-budget submission, the auto caucus called for continued investments in this sector. Canada's auto sector and advanced manufacturing will benefit from the \$1.26-billion strategic innovation fund, which will offer both repayable and non-repayable contributions to firms of all sizes across all of Canada. Budget 2018 is giving this vital industry more opportunity to invest in Canada, driving economic growth and job creation in the advanced manufacturing sector in Ontario.

I cannot speak in support of budget 2018 without recognizing the effort and consideration that has been taken throughout its proposals to address gender inequality issues in Canada.

Budget 2018 offers more ways to ensure the equal and full participation of women in Canada's economy. We are changing parental leave benefits, as I previously outlined, to help mothers transition more easily back to the workforce. We are taking pay equity seriously by implementing historic proactive pay equity legislation so that Canadians receive equal pay for equal work. We are making unprecedented investments in women in business through establishing the women entrepreneurship strategy in a \$1.65-billion investment over three years through the Business Development Bank and Export Development Canada.

We are expanding Canada's strategy to address gender-based violence, providing funding to projects, including preventing violence in teen dating and supporting rape crisis and sexual assault centres. Also proposed is \$1.8 million in funding for programs that engage men and boys on the importance of gender equality and speaking against violence against women. Events like our local Halton Women's Place Hope in High Heels, which I was pleased to co-host and bring to Parliament Hill last November, raise awareness on this issue. These are initiatives I believe are necessary and will make a significant impact on our country's future. I have said many times, violence against women is a male problem, and the solution must include men and boys. I am so proud to stand here as part of a government that has not only taken gender issues seriously, but is providing meaningful and thoughtful ways to address those challenges.

I would now like to speak about a topic included in the budget that is near and dear to my heart. It is a priority in my riding of Oakville and across Canada. A highlight of the budget is the creation of the national advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare. As many of my constituents and colleagues in the House know, this is one of the main reasons I decided to enter federal politics. We are the only country in the world with a national health care system that does not also have a national pharmacare program. When one in four Canadians cannot afford to fill or finish a prescription, something must be done. When a single mother of two has to choose between medication for a sick child or food on the table, something must be done. When a senior on a fixed income cannot refill a required medication, or when our nation's young adults cannot afford medications for chronic illnesses, like insulin for diabetes, something must be done.

This is an issue I have been advocating for since I was elected. One of the first things I did after the election was work to initiate a

study into a national pharmacare program by the Standing Committee on Health. We have heard from 99 witnesses in order to prepare an in-depth report to Parliament on what a program could look like and how it could be implemented. I look forward to the report being tabled in the House in the near future. The national advisory council is the next step to achieving this goal. I am beyond proud that our government has commissioned the council to further investigate how this should be implemented, and I will continue to work both in Ottawa and at home in Oakville to further the health of Canadians.

As we can see, budget 2018 is supporting targeted, progressive projects that will build a more equal, competitive, and sustainable Canada. I am proud to support these initiatives, and I look forward to seeing the benefits roll out in Oakville and across our great country.

● (1150)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague listed a number of different projects that are receiving different amounts of money, millions here and millions there. However, one number he failed to mention is on page 219 of the budget, where the summary of all the expenditures are. It shows a \$26-billion payment, simply for interest this coming year. That grows to \$33 billion by 2022.

I understand that my colleague has wide and deep experience in running businesses. I wonder if he would answer the question as to how it is possible that any business, whether a private enterprise or a government agency, could continue to spend billions of dollars, or even millions of dollars more each year than what they are taking in. What kind of long-term sustainability would that company have?

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, to me it is about declining debt to GDP and that ratio. If we are increasing spending and raising GDP more than the cost of the deficit financing, then we are making a substantial investment in the Canadian economy and we are building capacity to repay that debt.

Canada has very strong fiscal fundamentals. We have been anchored by a low and now declining debt-to-GDP ratio, so our government can go forward with the confidence to make investments in our future that will strengthen and grow the middle class, lay a more solid foundation for the next generation of Canadians, and at the same time, increase the GDP by a greater amount than we are increasing the debt cost.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. He ended his speech by talking about the creation of an advisory council on the implementation of a national pharmacare program, so there is still a very long way to go. He even said that the Standing Committee on Health will soon be tabling a report on the issue, but that another report is needed to look into the implementation of a national pharmacare program.

Why then should I trust my colleague when he tells me that we are finally going to get a national pharmacare program, given that the Liberals made that promise many times over 20 years ago and have already examined the issue at length?

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Standing Committee on Health has been studying national pharmacare for a period of time. We have heard from a number of witnesses and a report will be forthcoming to the House in the near future.

However, that just goes part of the way. There is much to be done at the provincial and territorial level. Further consultation and discussion needs to take place to make sure that national pharmacare can be implemented in a way that is supported and is part of that great Canadian framework of collaboration between provinces, territories, and the federal government. That is why a national advisory council is required. It is additive to the work that the committee has done. When the committee's report is tabled, members will see that direction and strategies have been set on how to move forward with national pharmacare if the government so chooses. However, it would still need to work with the national advisory council.

That is why I am so excited to see it in the budget. It is a strong indication of the next steps to come toward moving all Canadians forward to the proper coverage of pharmacare. No Canadian should be denied access to prescription medicines because of affordability. This is our window of time to fix that.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.):

[Member spoke in Cree]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here on Algonquin territory. Ottawa is the meeting place of many first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, but it is also the home and capital of all Canadians. I am very proud to be here today to offer my comments and my thoughts on budget 2018.

My mother is an example. She worked hard, day in and day out, in her life. It was a life of sacrifice for her two children. She was a single mother. She earned minimum wage, often in various precarious employments. She even delivered newspapers at five a. m., and then I would help her in the evenings, delivering other newspapers. We were not always able to pay the rent. It was very hard sometimes to get ahead in society. It was hard to make ends meet, to make sure that we could actually provide the necessities. I remember going to the supermarket and counting out the dollars, penny by penny. Even if we found a penny on the ground, it was

something of value because it might be add up to enough to be able to buy some milk for that day.

I am very proud of the government and the work that we are doing.

In the new budget of 2018, the government proposes to strengthen the working income tax benefit, the WITB, by making it more generous and by making the benefits more accessible to people like my mother, so that they can get the resources and the tools they need to be successful in life. This strengthened benefit will be named the Canada workers benefit, CWB, and will take effect in 2019.

In budget 2018, the government proposed to increase maximum benefits under the CWB by up to \$170 in 2019 and increase the income level at which the benefit is phased out completely. The government also proposes to increase the maximum benefit provided through the CWB disability supplement by an additional \$160. This enhancement is expected to directly benefit about 68,000 Manitoba workers annually, and many of these 68,000 people in Manitoba can be found in Winnipeg Centre, the riding I have the opportunity to represent here.

As a result of these enhancements, a low-income worker earning \$15,000 a year could receive up to nearly \$500 more from the program in 2019 than he or she received in 2018. Moving forward, the government will continue to work with interested provinces and territories to harmonize benefits and to help support the transition from social assistance and into work. I hope the provincial government in Manitoba will take this opportunity to really strengthen the situation and the condition of many of our poorest workers.

At the same time, the government recognizes that not all low-income workers are receiving the CWB payment that they are entitled to. The government is proposing amendments that will allow the Canada Revenue Agency to automatically determine whether these tax filers are eligible for the benefit. An estimated 300,000 additional low-income workers will receive the new CWB for the 2019 tax year as a result of these changes. Specifically, the government estimates that approximately 13,000 additional low-income Manitobans will receive the benefit for the year 2019. Once again, many of these additional 13,000 low-income Manitobans can be found in Winnipeg but also in rural areas and in many first nation communities.

The CWB enhancement, combined with new investments to make sure that every worker who qualifies actually receives the benefit, will mean that the government is investing almost \$1 billion of new funding for the benefit in 2019, relative to 2018. That is investing in people, people who are going to invest in the economy, people who are not going to put that money in the bank, saving it for a rainy day, but people who are actually going to spend it on their children, buying the bread and milk their children require today.

The Budget

The government estimates these enhancements and the improved take-up in 2019 will directly benefit more than two million working Canadians, many of whom were not benefiting from the WITB before. This will help lift approximately 70,000 Canadians out of poverty. I have seen the estimates, and Manitoba low-income workers will be provided with about \$114.5 million more in benefits under the new Canada workers benefit in the 2018-19 to 2022-23 period as a result of this budget. I am very proud of that.

● (1200)

This is not all that we can find in the budget.

Last Friday, I had the opportunity of having a meet and greet at the YaFa Café, a Palestinian café in my riding, just off of Portage near the airport. A young lady came in from Brandon. She drove two and a half hours to visit with me to tell me her story. She had lost her children to the child welfare system. They had been taken from her. She told me how she had complained about the abuse she was suffering at the hands of her partner and how instead of helping her and ensuring she could keep her newborn baby, the system took her baby from her. The workers said that she was also at fault and that she needed to prove she would be a good parent. She is also indigenous.

Therefore, I am very proud that the government decided not to continue fighting, in the Human Rights Tribunal, the child welfare case that was before it for a very long period of time. The government could have done that. It could have fought it over many years, probably another a decade, and gone through the court system all the way to the top.

Instead of doing that, we are providing \$1.4 billion in new funding over six years. I am very proud of the government, the ministers, and the people all across this chamber, even our colleagues on the other side, especially from the NDP and the Conservative Party, who I believe support this. This is important to the young lady, who drove from Brandon for a 25 minute chance to speak with me about an issue that was important to her life. She spoke from the heart. It is important because that makes the difference in her life. The budget is not alive in this chamber or in the stats; it is alive in the lives of people and Canadians.

This is not the only investment the government is making. We recognize that not only is it important to reform the child welfare system, but we also have to invest in families. In this case, another \$1.5 billion over five years are being invested in indigenous families, making them stronger. We know there have been many issues over many years. I can list multiple stats: \$498 million, with \$97.6 million per year ongoing to sustain access to critical medical care and services, including 24/7 nursing stations in 79 remote and isolated first nations communities; \$200 million, with \$40 million per year to enhance the delivery of culturally appropriate addictions treatment and prevention services in first nations communities with high needs.

This one is extremely important. I had a town hall in our constituency week. A gentleman from Saskatchewan, Mr. Johnson, attended. He is a lawyer, an indigenous man, and a trapper and a hunter. He had worked in the mining camps for many years. He was told he was stupid, that he, as an indigenous person, could not succeed. To prove people wrong, he went to law school and got his law degree from the University of Saskatchewan. To prove people

wrong again, he got a master's degree in law from Harvard. Not only was he successful in this, he eventually became a crown prosecutor.

One of the issues he raised was the level of addiction in many communities across the country, which we fail to recognize. He talked about the impacts of alcohol. He talked about what we needed to do to eradicate this, which is destroying many people. He talked about all the deaths it caused. Whether cancers, FASD children, or drunk driving, it is important to address these things.

We had 100 people at this town hall. They listened intently over the noon hour on a Wednesday, while he discussed addictions. He estimated that 95% of all the court cases in northern Saskatchewan were alcohol related. We talk about opioids, meth addiction, and other addictions. However, we often fail to recognize the addiction that is among us each and every day even in this chamber and in this building, Centre Block.

I look forward to questions.

Tapwe akwa khitwam hi hi.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of my colleague opposite, given that he is indigenous.

The Liberals have long promised to eliminate the 2% cap related to investments in post-secondary education for indigenous peoples, but there is no mention of this in the budget. Therefore, this issue has not yet been resolved.

Demographically, indigenous youth are the fastest-growing population. They are the ones with the greatest need for investments so they can have access to post-secondary education, but investments are capped at 2%. This makes no sense and is an immeasurably huge injustice that restricts indigenous youth's access to education.

Does my colleague not think that we should have eliminated this 2% cap in the budget, as the Liberals promised during the election? They have been repeating this promise for more than two years, but we cannot find it anywhere, although they keep talking about nation-to-nation reconciliation and discussion. It seems to me that we should be investing more into public education for all, but this budget does not do so.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question about education.

Education is extremely important. I myself have several undergraduate and master's degrees, as well as a doctorate. Even though I am an indigenous person with Indian status who lives on a reserve, I never got any funding. I know a lot of people need that funding to make it through post-secondary education, but that does not stop people from going it alone.

The Budget

Anyway, the government is investing in education. We signed an agreement with Manitoba first nations to create their own school board. Working with the board, they will be able to make financial decisions to ensure that their education system, from kindergarten to Grade 12, meets Manitoba's provincial standards. The board will have the same level of funding and its own curriculum. It will also handle teacher training itself. It will have a complete system to ensure the success of children in special education.

I know there is a lot more that needs to be done, and I hope we will get all those things done in the future, but we are doing a lot already.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about the Canada workers' benefit, introduced in budget 2018, and how it will help alleviate poverty from coast to coast and help literally millions of Canadians, including potentially thousands of Canadians in his riding.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting comment. I talked about it during my speech, but what I will talk about is supporting Métis nation priorities.

Last week I had the opportunity to speak with Marion Meadmore, who is an elder. Fifty years ago she set up Kinew Housing. It talks about self-reliance, ensuring people can look after themselves and doing it in a communal way.

The budget proposes to help the Métis nation by investing \$516 million over 10 years, including \$500 million over 10 years to support a Métis housing strategy, with \$10 million in 2018-19 to support Métis nation post-secondary education, and \$6 million over five years to support the Métis nation in gathering health data and developing a health strategy.

There is an awful lot in the budget that we can talk about and I am really excited about this. When I talked to David Chartrand, he was over the moon about what we were doing for the Métis nation across the country, trying to build on the dream of Louis Riel to ensure all of us are successful. This is an investment in people and for the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to share my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, and I will get to the heart of the matter right away. Today, we are debating the government's budget statement. This is a document that is supposed to set the government's direction for the next financial year. Clearly, that covers a wide range of subjects. I will try to limit myself to the topics that I find most important. At the outset, I want to say that, unfortunately, this budget is completely out of touch. I would like to be able to say otherwise, but the budget is completely out of touch, perhaps because it was produced by the government's two main architects, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. They are out of touch with the reality of many Canadians. That is why we have a budget that is so completely out of touch. In a vote as important as this, I will not be able to give it my confidence, and so I will not be able to support this budget when the vote is called.

One of the main reasons for my disagreement is that the fiscal framework of this budget has completely missed the mark. The fiscal framework is missing many pieces and also leaves many things out, such as, for example, the sources of revenue. As a result, in my opinion, the fiscal framework is not up to the task. This is not just my opinion; the parliamentary budget officer is also openly criticizing this framework. For example, there is the fact that, where certain items forecast expenditures for programs and for the public service, no provision has been made for the collective agreements signed with the public service. There are therefore major gaps in the budget in terms of the government's spending estimates. That might indicate to us a gentle austerity in the future, if the government wants to stand by the budget framework that it has published in its budget. A framework of that kind does not hold water when it relies on a number of forecasted factors in the future. The parliamentary budget officer has said so as well.

Budget 2018 also really lacks courage. The Liberals did not have the courage to go after those who are profiting from the current system, according to Canadians, specifically corporate executives. They are continuing and will continue to pocket millions thanks to preferred rates that average taxpayers who pay their taxes every year do not have access to. Average taxpayers do not have this advantage because they are not corporate executives who receive stock options. We could also talk about the multinational corporations that will continue to benefit from our weak tax laws that allow them to move their profits offshore and then repatriate some of that money without paying taxes in Canada. This will continue, because there is nothing in the budget to pull the rug out from under those multinationals that are taking advantage of our tax system and the global tax system to avoid paying their fair share.

The Liberals also did not have the courage to stand up to web giants on the tax issue. Netflix, Facebook, and Google are not paying their fair share of taxes to our society. This is common knowledge and well documented. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Canadian Heritage also know this very well. They do not have the courage to do what other countries have done to stand up to these web giants. Even Quebec has done so, in its own way.

My colleague often speaks about protecting pensions. I also see that the Liberals lack the courage to protect Canadians' pensions by changing the law. This is a hot topic today. Companies like Sears continue to take advantage of this overly lax system and are shirking their responsibilities towards their employees and former employees.

This budget is also chock full of half measures and the government is just pretending that it is taking action. It is not enough to get my vote. Half measures, for example, are the many things that the Liberals promise will happen after the election. It is not the first time this has happened. Successive governments have done the same thing. They make promises that will be fulfilled after the next election, and thus the promises are conditional upon the incumbents being re-elected. That is not the way to govern. They should govern and keep their promises right away, while in government. There are also half measures concerning pharmacare. I mentioned it earlier when I asked my colleague a question. They are again promising that a new committee will study the issue even though the Standing Committee on Health is about to complete its own study.

The Budget

•(1215)

The government is saying that it needs more evidence to show that this is a good option, even though the Liberals promised a national pharmacare program in 1998. They promised a pharmacare program 20 years ago and they are still not convinced it is a good idea. They always want to conduct a study before moving forward, and I am not convinced that this is really going to happen, given that they have failed to deliver on other promises, such as electoral reform. Obviously, I have very little confidence in this government's promises.

My colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith, with whom I am sharing my time, will likely have a lot to say about pay equity. The Liberals promised pay equity but can we trust them? Will we really see this legislative change in the budget implementation bill? We will see. Of course, the money needed to close the gender wage gap in the federal public service is not provided for in the fiscal framework, which is a major omission. I therefore cannot support a flawed fiscal framework that leaves out such important things.

What is more, the announcement regarding local media is clearly inadequate. The \$50 million that was promised is nothing but a half measure. It does not respond to concerns and does not give local media what they need to ensure that quality information is being disseminated to our regions, such as my riding of Sherbrooke where people read *La Tribune*. It is not enough.

There is also nothing in the budget to help reduce household debt, a recurring problem that we are always hearing about in the news. The rate of Canadian household debt is currently 171%. That means that the average Canadian family has \$1.71 of debt for every dollar earned. Every time Statistics Canada publishes a report on that subject, the average debt-to-disposable-income ratio rises. However, there is nothing in the budget to address this situation, which the government has known about for a long time and which continues to get worse. The Minister of Finance continues to ignore this problem, which is threatening the Canadian economy.

I would also say that this budget is disrespectful to the Standing Committee on Finance. I sat on this committee during the pre-budget review, during which the committee produced 92 recommendations. I obviously cannot read them all out, but I would like to share a few of them. The Minister of Finance disregarded most of these recommendations in his budget.

I introduced a bill to exempt psychotherapeutic services from the goods and services tax, but this topic is not addressed in the budget. I gave my colleague, the Minister of Finance, the opportunity to include my bill in his budget, but he chose not to do so, even though the Standing Committee on Finance recommended that such a bill be passed.

The following is recommendation 24 from the report of the Standing Committee on Finance regarding the Social Security Tribunal:

Review the Social Security Tribunal and consider restoring the following: Employment Insurance Boards of Referees, the EI Umpire, the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) Review Tribunals, and the Pensions Appeals Board in an effort to restructure the system.

Unfortunately, there is no review in the budget of the Social Security Tribunal, which is extremely deficient. I think that most of my colleagues have cases in their riding offices and are aware of the tribunal's delays and inadequacy.

As well, recommendation 26 refers to a high-quality, inclusive child care system. There is nothing about that in the budget. The government is not acting on this recommendation. Then, recommendation 41 refers to home energy retrofit renovations. There is nothing about that in the budget, although that would have been a very good item. The Standing Committee on Finance agreed on that.

As for recommendations 65 and 66, they urge support for air transportation. There is nothing in the budget on that. There is also nothing about short-line railways, which are important to us, in Sherbrooke. However, this was addressed in the Standing Committee on Finance report. Lastly, recommendation 91 calls for the infrastructure program to be simplified and improved so that it actually serves communities such as Sherbrooke. There is nothing on that in the budget either.

•(1220)

I appeal to the government to correct the situation if they want my support. Obviously, this budget does not deserve my confidence.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on a whole host of issues, but the one I will focus on is pharmacare. He and the NDP are concerned that what the government has proposed with respect to pharmacare is not enough. I question how they would be able to do more, while at the same time balancing a budget, which is what they committed to do during the election.

Nonetheless, these are complex issues. We have a country with independent provinces and this requires proper negotiations with them. Ontario has already started its own pharmacare program providing free drugs to anyone 25 years of age and younger. Quebec has a similar program for public partnerships providing pharmacare. These are complex problems that need to be looked at. We have to figure out the way in which we are going to do it.

I respect the fact that the member is not happy and thinks we are not doing enough, but could he at least acknowledge that we are moving in the right direction toward pharmacare? He said that the Liberals had committed to doing it in 1998 and has not done anything for 20 years. I am sure he has not forgotten that for 10 years the Liberals were not in power.

Can he comment on how he sees the progress and that we are at least going in the right direction on this?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, this is not an adequate response to the criticism I made. My colleague just said that the Liberals had promised pharmacare as early as 1998. They had until 2006 to bring it in, but they failed. Of course, the Conservative Party of Canada was in office in the meantime.

The Budget

In October, the Liberals will have been in office for three years, and there is still no bill or framework to implement pharmacare. I understand why people are sometimes cynical about government. They are skeptical about new measures being implemented since it takes so long.

The Liberal government is dragging its feet. If they had the conviction and if they had the courage to bring in pharmacare, they would have done it a long time ago. Pharmacare could even have been brought in before the Liberals took office in 2015. Once again, it seems that the Liberals are trying to buy time. I can guarantee you that this national pharmacare program will not be in place before the next election.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for drawing attention to the increasing consumer debt that Canadians are taking on. A recent study indicated that consumer debt has risen by 6% since the fourth quarter of 2016. However, the introduction in the budget document states, “For Canadian families, this means greater financial security, and greater peace of mind”. That certainly has not been bearing out in the consumer debt levels that Canadians are taking on.

I wonder if my colleague is concerned about the increasing and spiralling amount of money we are paying just in interest to service our national debt. This year alone it will be \$26 billion. By 2022, it will be \$33 billion a year just in interest. Just a 1% rise in interest rates would increase this amount by billions per year.

Does my colleague share my concerns about the increasing amount of money that we are spending on interest to service our national debt?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent point that I did not get a chance to bring up in my speech.

The government keeps talking about the debt-to-GDP ratio going down, but it purposely fails to mention that the cost of servicing the debt will increase over time. The cost associated with the debt is somewhere between \$28 billion and \$32 billion a year. Who gets money from servicing the debt? The banks and major international financiers, that's who. It is certainly not middle-class Canadians, who actually own the state, who will get that money.

If interest rates go up as the Bank of Canada projects, the cost of servicing the debt will increase significantly. The government's fiscal framework does not account for that. That is another reason why we cannot support this utterly flawed policy.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be here in the House standing in support of women in Canada, who honestly have received the raw end of the deal.

Over the last year, our status of women committee has heard from countless witnesses about how far women in Canada have fallen behind. We heard from women who are burdened with university debt and have a very difficult time making it forward in the

workplace. We heard from women about the lack of access to child care. We heard from women about the lifetime of earnings comprised either by precarious work or by the lack of pay equity. We also heard from elderly women who are living in deep poverty, and professional women who have worked all of their lives but in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith are finding themselves having to access homeless shelters. It is terrible.

For all the good words of the Liberal government, with the majority that it has, with the mandate it had to implement real action on feminism, and the long shopping list that women's organizations and witnesses at our status of women committee have been giving, I honestly expected so much more in the budget. I am going to run through some hits and misses in the budget.

The first one, and we heard this from women's organizations across the country, is the failure of the government to fund a universal, affordable child care program. We have had funding announcements in the past, but they are pushed way into the future. Women cannot wait 10 years to access affordable child care spaces. Zero new child care spaces have been funded in this budget.

Child care is a major missing piece from the budget. It is the number one thing the government could have done to help with affordability, prosperity for women, and getting them into the workplace. The experience in Quebec has shown that investments in this area are good for the economy. The Quebec model has almost paid for itself by virtue of the fact that 70% of women who want to be in the workplace are working and earning more money. They are spending in their local economy and they are being taxed. It is a good investment.

The International Monetary Fund, in talking about Canada specifically, said the same thing, as did the Conference Board of Canada and the Governor of the Bank of Canada. This is in addition to the fantastic NGOs that have been carrying the torch on this issue for so long. Canada would be in very good company with the rest of the developed world. It would certainly have a lot of allies if it would put its money where its mouth is and funded affordable child care.

Pay equity is another big piece. I was so honoured to stand with my colleague the member of Parliament for Jonquière on the NDP's first opposition day motion which asked for the consent of the House to have the Liberal government agree to implement pay equity legislation. That was two years ago. It was a big win for us, but it was the same promise that had been made by Pierre Trudeau 40 years earlier. We are still waiting.

To have in the budget the announcement that there would be legislation was really like a sore consolation prize, because women have been waiting so long and the gap is real. We are glad to hear the re-announcement that there will be legislation. That is a checkmark, but it still is overdue and we have not seen the legislation yet. The big hole is there is no implementation funding at all.

The Budget

Last year, the alternative federal budget put together by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recommended \$10 million a year be spent to implement pay equity. That did not happen.

The Canadian Labour Congress recommended at a bare minimum that the government fund the establishment of a commissioner and some of the machinery that would be needed for the adjudication process. Again, there were zero dollars for that. The government, in saying it is still committed to pay equity but will not put any dollars in the budget, to me represents a great timidity on the part of the government and a failure to put its money where its mouth is.

A win that we did get in the budget is better support for sexual assault centres on campus. There is funding in place for the development of policies to prevent campus rape. This was a recommendation that arose from an earlier status of women study where we asked the Liberal government to lead the coordination of national policies to prevent campus rape.

My colleague the member of Parliament for Salaberry—Suroît, who is the NDP's youth critic and also the deputy women's equality critic and the critic for post-secondary institutions, has heard, as have many of us, from women on campus. If a female is born and raised in Vancouver, for example, and her big sister goes to UBC, she learns how sexual assault is dealt with on that campus. Then she may go across the country to Dalhousie University where she is away from her family for the first time, and there may be alcohol involved. Those first few weeks on campus are the most vulnerable time for a woman to be sexually assaulted. The policing, justice system, and the level of support may be different, which would make it worse.

● (1230)

There is no question Canada has a coordination problem around sexual violence, with the territories, provinces, and municipal governments. However, this is the first thing the government should have done. It took the Liberals several years to agree with us, but we are glad to see some money. Sadly, and this is a theme, the money will not appear for five years. Women should not have to wait to be safe on the campuses of our higher institutions.

Another very sad point is insufficient investment in public transit. This past week, I was at the United Nations, hearing about the level of commitment of countries to implement their United Nations' obligations on women's equality. The focus was rural woman. We heard again and again about the role of a safe, accessible, and affordable transit system for them to be able to get to work or medical appointments, to accept jobs they are offered, and absolutely to avoid another Highway of Tears in northern B.C. Women were hitchhiking because there was no other alternative and it ended lives, again and again.

My colleague, the member of Parliament for Saskatoon West, has been raising the alarm on this, the loss of the long-standing and successful public transit system in Saskatchewan. This is a role for the federal government, and we really would have liked to see a significant investment in rural public transit. That is a big missing piece.

A win though, another one, is paid domestic violence leave. Many provinces have started to implement paid domestic violence leave, especially the New Democrat government in Manitoba. If a woman

has to leave her husband because of violence in the home, she has the assurance from her employer that she is going to be able to take a few days paid leave while resettling her family or renting a new house, and she knows her job will be waiting for her when she comes back, let alone having a little bit of coverage.

To our disappointment, the labour minister's offer last year was three days, unpaid. That is cheap for a government willing to spend on all kinds of things. That was mean-spirited. Because of the pressure of my colleague, the member of Parliament for Saskatoon West, when she was in her role as our labour critic, and of the labour movement in Canada, we are very glad that the government was persuaded in this budget to fund five days of paid leave. It is the least we can do. Few women will take it up, but it will make a big difference to those who do and their families.

Use it or lose it parental leave was another win. It has been shown in other countries that when men take parental leave it locks them in early to some of the domestic care issues. They are changing diapers and looking after the home. If they do not take that leave, then it is gone. It is not the kind of thing we have right now where the father and mother can split the leave.

The former NDP leader, the member for Outremont, and I wrote to the Prime Minister back in September urging him to take this on. We are very glad he took our advice and we think it is a win for families. However, it is tempered by the fact that the budget did not fix employment insurance parental leave benefits. When working families cannot earn enough hours to be eligible to take that paid parental leave, it means that once again the better off middle-class people the Prime Minister loves to support get that access, but the poorest people who need it the most just cannot get a foot in the door. It is unfair. We have registered this with the government many times, and it is a problem that it has still not closed that gap.

It is the same with unemployment insurance for precarious part-time work. We have heard from witnesses at committee again and again that women are more likely to work part time. One may be a full-time teller or cashier, but that is not going to get them enough hours each week to be able to qualify for employment insurance, let alone benefits and a pension. This is the nature of the working world, the Prime Minister tells us. He said to young people to get used to it. Honestly, if the Prime Minister has admitted this is a for sure thing, we must fix our employment insurance system. Given the government's commitments, it should want to do that.

The government has a mandate, has a great amount of goodwill, and talks a good talk on feminism. We would have really liked to see more action and the government putting its money where its mouth is on women's equality.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I tend to disagree with my friend across the way. There are many examples that have been given in terms of just how seriously this government takes the idea of issues related to gender equality and moving forward in terms of important issues such as pay equity and so forth.

However, the question I have for my colleague across the way is more with respect to the NDP's former position, and I say this with all seriousness. Coming into the last federal election, part of the election platform that NDP members had was that they would have a balanced budget. I am very curious if, under the new leadership, the NDP has revisited this issue. What is their actual position on balanced budgets?

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, the New Democrat leader, Jagmeet Singh, has been very strong in his way of describing taxation and spending where we can show investments in a strong social safety net will benefit the people who need it the most, those who most need a boost and who have been discriminated against by successive Conservative and Liberal policies. We should make those investments. We have a lot of evidence, for example, on universal, affordable child care. The International Monetary Fund, the Conference Board of Canada, and the Governor of the Bank of Canada are all saying to invest here and it will pay dividends.

However, I will note another win that we got in the budget that we do credit the government for. We have been asking for years that Status of Women Canada be made a full ministry. It was in the 2011 and 2015 NDP platform to make it a full ministry. Our colleague, the member of Parliament for Elmwood—Transcona, had been pushing for it in this Parliament very actively. We are glad to see the government finally take our advice.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her advocacy for women on the status of women committee and for an excellent speech.

I notice that even though the government has a deficit of more than \$18 billion this year, its priorities do not seem to be for women. If I look at the amount of money that has been spent in other countries, for infrastructure in Asia, climate change in other places, and a bunch of these other initiatives, and we compare that to the amount of money that is in the budget for women, it seems really small, especially on the subject of pay equity.

I was happy to serve on that special committee, and the recommendation that the government agreed to was to introduce legislation. Therefore, coming out with this budget and reannouncing that but putting zero dollars in it seems like not the right priority. Would the member agree?

• (1240)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I was discouraged in this budget to see an awful lot of window dressing: we are going to fund a corporate award for the best performers who hire the most

Privilege

women; we are going to establish a think tank; we are going to do two conferences; or we are going to do what we can to encourage and inspire more women to move into the STEM industries. What we were hearing at committee is that all of that fancy stuff, which honestly feels kind of like elite feminism to me, does not do anything for the women who need the help the most on the ground. We are hearing from women in university saying that they are in STEM but their student debt is impossible and they cannot get affordable child care.

As well, the government has failed in its infrastructure spending, which it keeps delaying, to put in equity hiring provisions. The government has not put in place the conditions for anybody who gets a contract for infrastructure to say that they must hire a certain number of apprenticeships, indigenous people, or women. That is where the government could use its spending power to make a difference, to get some of these people their first jobs and then they could carry on in construction and engineering.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order to respond to a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Durham on March 2, 2018, with respect to the divulgence of sensitive information.

My hon. colleague argued that his freedom of speech and his freedom from obstruction or interference in the fulfillment of his duties were inhibited as were the collective rights of Parliament to collectively institute inquiries, call witnesses, and demand information to this chamber. The member went so far as to mention a cover-up, which is an unfounded accusation. In his argument, the hon. opposition member referred to Speaker Milliken's decision from April 28, 2010, concerning the Afghan document decision, going as far as quoting a section pertaining to the government censoring the information provided to Parliament.

It should be noted that not much links these two cases. The April 2010 decision pertained to the production of documents required by an order from the House. As such, the reference is inadequate to the question currently being debated. Looking at the previous Speaker's ruling on June 13, 2012, on the government's co-operation with regard to access to information, it states:

In the 2010 case, however, the circumstances were quite different. There had been a House order and committee orders requiring the production of documents. So it was the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the orders of the House were obeyed. In the case before us, there are no such orders and, in their absence, the Speaker has neither the authority nor the power to compel the production of information.

Privilege

Considering this, I would ascertain that the hon. member was in no way impeded in his duties as a member of Parliament.

On the topic of the national security adviser's statement to the media, I will refer to the decision given by your predecessor on December 4, 2014, regarding the access to information by the House. Again, I quote:

The release of and accessibility to information is, of course, a matter of importance to all members since it touches the role of members as legislators.

He then further stated:

...this role should not be trivialized. In fact, we should take every opportunity to underline its significance in our system of responsible government.

That is not to say, however, that every proceeding or activity related to delivering or accessing of information by members implicitly involves their parliamentary duties.

On the same subject, Speaker Parent's decision on October 9, 1997, regarding the alleged denial of information to members, at page 688 of *Debates*, states:

...activities related to the seeking of information in order to prepare a question do not fall within the strict definition of what constitutes a "proceeding in Parliament" and, therefore, they are not protected by privilege.

Furthermore, Speaker Bosley's ruling on May 15, 1985, at page 4769 of *Debates*, states:

I think it has been recognized many times in the House that a complaint about the actions or inactions of government Departments cannot constitute a question of parliamentary privilege.

I do not agree that there is any conspiracy trying to prevent members of the House from fulfilling their duties. Consequently, I respectfully submit that this is a question of debate and as such does not constitute a *prima facie* question of privilege.

• (1245)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, the question of parliamentary privilege that the deputy House leader from the Liberal Party raised was mine. I do not believe I used the term "cover-up" in my suggestion. I quoted the Milliken decision with respect to the ability of parliamentarians to see all information.

I would remind the member that information is not just provided through the production of documents. Witness testimony and the ability to question witnesses is part of the obligation of parliamentarians to fulfill their duties unfettered. That was supported by the Milliken decision, which supersedes both the Bosley and Parent decisions. It should be unfettered. National security interests can be addressed if there are some, but those were waived in this case when the Prime Minister's Office asked the national security advisor to brief members of the press gallery, who do not have the same privileges as members of Parliament.

The key element of the Milliken decision, which my friend, the deputy House leader for the Liberals, glossed over rather craftily, is that a parliamentarian's privilege shall be unfettered to fulfill their obligations to hold the government to account. My privilege, as both a member of this place and as the shadow cabinet minister doing my parliamentary duties to critique the minister and the government on foreign affairs matters is curtailed by the fact that the government has provided information to the media through the national security advisor, the most senior civil servant advising cabinet and the Government of Canada. It is not allowing parliamentarians, including me, to have that same degree of information and access.

A request by parliamentarians to have that same degree of information at the public safety committee is the same as a request by this House to have documents related to Afghan detainees, which is the subject matter of the Milliken decision.

My friend is trying to be somewhat cute in the fact that suggesting there is not an order for the production of documents is somehow different and can be distinguished from requests from parliamentarians to have evidentiary testimony from the most senior civil servant responsible for security when that very information was provided to non-parliamentarians. It is a preposterous position for the member to take.

I would ask the Chair to look at both my presentation from two weeks ago and also my rebuttal here today, and the Eggleton decision, which recognizes that the government cannot have two positions on one issue.

The Prime Minister's Office compelled the national security advisor to provide briefings to the media. The public safety minister, in his press conference before the House rose, suggested that the national security advisor could provide that information to the media but could choose not to provide that information to parliamentarians. That is fettering the privilege of parliamentarians to fulfill their obligations in this place. That is supported clearly by the Milliken decision, which did not just in spirit relate to production of documents. It is information and evidence that parliamentarians need to fulfill their duties.

I would also suggest that the member's response to my question of privilege highlights the fact that the Eggleton decision would apply to this circumstance where the Government of Canada has provided two possible responses to a diplomatic incident. One response was that the member for Surrey Centre was responsible for the invitation of Jaspal Atwal, which the Prime Minister has acknowledged and the member himself has acknowledged, and for which the member was disciplined or resigned from a role. The Prime Minister has also suggested that the Indian government is somehow complicit in the Atwal invitation, or the scandal related to Atwal's attendance at the Prime Minister's events.

That is in a very similar fashion to a previous ruling, the Eggleton decision, where two positions of the federal government cannot possibly be correct. This is something that the House has been trying to probe at. The information that the national security advisor provided to members of the media is required for parliamentarians to discern which alternative is true. They cannot both be true. Even Mr. Atwal himself, a week ago, refuted the Prime Minister's suggestion that the Indian government was responsible.

• (1250)

I would ask for an expeditious review of this point of privilege. Parliamentarians are clearly having our ability to perform our function fettered by the government's unwillingness to provide parliamentarians with the same briefing and the same degree of access to the national security advisor that the Prime Minister provided to members of the media in order to explain away problems with his trip to India.

The Budget

Those are my submissions in right of reply to my friend from the Liberal Party with respect to this matter of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the member for Durham for the additional information that was provided. We will certainly take it under advisement. The Chair will include it in the information that has already been provided.

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THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague across the way, the member for Joliette.

This is a good news budget. It is a budget that continues from the previous two budgets. It helped build Canada's middle class, those aspiring to be a part of it, and those who needed that helping hand.

I look across the way. I have been listening to a lot of the Conservatives stand up and critique this wonderful budget. One cannot help but ask, what is the difference between the Conservative Party today and what it was three or four years ago? I would think that Stephen Harper is in fact still leading their party. I do not think Stephen Harper has left Parliament Hill. They do have a new leader, but I listen to the criticisms and try to distinguish the difference between Stephen Harper and this current leader. I do not see much of a difference. I would suggest that they are one and the same.

When listening to how the Conservatives are critiquing this budget, one would think that they are not listening to Canadians. In fact, I would suggest they are out of touch with what Canadians want the government to be doing. We had a good sense of that in the last national election, with one party talking about investing in Canada, protecting Canada's middle class, doing the things that are necessary to advance our economy and our society. We had the Conservatives and the NDP saying that we have to have a balanced budget. We have to have cutbacks and so forth. That was the unholy alliance back then.

In fairness, I am starting to see a bit of a division among the NDP and the Conservatives. I do not want to say that the NDP are fully in line with the balanced budget model that the Conservatives often talked about today. However, having said that, I believe the proof is in the pudding. I would like to suggest to my friends across the way that a lot of good things have happened in Canada as a direct result of the change in government back in 2015. I remember the slogan of "real change" quite well. Canadians wanted a change, and Canadians received that change when they voted for this government.

We will continue to work with Canadians from coast to coast to build a stronger and healthier economy. One of the biggest selling points to how successful this government has been is to take a look at the job numbers, with over 600,000 jobs created. It took the Conservatives a decade to get to those types of numbers. In less than

three years, we have accomplished that by working with Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

When I am asked what sort of policy initiatives we have taken to support that type of growth, I bring it back to the first piece of legislation. The first priority in terms of legislation was dealing with a cut in taxes for Canada's middle class. That resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars being put into the pockets of consumers. Those consumers were able to spend that money, which helped to cultivate the economy with more money being spent. It is the middle class who are the great consumers. They purchase items needed, increase production, and cause all sorts of wonderful job spin-offs. That tax cut was critical to what we see today.

I remind members that we also put the tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%. That was an additional assigned tax, so there was that tax increase. However, it is interesting. Members will recall that the Harper Conservatives, as well as the Conservatives under this new leadership, who are the same, voted against that particular tax cut.

● (1255)

Other initiatives have included the Canada child benefit. I have often talked about the benefits of that program. The bottom line is that thousands of children were lifted out of poverty, and millions of dollars were put into the pockets of Canadians, thereby increasing disposable income once again.

Every month we get millions of dollars from the national treasury going to Winnipeg North to the families and children that really need that support. That is something that is really helping our economy and strengthening the lives of so many people. The budget recognizes that it is not good enough to have established the child benefit program; we need to ensure that it continues to receive increases. Therefore, we are going to see them in the future. When the cost of living goes up, the money allotted to the program will also go up.

I talked about tax cuts and about money in the pockets of Canadians with young children. I should also talk about the increase to the guaranteed income supplement, our seniors program. We continue to support seniors in whatever way we can.

I heard a lot of discussion about pharmacare. It is a fantastic idea that I suspect will get good support from Liberals, New Democrats, and the Green Party. Even some Conservatives might ultimately support a national pharmacare program. It is an ambitious road we are on, and we need to recognize that the national government has to work with our provincial and territorial counterparts. We will also work with indigenous people. The New Democrats will snap their fingers and say, "Make it happen yesterday." It just does not happen that way. Negotiations have to take place.

The Budget

My daughter, an MLA in the province of Manitoba, and I have a wonderful story about the pharmacare program. My daughter said that she wants to see a national pharmacare program, but until then, the Province of Manitoba should be prepared to go it alone if necessary, because she believes so passionately in the program. Interesting enough, the provincial NDP, after being in government for 15 years and booted out of office two years ago, now finally says that we should have a national pharmacare program. In fact, the NDP back then, in the province of Manitoba, could have led the way. It chose not to do that.

The Standing Committee on Health has recognized the importance of pharmaceuticals and the cost of medications. Its report has been brought forward. I think it is a step forward for all of us. I hope there will be an opportunity some day in the future when we will be able to say that we have a national pharmacare program. I know that the residents of Winnipeg North would love to see that happen.

The Canada workers benefit that is being established by our government is one of those programs that will greatly enhance opportunities for our working class, in particular our low-income workers. My colleague and friend from Winnipeg Centre talked a great deal about that program and the thousands of Manitobans and Winnipeggers who will benefit from it. The bottom line is that from coast to coast to coast, Canadians will benefit from that initiative. This is one of the initiatives that demonstrates very clearly that we have a Prime Minister and a government that genuinely care and believe in bringing in good, solid, progressive programs that will have a profound, positive impact on the future of all Canadians.

• (1300)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the tail end of the speech by the member opposite, because most of his speech focused on previous budgets and previous initiatives of the government, he mentioned the changes to the working benefit. Many of these changes were brought in by former minister of finance Jim Flaherty, who originally proposed the WITB enhancements and whatnot.

In last year's fall economic update, the Minister of Finance and the government announced that there would be further changes. However, those cheques the Liberals have said are ready to come out will not actually go out until 2019, almost at the end of the government's mandate, when we are looking to have an election. I am not saying that cheques coming out in an election year are anything short of what a Liberal government would do. However, the member said that this budget would help those people. It seems to me that the government makes a habit of announcing and announcing and basically ragging the puck until either it is near the end of its mandate or after.

Does the member believe that the Minister of Finance needs to do a better job of working with provinces like Manitoba to get those cheques out to support working families faster than what this budget proposes?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, over the last three budgets, we have consistently seen the Minister of Finance present to this House many progressive policy changes that are having a very positive and profound impact on Canadians in all regions of our country. When we look at what was the working income tax benefit and how it is being converted to the Canada workers benefit

program, what we are really witnessing is this. An individual who has a job paying around \$14,000 or \$15,000 a year will benefit from an additional \$500, which is a significant amount of money.

We can always look at ways we can improve the system, but what I think Canadians will appreciate is that we have a government that has consistently, through its budgetary measures, brought in progressive steps that will enable a healthier, stronger middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. That was the theme from day one of this government. I hope and trust that we will continue to see that theme being carried through so that we will have a healthier and more robust economy into the future.

• (1305)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very interested when my colleague said that the government will support seniors wherever it can. That is a very important statement. However, in 2009, the Liberals promised to change the bankruptcy laws. That was when the then leader held a big rally outside this House. They did it again in 2015, at election time, yet it is 2018, and still nothing has been done. The budget has referred to it, stating that we are going to have consultations and that it will be evidence-based.

How much more evidence does the government need to find out that thousands of workers and retirees have been shortchanged on their pensions? The Liberals are still looking for a way to avoid correcting it, as we have said many times in this House. What concrete measures has the government taken to ensure that pensioners will not be ripped off in the future?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can assure my friend across the way that when we look at the issue of pensions, what we see is a government that took action virtually within the first few months of governing Canada. All one has to do is look at the guaranteed income supplement, which was significantly enhanced to the tune of up to \$900 plus for some of the poorest seniors, lifting literally tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty. We can talk about the CPP. We have a historic agreement between this government and the provinces and territories for individuals who are going to be retiring. Many of those seniors are ones we are all concerned about. I am not only talking about seniors but about individuals between the ages of 25 and 50-plus, who will have better or more resources when it comes to retirement. Does that mean that everything is done? No. There is always room to do more.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, GPQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for sharing his time with me.

There is nothing revolutionary or even ambitious about this budget. The only thing coming out of this budget is the fact that the government is throwing money around without any real plan to return to a balanced budget. That works well for pre-electoral announcements in Toronto suburbs, but not for much else.

The Budget

Once again, Quebec is not a priority to Canada. Again, Quebecers are not a priority to the government. In short, budget 2018 is totally unfair to Quebec. For example, look at what Irving got. Irving practically has the monopoly on forestry in the Maritimes with four and a half million acres. The Liberal government decided to give the Maritimes forestry sector, or Irving, \$75 million to combat the spruce budworm while Quebec got nothing. Not one penny for us, even though the area affected in Quebec is larger than the entire province of New Brunswick. It does not make sense and is a slap in the face.

Pushing our Davie shipyard aside in favour of Irving was more of the same. Eight hundred jobs were lost just before Christmas because the government gave nothing to Canada's largest shipyard. However, the two shipyards that received all the contracts, Irving and Seaspan, are behind on building their ships. In fact, they are constantly behind. The Davie shipyard could build a second supply ship and the icebreakers, which are so desperately needed on our St. Lawrence, but there is nothing for that in the budget. Since the current builders are unable to meet the orders, all the contracts should be redistributed, no more, no less.

I will give the government a little tip for free. If a supplier is bad, change suppliers. As we know, the Davie shipyard delivered the Asterix supply ship on time and on budget. The Davie shipyard, which is struggling without a contract, is capable of meeting requirements. However, there is nothing in the budget for Davie. Clearly, the Liberal members from Quebec are asleep at the wheel on this issue. The government has just missed out on a great opportunity to be a little fairer by awarding contracts to Davie.

When I say that all the major measures in this budget have no impact on Quebec, I am not exaggerating. For years, everyone in Quebec has been asking the federal government to do its part for health care funding. We know that our nurses have to work until they become sick themselves. Just to maintain the system in its current form, health transfers would have to be increased by at least 5% annually. Again, however, there is nothing new here. The Liberal government ignores our needs and prefers to create programs that we already have in Quebec. For example, the Liberal government has announced that it wants to establish a pharmacare plan, but only outside Quebec, because we already have our own. It has announced that it wants to establish parental leave, but only outside Quebec, because we have had our own for 12 years. It also wants to introduce a federal bill on pay equity, while we have had our own for 22 years. Last year, it freed up money to create day care spaces, but only outside Quebec, because we already have our own. The Liberals are full of measures that have no impact on us. It is rather strange to have a government that ignores Quebec's requests and then constantly copies us 10 or 20 years later. Ottawa seems to feel free to ignore our requests.

For years, we Quebecers have been asking for investments in regional infrastructure, like airports and ports. Sadly, our pleas have gone unanswered. The funding for municipal infrastructure has already been announced, but it is held up in Ottawa because the program is too rigid. The budget has nothing new to say on this subject.

The budget also contains no announcements about the issue of the EI gap. People, ordinary people, are struggling because the

government refuses to lift a finger. Despite a unanimous call by Quebec's National Assembly, the Liberal government continues to give an unfair advantage to Web giants. By not taxing them, the government is giving them a 15% advantage over our businesses. I do not see Amazon creating jobs in our cities and municipalities, nor do I see Netflix creating jobs in our cultural sector, yet the government has decided to side with multinational Web giants over our local businesses. It has picked rich Americans over its own cultural sector. If that is not colonization, I do not know what is.

The Liberals also missed an opportunity to tackle tax havens. Again, Quebec asked Ottawa to stop legalizing tax havens. Instead of making the immoral illegal, the Liberal government has just legalized two new tax havens. Good God.

• (1310)

This political choice has a price. Each year, tax authorities lose between \$7 billion and \$10 billion. Quebec's tax authorities are also losing money. It is clearer than ever that all of Quebec's voters have less weight in the House than the Bay Street lobby.

In Quebec, Desjardins and National Bank do not have subsidiaries in tax havens. In Toronto, the five big banks will continue to hide their profits in tax havens, while those in the middle class, who work and pay their taxes, will continue to pay in their place. This is what is going on. The money that is hidden in tax havens matches the budget deficit. That is the government's economic vision.

There has been another budget announcement made to please the banks of Bay Street. The Liberals announced that they will try again to remove Canadian banks from Quebec's Consumer Protection Act. We will be awaiting them with our heels dug in, because there is no way we will be set back 40 years so that the insatiable appetite of their friends on Bay Street can be satisfied. It is out of the question.

Despite the government's rhetoric about our dairy producers and all of our supply-managed farmers, it continues to sacrifice them in trade deals. For instance, the government has not even renegotiated quotas in the new TPP. The Liberals chose to cede the same market share as in the previous agreement, while the United States is no longer part of the agreement. This goes directly against the will of the National Assembly, the unanimous motion that was voted on here, and even the Prime Minister's statement. It is unacceptable. This certainly does not bode well for the NAFTA renegotiations. Meanwhile, there is no compensation for our farmers. The budget has forgotten them.

Regarding environmental commitments under COP21, we were expecting measures to encourage the electrification of transportation, such as purchasing bonuses for electric vehicles or even funds to develop the network of charging stations. Unfortunately, the budget contains nothing to that effect.

The Budget

In conclusion, the budget does pay particular attention to women, indigenous people and other minorities, which would be fine if the government ever walked the talk. What it does not do, however, is speak to Quebeckers. It is not meant for them. It does not respond to their needs. Quebec has never been so weak in Ottawa. This is crystal clear in the budget. No one even pretends to care about Quebec anymore. It is completely ignored. For my colleagues in the Quebec caucus and I, our job is to defend the interests of Quebeckers. It is not complicated: We will always put Quebeckers first. Since the budget ignores them completely, we are certainly going to vote against it.

• (1315)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech in defence of Quebec's interests. In mine, I will defend the interests of all Canadians, but I understand his objective.

In his opinion, are we now more than ever dealing with an excessively centralizing Liberal government that has no respect for provincial jurisdictions? It almost seems as if the government sees the country as its own unitary regime. For the Liberals, it is as if there is no federation, only a great leader who revels in his duties and who gives orders to the provinces.

Is that how my colleague reads the situation as well?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I fully agree with him. We have a centralist and imperialist government that wants to interfere in all areas of jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec even though it is incapable of doing its own job. For every dollar paid in taxes, 50¢ goes to Ottawa, whose job it is to spend it in ways that matter, such as investing in health care. We have been asking for this for years but we get nothing but crumbs. It is unacceptable. This government, which is not even capable of paying its employees properly, is not going to give Quebec lessons on how to do its job well.

My colleague talks about defending the interests of all Canadians. We want to defend the interests of Quebeckers in the House. What I have seen here over the past two and a half years is that there are two very different societies with very different economic bases. When Ottawa comes up with economic policies, they are not adapted to Quebec and the province is ill-served. Quebec is just too different. We do not have Ontario's automobile or financial sectors, or western Canada's oil sector. We have a high-tech sector. Furthermore, the needs of our forestry industry are different than British Columbia's. We need more support for the high-tech, aerospace, and informatics industries. We saw our pharmaceutical sector collapse for lack of support. That is also the case for the manufacturing sector. More than ever before, this must change.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for all his comments. However, women in sport is what I am interested in. Today, I am a very proud mother because my eldest daughter is in a major synchronized swimming competition.

In Canada, 41% of girls between the ages of three and 17 and 84% of adult women do not participate in sports. This budget provides funding to foster gender equality in sport.

Does my colleague believe that this type of funding can help women and girls in his riding to participate in sports?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Having an eight-year-old daughter myself, I believe it is important to achieve gender equality in all areas, including sports.

After looking closely at this budget measure, I consider it to be more of a vote-seeking measure that gives Liberal ministers and MPs an opportunity to make a bunch of announcements all year long and in various settings, giving a little money each time in exchange for visibility. I see this measure first and foremost as a way to hand out goodies to people.

I did not see any structural measures in the budget to develop the Quebec economy or any vision for economic development. I saw only scattered bits of funding here and there.

The issue of gender equality is extremely important. We need to keep going in that direction. The budget does propose legislation to ensure pay equity at the federal level, but I would remind the House that Quebec introduced that 22 years ago. The federal government is 20 years behind.

• (1320)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the very honourable and very competent member for Mégantic—L'Érable, a beautiful riding that has a beautiful lake I swam in a few years ago. As I always do, I would also like to say hello to the many residents of Beauport—Limoilou who are listening to us today and those I meet in my travels, whether I am going door to door or attending events at community centres and so on.

Today I want to talk about the stark realities of budget 2018. I would like to draw a parallel to the disastrous trip to India that my constituents have been upset about and have been talking about so much in recent weeks. This trip was not out of character for this government. The trip was ill-defined and achieved virtually nothing, other than having the Prime Minister dress up in ridiculous costumes—ridiculous only because it was the Prime Minister wearing them. The clothes themselves are not ridiculous; what is ridiculous is the fact that the Prime Minister of Canada wore them instead of wearing the type of clothing he should be wearing to such international meetings. He toured around India making a mockery of the office of Prime Minister, and he was the laughingstock of the international press. He then returned home after announcing hardly anything to Canadians.

This trip pretty much reflects how this government acts every day in the House. It is also exactly like budget 2018: a political agenda with no substance, with page after page of lofty words, and void of any concrete measures.

The Budget

The Liberals and the Prime Minister, the hon. member for Papineau, brag about forming a government that is not cynical, that will put democracy back on track, that is more transparent, and that wants to restore Canadians' trust in the political system. In my opinion, one of the best ways to restore Canadians' trust is keep the most basic of promises. Not only have the Liberals broken key promises, such as changing the voting system, but they have also broken basic, structural promises that they made with their hands on their hearts in 2015.

The Prime Minister promised to run annual deficits of no more than \$10 billion. He also said that in 2018, the deficit would not exceed \$6 billion. Less than two weeks ago, the government announced that the deficit for 2018-19 is \$18 billion, three times the amount that was promised during the 2015 campaign.

The second broken promise is just as important. The Liberals promised a return to a balanced budget by 2020. As my dear colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent always says in a delightful turn of phrase, never has a Canadian government ever run a deficit outside wartime, such as during the Second World War, or outside a major economic crisis, like the one we went through when Mr. Harper was leading the government. He was a great prime minister, by the way.

The Prime Minister is running major deficits and has no plan to return to a balanced budget, even though our economy is in a favourable position compared to most countries around the world. I will get into this economic situation a bit later. It is unbelievable.

Here is what the parliamentary budget officer thinks about it, as reported by the QMI Agency:

...Canada's fiscal watchdog notes that the federal government's vagueness about [balancing the budget] conflicts with the objectives set out in the mandate letter of finance minister Bill Morneau.

The PBO also notes that the mandate letter from the Prime Minister explicitly asks the minister to ensure "that our fiscal plan is sustainable by meeting our fiscal anchors of balancing the budget in 2019/20 and continuing to reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio throughout our mandate".

Lastly, the article states:

However, in its 2016 budget, Ottawa abandoned its intention of reaching a zero deficit in 2019-20.

Ottawa confirmed two weeks ago that not only will a balanced budget not be reached this year, but it will certainly not be reached by 2023, or by 2045, based on forecasts.

As for infrastructure, it is the biggest joke of all. It is unbelievable. After the election, the government bragged about implementing the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history, a \$180-billion program.

● (1325)

I am not the one saying this. Barely a week ago, the parliamentary budget officer said that only \$10 billion had been released so far. The media has been covering this story for last few days, thank heaven. All the billions of dollars that should be spent on infrastructure by 2019 will be delayed until 2022, 2023, and 2024.

I will come back to balancing the budget and to deficits. When the Prime Minister promised deficits of no more than \$10 billion a year, he brazenly insisted that these deficits were for infrastructure, not for international relations, or for climate change in third-world countries, or for endless funding for all of Canada's diversity groups. No, he said that they were for infrastructure.

The parliamentary budget officer said that the Liberals do not yet have a plan for how the federal government will spend \$186.7 billion in infrastructure money over the next 12 years. Is this not the same Liberal government that keeps repeating that meeting environmental targets, for example, requires a plan? The Liberals have no plan for the environment, just as they have no plan for infrastructure. One of their flagship promises, which was so important that it formed the basis for the other promises, was to balance the budget in 2019 and to run annual deficits of \$10 billion.

Meanwhile, taxes are going up for the fine constituents of Beauport—Limoilou. The average increase for middle-income families is exactly \$840 per year, whereas by the end of 10 wonderful years of Conservative government, from 2006 to 2015, the average Canadian family paid about \$2,000 less in taxes. There is an increase in Canada Pension Plan contributions, up to \$2,200 per household, there is a carbon tax, up to \$2,500 per household, and the cancellation of the family tax cut. This has a direct impact on the people of Beauport—Limoilou. All my neighbours in Beauport—Limoilou have children who play sports or take part in fitness or arts activities. For example, on Sunday mornings, my daughter takes music lessons at the Cascades school of music. It is a great place and I am proud to mention it today. They also cancelled the tax credits for education and textbooks, which could be as much as \$560 per student, and they raised EI premiums. This does not even include the disastrous tax reforms imposed by the Minister of Finance, even though he himself wanted to hide some of his income from the federal taxman, frankly.

The sad part is that the debt keeps piling up. After three years in office, the current government has grown the national debt by \$60 billion. According to projections by the Department of Finance, in other words, our dear, dedicated public servants, the budget will not be balanced until 2045, which will add \$450 billion to the debt. A colleague opposite spoke about 3- to 17-year-old girls not being able to access this or that thing. I will tell her that, in 30 years, fully all of these girls will be paying the debt piled up by the current government. Only one thing is certain: men and women alike will be paying a lot more on the debt in 30 or 40 years, because of the bad fiscal management by this bad government, which, I hope, will be calling it quits in 2019.

The Budget

What is even more unbelievable is that the government brags about having wonderful financials thanks to its prowess at managing public funds. That is not the case. We know full well that the current growth is primarily due to a recovery in the oil sector. That is good for the entire oil industry, but again, it is not because of the Liberals' sound management. In addition, house prices increased by 16% in 2016, bringing in additional revenue. Oil and gas exports went up. The Canadian dollar fell, and so did interest rates. All those factors combined to produce strong economic growth in Canada. What should we do under such circumstances, when the economy is doing well? We should address the issues and ensure that there is money for potential emergencies, such as the crisis in the aluminum and steel industries, the potential end of NAFTA in a few months, or a global economic crisis that could erupt at any moment.

• (1330)

When the economy is doing well, we must prepare for future crises. The current government is simply being reckless with the Canadian economy. The constituents of Beauport—Limoilou have a right to know.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

When I listen to Conservative Party members talk about our budgets, I hear two things. On the one hand, they say that we are spending too much and that we should lower taxes and balance the budget. On the other, they say we are not doing enough in some areas, such as military procurement.

Yesterday, I heard a colleague from Edmonton say that we did not have a plan for the Phoenix pay system, but the fact is that we are spending \$400 million to fix problems left behind by the Conservative government. They say we are not doing enough in all kinds of areas. We need to fix 10 years' worth of Conservative mistakes, because they underfunded pretty much everything and still failed to balance a single budget. They want us to spend more and spend less. That seems pretty contradictory to me.

Can the member tell us precisely which programs for Canadians he thinks we should scale back? Can he be specific about the funding cuts he would like to see?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, the fact is that never in the history of Canada has a government spent so much on the bureaucracy and its own administration, instead of on Canadians. We are not saying that the Liberals should allocate more money in one area and less in another. We are asking them to distribute the money in an intelligent manner, by focusing on the most urgent issues.

The Senate report on national defence, which my colleague is very familiar with, says that during the great years under the Harper government, the percentage of our GDP spent on national defence reached its highest-ever level of about 0.8%. That was unprecedented. During the dark years of the Chrétien government, that percentage was between 0.2% and 0.3%.

As my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles always says, the Conservatives gave huge amounts of new equipment to the men and women in uniform who bravely serve us. We did all

that and balanced the budget. We left a surplus of \$3 million for the Liberals when they came into office in 2015. We also lowered taxes by an average of \$6,000 per family.

The Liberals are fattening up the bureaucracy and interest groups across Canada instead of working for Canadians in general.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his fire and passion.

My colleague knows all about Canadian history. I am always impressed by his knowledge of the Constitution. When he says that never has a government invested as much in the bureaucracy as this government, there is no one better placed to say it. He is up to speed on our history.

Does my colleague think that public money should be used to serve Canadians, rather than serving the Liberal government?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes.

I have met with people from my riding over the past three weeks. Much to the Liberals' dismay, everywhere I went, even in redder areas like Giffard and Limoilou, people are shocked by what is happening and what the government is doing. I met with countless people who voted Liberal and will never do so again.

The way the government is spending money does not make any sense. The Liberals are spending hand over fist in every area, without any plans to balance the budget and for no good reason other than to try to appear virtuous and please Canada's interest groups. What is more, their trips abroad have been disastrous.

Developing a welfare state served a purpose in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, but now things have gotten completely out of hand. Canadians want the government to one day work for them, not the other way around.

• (1335)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, once again, I would like to commend my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his excellent work and his speech. I will continue in the same vein by acknowledging all the people in my riding of Mégantic—L'Érable, who are also disappointed with the Liberal government's most recent budget. Never has a government spent so much to accomplish so little. That is what the leader of the official opposition said after reading this public relations document—since this was really more of a public relations document than a budget. That is what most of the financial analysts who examined this document said. This budget merely serves to cover up and hide the bad decisions that the Liberal government has made in recent months.

The Budget

I am the shadow minister responsible for agriculture and agri-food. In this public relations document from the Liberal government, what we have seen is that agriculture, despite its absolutely critical impact and importance to the Canadian economy, is not a priority for the Liberal government. There is nothing in the budget for agriculture, period. It is as simple as that. There is no compensation plan for the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and there is no increase in the envelope for the dairy industry funding program. I will quote an industry member, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, who had this reaction to the budget:

[English]

“Ignoring the farming community is something that farmers are used to but refuse to accept. We contribute a huge portion of the Canadian economy.”

[Translation]

We can believe them, it was the president, Levi Wood, who said that. Another member of the organization, Jim Wickett, added:

[English]

“Budgets don’t balance themselves and wheat doesn’t plant itself. If the Federal Government really wanted to help farmers, they would remove trade barriers and ensure that we can move our products to market, rather than face transportation delays that cost us both time and income.”

[Translation]

There you have it, clear and simple. These people made the same observation. Obviously, the Minister of Agriculture did not have a say when this public relations document from the Liberal government was drafted. Is there even a minister of agriculture in the cabinet? We may wonder, but we have discovered something in recent weeks, namely that there is a minister of agriculture in India. He hosted the Prime Minister during his tour of India. We saw it. Unfortunately, we laugh about it, but we saw the Prime Minister on his trip failing to promote Canada’s exports to India. Instead he put them at risk. The facts speak for themselves, since \$587 million in exports to India have been lost under the Liberal government. This represents nearly 75% of our exports, according to current figures. I understand why India’s minister of agriculture was pleased to receive the Prime Minister, since he was helping his own industry. However, this visit did not help our industry or our exports.

The government’s current track record is measured in deficits for everyone, and losses in the millions for farmers. Farming does not even appear in the table of contents of the document that they are calling a budget. After this document was tabled by the Minister of Finance, I looked and I tried to figure out why there was nothing on farming. I asked the Minister of Agriculture why, once again, farmers are being sidelined in the 2018 budget. As an answer, he gave me the talking points for the 2017 budget. He told me that the answers to my questions on the 2018 budget were in the 2017 budget. It is incredible. It is as though nothing has happened to farming in Canada for a year. That is what they gave us, a document with nothing for farmers and a public relations document to cover up the mistakes of this budget.

This public relations exercise is a failure of the Liberal government to take action for the Canadian middle class. The Prime

Minister raised taxes by over 90% for middle-class families. He is going to add \$18 billion to the debt in 2018-19. That is three times higher than what the Liberals themselves had promised, in 2015, during the election campaign. Billions of dollars are being used to hide the government’s disastrous track record, the most recent example being the family trip to India.

● (1340)

As well, the main measures in the budget, parental leave and universal pharmacare, will do nothing for Quebeckers, since they already benefit from these. Do not be fooled. It is not enough to mount a big public relations exercise and make big promises, especially when the government does not even keep them, which should worry Canadians in the other provinces.

What I would have liked to see, in a real budget, is money for the rail bypass project in Lac-Mégantic. On January 23, the Minister of Transport announced that the federal government was going to provide assistance, something that has been requested for years, and that a sizeable amount was going toward Lac-Mégantic. Unfortunately, the budget, a public relations operation, was not used to announce this funding. Are we, or are we not, going to see this rail bypass? I beg the government to heed the call from the people of Lac-Mégantic. It is important.

In the Appalaches RCM, the Fonds Christian Paradis bears the name of a former member of Parliament. This fund was put in place to help communities that rely on chrysotile asbestos through the crisis. The Liberals’ proposed ban of asbestos will decimate this industry in Thetford Mines. Will people be able to cope and keep on living? Mountains of mine tailings are being abandoned after nearly 100 years of operation. Will our community receive help in dealing with what has been left behind by the mine? There is nothing in the budget to stimulate economic growth in our region once asbestos is banned. I would be remiss if I did not add that, for 100 years, governments lined their pockets with the income taxes of those working in this industry.

There has also been a lot of talk about broadband Internet. My region has a lot of connectivity issues. There were announcements about funding for new satellites to provide Internet access to all rural regions, but the satellites do not work well around mountains. No matter how hard you try, it does not work. If this is the Liberals’ answer, let me warn them that it will not work. Not to mention, this solution does nothing to fix cell service in the region either.

As for cannabis, it is a total joke. The government’s budget includes public education initiatives on cannabis. It is going to invest \$62 million over five years. That is \$12 million per year, which breaks down to less than \$1 million per year per province and territory. How is that money going to be allocated? Who knows. One thing we know for sure is that nothing will be ready by the time marijuana is legalized, which will probably be by the end of the year. That is scandalous. The government gave its head a shake and handed the Mental Health Commission of Canada \$10 million over five years to “study the impact of cannabis use on the mental health of Canadians”. Wait, what? Pot is about to be legal, so should the government not have done that a while ago? Seriously.

The Budget

That is not all. The government is also giving the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction \$10 million over five years to support research on cannabis use in Canada. Why did the government not do that before? What evidence did the government use in making a decision as momentous as legalizing marijuana? Nobody seems to know, and they are only now investing in finding out more. This is the Liberals' ridiculous, half-baked way of doing things.

When I visited a high school in my riding last week, I found out that nothing had been done to make sure the students were informed about this big change that is about to hit our communities. There are no resources for students, teachers, principals, or municipalities. There is nothing for anyone who is going to have to live with the consequences of this irresponsible decision to legalize marijuana so hastily.

Let us talk about small businesses, which create jobs. They play a key role in the Canadian economy, but the government keeps getting in their way and making it harder for them to grow and compete. The U.S. government just implemented juicy tax incentives to entice our small business owners to relocate south of the border. We do not want that. We want growth here at home, in our regions and our ridings.

This budget is about grandstanding and public relations for the government. Our leader's priority and that of the Conservatives will always be to deliver a budget that serves Canadians and not the government.

• (1345)

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to make some comments on one part of the member's speech. He must have read a different document than this budget document, which talks about equality and growth. He is certainly off the mark on so many of his points.

This budget is all about growing the economy, assisting small businesses, assisting researchers, and increasing exports, and it is equal across the country.

The member laughed about the Minister of Agriculture. I am a bit insulted by that. The Minister of Agriculture strongly supports supply management, which is key in the province of Quebec. The Minister of Agriculture was not in India, but negotiations were done and we enhanced our market opportunities in that market.

This budget would increase research spending on agriculture institutions. I have seen several announcements where funding was increased for researchers at agriculture research centres across the country, the very areas that your former government cut.

What you are seeing is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I also want to remind the member for Malpeque that he is to address his questions and comments to the Chair and not to individual members.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I suggest that my honourable colleague ask permission from the people in cabinet to give a speech. That way, he will be able to decide what kind of speech to give.

I would still like to recognize my colleague's courage, because, when the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food stopped talking, and when the Minister of Finance wanted to impose a disastrous tax reform on farmers and SMEs, my colleague who just gave us a bit of a lecture at least had the courage to rise, something that the Minister of Agriculture did not do to defend farmers when the time came to defend the tax reform.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Earlier, we were talking about agriculture, and I would like to have his opinion.

The budget mentions agriculture, but there is also forestry. Quebec is dealing with the spruce budworm, which will have serious consequences. However, there are no tangible solutions or funding envelopes specifically for Quebec to help with its research and to achieve its goals.

Furthermore, there are the public forests, but there are also private forests, and where those two meet, those tiny butterflies cannot tell the difference between the two. I would therefore like my colleague's opinion. If the government is so inclined to talk about agriculture and forestry, it should also take action, which should be reflected in the budget.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's view.

There were a lot of public relations announcements in this budget. When we take a closer look, we realize that there is not much for Quebec. There is not much for the parental insurance plan. Just when we think we finally found something about forestry, we read the words "spruce budworm" and we realize that it does not concern Quebec. I read it myself.

The members from Quebec on the other side should rise a little more often on budgetary and financial matters so that they can make their own demands to the Minister of Finance. If they had done so, perhaps we would not have been excluded from the funding to fight against the spruce budworm, which my colleague has requested adequately and appropriately.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks and his work on agriculture.

What does he think about the infrastructure and the funding that were carried over to 2022?

• (1350)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, this decision is in keeping with all of the promises this government made in 2015 to get elected. One such promise was to run small deficits of \$10 billion, \$10 billion, and \$6 billion, and to then balance the budget. Furthermore, this money was supposed to be invested in infrastructure to stimulate our economy. Instead, the Liberals put it back into the government machine to serve the government and its own interests.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin my discussion on budget 2018, I want to share with the House a little more about my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, which is in Nova Scotia and surrounds the major cities of Halifax and Dartmouth. We have about 95,000 people in my riding, some are fishermen and some are farmers. We also have many young families and seniors. As I will show throughout my speech today, this budget will support not only Canada and Nova Scotia, it will directly support my community of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. I will focus on families, veterans, women support, as well as youth.

It is important to look at the history of what our government has accomplished over the last two and a half years, which is extremely impressive thus far. We have created over 700,000 jobs in just over two years, most of which are full-time jobs. The party opposite would have liked to have been able to share with the House in its 10 years of governing, but that was not possible.

The second thing I would like to share with the House is that the unemployment rate has dropped to 5.7 per cent. That is the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. This includes the 10 years the Conservative Party was in power.

Let us talk about the Canada child benefit. This program has been extremely important for Canadians and young families. Everyone in the House should be thanking our government for that investment in young families. Not one member in the House is not seeing major investment for kids in their riding. I will give the example of my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. Over 10,000 families are receiving extra support, tax free, from the child care benefit. What does that mean to the citizens and families in my riding? It means an investment in Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook of \$5.6 million per month tax free, or \$60 million per year. Everyone in the House is seeing that investment in young families across the country, which is extremely important.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Avalon, Madam Speaker.

Let us look at some of the investments touching Atlantic Canada, Nova Scotia, and my riding. The investment in the prevention of the spruce budworm is extremely important to our riding, as well as to the province and Atlantic Canada. Forestry is extremely important to Nova Scotia. Also, there is a major investment in the area of small craft and harbour. As I said, we not only have fishermen in my community, but right across the province of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada as well.

There is also major investment in multiculturalism. The investment for black Canadians in black Canadian communities is extremely important for Canadians and for the people in Preston in my riding. People may not know this, but we have the largest black cultural centre in Canada. Only a couple of weeks ago, I was able to celebrate with the African Nova Scotian community. Earlier in the day, the minister had launched the new \$10 bill, which has the first Canadian black women on it, Viola Desmond. She was a leader not only for her community, but a leader for civil rights for Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada. This celebration was really touching. As one gentleman described to me that evening, “Today we launch

the \$10 bill. Tonight we celebrated the \$10 bill, and we celebrate Viola Desmond and our community.” That was very special and important.

• (1355)

I have a quote on that from the Federation of Black Canadians which said, “A historic first, 'Equality Growth: A Strong Middle Class' constitutes the first time a federal budget explicitly acknowledges the unique and specific challenges faced by Black Canadians and commits substantial amounts to addressing them.” That is something really impressive that we should be celebrating as well.

I also want to talk about the investment in families. There are three main areas I want to touch on.

The first one is the EI parental sharing benefit, where we have added five weeks. This will create much more flexibility for families, which is extremely important. Adoptive parents and same-sex couples who are parents will also be able to benefit from this investment.

The second area I want to talk about is pharmacare. This is something Canadians value. It is something we have been talking about for many years. We have already done quite a bit of work in this area. We have already worked with the provinces to encourage bulk buying. In that way, we have been able to lower prices and make drugs much more accessible for Canadians, which is extremely important as well.

We added the new Canada workers benefit, which will support low-income Canadians. Three hundred thousand more Canadians will benefit from this. This will move the number to over two million people who will benefit directly from this investment. This is extremely important.

Another area I want to talk about is veterans. Our government continues to work closely with veterans. We have already invested almost \$10 billion to support veterans across Canada. I have spoken with many veterans over the last six months while doing several town halls. They have indicated there is a large number of benefits and more communication about those benefits is needed. We need to ensure they are made aware of them and support them in achieving that goal. One area mentioned was the backlog. They said it was taking too much time. Our government listened very carefully and came forward with an investment of over \$40 million to help with the backlog and to get the information out. This is crucial.

Here is a quote:

The Royal Canadian Legion is encouraged by the commitments in this year's federal budget in areas of importance to Veterans and their families.

“The investments outlined are a step in the right direction,” says Dominion President, David Flannigan.

How much time do I have, Madam Speaker?

Statements by Members

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The member will have one minute and thirty seconds to conclude his speech after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, GPQ): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the Groupe parlementaire québécois, I want to wish everyone a happy International Day of La Francophonie. French is the language that defines us, but it also serves as a gateway to the world and, in particular, the francophone world.

We are proud of building relationships with our partners, especially since, as we remember, this has not always been possible. In international relations, countries deal with other countries. In 1970, the Canadian government objected to giving Quebec a voice among the member states in the early days of the International Organisation of La Francophonie. It was only after francophones from across the world pressured Canada that Quebec was allowed to join the organization as a full member. We must not forget this solidarity and we must nurture these precious relationships that connect us to francophone nations around the world.

* * *

● (1400)

[English]

CANADA-IRELAND RELATIONS

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate all things Irish. More than 4.4 million Canadians, including myself, claim some Irish ancestry, making Irish the fourth-largest ethnic group in Canada. The relationship between our countries is historic, emotional, genetic, and economic.

While every year we Canadians celebrate this heritage on St. Patrick's Day, I look to the future with great excitement as the ties between Ireland and Canada grow stronger. Having been part of the parliamentary delegation that recently visited Ireland, I had the privilege to meet Canadian and Irish business leaders and see first-hand how these economic leaders are working together creating new partnerships that will bolster the economies of both countries.

I would like to thank our ambassador, Kevin Vickers, and his team for all the work they do, as well as Ireland's Ambassador to Canada, Jim Kelly. I am also honoured that so many Irish political leaders are coming to Canada. Sometimes I feel I spend more time with Irish ministers than I do with Canadian ones.

Happy St. Patrick's Day.

KING'S KIDS PROMOTIONS

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to participate in a fundraising event for King's Kids Promotions in Fort McMurray.

King's Kids Promotions is a ministry committed to sharing hope and love to the world through theatrical and musical presentations, as well as practical service projects, community and family events, and humanitarian aid. I would like to thank Rick Kirschner and King's Kids Promotions for their community-building initiatives.

As we see the many challenges in the world today, it has become even more imperative that we continue to invest in community efforts to provide positive programming that strengthens families and the next generation.

An initiative of King's Kids Promotions is 91.1 The Bridge, a faith-based radio station with a unique approach to radio. Their mission is to expose hope through relevant music, talk, and action. More than just a radio station, 91.1 The Bridge is the heartbeat of the community .

* * *

[Translation]

SUGAR SHACKS IN VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spring is in the air. There is nothing more exciting or tasty this time of year than a visit to one of our sugar shacks in Vaudreuil—Soulanges. From Auberge des Gallant to the Sucrierie Lavigne in Rigaud, to the Sucrierie d'antan in Saint-Lazare and the Cabane à sucre des pins verts in Les Cèdres, Vaudreuil—Soulanges has some of the best maple syrup in the world.

Sugar shacks are part of our heritage and the heritage of many families, like Pierre Faucher and his son Stéphane, owners of the Sucrierie de la Montagne in Rigaud. Their sugar shack has served many generations in our community and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. I encourage families in Vaudreuil—Soulanges to get out and enjoy one of our sugar shacks this spring. That is how we support our heritage. That is how we ensure its preservation for generations to come.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Grassy Narrows have suffered decades of lethal injustice from Canada.

Since the 1970s, Ontario and Canada have ignored their legal obligation to clean up the English-Wabigoon river system that was poisoned by corporate negligence and criminality. People are suffering today an ongoing nightmare of mercury contamination.

Statements by Members

One of the more insidious aspects is the refusal of the federal government to properly compensate and treat the victims of ongoing mercury contamination. The government is hiding behind the Mercury Disability Board, which is rubber-stamping denials at a staggering rate of over 70%. It gets away with this by using unfair, narrow criteria that limit the access of people to get treatment.

Mercury poisoning is a horrific way to die. I am calling on the government to end the obstruction, and ensure that every person in the Grassy Narrows region gets the compensation and treatment that they deserve for this horrific corporate crime that has been committed against their people and their territory.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AVIGNON—LA MITIS—MATANE—MATAPÉDIA

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today in the House to thank three outstanding women from my riding who have demonstrated incredible leadership.

First, I would like to thank Marie-Josée Lapointe, head of the Fondation de l'hôpital de Matane since 2011. This dynamic and dedicated woman is also the founder of Bon goût frais de la Gaspésie and has been involved in the Association du cancer de l'Est du Québec for over a decade.

I would also like to thank Doris Ross, who is a very generous woman. She is the owner of Jardins de Doris, which attracts tourists from all over the country every year. Through her company, Ms. Ross has helped rehabilitate over 825 young people from La Matanie. Her dedication to helping our young people is extraordinary. I tip my hat to her.

Finally, I would like to thank Denise Gentil, a woman dedicated to the welfare of her community. She served as Matane's first woman mayor from 1993 to 1997 and established the Fondation Paul-Pineault and the Maison J. Arthur Desjardins, which help people with Alzheimer's.

I thank these three women. I am very proud of the work they do.

* * *

• (1405)

[*English*]

HALIBURTON HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce recently hosted the 12th annual Business and Community Achievement Awards Gala. The chamber received a record 130 nominations in 12 award categories, which speaks volumes to the achievement and hard work being done right across Haliburton County.

I would like to congratulate all award nominees and recipients, including: Andy Campbell, Highlander of the Year; Morgan Burke, Young Professional of the Year; Chris Carl and Terri Matthews-Carl, Entrepreneurs of the Year; Point in Time, Not for Profit of the Year; Cathy Mack, Customer First - Employee Award; Master's Book-

store, Customer First - Business Award; McKeck's Tap & Grill, Business Achievement; Abbey Gardens for Innovation & Creativity; Clothes Encounters of the Thrift Kind, New Business; ArborView Tree Care, Skilled Trades & Industry; Yours Outdoors, Tourism & Hospitality; and Haliburton Highlands Land Trust, for the Warden's Award.

Finally, I extend a special thanks to the sponsors, staff, board of directors, and general manager Autumn Wilson for organizing the spectacular event.

* * *

JANE FINCH CONCERNED CITIZENS ORGANIZATION

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge that 2018 marks the 40th anniversary of the Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization.

Its director, Winston LaRose, and the JFCCO represent just how vibrant the Jane Finch community truly is. With a mission that provides assistance to community members as well as opportunities for youth in recreational programs and post-secondary placements, the JFCCO has been at the forefront of fighting for the rights of the disadvantaged for many years.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those, past and present, who have dedicated their time to this important grassroots movement at the Jane Finch Concerned Citizens Organization. I thank all of them for their dedication in ensuring that the residents of Humber River—Black Creek have a great place to continue to live in.

* * *

MARIELLE FRANCO

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Rio de Janeiro and people around the world are in mourning this week following the murder of Marielle Franco, a black lesbian Rio city councillor who served as a champion for the inherent worth and human dignity of all people, of queer people of colour, and of women of colour.

[*Translation*]

Today, it is with great sadness that we join the hundreds of thousands of people across Brazil and throughout the world in mourning the loss of this brave and eloquent woman who sought to give a voice to the disadvantaged and the persecuted and to defend their rights.

[*English*]

Those of us who believe in the inclusion of all people in society will redouble our efforts to ensure that Marielle's work lives on. Her spirit and the hope that she gave her community are being expressed in marches and tributes and in the fitting hashtag that we now see being invoked around the world, #MarielleFrancoPresente.

[*Member spoke in Portuguese*]

*Statements by Members***BIRTHDAY WISHES**

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send happy 70th birthday wishes to Mr. Bobby Orr. In my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, there is no debate that he is the greatest hockey player to ever lace them up.

From an early age, it was evident that Bobby was a phenom. In rinks across Ontario, young Bobby would glide with ease from one end of the rink to the other, scoring goals for the Parry Sound Shamrocks at will, a scene that would be replayed many more times throughout his Hall of Fame career.

While his hockey career is known to many Canadians, they may not know that his hockey prowess is also matched by his great generosity and humanity. He has given so much back to Canada and his hometown of Parry Sound, including his annual youth awards, which I have had the honour of attending many times.

I call on hockey fans in the House today and across Canada to join me in wishing number four, Bobby Orr, a happy 70th birthday.

●(1410)

The Speaker: Considering that I have a print of Bobby Orr on the wall of my office in Nova Scotia, I have to say I have never heard a better statement than that one.

The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

* * *

SOUTH SLAVE ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, I had the pleasure of attending the opening ceremonies of the 2018 South Slave Arctic Winter Games.

This week, the towns of Hay River and Fort Smith will welcome nearly 2,000 athletes to compete in 19 sports, from hockey and gymnastics to dog mushing and arctic sports. The games will also put significant focus on culture and will include Dene drumming, indigenous dancing, and Métis fiddling. With teams from Alaska, Europe, Russia, and five provinces and territories, this is the largest sports and cultural event held in the Arctic.

I would like to recognize the hard work of the organizing committee, the dedication of the volunteers, and the contribution of over \$1.1 million from the Government of Canada for ensuring that these games are a success.

I welcome the circumpolar world to the Northwest Territories and wish them the best of luck. Go, Team NWT.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, celebrations seek to capture the essence of civilization. Nowruz, celebrated by Iranians and people of Kurdish, Turkish, Azeri, Baluch, Afghan, and Pakistani descent, is a moment of renewal and a marker of the passage of time.

In Richmond Hill and across the GTA, we do our part to honour over 3,000 years of tradition with annual bazaars, banquets, acts of charity, and festivities. Throughout the month of March, I have had the opportunity to attend traditional fire festivals, symbolizing the

shedding of sins past and moving into a better future, as well as the privilege of bringing the greetings of the Prime Minister to many festivities and events.

Today, at 12:45 p.m. our time, nearly 300 million people started celebrating Nowruz 1397 across the world. To all of them, I say this.

[Member spoke in Farsi]

* * *

MILITARY POSTING ALLOWANCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, whose riding includes garrison Petawawa, I am familiar with the financial stress on military families when a soldier is posted. Military families are the strength behind the uniform.

Therefore, it is with disbelief and shared outrage with members of the Canadian Armed Forces that I found out about the new Liberal policy to tax posting allowances. Effective December 1, 2017, posting allowances are now taxable.

The Auditor General has clearly outlined the growing gap between the total number of regular force members who are needed, including the under-representation of women, and the inability of the government to recruit, train, and keep Canadians in uniform to fill that gap.

Why is the Prime Minister so insensitive to military families? Why has the Prime Minister refused to consider this anti-family policy as a barrier to recruitment, retention, and gender equality?

I invite all Canadians to go to cherylgallant.com/posting-tax and express opposition to this new tax on military families.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

[Translation]

On March 21, let us remember the 69 black South Africans who were killed in Sharpeville because they opposed apartheid. The theme this year is promoting tolerance, inclusion, unity, and respect for diversity in the context of combatting racial discrimination.

[English]

As Canadians, we know that our diversity is our strength, but as a government, we know that combatting racial discrimination takes more than words. It requires action and the funding to support programming.

That is why budget 2018 commits nearly \$50 million to multiculturalism, to supports for the black community, and to the collection of disaggregated race-based data.

I am proud that these commitments will allow us to develop a new, national anti-racism approach and work toward the goal of reducing discrimination to build a stronger and more united Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN RANGERS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and to recognize the courage of the Canadian Rangers from the Fond-du-Lac patrol for their actions last December 13. At around 6:12 that night, a plane travelling from Fond-du-Lac to Stony Rapids crashed shortly after takeoff, seriously injuring six passengers and one crew member. Sadly, one of those passengers, Arson Fern Jr., passed away.

The Canadian Rangers arrived on site quickly, and wisely put out a call to the community to bring blankets and to assist in the transportation of survivors. The rangers worked through the night to bring people to safety, providing rescue and first aid in the dark and frigid cold of a northern Saskatchewan winter.

I invite all members of the House to join me in thanking the Canadian Rangers from the Fond-du-Lac patrol.

* * *

• (1415)

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the Foothills groups that have had their application for the Canada summer jobs program rejected because they could not, in good conscience, sign the Liberal attestation. These are dedicated organizations. In fact, one children's camp is now at risk of closing because the organization would not comply with the Liberal values test.

One church group even rewrote the attestation to affirm that it supports all charter rights and that, too, was denied. Our faith-based groups are the foundation of many critical components of our social infrastructure, but instead of supporting these efforts, the Liberals are denying them funding unless they violate their deeply held convictions. Yesterday, the Liberals had an opportunity to do the right thing and they did not.

I urge the Liberals to reverse their ideological decision to impose a values test on Canada's summer jobs. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression are rights guaranteed by the charter. They must be protected. The government should stop this values test.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 220 million francophones are celebrating the International Day of La Francophonie today. I want to recognize and highlight the work being done from coast to coast to coast by its Canadian members,

Oral Questions

namely Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick. They are all dedicated to helping the French language flourish.

This year, the Francophonie summit will be held in Armenia. Canada is working to achieve progress on the Francophonie's gender equality strategy. It is an important step in the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie's examination of its fundamental values. The Francophonie knows neither borders nor colours, and it is at the service of a better world.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the Prime Minister told the House that he believed that Jaspal Atwal's presence during his trip to India was related to factions in the Indian government. However, on February 28, the Indian government contradicted the Prime Minister's story. Somebody is not telling the truth.

Is it the Prime Minister or the Indian government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, if we have a choice between believing the professional and non-partisan members of our public service, particularly on security matters, or believing someone who says the opposite, we will always believe our highly qualified professional public servants.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the Prime Minister told the House that he believed that Jaspal Atwal's presence during his India trip was linked to factions in the Indian government. However, on March 3, the Liberal member for Surrey Centre stated that he alone had forwarded the name of Mr. Atwal to the Prime Minister's Office. Someone is not telling the truth.

Is it the Prime Minister or the Liberal member for Surrey Centre?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, the member in question assumed responsibility for the role he played, namely extending the invitation. However, at the same time, we know that our professional, non-partisan security officials came to certain conclusions. On this side of the House, we respect the work of our public service and we believe what our senior officials tell us.

• (1420)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 27 the Prime Minister told the House that he believed the presence of Jaspal Atwal during his India trip was linked to factions in the Indian government. However, on March 9, Mr. Atwal denied that the Indian government had anything to do with his presence during this trip. Someone is not telling the truth.

Is it the Prime Minister or Jaspal Atwal?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can choose to believe what they want. However, we in government, on this side of the House, will always believe our professional, non-partisan public servants, especially in national security matters. Our senior officials are in a very good position to know the truth and unlike the Harper government during its 10 years in office, we respect our senior officials.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the Prime Minister told the House that he believed that Jaspal Atwal's presence on the India trip was linked to factions in the Indian government. On March 11, the foreign affairs minister confirmed that she was taking responsibility, telling the Indian government that Atwal's invitation was "an honest mistake". Someone is not telling the truth here.

Is it the Prime Minister or is it the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, when it comes to believing our Minister of Foreign Affairs, our top civil servants in security matters, and MPs who take responsibility, we on this side, the government, believe them. We support the extraordinary people who work all across our government. The members opposite consistently discounted the advice of public servants and even attacked public servants when they did not find that they aligned with their political ideologies. On this side of the aisle, we trust the professionals in our public service.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot have it both ways. These statements are mutually exclusive. Either there are factions inside the Indian government that collaborated to have this individual on the trip or, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the member for Surrey Centre said, they were acting alone. Someone is not telling the truth. No fewer than four different players have either dismissed the Prime Minister's conspiracy theory or directly contradicted it.

Will he finally substantiate his claims, or will he admit that his conspiracy theory is completely baseless?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years under Stephen Harper, the Conservatives ignored, belittled, and diminished the work of our professional, non-partisan public servants. We committed to Canadians two years ago in the election that we would once again respect them, support them, and allow them to do their professional work with the integrity they have always shown. We continue to support the public service. Unfortunately, the Conservatives stay in the same bad habits that Stephen Harper established for 10 years.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians surf the web, they expect their data to be protected. A scandal has just broken in Great Britain over the firm Cambridge Analytica, which found a way to access the personal data of tens of millions of Facebook users on a daily basis. This is extremely troubling, and the reaction by Facebook officials, who continue to downplay the risks, is equally troubling.

What does the Canadian government plan to do to protect the personal data of these users?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very serious about protecting Canadians' privacy and their online presence. That is why our Minister of Democratic Institutions is working on ways to protect our electoral system and our democratic institutions from interference from outside forces. I am also very pleased that the Privacy Commissioner has just announced that he also plans to investigate these allegations regarding Facebook.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on top of that, this is an international problem. Hundreds of millions of people around the globe are communicating, sharing information, and exchanging data. However, Web giants like Facebook do not seem serious about protecting the information of all of these users. Canadians expect their private data to remain private.

Will the Prime Minister pledge here and now, in the House, to raise the issue of data protection with his G7 counterparts at the summit in June?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that we are certainly going to do that, and in fact have already done it. I have had these conversations with my counterparts, including Theresa May and others, several times at G7 summits to discuss Web giants' responsibility for respecting privacy and protecting our democratic institutions. We are working on this issue right now with the Minister of Democratic Institutions, but we are going to keep working together to make sure Canadians are protected in the digital era.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Prime Minister, we sold Jeeps to Saudi Arabia, but we now know that this multi-billion-dollar sale included a large number of armoured assault vehicles. Saudi Arabia is attacking its own civilians and committing atrocities in Yemen.

What does the Prime Minister think of Canada's potential complicity in these violations of international law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first ask the hon. member to put this question to her colleague from London—Fanshawe, who said that this contract had to be honoured.

Oral Questions

This contract was signed by the previous government, and we know that in a democracy, contracts signed by previous governments must be honoured. However, we have established new transparency and accountability processes for international sales, because Canadians expect a higher level of accountability than the Conservatives gave us for 10 years.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new criteria do not meet international standards, so where is this going?

The government refuses to release its report on Saudi Arabia's improper use of Canadian vehicles, allegations that have been confirmed by the Saudis themselves. The minister has even stated that she will not re-evaluate the existing arms export permits, despite evidence of human rights violations.

How can the government claim to have a progressive and feminist foreign policy when it continues to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we condemn any and all human rights violations. Canada's export control system is one of the strictest in the world. Permits are not approved unless the exports comply with our foreign and defence policies, particularly with respect to human rights.

Our approach is fully in line with our national obligations and Canadian laws. Once again, if the member has any questions, she should direct them to the member for London—Fanshawe, who said that the contract must be honoured at all cost.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the parliamentary budget officer released a scathing report last week that confirmed what all Canadians know, which is that the Liberals have just broken their election promise to balance the budget in 2019.

What is even worse, and this will be of interest to everyone, even those who are talking, is that the Liberals have absolutely no idea when we will return to a balanced budget. The current government is acting like a compulsive gambler who refuses to face the facts. It keeps plunging further and further into debt, but sooner or later, the bill will come due.

I have one perfectly simple question for the Prime Minister: when will we return to a balanced budget? On what date?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent that two years ago, Canadians had to choose between the austerity proposed by the Conservatives and the program that our government put forward, which was to invest in our infrastructure, in our communities, in a fairer and more equitable society.

Over the past two years, we have succeeded in lifting more than 300,000 children out of poverty. In the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent, \$68 million is going to the families that need it the most. Year after year, these are the choices we have made, and I can assure the House that we are doing it in a fiscally responsible way. By

2022-23, our debt-to-GDP ratio will reach its lowest level since the late 1970s.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the facts. Page 76 of the Liberal Party's election platform says a balanced budget in 2019-20. The Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Finances says a balanced budget in 2019-20. The parliamentary budget officer's report says a balanced budget in 2019-20.

[English]

“One, two, three strikes you're out!”

[Translation]

When will the Liberals return to a balanced budget?

• (1430)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to remind my hon. colleague of the facts. Under 10 years of Conservative leadership, we had the worst GDP growth since Mackenzie King, the worst job creation since 1946, and the worst growth in exports since World War II.

In the past two years, 600,000 jobs have been created, most of them full-time, 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty, Canada is the fastest growing country in the G7 and has the best fiscal position of all G7 countries, by almost double.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Liberals promised to run modest deficits of less than \$10 billion to fund infrastructure. Instead, they are racking up much bigger deficits, but they are not spending the money on infrastructure. In fact, the PBO reports that one-quarter of the money promised for infrastructure will go unspent. That means that millions of Canadians stuck in traffic and roads and bridges unrepaired.

The Liberals also promised to transfer unused funds into the gas tax fund. Where is the promised Liberal plan for infrastructure?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Harper government, we do have a plan. That plan is to make a historic \$180 billion to support our municipalities and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It seems to me that the comments about the boys of summer have everyone excited about spring and summer and baseball, but members have to settle down. We have to hear the questions and the answers.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure has the floor.

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have done more for municipalities in the last two years than the Harper government did in its decade. This week we announced a historic \$30-billion investment in public transit only in one province, Ontario. There is more to come for other provinces. We made a commitment. We are going to deliver on that commitment.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. According to the parliamentary budget officer, the budget provides an incomplete version of the government's infrastructure spending plan. In fact, he asked the government for a copy of the plan, but there is no plan.

Before the Liberals refer to their so-called infrastructure plan, would they care to tell us where we can get a copy of the plan?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy International Day of La Francophonie.

[*English*]

We have approved more than 4,100 projects since coming into office, with a combined investment of \$30 billion. These are the investments that are creating jobs for the middle class, helping to grow the economy, and building more inclusive and welcoming communities. These are the commitments we have made to our municipal, provincial, and territorial sectors, and we are delivering on those commitments.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is trying to ascertain where all of this supposed infrastructure, now non-infrastructure, money is going. He wrote this in his report just last week:

Budget 2018 provides an incomplete account of the changes to the Government's \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer requested a new plan, but it does not exist. How is it even possible to spend \$186 billion without a plan?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would not understand what an infrastructure plan is, because they never had one. We put forward a plan that is helping us build a better public transportation system. The City of Halifax has purchased 20 buses with our plan, buses that are improving service in that community. For the first time in the history of Red Deer, we are investing in that community to improve the public transportation system. In communities that have been ignored by the previous government, we are building—

•(1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked what the plan is to spend \$180 billion on infrastructure, and he says, "We have 20 buses." Congratulations. Now we know the Liberal plan. How much does that work out to per bus?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We have heard the question. I know members want to hear the answer, but we cannot hear any answers

unless we listen. I know members are anxious to behave in a proper fashion in this House. Order, or else we will have a shorter question period.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Communities has the floor.

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition may find it funny, but it is very important for people in Halifax and people in Red Deer and to understand that those buses are improving their quality of life. It is helping to reduce gridlock in those communities, helping to get students from home to university or colleges, and getting workers home safely to their families. That is the importance of those investments.

It is so sad to see that the opposition members do not understand that critical transportation infrastructure is for communities.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since everyone seems to be in a good mood, let me say that last week, the Minister of Canadian Heritage finally said what everyone in the cultural community has been waiting two years to hear about web giants. That is great, but let us hope that her boss agrees.

When the government decided to approve the sale of the great Maison de Radio-Canada, many feared that its unique collections would be lost. The recent decision to destroy 150,000 discs did little to put anyone's mind at ease. What about the props, sets, and extensive archives in Radio-Canada's custody?

I realize that Radio-Canada is an independent corporation, but is the Minister of Canadian Heritage being kept abreast of how these public collections are being disposed of?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, CBC/Radio Canada operates independently. That being said, we are always prepared to support any good initiative from the sector to protect our heritage. We will have the opportunity to engage in good discussions with sector stakeholders.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our franco-phone culture is being threatened by the web giants that the Liberal government refuses to subject to the same rules as Canadian businesses. Our culture is also being threatened by certain free trade agreements. The Liberals like to brag about standing up for our culture in negotiations.

If that is true, then why is the TPP cultural exemption in a side letter and not in the main agreement?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the cultural exemption is a priority for our government, as demonstrated by our negotiation of the Asia-Pacific trade agreement. Unlike the previous government, we really have stood up for our cultural institutions. We obtained unanimous agreement from all member countries to guarantee the protection of our culture. We will always defend our cultural sovereignty, even when it comes to the Internet.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali is the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world. One hundred and sixty-two peacekeepers have been killed since 2014. The reality is that Mali is a war zone, and there is no peace to keep. General Roméo Dallaire said, back in 2016, “I wouldn’t touch Mali with a 10-foot pole.” He is talking from experience, after living through the UN debacle in Rwanda, with awful rules of engagement and bureaucratic chains of command.

Will the Prime Minister come clean about the UN rules of engagement and the chain of command our troops are going to be under in this dangerous mission in Mali?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of our Canadian Armed Forces members is the utmost priority. As I have always stated, anywhere we send our members, we make sure that they have, with the proper mandate, the appropriate equipment, the appropriate training, and the rules of engagement. The rules of engagement are set out by the chief of the defence staff, and the right of self-defence is always there. We are proud of our commitment that we made yesterday.

• (1440)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, General Dallaire is not the only person with major issues about this deployment. Aileen Carroll, a former Liberal minister of international co-operation, stated that the Mali mission is “wrong-headed” and “folly”, and that “There is no peace to keep.” She understands the danger and the risk of this deadly peacekeeping mission. Will the Prime Minister admit that the UN deployment is more about his personal political aspirations than it is in Canada’s national interest?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the member opposite is quoting members like Roméo Dallaire, I had the privilege of asking Roméo Dallaire and Louise Arbour to accompany me on my fact-finding mission to Africa, five different countries, where I got to learn from their experience. We have taken that into account. We have also taken into account the experts. We also know that we cannot be secure at home if we are not engaged in the world, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is perfectly clear that on Friday, while he was travelling in Florida, the Prime Minister decided on a whim that we had to rehabilitate our image and send soldiers to Africa. We are

going to Mali. However, there is no peace to keep in Mali; it is a war zone.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that Mali is a war zone, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a long tradition of co-operation and leadership on the international stage. Canadians can be proud of the initiatives led by Canada that contribute to peace and security and increase the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations. That includes Canada’s contribution of expertise and capacity where we can make a difference. Today, it is in Mali.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs for her answer, but the issue is that Mali is currently a theatre of war. There is no peace there. Things are becoming quite chaotic over there, which always happens with the United Nations. When the United Nations oversees military operations, it is always chaos.

Are we sending Canadian troops into a country that is at war and descending into chaos, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure all Canadians that the lives of our Canadian military personnel are absolutely precious. Our decision to take on this mission was carefully thought out and we intend to take the time to diligently plan the deployment. We appreciate the service of the members of our military. Our government will do everything in its power to ensure that Canadians can make a real contribution to world peace in as prudent a manner as possible.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more and more translation errors are being found in federal government tendering documents. Here are some concrete examples. Imagine bidding on contracts for “Computers for the Department d’Affaires autochtones” or “générateur - entretien”. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement promised to resolve this problem. We are still waiting to find out whether it will be made mandatory for the department to use the services of the Translation Bureau.

Who does the minister trust, Google Translate or the Translation Bureau?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes its official languages responsibilities very seriously. These poor translations are unacceptable. We expect good-quality French to be used on Public Services and Procurement Canada’s websites. Our government recognizes the importance of communicating in both official languages, and we support the act that governs them. I have asked the department to review its internal processes and find solutions so that this type of thing does not happen again.

Oral Questions

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many children outside Quebec have no choice but to attend an English school because all the census asks is whether French is their mother tongue. However, the Charter also guarantees access to French-language education to children who have a parent or sibling who went to school in French. The Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones is asking that all of these questions be included in the census.

Will the Liberals make the necessary changes?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our official languages and the vitality of our linguistic communities are both extremely important to our government. There is good news in the most recent budget. It allocates \$400 million for a new official languages action plan. Language rights, the vitality of linguistic communities, and access to services are priorities for us. I will have some good news to announce in the House in the coming days.

• (1445)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saint Boniface—Saint Vital is one of the most vibrant francophone communities in Canada. In schools and community centres, francophone minority communities continue to work to ensure that people can live their lives in French. Budget 2018 includes \$400 million to support the vitality of our official languages, particularly by addressing priorities such as immigration, education, and the media.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage update the House on our government's official languages projects?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint Boniface—Saint Vital for his question. I would also like to wish him a happy International Day of La Francophonie. In the same vein as my response earlier, I am pleased to announce that on March 28, we will be unveiling our new action plan for official languages.

After 10 years of inaction by the Conservative government, we plan to take concrete steps to support official language minority communities. I hope all members in the House will join me and my colleagues because we want to send a clear message about the importance of bilingualism in Canada—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Milton.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned some troubling news this morning regarding public safety.

There are about 1,200 individuals who, because of breaches in public safety and security, have been ordered deported from our country, yet they still remain on our streets. This is a serious issue, because there are a lot of individuals who are known risks to security in this country.

I am wondering if the minister could update us on his efforts to remove these people from the country. Will he pledge to do so as expeditiously as possible?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue is a serious one, and we are applying all efforts to deal with the backlog.

The backlog of people awaiting removal ballooned under the former government to over 20,000, and two-thirds of current cases date back to the Harper era. The Conservatives also cut nearly \$400 million from CBSA in their last term.

The total number of people awaiting removal is now lower than it was under the previous derelict government.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many foreign nationals who committed crimes and were ordered to leave the country for security reasons are still in Canada. These are dangerous people who are living in our communities. Their numbers have swelled over the past three years, and our border officials are swamped. As of now, there are exactly 1,167 such individuals in the country, and they are a threat to the public.

When will the Prime Minister order their immediate deportation?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, the Minister of Finance made additional resources available to CBSA. That effort will continue going forward.

However, the roots of this problem date back to the Harper administration. Two-thirds of the current cases date back to that era when Conservatives cut \$400 million from CBSA.

We are working very hard to repair the damage done by that very bad previous government.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about something serious.

Clearly, there is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, the hon. member for Milton has the floor.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: The potshot from the member opposite was uncalled for, and that is what I was referring to.

Mr. Speaker, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is a company that employs about 500 people in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. Unfortunately, they have been hit with serious tariffs, a 32% tariff by the United States for newsprint crossing the border. Even more importantly, the U.S. Department of Commerce has instructed that the duty be applied and taken over in cash deposit.

Oral Questions

I would like to know from the minister whether or not the government has a plan, and please do not tell me that the plan is to buy more buses.

● (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have a plan in dealing with all actions by the Commerce Department against the Canadian forestry industry, and we have been demonstrating that on all of our forestry files.

When it comes to uncoated groundwood paper, we are deeply disappointed with these preliminary rates. We know that the forestry industry sustains excellent middle-class jobs, including in rural and indigenous communities. We are working very hard with our partners in Canada, with the Commerce Department, and with our fine trade litigators.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. First, the United States imposed countervailing duties on softwood lumber. Now it is imposing an unwarranted tax on newsprint. For the minister's information, newsprint exports are worth \$1.6 billion, and the tax will affect 25 Canadian pulp and paper mills and thousands of Canadian families across the country. As the weeks go by, the government is sitting back, watching the world turn, and there is no agreement in sight, unless there is something the Liberals are not telling us.

What are the Prime Minister and his minister going to do to get the industry out of this awful situation and help Canadian families?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply disappointed in the U.S. Department of Commerce's unjustified decision to impose preliminary duties. We are well aware that the Canadian forestry industry sustains excellent middle-class jobs. We will keep working with our partners to defend this key sector against the United States' unjust and unwarranted trade measures and practices.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, household debt has reached a new record high across the country. The burden is hard to bear, especially for women. The Liberals boast about being feminists, but they have no measures in place to alleviate the economic burden on women in Canada. There is no child care system or investment to ensure equal pay. There is nothing to counter the housing crisis.

When will the government put its feminist words into action?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is working hard for the middle class and helping more Canadians join it, particularly from a gender equality perspective, as women have an important role to play in leading this inclusive growth. Over the last two years, we have implemented major policies that are transforming the quality and accessibility of child care, as well as a Canada child benefit that primarily benefits women across Canada. We are going to continue to work very hard with that in mind.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a massive economic burden is being placed on the shoulders of Canadians, and this burden continues to grow. Half of Canadians are \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills, and they are taking on increasing levels of debt.

In the meantime, the Minister of Finance claims that the economy is doing very well. Obviously, he and his friends are the only ones benefiting from this economic growth.

How can the Minister of Finance assess our country's economy for Canadians when he does not even have a tool for calculating and assessing the consequences and risks of Canadians' household debt?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the opposition member takes a look at our record over the past two years, he will see that we have made a sustained effort to reduce inequality and to ensure that those who need it most have the most at the end of the month. One example in budget 2018 is the new Canada workers benefit, which will help lift tens of thousands of low-income workers out of poverty. This is in addition to the indexation of the Canada child benefit, which, as members know, gives nine out of ten Canadian families an average of \$2,300 more a year, tax free. This is part of our goal to make our society fairer.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight-year-old Olivia Little from Port Elgin, Ontario, has been rejected by Health Canada twice for access to the life-saving drug Cystagon through the special access program. Luckily, Olivia has her family to fight for her, and fight government bureaucracy every three months for access to this life-saving medication.

Why is the Liberal health minister making access to life-saving medications difficult for most vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of Canadians having access to safe effective treatment such as Cystagon for rare diseases. We are committed to improving the affordability, accessibility, and the appropriate use of medication, and have proposed amendments to the Patented Medicines Regulations in order to prevent excessive prices for patented drugs, including those for rare diseases.

Health Canada's special access program continues to consider requests for access to treatment for patients with cystinosis when marketing drugs are not medically suitable.

● (1455)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Minister, it is supposed to be people before government.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member, I am sure, knows to direct his remarks to the Chair and not to the people across the way.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard still has the floor.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. Hundreds of Canadians, including 10-year-old Evan Palmer, in my riding, suffer from spinal muscular atrophy, a life-threatening rare disorder. Bureaucrats have approved Spinraza, but only for the most acute cases, using one clinical trial study of one subgroup.

Most children who suffer from SMA are being denied. Vulnerable Canadians with SMA are at the mercy of bureaucrats and the health minister, who are ignoring the evidence. Will the minister commit to overruling her bureaucrats so that Evan and other SMA patients can get the medicine they need?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada is committed to providing access to safe and effective therapeutic products, including products to meet the needs of patients with rare diseases.

Spinraza was reviewed as a priority and approved for treatment for patients with spinal muscular atrophy in the summer of 2017. As with all medications, the responsibility for decisions regarding funding and reimbursement lies primarily with provinces and territories.

[Translation]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a six-year-old girl from my riding came back from the Caribbean with a hookworm infection. Although three doctors, from Sarnia, London, and SickKids in Toronto, said that the girl needed albendazole, she was turned down by the government's special access program. This is not an isolated case.

Why does this government ignore vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving access to necessary prescription drugs and ensuring that products on the Canadian market remain of the highest quality. To that end, our department has recently launched an initiative to improve the regulatory review of drugs and devices. It is a major effort to increase the availability of prescription drugs, including drugs for rare diseases. This initiative will help improve access to the therapeutic products needed to better meet the needs of the health care system.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake and across Atlantic Canada and Quebec, people who work in seasonal industries are feeling the effects of the so-called “black hole” in employment insurance.

We know that the government supports seasonal workers, that it reversed the changes made to the EI system by the previous government, and that it announced targeted funding in budget 2018 to support affected seasonal workers.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development explain to the House how the government is committed to helping these vulnerable Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake and all members of the House who have worked so hard on this issue in recent weeks.

We signed an agreement with the Government of New Brunswick this morning to support workers in seasonal industries and provide them with assistance through income support, professional training, and work experience for the benefit of their families, their businesses, and their communities.

We will continue to support middle-class families and those working hard to join the middle class.

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[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Liberal fisheries minister of Newfoundland and Labrador, this minister's Arctic surf clam decision is “far from reconciliation”. He says, “It has pitted First Nation against First Nation, and community against community.” He and numerous indigenous groups are demanding a full review of the whole process and transparency in all the bids.

For the sake of transparency and confidence in the process, would the minister commit to tabling all the surf clam bids and the criteria he used in selecting his colleague's brother for the winning bid?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first welcome our colleague back to the House of Commons. It is great to see him with us in good health.

As he knows, our decision to introduce indigenous participation is consistent with our government's commitment to developing a renewed relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples. The selected proposal was one submitted by the Five Nations Clam Company. It was selected because of its inclusion of indigenous communities across Atlantic provinces and Quebec, allowing the benefits of this lucrative fishery to flow to the greatest number of people.

He understands that tabling the commercial confidences that our department received by competing bidders would be inappropriate.

Oral Questions

●(1500)

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 50 million Facebook users had their data harvested by a British company. We are not talking about a small attack. It is absolutely huge. The NDP has been pushing for better protection of Canadians' personal data for years, but the Liberals refuse to act.

How many more cases will the Liberals wait for before protecting Canadians?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting Canadians' money and Canada's democratic institutions from cyber threats and foreign interference is a top priority for this government. We work with platforms to ensure that they fulfill their responsibilities to protect the integrity of our democracy and our elections.

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SPORTS

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many of us, I watched the Pyeongchang Paralympic Games, which wrapped up on the weekend. It is fair to say that excellence is in the genes of our Paralympic athletes. The Canadian Paralympic committee's slogan for the games was "Greatness is Rare". Like everyone who watched the Paralympic Games, I can also say that greatness is magnificent.

Can the Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities tell us how our athletes did in Pyeongchang?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to be in Pyeongchang to see our Canadian athletes give their best. It was an experience I will never forget. Our athletes delivered an incredible performance, placing in the top five 42 times and winning 28 medals. It was our best showing ever. We are very proud of our Paralympians. They are an inspiration to all Canadians.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "Davie will have exclusive rights over the sale of its four icebreakers". Who said that? It was the Prime Minister himself when he was in Quebec City on January 19 with his entourage. Now we have learned that Public Works will be negotiating for only three medium-sized icebreakers. Why?

Why is the Prime Minister breaking his promise? What is he waiting for? When will he help the shipyard workers get back to work?

He must not deprive the Coast Guard of the MS *Aiviq*, an icebreaker that is available and that would help the Coast Guard fulfill its mandate.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are continuing our discussions with Davie to meet the Coast Guard's need for icebreaker services. We will inform the House when those discussions and negotiations

are complete, but right now we are looking at the numbers and working with Davie.

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HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, as recently as March 13, the Institut national de santé publique du Québec informed us that, last year, 2,332 young Quebecers between the ages of 12 and 24 were hospitalized for acute alcohol intoxication. We are talking about 7 to 10 young people a day. The minister wants to consult and regulate because she knows full well that highly sweetened, high-alcohol beverages are dangerous.

Will she use her common sense and suspend the sale of these beverages until new regulations are put in place?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Canadians is our top priority. As I said yesterday, our thoughts are with Ms. Gervais's family. I instructed Health Canada to immediately take action with regard to the proposal to restrict the amount of alcohol in highly sweetened, high-alcohol beverages. We are also going to meet with our provincial and territorial partners to discuss how these products are advertised and marketed and how to make them less attractive to young people.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, under the law, the minister can take immediate action. It is a question of political will. It is that simple. In the past 24 hours, we have visited convenience stores in our ridings, and several of these brands can still be bought by our young people.

Why is the minister refusing to act responsibly and suspend the sale of these products while regulations are being drafted?

●(1505)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, banning a specific product will not resolve the general problem they pose. I am also deeply troubled by the availability of highly sweetened, high-alcohol drinks that are sold in large, single-serve containers. That is why I have asked Health Canada to immediately hold consultations, over a 45-day period, to finally make a concrete decision on this matter.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in reference to a question that was answered by the Minister of Public Safety. I have in my hands a report from the Canada Border Services Agency, from November 2017, that says the number of deportations has declined dramatically in the last five years: 18,992 in 2012, with the good government, and 7,364 in 2016. I would like to table the document.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, we are sent here on behalf of constituents to get answers for them on issues they are facing in their dealings with the government.

Speaker's Ruling

On behalf of Evan Palmer, a 10 year old suffering from spinal muscular atrophy, I would like to table in the House the letter he sent to me as well as the letter from his parents Kira and Justin, explaining all the difficulties they have had dealing with the minister's department.

I am asking for unanimous to table this.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO BRIEFING ON BILL C-69—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on February 26 by the hon. member for Abbotsford concerning briefings held by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in relation to Bill C-69, an act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

• (1510)

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Abbotsford for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for their comments.

[English]

In raising the matter, the member for Abbotsford explained that within an hour of having introduced Bill C-69 in the House on February 8, a briefing on the bill was offered to the media and to stakeholders. This briefing was more than five hours before members of Parliament were offered the same. With members unable to respond immediately to media and stakeholder inquiries, he contended that this was a profound act of disrespect on the part of the minister that constituted a contempt of the House.

[Translation]

The parliamentary secretary disagreed, saying that the minister had not deliberately tried to impede members' access to information on the bill and would offer additional briefings, if requested. Noting that the bill was not debated in the House until days later and that departmental briefings are beyond the purview of the Chair, the parliamentary secretary said that no breach of privilege had occurred.

[English]

As I already noted, the Chair is concerned that this question of privilege was not brought up at the earliest opportunity. Members know that in determining a question of privilege *prima facie*, the Speaker must consider whether the two requisite conditions have been met; that is, whether the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity and whether, in the Speaker's view, it constitutes, at first view, a breach of a parliamentary privilege.

[Translation]

With respect to timeliness, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 145:

...the Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a Member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a *prima facie* question of privilege.

[English]

In this particular case, I note that between February 8, the date of the alleged contempt, and February 14, the date on which the member raised his complaint in the House, several sitting days had elapsed during which the member was aware of the situation that gave rise to his question of privilege. This is cause for concern for the Chair, particularly as the member did not provide an explanation as to why the condition of timeliness was not satisfied. While I am prepared to be flexible on this point this time and not dismiss his question of privilege for this reason alone, it is a condition that must be taken into account in assessing the alleged question of privilege.

Now, turning to the substantive elements of the member's question of privilege, there have been past instances where members have raised concerns about departmental briefings. Speaker Milliken, in a ruling on November 21, 2002, stated, at page 1742 of the *Debates*:

It is very difficult for the Chair to intervene in a situation where a minister has chosen to have a press conference, or a briefing or a meeting and release material when the Speaker has nothing to do with the organization of that...The same thing goes for those who are invited to meetings and for the way people are notified of meetings. Whether there is one meeting, or three or four, makes no difference. In my opinion, it is impossible for me to intervene in this case.

[Translation]

It is equally important to understand that the House's right to first access to legislation was respected in this instance since, as the member acknowledged, Bill C-69 was introduced in the House before either of the briefings in question took place. Thus, this situation cannot be characterized as one of premature disclosure of a bill, even if Members were excluded from the first briefing, that of the media.

[English]

The member stated that a contempt may occur if, by diminishing the respect it is due, the House's ability to perform its functions is impeded. Speaker Sauvé, in a ruling on October 29, 1980, at page 4214 of the *Debates*, said:

...while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.

This points to an essential truth that to constitute a contempt, it is necessary to demonstrate that a proceeding in the House, or the ability of members to fulfill their parliamentary duties, was in some way impeded. In response to a similar complaint, on December 4, 2014, at page 10168 of the *Debates*, my predecessor reminded the House:

That is not to say, however, that every proceeding or activity related to delivering or accessing information by members implicitly involves their parliamentary duties.

The Budget

● (1515)

[Translation]

He also had cause to state on March 3, 2014, at pages 3429 and 3430 of *Debates*:

When a situation is brought to the Chair's attention, it must be assessed within the somewhat narrow confines of parliamentary procedure and precedents. ...the Chair must assess whether the member has been obstructed in the discharge of his responsibilities in direct relation to proceedings in Parliament. ...a member who is preparing to participate in proceedings—whether through a technical briefing or some other means—is not participating in the proceedings themselves. While such preparation is no doubt important, it remains ancillary to, rather than part of, Parliament's proceedings.

[English]

That being said, as Speaker, I understand the member for Abbotsford's frustration and the sense of disrespect that he feels in not having had priority access to a briefing on such a complex piece of legislation. In fact, the Chair not only finds this matter to be unfortunate, but also entirely avoidable. While no parliamentary rules may have been broken or privileges breached, respecting members' needs for timely and accurate information remains essential. There is no question that the work of members of Parliament is made more difficult without expeditious access to legislative information. Given this reality, there is a rightful expectation that those responsible for the information should do their utmost to ensure members' access to it. Not respecting this expectation does a disservice to all. It is particularly disconcerting when the government gives priority to the media over the members of Parliament.

Having examined the evidence and given the limited parameters of the Chair in this matter, I cannot conclude that the House or its members were unable to fulfill their parliamentary duties. Accordingly, I cannot find that the question raised constitutes a prima facie contempt of the House, and thus there is no case of privilege.

[Translation]

I thank all honourable members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has a minute and a half remaining.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had two and a half minutes remaining, but since you are giving one minute and a half I will make it snappy.

[English]

I want to talk about veterans and the medical expense credit for service dogs. This has been very important to veterans for a long time. In my constituency, Mr. Cousineau, a veteran, has been a

strong advocate for this. He not only met with the minister and many people about the service dog tax credit, but he walked from my riding to Ottawa so he could make his point. I am extremely pleased, as he is, that this was approved in our budget.

[Translation]

Lastly, I want to address a very important matter, that of investing in official language minority communities. For 10 years, the Conservative government maintained the status quo and did not invest a penny in these communities.

Under budget 2018, our government is making a \$400-million investment in a roadmap and an action plan to ensure the vitality and future of official language minority communities. That is something that these communities have been looking forward to for a long time, and our party is going to meet their expectations.

[English]

Budget 2018 is a very strong budget for Canadians right across Canada.

● (1520)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was very optimistic and glowing in his remarks about the budget. I was reading through some of the preamble in the introduction of the budget. It talks about our towns and cities being better, cleaner places to live, yet we know that just recently another 46 million litres of raw sewage was released into the St. Lawrence river from Quebec City. Earlier in the Liberals' mandate, eight billion litres of sewage went into the river. I do not see how we can say those are better, cleaner places to live.

The budget also states that Canadians are optimistic about the future, about owning their own homes. Recently, I have held a number of round tables both in my riding and in Sault Ste. Marie. Mortgage brokers, real estate agents, and homebuyers are not optimistic about being able to own a new home.

How can my colleague feel optimistic when some of the economic data that we see on the ground in our communities is so negative?

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to add something important. This budget builds on the work we have done over the past two years.

We rank number one among the G7 countries. That clearly shows that we are leaders in this area. There are more jobs, with 700,000 jobs having been created in two and a half years. It is extraordinary. New jobs have been created in every community. It has been a great success. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.7%, its lowest in 40 years.

These are all key points that clearly illustrate the success of our government. These changes help young people not only in my riding, but in every riding in Canada.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, last Friday I was in Kenya as part of a Canadian delegation for Canada in Africa. We went to learn about conservation. We heard about the last living male northern white rhino. Last night we heard that this northern white rhino had died. The extinction of that animal is inevitable.

In the budget, the government continues to talk about the ocean protection plan. In southern British Columbia, we are looking at a steep decline of the southern resident killer whales. We know they rely on our salmon for their existence. The government does not seem to understand the sense of urgency facing our orcas and our salmon. The Liberals have funded nothing for the Somass and nothing for Clayoquot. We are getting almost no money at all from the government's coastal restoration fund.

Where is the sense of urgency for the voices that are not able to speak, our species at risk?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that our investment in coastal waters and protecting our shoreline has been very predominant in the last two years. Our government has been working closely with the provincial government in B.C. to find ways to ensure that the safety of those species will continue to be successful. We will continue to work on that, and I will bring that information to the minister.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my hon. colleague started talking about the area where he is from, Preston. I had the opportunity to visit Preston a little while ago. I understand there are some challenges that the community faces there, the black community in particular.

You could talk about land rights claims, and you could talk about other issues. How important is it that this budget, for the first time in history, has mentioned the black community specifically, and put resources towards ensuring their success in this country today and beyond?

• (1525)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that she is to address her questions to the Chair and not to individual members.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question and for her continued support, of course, of our community. She was there once, but she was also there a couple of weeks ago for the launching.

The African Nova Scotian community has struggled for years. They have contributed tremendously to my riding, to Nova Scotia, and to Canada. They are extremely pleased. What they said to me on the night of the afternoon launching was, "We are here, not to launch, as that was done this afternoon, but we are here to celebrate. We are here to celebrate Viola Desmond. We are here to celebrate our people. We are here to celebrate our community. We are here to celebrate our country." They are extremely happy.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start my speech today by congratulating my former colleague, the hon. Judy Foote, on today's announcement. She has been named the next Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador. On

behalf of all the Newfoundland and Labrador caucus and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we congratulate Judy and are incredibly proud of her accomplishments.

I am so pleased today to speak to our 2018 budget, a budget about equality and growth, a budget for a strong middle class. I was very proud when the finance minister tabled his most recent budget because it demonstrated our continued commitment as a government to making decisions for Canadians first and foremost. Budget 2018 is the most progressive and inclusive budget to date, going to great lengths to recognize our strengths as a country, but also to recognize that there is still a lot of work to do as it relates to reconciliation, gender equality, and overall inclusion.

I want to focus my speech today on some of the commitments made in budget 2018 that will have the biggest impact in my riding of Avalon and in my home province.

There is \$250 million allocated to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' small craft harbours program. I cannot begin to express how thrilled I was to see this commitment in budget 2018. All but one community in my riding is bound by the ocean. They are coastal communities that depend on the commercial fishery, not just economically but also culturally. Small craft harbour facilities in Avalon are essential to the fishing industry and indeed this goes for small craft harbours across the country.

This investment means that facilities that are in desperate need of repair and those needing expansion can get the work done and make sure that our fishers are safe and protected before they even go out to sea. I know many of my colleagues across the country will join me in applauding this critical investment for rural and coastal communities.

Furthermore, budget 2018 allocates \$21.6 million over two years to renew the sustainable aquaculture program. As we know well in Newfoundland and Labrador, aquaculture is an ever-growing industry and is becoming more important and popular every year. We know that making sure aquaculture is done safely and sustainably is incredibly important to the health of our wild fish stocks and ultimately of Canadians. Investing and continuing to invest in this program means that those in the aquaculture industry can continue to keep their farmed fish well contained and invest in research for best practices for the future.

In the 2018-19 fiscal year, there will be \$58.2 million in new funding for the Atlantic fisheries fund. I was with my colleagues in Newfoundland at the marine institute when our government announced the Atlantic fisheries fund, and the response to this fund has been astounding. I have personally had conversations with fishermen in my riding who have recently applied for and received funding through the AFF, and they are all so thrilled with what this funding could mean for them and their enterprises.

The Budget

This is probably one of the only times that individual fishermen have been able to apply for their own federal funding to invest in innovative equipment that will make their jobs easier and safer, now and into the future. Stimulating the fisheries in Atlantic Canada, an industry that has been suffering recently, there is no question, is so critical for the vitality of rural coastal communities and the people that live in them, like many of mine in Avalon. I did not thank the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, but I certainly will for his continued faith in and consideration of our fishers.

Canadians look to the government to make strategic decisions and move forward on projects that will benefit them and their neighbours today and well into the future. Canadians were vocal in their support of a national pharmacare program and to see the announcement in budget 2018 that our government will be moving forward on this initiative with an advisory council was fantastic. We know that taking on a project of this size and importance will require a lot of work and research so that we can get it right for Canadians. I am very excited to follow the work of this advisory council as it discovers which pharmacare plan would be the best for our country in the future.

• (1530)

When I was elected in 2015, I quickly learned the value of the regional development agency in Newfoundland and Labrador, ACOA or the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. ACOA is a vital resource for local businesses, community organizations, and innovators in my riding. Since being elected, I have seen many groups thrive thanks to ACOA funding. That is why I was thrilled to see that in this budget we have continued investment in the agency, with an additional \$48 million, \$8 million of which our government has earmarked specifically to support women entrepreneurs. I am sure that not only my constituents but the constituents of many of my colleagues across Atlantic Canada are thrilled to see this commitment to support women in business. I believe that this builds on our government's promise to work toward gender equality and giving women more opportunities to achieve this goal.

Investing in female entrepreneurs is not the only way that budget 2018 has committed to giving women the opportunities they deserve to thrive in today's workforce. This budget commits to a new parental sharing benefit that will give an extra five weeks of parental leave to new parents, provided that both parents share that leave. This is a revolutionary change as it incentivizes moms and dads, women and men to share the responsibility of maternity leave, giving women the opportunity to get back to doing what they love and are passionate about earlier.

On this side of the House, we know that women are a force and strength in the workplace. They are leaders and innovators, have incredible minds, and are assets to any company or department. Simultaneously, we know that men can be compassionate and loving fathers who want to be a part of their children's early days just as much as moms do. That is why this new parental sharing benefit not only recognizes the value that both women and men have as employees but also as parents, giving them both equal opportunities at home and at work. We believe that our children are better off when they learn, grow, and develop alongside both of their parents equally. Each of us in the House knows family members, friends, or constituents who would have loved to avail themselves of this kind

of opportunity for their kids. With this new benefit, we will have stronger families, kids, and workforces.

I know many of my colleagues would agree with me when I say I could go on and on in the House today speaking about budget 2018. The continued investments are welcomed by me and my constituents, as are the new initiatives announced by the finance minister last month in this budget. The budget is proof that our government is investing and making decisions with the best interests of Canadians in mind.

I want to thank the finance minister and the Prime Minister for ensuring that the middle class and our most vulnerable Canadians are at the heart of this budget and all decisions made by this government.

I am proud to stand in support of equality and growth for the middle class, and in support of this 2018 budget.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague continues to list the number of investments, as he calls them, or expenditures, but he fails to acknowledge the fact that these investments, this spending, is done at the expense of increased deficit spending year after year to the point where we are spending over \$26 billion a year just on interest.

The platform of the Liberal Party, when it was running for election in 2015, clearly indicated it was going to go into a deficit. We knew that. However, what it did not tell us was the size and length of the deficits that we have seen. It said it would be \$10 billion maximum and that by 2019 it would balance the budget. Here we are with \$18 billion more in deficit, a continuing growth of that deficit, and no plan to balance the budget.

Therefore, I would like to ask my colleague this. Did the Liberals lie to Canadians when they said it was only going to be \$10 billion or are they just incompetent managers? When will the budget be balanced?

• (1535)

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his question. It is an area I am quite familiar with. I have family who live in Kitchener and have visited there many times.

He started off by saying we are spending irresponsibly, that there is a bigger deficit, and that we are not balancing the budget when it was first predicted. However, I would like to remind the member that in not doing what the Conservatives would like to see us do by balancing the budget, we have created over 600,000 new jobs in this country over the past two years. We have the lowest unemployment rate that this country has seen since it was first recorded in 1976. Therefore, I would forgo balancing the budget to create that kind of economic growth any day of the week and any year.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Avalon, who I know sits on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. I know that he cares about coastal communities. We talk a lot about the importance of salmon and fish to coastal communities for culture, the economy, and food security. We know that over the last decade, we saw our fish stocks decline rapidly under the Conservative government.

The Budget

We had the parliamentary secretary of fisheries and oceans, who is from Burnaby North, come to my riding to look at the state of our salmon and to travel the Somass. He was on the front page of the *Alberni Valley News*, and he said:

It means we're going to be able to do better science and better stock assessments. For so long, communities have had a lot of good projects like the group here (West Coast Aquatic) that they've wanted to get done but we haven't had the financial ability to move forward on it because the federal government has been somewhat absent.

Madam Speaker, guess how much funding they got. Zero. They could not be more absent than zero. Even the Conservatives, in their failure, delivered some funding to this community. When is the government going to understand the urgency and the threat to our salmon? Our hatcheries have not had an increase in 28 years. This is a desperate situation.

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member sat in on some fisheries and oceans committee meetings and did some travel in Atlantic Canada.

I cannot speak to the specifics of what is going on in his riding, whether it be with the salmon or any other species. However, I can say that through various programs, the government is committed to rebuilding programs in just about every stock that is in trouble, whether it be in eastern Canada or western Canada, that has been identified by the commissioner. It is under way to see a program established.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite mentioned that both coasts have slightly different approaches. He did not want to talk about the west coast. I will say that there was no \$400 million for British Columbia for our fisheries, unlike the fund he suggested earlier. That is one of the main differences.

I would just like to take this member to task. He actually campaigned on a small \$10-billion-a-year deficit. The majority of the amount would go to infrastructure. That has been proven categorically wrong by his own finance minister's budget and also by the PBO. Is he satisfied that there is enough money being spent on infrastructure, and is he unhappy with his own government's approach to balanced budgets?

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I will say that I am happy with the economic progress this government has made. When he says that I campaigned door to door on a balanced budget, I will take him to task on that, because a balanced budget never came up once when I knocked on doors. Do not lecture me on what I campaigned on and what I did not campaign on.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am reminding the member that I am not lecturing him and he is to address his questions to the Chair.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Pickering—Uxbridge.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I start, I will be sharing my time with the member for Laval—Les Îles.

It is a pleasure to rise in this House today to speak to budget 2018 and the impact it is going to have in my community and for Canadians across the country. Budget 2018, tabled recently by the Minister of Finance in this House, outlines the government's next

steps in our plan to support the middle class, strengthen and grow the economy, and promote equality for all Canadians.

During the last two constituency weeks earlier this month, I had the opportunity, like many members of this House, to have meetings with constituents and local organizations on some of the announcements made in this budget. I also spoke at both Pickering and Uxbridge town councils, where I provided an update to constituents and local councillors on the work of the federal government and the positive effect this budget would have on our communities.

To put the debate on this budget in context, I began my delegations to my councils by outlining the economic reality we face. Despite the negative spin coming from the opposition, the fact is that Canada has created over 600,000 jobs over the past two years. We have a resurgent economy, the fastest growing among the G7. Our constituents have more money in their pockets, and families are better able to support their children because of an enhanced Canada child benefit.

In my riding of Pickering—Uxbridge, the families of 16,260 children are receiving CCB cheques, with an average payment of \$520 per month, for a total of over \$4.8 million. I cannot stress enough how big an impact this is having not only for families and children but for our local economy. The CCB is driving business growth and consumer spending and is helping to create and maintain jobs both across the country and in my community. That is why I was thrilled to see that in budget 2018, our government would be indexing the CCB two years ahead of schedule to ensure that the roughly six million Canadian children who currently benefit from the CCB would continue to do so over the long term. That means that starting in July, in my community and communities across the country, families would be provided with even greater support for the cost of raising children and would have extra help each month to pay for things like nutritious food, sports programs, music lessons, and school supplies.

During my remarks and in my conversations, I spoke about budget 2018's investments to support low-income workers. I am proud to say that in a world and global climate in which many feel that they do not have the chance to succeed or that they are being left behind in the new economy, our government is investing almost \$1 billion in new funding per year to help low-income workers get ahead. As part of that investment, budget 2018 announced the new Canada workers benefit, a tax benefit that would allow more workers to keep more of their paycheques. It would build on the former working income tax benefit. It would not only encourage more people to enter the workforce but would provide real help to more than two million Canadians, some of whom live in my community.

The Budget

Starting in 2019, the CWB would increase both maximum benefits and the income level at which the benefit would be phased out. We would also ensure that everyone eligible to benefit from the new CWB would actually benefit when they filed their taxes. That means that an estimated 300,000 additional low-income workers would receive the new CWB for the 2019 tax year. That would be real results for working people, and it would help create a more level playing field for more Canadians.

Achieving equality and levelling the playing field are important themes in budget 2018. How to create a more equal society and bridge the wage gap between men and women is a question governments around the world are wrestling with. Today women in Canada earn 31% less than men on an annual basis, and on average, about 12% less in the hourly wage paid for full-time work. There are a number of complicated reasons for this, but the facts are clear. Studies also show that by closing the wage gap, Canada's economic growth would grow significantly.

I want to be very clear that this is an economic issue just as much as it is a social issue. Through budget 2018, our government would lead by example. It would put in place measures to address the gender wage gap by shining a light on pay practices in the federally regulated sector and by taking the next steps to create a proactive pay equity regime, for which legislation will be tabled later this fall.

• (1540)

This robust pay equity regime would encompass businesses and organizations that are federally regulated and would apply to roughly 1.2 million Canadians. Strong oversight and enforcement and a requirement for regular maintenance would be included. It would take an innovative approach so we could ensure that on average, women and men received the same pay for work of equal value. This is an issue that so many have advocated passionately for over several years. I was proud to see the commitment made in the budget and look forward to the introduction of pay equity legislation.

I was also thrilled to see the announcement of a new women's entrepreneurship strategy in budget 2018. Supporting women-owned businesses is crucial, and this comprehensive approach would address the unique barriers female entrepreneurs face in comparison to their male counterparts. Whether it is to help improve skills or connect female entrepreneurs with mentorship or networking opportunities, our government would invest \$105 million over five years to regional development agencies to support the growth and prosperity of women-led businesses.

Achieving equality in the workforce is a difficult task, and doing so requires this type of creative thinking. It also challenges us to address inequalities at home. That is why in budget 2018, our government has introduced a new EI parental sharing benefit. The benefit would support equality at home and in the workplace by providing an additional five weeks of benefits when both parents agreed to share parental leave. This measure would provide greater flexibility for parents to return to work sooner, if they chose, with the knowledge that their family had the support it needed.

Budget 2018 is a bold, innovative, and optimistic plan that would put people first and would invest in a prosperous and shared future. It would build on the commitments and investments in previous budgets in infrastructure and affordable housing. Just last week, I

had the privilege of making an announcement, with my Durham colleagues, about a historic investment of \$94 million in Durham Region Transit.

The commitments we make would have a real, measurable impact on our communities. I am proud to support the budget and the government's plan to ensure that all Canadians have an equal and fair chance for success.

• (1545)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the campaign promises that was so familiar was that the Liberals were going to run a \$10-billion deficit, and they were going to do that in order to build infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, in municipalities all across Canada. However, we have seen that it did not happen. In fact, they took \$15 billion away from municipalities and put it into the infrastructure bank. Now they are spending half a billion dollars to build roads and bridges in Asia. Meanwhile, municipalities are suffering.

I see in the budget that they have also pushed out another nearly \$5 billion worth of infrastructure spending. Why does the government not have a plan to keep its commitment to Canadians about municipal infrastructure?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, in fact, we have been delivering for municipalities. One of the reasons I ran to be in this place was that I was so tired of the federal government, under the Harper Conservatives, not being a partner at the table. The investment in Durham Region Transit is the largest that has ever been provided to Durham. This will provide bus rapid transit along Highway 2 in our community, connecting Durham Region to the TTC in Toronto and to colleges and universities, from the University of Toronto to Durham College to UOIT. I guess the members opposite do not think that is a valuable investment, but in my community they do.

We also see the infrastructure bank as an opportunity for major investments that help more than one community across the country. From my perspective, municipalities are very pleased with our government's plan.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to pick up on some remarks of the hon. member regarding pay equity legislation, because that portion of her speech could very well have been delivered during the 2015 election. Of course, we are about two and a half years past that election. We are now closer to the next election. It was re-announced in the budget. We are certainly glad that it has not fallen completely off the radar, but we in the NDP have been pushing in this place over the past two years in this Parliament, and for far longer, over a decade, to see pay equity legislation not just talked about by the government but implemented.

The Budget

We also saw, alongside this rehashed promise to bring forward legislation, that there was no money actually allocated to the implementation of pay equity. Pay equity will not be cost-neutral for the government. That is fine. That is money that belongs in the pockets of women who are doing good work for the government. However, if the government is serious about the implementation over the next year, surely there ought to be money in the budget. I wonder what the member thinks about that omission.

• (1550)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, frankly I applaud anyone who has been advocating for pay equity, at all levels of government and in all sectors in business and Canadian society. At the end of the day, the pay equity legislation only works if we get it right. Just speaking about it or implementing a pay equity system without having the checks and balances, without having the reviews, does not move the issue forward.

In terms of the comments around our government just mentioning it, that is the whole point of the legislation that will be introduced in the fall. It is something that I am very much looking forward to debating in the House.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it has been difficult for me to get into the debate, but I hope the member for Pickering—Uxbridge can shed some light on why a budget in 2018 has no new private programs at all. Previous budgets have not been as good in delivering climate action as the one delivered in 2005 by the gentleman who now serves as the Minister of Public Safety. When he was the minister of finance, we saw much better.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak for previous governments and previous budgets, but I can say that we have seen investments in the environment. The government's commitment to the environment and the economy has been clear.

One example in terms of the environment being woven into this budget across sections is going back to the point about infrastructure. Waste-water systems in my community are a very important piece of environmental protection that I am proud our government is supporting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the third budget of the hon. Minister of Finance builds on the preceding ones. Those budgets improved the performance of our economy, allowing it to outpace our G7 partners. Our Minister of Finance and our government are following a rigorous plan that is delivering outstanding results in the best interests of Canadians.

One of this great things about this budget is that it helps women and families, especially those who need it the most. It stimulates our economy through smart investments, including investments in research and development and in sustainable infrastructure. Most importantly, it prepares Canadians for the economy of tomorrow.

For Quebec, I am pleased to see that we will be receiving an additional \$651.5 million in equalization payments, for a total of \$11.7 billion. This is fresh funding that will enable the Government of Quebec to better meet the needs of our people.

In addition, we all too often forget the Government of Canada's part in funding provincial health and social services programs. The budget provides an additional \$295 million in federal health transfers for Quebec, for a total of \$8.8 billion this year. Quebec will receive an additional \$82 million for social programs, for a total of \$3.2 billion. In 2018-19, Quebec will receive \$23.7 million in federal transfers, \$1 billion more than last year.

There is more for Quebec in this budget. Let us first recall the measures that continue to affect the people of Laval. The first is the Réseau express métropolitain, or REM, which will connect the north shore of Montreal and Laval to the Trudeau airport and downtown Montreal, and which was already allocated an investment of nearly \$1.3 billion in the last federal budget.

The federal government has also invested \$23.7 million in the Société de transport de Laval, or STL, to purchase buses to meet the growing demand for public transportation across the city, to help convert buses to electric power, and to increase the reliability and efficiency of the STL. Like all public transportation systems, the REM will help the people of Laval get around and improve their mobility. It will have a positive impact on jobs, the economy, and the environment in Laval.

• (1555)

[*English*]

Budget 2018 contains numerous positive measures, but I would especially like to draw attention to those that will impact women. As members know, we celebrated the International Women's Day on March 8. That day is not another Valentine's Day. It is a day on which we acknowledge women's struggle for equality.

I am pleased to rise in this House to applaud the federal government's decision to make Status of Women Canada an official department. Our government is taking concrete steps to make Canada a more equitable and egalitarian country on the world stage.

[*Translation*]

Women still face challenges and obstacles every day in our communities. They are faced with pay inequity, they are under-represented in certain sectors of the labour market, and, sadly, they still experience all manner of violence, which jeopardizes our communities.

I am pleased that the concrete measures in this budget will help advance gender equality. The new department will have effective tools and means to make that happen. For example, the government will soon be introducing a bill on pay equity. This bill will require all federally regulated businesses to provide equal pay for equal work. This makes even more sense when we consider that Canadian women are among the most educated in the world. This initiative will help remove the obstacles preventing half of Canadians from fully contributing to the wealth of our beautiful country.

I also want to talk about other measures. It is no secret to anyone, myself included, that women do more work in the home than their partners.

The Budget

•(1600)

[English]

The new parental sharing benefit gives families an additional five weeks of benefits when both parents agree to share their parental leave. This measure will provide greater equality when it comes to child care and family responsibility. This flexible measure will empower women to more effectively return to work.

Other measures included in budget 2018 are work placement under the Canada summer jobs program for young women who want to enter male-dominated trades. Trades like plumbing, welding, and gas installation pay very well. Women who want to train in these trades will receive financial assistance during their apprenticeship.

The budget also contains measures to help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses. The goal is to grow their reputation worldwide. For Quebec alone, budget 2018 provides \$22 million for personalized support for women entrepreneurs in that province.

Women will also be able to take advantage of the apprenticeship incentive grant for women, which encourages women to explore new skilled trades and Red Seal trades.

[Translation]

This budget is full of measures for or about women. Every one of those measures removes obstacles and brings us closer to our shared goal of justice, equality, and fairness for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his remarks. I enjoy working with him on the scrutiny of regulations committee. He always does his homework and is well prepared.

I have a question that relates to some of the conversations we have had today and yesterday in this House. In the preamble of the budget, it talks in glowing terms about a country where differences are recognized not as a barrier to success but as a source of strength.

However, yesterday, we saw almost the entire Liberal caucus voting against a motion that would have removed some of those barriers. It would have given equal access to summer students, or groups applying for funding to employ those summer students, to give them the opportunity to access funds they have paid as taxes in our country.

Now we have a system where to receive those funds, not only can we not remain neutral, we cannot just be silent, we have to sign an attestation saying that we agree with the government.

How is that removing a barrier to success?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague whom I have a lot of respect for. I enjoy working with him on committee.

I would like to reassure my colleague on the other side that the government will not have barriers, it will destroy barriers, and it will give access to young women, young children. We encourage science development, research, students. In this way, we can grow our economy. We can prepare our country for a better life for our future generations. This is the way we are doing it, and we will continue to

do it. I assure my colleague that this is the best way, under this government.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, some time ago, the status of women committee did a study on the barriers that young women face in regard to entering the trades, for example, jobs that women are not usually seen in.

One of the biggest barriers was the absence of child care. A young woman might very well qualify for a position in a business or a company, but because she cannot access child care, she could get the position and could not get the training needed to remain in that position.

I would like to ask the member a question. In light of the fact that child care was blatantly absent from the federal budget, with all of this talk about encouraging women into business and into jobs, how on earth can this help, if they cannot access child care and cannot accept those opportunities?

•(1605)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I would like to assure my colleague and all members in the chamber that she touches the spirit of the budget, how the budget is encouraging women locally and internationally.

We have a program to go even further, out of Canada, to make life better for women. Here, we help women who have the intention to do a difficult job. We will give them \$8,000 for training, in order for them to be qualified and productive in our society. We will continue, from students to workers to parental sharing, contributing a lot on the subject.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask the same question that I asked earlier. First of all, did the member knock on doors, like many of his colleagues, saying that he would run two deficit budgets of \$10 billion and then return back to balance by 2019? This budget clearly shows that there is no plan. In fact, the reason for borrowing was originally for infrastructure. The parliamentary budget office has said that 25% of the funds that the government proposes are going to lapse and that there is no plan.

Does the member feel that he has honoured his constituents? Does he feel that the government needs to do a better job in this area?

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury: Madam Speaker, I would like to assure my colleague about the following. When someone needs to buy a house, if he does not have the money, he takes out a mortgage in order to have a better life for his wife and children. That is exactly what we are doing. We are borrowing money in order to invest in our infrastructure, our environment, families, students, science, our research. We keep investing in order to pay the debt left to us by the previous government.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share my time with my hon. colleague from Sarnia—Lambton today.

There are many names that have been used to describe this budget. One I have heard is the Peter Pan budget. Another one calls it the Seinfeld budget because it is about nothing. I have a few other names myself for it, perhaps the Led Zeppelin budget because it would leave one dazed and confused in reading it.

The Budget

Here is a quote about the budget from the Minister of Status of Women: “The lens applied to the budget has been an intersectional gendered lens because our brand of feminism is based on the belief that feminism is a diverse as Canada itself.” At the same time, the budget itself says that men and boys also have gender intersecting identities, experience inequality, and are not a homogenous group. This work will recognize that this gender is not synonymous with women, dazed and confused.

We could call it the budget of broken promises. We heard earlier today about the broken promise of small deficits. Remember, the Liberals originally promised just \$24 billion in deficit and then balancing the budget in 2019. Instead, we are going to be looking at \$83 billion in new debt by 2019 and no balance in sight. In fact, numbers from the Finance department show that we will not be in balance until 2045, which is 27 years from now.

The finance minister and the Prime Minister refuse repeatedly to answer the question of when the budget will be balanced. The mandate tracker that the Liberal government launched to great fanfare says on the budget, and remember that the mandate was to balance the budget by 2019, that it is under way, with challenges.

We could call it “Dude, where is my infrastructure?” There is \$24 billion of infrastructure spending on the original debt and a promise, but so much has been reprofiled and lapsed that even the Parliamentary Budget Officer cannot track it.

The Senate did a study on the infrastructure spending. Remember, this infrastructure spending was supposed to be the golden bullet. It was going to improve productivity, get us home to our families faster because of a shorter commute, make us happier, make the Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup. The Senate said in its study that the only metric for success for outcomes for infrastructure spending is that the money was spent. It was not that it would increase productivity, not that Canadians were getting good value for the money. The Senate dominated by Liberals and independent Liberals, stated that their only measure of success is that they spent the money itself.

Now these are all good names, but I want to go with a different name. It will be a sequel to the Rick Moranis film, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, except we will call this budget the “honey, I sunk the kids budget”, because it sells out our children and our grandchildren. It sticks them with billions and billions of added debt and interest.

How bad is it? There will be \$98 billion added over the next five years. That is \$3,800 for every single Canadian taxpayer over five years. A husband and wife with one of their children working has three taxpayers. That is \$10,000 of added debt for that one family in just five years.

Over the next five years, we are going to be spending \$175 billion in interest payments. Think about that \$175 billion. That is \$6,730 for every single taxpayer for five years. Now, if people have kids graduating from high school or in their first year of university, when they enter the workforce around 2022-23, in that one year, they are going to be on the hook for \$1,300 in taxes just to cover interest rates.

What could that \$175 billion in interest that we are paying to foreign banks and Bay Street billionaires buy? It could get us 700,000 trips for the Prime Minister for his trip to billionaire island;

22,000 hockey rinks on Parliament Hill; 525 sole-sourced Super Hornets from Boeing, which we could cancel because we do not like Boeing, and then go to Australia to buy Boeing Hornets. We could do 470 bailouts for Bombardier, and almost two million Twitter accounts for the Minister of Health to do her two tweets a day.

Seriously though, what could that money do? With that \$175 billion, we could build 15 brand new hospitals, in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, and Calgary. The Misericordia hospital in west Edmonton, where my oldest son was born, needs to be replaced. They say it is a billion dollar price tag. We could replace that 15 times. With the other money, we could build a brand new hospital in every single town or city in Canada that has a population of 20,000 or more.

● (1610)

Going forward, let us look at the future. Both the budget and the PBO talk about upward and downward risks of the budget, and risks of the economy being higher or lower than they are forecasting. On the upward side, they state that we could have higher growth globally. We could have economic activity driven by unsustainable consumer debt, or higher oil prices. However, we know we cannot get the oil to market under the Liberal government, so it is massively discounted. The only good news, the only way things could get better is to rely on the world economy, higher oil, even though we cannot get our oil to market, or more consumer spending.

On the downside, we could have NAFTA crashing, and there is nothing in the budget that addresses the possibility. We could have higher interest rates or higher debt. We do not have a lot of upside, but there is a lot of downside on this.

What does this budget do for Alberta? Well, let us see: nothing. It does nothing for Alberta. We realize that the Liberals do not care about Alberta. They only have two or three MPs left, depending on the scandal of the week. That being said, when I look at the wanted infrastructure from the government, what do we get? The Minister of Infrastructure and Communities is from Alberta. Alberta has about 12% of the population of Canada, but we get 9.5% of the infrastructure that has been spent so far. Even with the Minister of Infrastructure based in Edmonton, we are underfunded by 18% per capita. Keeping in mind that Alberta overcontributes because of a higher wealth to equalization, we are underfunded by 18% per capita.

The Budget

What have we had from the spending so far that we have heard so much about? We have garbage and cigarette disposal units for our bus stops. Thanks to the minister. We have five passenger shelters purchased for Alberta. We have a review of transit feasibility and bus stop upgrades. From Edmonton to Fort McMurray, there is Highway 63, and it is called the highway of death because there have been 150 people who have lost their lives. I used to work in Fort McMurray and have driven that highway several times. Of all this historic infrastructure spending, with the infrastructure minister based in Edmonton, what do we get? We get \$29 million for upgrades for Highway 63. It is an absolute disgrace what is going on with this budget. It provides almost nothing for Alberta. All it does for this country is drown us in debt.

I want to summarize what it does. In good times, the government is spending like there is no tomorrow and driving up debt when it should be putting away money for the future for our aging population, the possible downturn of the global economy, and higher interest rates. When times are good, with a strong global economy, the government is racking up the debt and leaving us with nothing in the bank for when things go down.

This diverts massive amounts of taxpayers' dollars out of needed resources for hospitals, the military, and infrastructure, and drives it into interest payments to foreign bankers and Bay Street elites. This is a budget for Bay Street elites and foreign financiers. It is not a budget for Canada or Albertans.

• (1615)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was remiss when I heard some of the comments by the hon. colleague from Alberta about how this is a budget for certain groups; this is a budget for all Canadians coast to coast. This is a budget that indexes the Canada child benefit two years in advance. This is a budget that introduces a Canada workers benefit.

I am wondering if my colleague across the aisle would comment on how the Canada child benefit helps the residents of his riding, whether it is a single mother, individuals with two or three kids who may be staying home for a certain time, or somebody who has recently moved to his riding from another part of the country or immigrated recently. Can he comment about what the Canada child benefit is doing for residents of his riding in Alberta?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, it is funny that the member brings up the benefit and indexation. He only brings it up because the government forgot to add indexing when it first introduced it. It probably knowingly left it out so it could reduce the amount of payments. It only brought it up to detract from all the scandal that the government has been involved in.

Regarding the example of paying single mothers, I would love for the member to come to my constituency office and listen to the amount of single mothers who cannot access this because of the bizarre rules that the government has set up. We have mothers who have come in with their identification, letters from their ex-husbands stating that they have given full custody to the mothers. They have brought the children in. There are letters from the school saying that the children exist. However, what do we get from the CRA and deafness from the government? We are told that it needs more proof.

I would like to see the government step up, do its job, and help single mothers, not just talk about it in this House.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend from Edmonton West for raising the concerns and asking where this money is going.

We have heard the government talk about its record amount of investments in infrastructure and job creation, but I can tell members that my community in the Alberni Valley has the highest poverty rate in British Columbia, and we know that comes at a huge cost to our criminal justice system and health care system.

We have put forward some really good proposals. One is for coastal restoration to bring our salmon back, which is really important to our economy and food security. We have put forward proposals for port infrastructure to create a good, strong marine economy where we can refit boats. We have put forward proposals for a firefighting school of excellence and return-to-work policies through Pacific Coast University to help unlock the potential of 1.2 million Canadians who are injured in the workplace. None of those proposals got any funding.

Would the member agree that if we are going to spend money, we should put it in places where there is a high amount of poverty, unlock that potential and empower people? Instead, the government is making it a lost opportunity.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I used to live on Vancouver Island. I have been to the member's area plenty of times. It is a beautiful part of the country and it is a shame what is going on there.

The member is very right with respect to the misguided use of resources. There is a lot that should be used there and in the rest of the country. Instead, where do we see our money going? We see the government investing millions upon millions in the Chinese infrastructure bank to build pipelines in China but not in Canada. We see billions and billions being given to foreigners for interest payments. This is money that should be used to help alleviate poverty not only in Port Alberni and elsewhere on Vancouver Island, but also in the rest of Canada.

• (1620)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague has been involved in business in the past and he knows a lot about small businesses. I wonder if he saw anything in this budget that was of any value or any detriment to the small businesses of Canada.

The Budget

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, what we see with this budget is the continual betrayal of small businesses. Dan Kelly from the CFIB has continually called out the attacks on small business. Also, we are uncompetitive now with the U.S. Despite everything we like to say, the U.S. is still our greatest friend and biggest trading partner, and will be for the foreseeable future. We are going to get crushed with this budget because of the changes that are being made in the U.S. Whether we like Trump or not, we are being made uncompetitive by the government and the Liberals do not seem to care.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, to get 10 minutes to talk about budget 2018, when I first got elected, I would have thought was a long time, but now it just does not seem to be that much time.

This budget was not well received by most Canadians. I am going to talk about health care, infrastructure, and some of the spending. I was always told that when one is bringing a critical message it is good to make a sandwich and say something nice at the beginning and something nice at the end. Therefore, I am going to say something nice at the beginning and something nice at the end.

The thing I will say at the beginning is that I was pleased to see that the response for science to the Naylor report was a good one. As the former science critic for our party, that was something I was looking for. I do not have anything bad to say about that, but now I will turn to the other issues.

[*Translation*]

The first topic of discussion of course has to do with palliative care. I was surprised that the word “palliative” does not appear once in this budget. After seeing the word “palliative” in budget 2017, and considering the unanimous support of the House of Commons and the Senate for my bill, Bill C-277, regarding palliative care, I was surprised that the word was not mentioned in this budget.

In 2017, the federal government proposed investing \$6 billion over 10 years for home and palliative care, as well as \$5 billion over 10 years to support mental health initiatives. These investments included improving home care services in Canada, as well as palliative care. In other words, there was \$11 billion for mental health, home care, and palliative care. However, budget 2018 announced different investments, specifically \$11 billion over 10 years for provincial and territorial governments to support home care and mental health, but not palliative care. There is no mention of palliative care.

Palliative care is a necessary but extremely underfunded service in our country. By leaving palliative care out of the budget, the government is ignoring the needs of many desperate Canadians who need financial support not only to improve their living conditions, but also to help ease the burden on our health care system.

The second issue has to do with mental health, dementia, and PTSD. As with palliative care, budget 2018 fails to make investments in mental health care. As I mentioned earlier, only \$11 billion was earmarked for mental health, including home care. That is not enough. Canada is still in crisis, and we must do everything we can for all those in need.

To make matters worse, the federal government is investing only \$20 million over five years and only \$4 million a year after that for Canadians with dementia. Over 400 million Canadians have dementia, including Alzheimer's, and this disease disproportionately affects elderly women. That amount is simply not enough. Given our aging population, we need to prepare and invest in quality programs.

I would like to thank my colleague on this side of the House for all of the work he has done regarding injuries and post-traumatic stress. I believe that it is thanks to him and his efforts that investments were made in this area. However, the government is proposing to invest only \$10 million over five years to create a pilot project. Research and pilot projects are important, but so are services for all those who are living with PTSD. I believe that this is a step in the right direction but that the government needs to do a lot more.

Another point worth noting is the \$20-million investment, and \$6 million a year going forward, to improve mental health supports for offenders in federal correctional facilities. Those funds are intended specifically to enhance supports for women inmates in those institutions.

Despite those small investments, the government is also proposing to provide \$10 million over five years for the Mental Health Commission of Canada to assess the effects of cannabis use on Canadians' mental health.

The Liberal government is doing everything it can to control and limit cigarette use, yet it wants to legalize marijuana as soon as possible, despite knowing the mental damage it can cause to users. This \$10-million investment proves that the government recognizes the dangers associated with cannabis, yet it is going ahead with full legalization anyway.

● (1625)

[*English*]

What really struck me in this budget is where the government put the priorities in terms of health. There is \$80 million in the budget to get people to stop smoking, but there is \$800 million in the budget to get people to start smoking marijuana. That seems like the wrong priority. At the same time, while people are dying across the country in the opioid crisis, there is \$40 million a year being put toward that crisis. Again, in comparison to the legalization of marijuana, it just does not seem to be the right priority at all.

I talked about my disappointment that palliative care was not even mentioned in this budget. I had approached the minister with a plan for once the framework was put together to build palliative care infrastructure across Canada. When we talk about the infrastructure spending that was promised by the government at the beginning, that was the whole reason for going into deficit. However, it does not seem that the money is flowing to the municipalities. What could be a better example than my riding?

The Budget

Most members know that on January 11, the Canadian Coast Guard decided not to close the channel, which it normally does when ice floes are heavy, and the resulting push from the icebreakers crushed the Sombra ferry causeway. That border has been shut since January. The Minister of Public Safety is in charge of the CBSA, which makes \$3.3 million in duties from that crossing every year. I approached the minister to get the repair money to put that back together. At first there was no response, but then a denial. I approached the Minister of Transport, who has the responsibility for the trade corridor funding. Again, there was a refusal. I approached the infrastructure minister, who seems to be looking for somewhere to spend \$186 billion. I only need \$2.5 million. Certainly, he could spend it on the restoration of the Sombra ferry crossing, but again, that was refused.

Combat engineers in my riding said that if the Minister of National Defence decides that it is in the national interest, he could send them to repair the bridge. They had done that in Laval and Guelph, and they could do it elsewhere. Again, there was a great opportunity, but the Minister of National Defence turned me down. I have escalated this to the Prime Minister's Office, but nothing has been done. When the government states that it wants to spend money on infrastructure and the municipalities, it falls on deaf ears for me and my constituents, who feel that there is no infrastructure money for the Sombra ferry restoration in Sarnia—Lambton.

That said, at the beginning of my speech I gave some commentary about the things I thought were missing in the budget, and said that I would say something nice at the end. I have a couple of nice things to say.

I was glad to see a reference to the thalidomide issue. We know there are people who did not qualify for their thalidomide claims because they could not produce the paperwork. I have brought this to the attention of the Minister of Health, and I am pleased to see that this has been put into the budget. No dollars were associated with it, but I am trusting that money will be parcelled out to those people who deserve compensation.

Other than that, the only other happy news is that most of the spending has been pushed out into the years after the Liberal government will have been defeated.

• (1630)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is good to see my colleague on her feet, which is not an unusual thing to see here in the House.

It was great to hear your comments, and it was nice to hear you mention some positives, because there are lots of positives—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just want to remind the member to address her questions and comments through the Speaker.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, there are lots of positives, and I am glad that the member decided to single out one or two of them.

I know the interests of my colleagues in the House with respect to women entrepreneurship and the steps that have been taken on that particular file in the budget. Therefore, I would be interested to hear

my colleague's comments on whether she agrees that is going to be very helpful to the women of Canada.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, when I was the chair of the status of women committee, we were working on a study of the economic status of women and the barriers that prevent women from becoming entrepreneurs and from going into some of the higher-paying positions in the trades or STEM. The key barriers came down to available child care and travel. As members can appreciate, people who work in construction sometimes have to start at 7:30 in the morning or work overtime. The day cares that exist today are not available during those hours. That can be problematic. In other kinds of entrepreneurial careers, the necessity for travel can be a real barrier. I do not think the government has come up with a solution that meets the need for the child care support that people would want.

Another thing I would say is we continue to see an inequity in pay and the awarding of funds. I was pleased to see some additional funding for women entrepreneurs, but there is more that needs to be done.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals made a promise in 2015 that they were going to close the stock option loophole for CEOs. We now know that 92% of the benefit of the stock option loophole goes to the 1%. Both parliamentarians and the Canadian public are being misled that this is good for business. In fact, I have met business leaders in the tech industry, and I have asked them if this incentive would make or break whether they are going to do business in Canada. They said no, that it is about recruitment, affordable housing, and making things more business-friendly. The environment is really a priority. The stock option loophole is not going to make it or break it.

Does the member support closing the stock option loophole, where 92% of the benefit goes to the top 1%?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, the member is correct that the government is not at all good at keeping its promises. We saw the Liberals break the promise about running only a \$10-billion deficit, the promise to balance the budget in the four-year term, the promise to restore home mail delivery, the promise that this would be the last election under first past the post, and we could go on.

With respect to the 1%, the government has actually reduced taxes on the 1% and increased taxes on the middle class, the very people it claims it is trying to help. Certainly, I do not think the government has done what people were looking for about the 1%.

The Budget

•(1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives often close their eyes about the past. A good example of that is the member making reference to infrastructure spending. Our government has done more in terms of making a commitment to communities, in every region of the country, to invest in infrastructure. That means we also have to work with other levels of government in order to get some of those infrastructure projects off the ground.

I wonder if the member could comment on why she is critical of the government for infrastructure spending. What would she have said if she was in opposition when Stephen Harper was the prime minister and he got virtually nothing off the ground on infrastructure?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I would like to correct the misinformation there, because under the Harper government there was a lot of infrastructure money spent, and I certainly received a large portion of that when I was a citizen of Sarnia—Lambton. However, as I always like to say, we cannot change the past; we can only change the future.

I look to my own riding. There is an opportunity in my riding for an oversized load corridor that would create 3,000 well-paying jobs. This has been on the Liberal government's radar since I first got elected. I need \$6 million federally. The rest has been given by the province and the municipality. I have yet to get this money approved. Once again, there is no infrastructure money coming out of the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Port Moody—Coquitlam, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Perth—Wellington, Interprovincial Trade.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

I am pleased to have a moment to reference some of the good things in this budget.

I am proud of budget 2018, entitled “Equality + Growth: A Strong Middle Class”.

This budget takes a people-centred approach. By making substantial investments and real progress for the middle class, our government is demonstrating its commitment to all Canadians, especially those in need, in most of our communities here in Canada. My riding of Humber River—Black Creek is no different.

The government's plan to strengthen the middle class and grow the economy is clearly working. Since November 2015, our economy has created nearly 600,000 jobs, most of which are full-time jobs, not part-time jobs. The unemployment rate, thank goodness, is near historic lows, and that is something we can all

be grateful for, because it means that many people in Canada who wanted to work are working.

Canada has the fastest growing economy among the G7 countries, and Canadians are feeling far more optimistic about their future and their children's future. That is what I am hearing from my constituents every single day.

The introduction of initiatives like the Canada workers benefit puts more money in the pockets of low-income workers.

Members have heard me talk about my riding and the challenges I have. I represent a lot of fine people who are new immigrants to Canada and are struggling to finish their education, get their children into a good spot, and find a decent job and some decent housing. They struggle with that every day.

Low-income workers can no longer live paycheque to paycheque. We are trying to help correct that. The Canada workers benefit will raise approximately 70,000 Canadians out of poverty by 2020. Encouraging more Canadians to join the workforce is of the utmost importance, especially in Humber River—Black Creek.

I cannot tell the House how many people have come to me looking for employment opportunities over the many years I have been here. I really disagree with the idea some people have that people do not want to work. All people want to work, if they are physically able and mentally well. It gives them a feeling of satisfaction to know that they are trying to build their own families and communities. Job creation is really important for so many reasons.

There is even more good news, other than the 70,000 Canadians who will be out of poverty by 2020.

For example, a single mom of two children aged five and eight with a net income of \$35,000, and I have many in my riding, is receiving \$11,125 in tax-free Canada child care benefit payments in 2017-18. That is like a million dollars to many of the single moms in Humber River—Black Creek. That is an enormous amount of money for them to be able to make a difference in their lives and the lives of their children. That is \$3,535 more than she would ever have received under the previous benefit system. The child care benefit is making a significant difference in the lives of mothers and families in my riding of Humber River—Black Creek.

During a recent visit to the Yorkdale mall, I was stopped by a new mother, who thanked me for the support she was getting from our government. She told me about the difference it was going to make at the end of the month in her ability to pay for the rental housing, put food on the table, and maybe just allow her children to be more involved in some of the sports activities that they want to do. It meant that she was able to pay for things like better food, the sports programs that I mentioned, music lessons, and school supplies for her children.

There is nothing better than hearing directly from my constituents about how the work we are doing here in the House is making life easier for them. It is stories like this that allow me the opportunity to be so confident that our government is making the right decisions through budget 2018.

The Budget

•(1640)

Overall across the country, single mothers are receiving roughly \$1.8 billion more in benefits under the Canada child benefit. That is a lot of money going into the pockets of thousands of families across Canada. That is an incredible investment. Most families in Humber River—Black Creek are benefiting from the Canada child benefit. They receive about \$6,800 in child care benefits annually. Last fall, the government proposed to make the Canada child benefit even stronger so that it keeps pace with the rising cost of living. As of July this year, two years ahead of schedule, the government will have it tied to the cost of living.

As of late, we have heard a lot about the Canada summer jobs program. I would like to focus on the positives that are assisting the youth in my riding who are being hired for the first time through many organizations, businesses, and non-profits throughout the riding. For many people, this is their first job and without this first experience, I am afraid some of these young people would end up going in the wrong direction and end up on the streets, getting involved in criminal activity, and so on. The Canada summer jobs program is doubled from what it previously was, and it is employing thousands of young people in their first jobs. At the end of the summer, when I often try to meet many of them, they tell me that it completely changed their ideas of what work was going to be like, that having that paycheque at the end of each week really made them feel good, and that they want to make sure they go back to school and improve their education.

Through budget 2018, students would benefit from more job placements for youth through the Canada summer jobs program, and women would have better financial support to access apprenticeships that are male-dominated and better paid, doing red seal trades like plumbing, welding, and gas fitting. There are lots of women who want to do these jobs, but they have to be encouraged and we have to remove the barriers that have prevented women from doing that.

We have made investments specifically in Ontario to create 100,000 new child care spaces, as we work with our province by transferring funds between governments and working in co-operation with our provincial government. That is how we create those opportunities when we know that there is a big need for this. This is a positive, not a negative. The youth of today are our future, and it is vital that we support them now.

There are still problems that have to be solved. For example, despite significant efforts by the government and many others, the number of opioid-related deaths unfortunately continues to rise. Through budget 2018, the government would make further investments to address this crisis, which has had a significant effect on many communities, including my own. Key measures include providing one-time emergency funding for provinces and territories to improve access to treatment services, a very important opportunity to give people a helping hand; launching a public education campaign to address the stigma that creates barriers for those seeking treatment; and equipping border agents with detection and identification tools to intercept fentanyl and other substances at ports of entry.

In addition, we as a government are also taking steps to keep cannabis out of the hands of youth and to keep profits out of the

hands of criminals. The government is working with the provinces and territories on a coordinated approach to taxing cannabis, keeping taxes low, and driving out the illicit market.

As I said, there are many good things in this budget. It is part of our plan of building Canada, making Canada stronger, and ensuring that the middle class has the support that is required to make Canada strong.

•(1645)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, at one point in time the riding of my friend from Humber River—Black Creek was actually a part of rural Canada, but it is no longer. I wonder how she can comment on this budget when there is not a single word in this budget about agriculture. We were dealing with 40% tariffs on chickpeas to India and 20% tariffs on canola to India, and after the Prime Minister went to India and came back, all of a sudden it is 60% tariffs on chickpeas. That does not do our rural Canadians any favours. There is not a word in this document about agriculture. Could the member comment on how that would have affected her riding when it was a rural part of Canada?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, in my many years here as an urban member, my colleagues from the rural part of our caucus and our staff, including my previous employee who was with me for 16 years, constantly made sure that I as an urban member was sensitive to the issues that the rural areas experience.

In terms of the many things we did in last year's budget as well, in expanding the broadband and the opportunities, our rural caucus and rural members speak of them very passionately and care very much. It is important that we make sure as we go through with a balanced budget that we do not forget anyone and do not leave anyone behind.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague said that the Canada summer jobs program has offered many more jobs for young people. Yes, many more groups received funding, but just this morning, I noticed that we were giving six weeks of work to groups that had applied for jobs for the entire summer, 15 or 16 weeks.

A six-week summer job is a month and a half for a student. This is not a quality job. Yes, perhaps more students will get jobs, but a six-week job will not allow them to pay for university tuition. Actually, it will not help them pay for much.

So when people are told that the jobs offered through the Canada summer jobs program have been improved by increasing the number of people receiving a job, it is not true, because the quality of the jobs has greatly diminished.

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, it depends on the applications from the various organizations. Some are doing summer programs and they are simply hiring for a six-week plan. Others are doing it for 14 or 16 weeks. It all depends at the end of the day on the companies that are offering the employment opportunities for these students.

The Budget

I was going through my summer job applications this morning and there are a lot of them that are offering 12 and 14 weeks, tying in with many of the university students who are seeking employment opportunities. Therefore, the application put in seeking a partner is what matters and how they match up the funds.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague and friend has been a very strong advocate for people age 55-plus. I have seen first-hand how effective she can be on that.

In part of this budget we talk about putting together a committee or advisory group to look at the whole issue of pharmacare, something I suspect my colleague has given a great deal of thought to. Could she share with the House her feelings in regard to that? For many seniors the cost of medications is fairly high and is one of the reasons they have a difficult time making ends meet.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to see that we are putting an advisory council together. Something that many of us as parliamentarians have talked to our constituents about is their struggles about whether they buy medication or put food on the table. The government is moving forward with the advisory group to put a plan together that is going to end that struggle and that decision-making for seniors by being able to provide drugs for all of them.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, on February 27, we tabled budget 2018. I am proud to rise today to speak in the House about what the budget will deliver for my constituents in Parkdale—High Park and to Canadians right across this country.

This budget is about access. It is about dismantling the barriers to success that many Canadians still face. In budget 2018, we are investing in order to advance gender equality, indigenous reconciliation, the growth of small businesses, and the strengthening of our nation's cultural diversity. These progressive investments will facilitate and promote positive economic growth across all demographics, not just for the wealthiest but for all Canadians.

[Translation]

These investments will help ensure that a social and economic structure is in place to propel all Canadians to success.

[English]

Let us start with women and girls. There is no doubt that women in Canada continue to face significant barriers. They carry the majority of the burden of child care. They face gender discrimination and pay inequity in the workplace. They lack equitable access to a variety of male-dominated sectors. As a government, we are determined to facilitate real opportunities for women to overcome their barriers to success.

[Translation]

This means implementing concrete, tangible policies and investing in the promotion of gender equality.

[English]

We are addressing the double burden placed on women of both raising children and working full time. Budget 2018 will invest \$1.2 billion into the new EI parental sharing benefit, which means that there will be an additional five weeks of paid leave available for a second parent. This means that the primary parent can have the support of their partner while they transition back into the workforce. Another five weeks means that paid parental leave goes from 35 to 40 weeks of shareable time, split in any way that works for individual families. It is an arrangement that empowers families and that will also benefit children, who will have the opportunity for more direct contact with both parents during that formative first year of development.

Let us talk about pay equity and under-representation.

Our government is also committed to ensuring that women receive equal pay for equal work. In 2018, women still receive, on average, 69 cents on every dollar earned by their male counterparts on an annual basis. That is an injustice plain and simple. It is an injustice that calls for intervention at the national level. That is why in budget 2018 we are targeting federally regulated industries by introducing proactive pay equity legislation that will apply to about 1.2 million Canadians. We will also be providing an additional \$1.65 billion in new financing for women entrepreneurs through the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada.

Our government will also publicly recognize the corporations that commit to promoting women directors in order to improve gender representation in corporate Canada, building on the measures included in Bill C-25. These steps are imperative not only because they are morally imperative but because they make good economic sense.

• (1655)

[Translation]

By minimizing barriers to women's success in traditionally male-dominated fields and by facilitating their participation in the labour force, we will add \$150 billion to Canada's economy by 2026.

When we support women's entry into the labour force and foster their success, our society and our economy reap the benefits.

[English]

I will now turn to reconciliation with indigenous persons.

I hosted a town hall in my riding of Parkdale—High Park to discuss the importance and the work of indigenous reconciliation. What I heard from my constituents loudly and clearly is that it is unacceptable in 2018 that there are still areas in Canada, including many indigenous reserves, where people do not have access to clean drinking water.

The Budget

There is no reason why anyone in a developed country like ours should not have access to safe drinking water. We are a rich nation, but for too long that wealth has not been shared equally with indigenous persons, who have suffered under colonial policies and the institutional racism of the residential school system. That is why in this budget we have invested an additional \$172 million on top of the \$1.8 billion committed in budget 2016 to get clean water on reserves across the country.

Thus far we have lifted 54 long-term drinking water advisories in Canada, and with these additional funds committed in this budget, we will be able to fast-track the eradication of the 81 long-term advisories that are still in place. By increasing this funding, we are committing to completing 25 water infrastructure projects by 2020 rather than 2021 as was originally planned.

This is an important, indeed, I would say, a vital step in the right direction. Without providing access to clean water, the broader goal of truly advancing indigenous reconciliation could never be realized.

Now I want to talk about small businesses.

After hearing the concerns of constituents and small business owners from my riding of Parkdale—High Park and indeed right around the country, our government has revised our approach to small businesses. First, we have lowered the small business tax rate to 10%, and we will further reduce it to 9% by 2019. Second, we have eliminated the proposal to tax capital gains on the transfer of a small business to a family member. Third, we have revised the proposal as it affects passive income. We heard loudly and clearly from business owners that invest in their businesses, create prosperity in our economy, and employ Canadians and boost productivity. We heard from Canadians that they use passive investment income to save for a rainy day, a bad year, sick leave, or parental leave.

These are the types of businesses we will help prosper. To ensure the tax reforms are targeted at only the wealthiest 3%, we are limiting our tax reform proposals to only those corporations that have more than \$1 million in passive investments. This amounts to about 40,000 of the 1.8 million businesses in this country. It targets 3% of all Canadian corporations, so that 97% of all Canadian businesses will not be affected by these tax reforms. That is critical because we know that 97% of businesses are working to help the Canadian economy grow, are reinvesting, and are creating jobs.

I want to talk about new Canadians and how they are layered into this new budget. In this country we are strong, not in spite of our differences but because of our differences. New Canadians contribute immensely to the vibrancy of our culture and undeniably to our economic success. This economic contribution is not always attainable, because of the many institutional and systemic barriers that newcomers continue to face.

To overcome some of those barriers to employment that visible minority newcomer women face, budget 2018 will invest \$31.9 million as part of a three-year pilot project to provide additional settlement support. That is a critical measure to setting newcomer women up for success, success for themselves, success for their families, and success for their new home, Canada. In addition, to ensure that newcomers have access to better supports in dealing with

their immigration cases, \$12.8 million will go to the Department of Justice to deal with the pressure currently on immigration and refugee legal aid.

I want to speak about multiculturalism and combatting racial discrimination. Over the past few years, we have seen an escalation of division and intolerance in this country. Despite the fact that the majority of Canadians value our diversity and pluralism, we have witnessed a rise in hate crimes, particularly those that target the Muslim community and continued anti-Semitism. As a government, we know that it is not sufficient to simply talk about championing our diversity. We need to be vigilant in defending it so that we can move beyond tolerating difference and move towards celebrating difference.

To this end, budget 2018 commits nearly \$50 million to programming that will advance Canadian diversity; \$23 million is dedicated to multiculturalism programming that will enable our government to empower communities and build capacity; \$19 million is dedicated to the black community alone, to address mental health issues, youth, and combatting racism; and \$6.5 million is allocated to a new centre for diversity statistics.

For the first time ever, Canada will be collecting and disseminating disaggregated data to allow us to accurately pinpoint and thereafter address the obstacles faced by racialized persons in this country. As the parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism, I am proud of this financial commitment of our government in budget 2018. It will allow us to conduct nationwide consultations on the development of a new national anti-racism plan. Although the previous government abolished this plan and reduced funds to the multiculturalism program, our critical investment in budget 2018 underscores our commitment to unifying our nation, rather than dividing it.

As I mentioned at the outset, the growth that we have been witnessing in the Canadian economy has not been shared by all. Budget 2018 is about overcoming barriers. It benefits no one when some Canadians are prevented from succeeding based on their gender, race, culture, or socio-economic standing.

The progressive policies and investments contained in budget 2018 are here to support all of us, to push us forward as a nation, and to ensure that all of us share in the growth being created. I know that my constituents in Parkdale—High Park want to see strong, socially conscious investment from our government, because these types of investments benefit all of us.

• (1700)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, many times during my colleague's speech, he talked about championing diversity, valuing diversity, defending diversity. The introduction to the budget talks about a country where differences are recognized not as a barrier to success but a source of strength.

The Budget

However, we have witnessed in these last number of weeks, and indeed yesterday during the vote for the Canada summer jobs program, that the government has chosen not only to not champion diversity but to actually clamp down on those who have different opinions or different beliefs from the current government.

How can my colleague stand here today and say these things about championing diversity, when just yesterday we saw a situation where freedom of belief, freedom of opinion was being squelched?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I share a completely different perspective on what was at issue yesterday, and what is at issue in the Canada summer jobs program. First, we have expanded the Canada summer jobs program. We believe in it as an economic vehicle and we believe in empowering youth. Today in my riding and in the riding of my friend opposite more money is available to employ youth.

Second, the issue with the Canada summer jobs program is we believe all organizations employing youth should be able to do so as long as they believe in an inclusive program. This means that any sort of religious institution running a camp that provides equal access to everyone is welcome to access Canada summer jobs funding. However, a religious institution or other organization that says, for example, that LGBT youth are not welcome in camp will not be able to access funding. Why? Because that contradicts the charter values upon which our country is based. Those equality principles are not principles we will compromise with government funding. That is the principle upon which the Canada summer jobs determination was made.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary and I sat on the heritage committee and worked on Motion No. 103. While I am happy to see in the budget some acknowledgement of the urgent action required to address the issue of the rise in hate crime incidents, the budget will embark on a consultation process: \$23 million dedicated I guess to consult about a national strategy to address the issue of systemic discrimination and all forms of religious discrimination.

Given the government's history on consultation, it does not give me a whole lot of assurances. We saw that with electoral reform. The government embarked on an extensive consultation process, only to decide it would do whatever it was going to do in any event.

What assurances can the parliamentary secretary give the House and, more important, Canadians that there will actually be a real national strategy to address the issue of racial discrimination and all forms of religious discrimination?

• (1705)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her contributions at that committee and at the immigration committee. In all sincerity, we are not reinventing the wheel. Our country had an action plan on racism. It was implemented under Paul Martin. It fell by the wayside under the previous government's tenure. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel to drag out this process any further. The idea is to revisit the old action plan and modernize it. It is now 14 years old. It does not account for the acute rise in indigenous discrimination or Islamophobia. By consulting, we will be able to take into account the reality of racism in modern day Canada and

implement it as fast as possible. That is certainly my goal, and I believe that is our government's goal.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, we talk about small business and the passive income part of the small business. I know changes were made, which I appreciate, but I have a situation in my riding where I have, for example, a doctor who is trying to grow his LASIK surgery business. He is spending \$2 million on a building and a whole bunch of equipment, but he would not be tax eligible to reduce that.

Would the member consider bringing forward a kind of change like that?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, briefly, with respect to doctors, other various medical professionals, and professionals, we are trying to empower such individuals to grow their businesses. We are open to exploring the mechanisms we can put in place. Part of the mechanisms we chose to implement include a reduction in the small business tax rate. That is available to the vast majority of businesses. That is the kind of mechanism we will use to ensure those businesses, such as the one mentioned by my friend opposite, can continue to grow.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know we are going to run out of time, but I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I understand we will probably run out of time at 5:15 p.m. I am, however, delighted to start my speech today on budget 2018.

This was a great news budget for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. However, being from the best coast, the east coast, I was particularly pleased to see the strong funding in support of Atlantic Canada. I was proud to see a proposed historic investment of more than \$1.3 billion over five years to protect Canada's nature, parks, and wild spaces; historic investments in research; and much more.

For the past 40 years, lower and middle-income workers in our community and right across Canada have had their wage prospects stall. So many Canadians are working hard each day, sometimes working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Many of these hard-working Canadians are struggling to support their families and to afford the basic needs.

That is why our government has introduced the new Canada workers benefit, a strengthened version of the working income tax benefit. The CWB will offer help to more than two million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class. The new Canada workers benefit will lift around 70,000 Canadians out of poverty and will be simple to access. Our government will make changes to allow the Canada Revenue Agency to calculate the CWB for any tax filer who has not claimed it. As long as those who should benefit from the CWB file their taxes, they will receive it.

The Budget

Psychiatric service dogs can play a very important role in helping Canadians cope with conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. First responders and veterans in particular can benefit greatly from these specially trained service dogs.

Some may have read in the media about one of my constituents, Sonny Wicks, when he made the news for receiving his special service dog Tru. Sonny lives with PTSD, which has impaired his ability to function, but these PTSD service dogs are specially trained to recognize and react to their partners' triggers and to do their best to prevent anxiety attacks and more. We can see Sonny and Tru throughout the entire community of Dartmouth—Coal Harbour. I have had a chance to learn a lot about the importance of these incredible dogs through this pair.

Our government recognizes the importance of psychiatric service dogs and, through budget 2018, we propose to expand the medical expense tax credit to recognize costs for these animals. We hope that more folks, like Sonny in Dartmouth—Coal Harbour, will be able to have their lives changed by these dogs.

It is important to me that our government continues to recognize the enormous contributions seniors have made and continue to make in our communities. We remain committed to working hard for seniors and will ensure they enjoy the secure and dignified retirement they deserve. That is why we have taken meaningful action to support our seniors and to increase their opportunities to maintain a high quality of living.

We restored the eligibility age for old age security to 65, after the previous government's decision to raise it to 67. We have introduced the guaranteed income supplement top up. We have reached a historic deal with the provinces to strengthen the Canada pension plan.

As part of our commitment to help seniors live healthy, active, and independent lives, we have made investments in the construction and refurbishing of affordable seniors housing. We are working with the provinces and territories, and others to help communities become more age friendly.

Our government is committed to working with the province to improve health care for Nova Scotia families. That is why in 2017 we announced \$130.8 million in dedicated mental health care funding and \$157 million in home care funding for the province of Nova Scotia. The funding will help ease the burden on our health care system and make it easier for folks to obtain the services they need. In budget 2018, the Canada health transfer to Nova Scotia is \$996 million, an increase of \$30.9 million over last year.

• (1710)

I have heard from many constituents who have had to decide between paying for things like rent or paying for the prescription drugs they need. As many of the members might know, I am a strong supporter of the implementation of national pharmacare in Canada, and I know many Nova Scotians are counting on us to get this right. Many Canadians are counting on us to get this right. I was happy to see that budget 2018 proposed the creation of an advisory council on the implementation of national pharmacare in Canada.

I have already been hearing positive feedback from folks at home on Canada's new parental sharing benefit. We have proposed a new

five-week EI parental sharing “use it or lose it” benefit top-up when both parents agree to share parental leave. This means greater flexibility, particularly for new moms, should they wish to return to work sooner. The benefit would increase the amount of time for EI parental leave by up to five weeks in situations where the second parent agreed to take at least five weeks, using the standard option of 55% earnings for 12 months. There are also options to extend parental leave as well.

Supporting equal parenting makes sense. Our government is committed to breaking down barriers to gender equality so all the women and girls can participate and contribute to our growing economy.

Speaking of women contributing to our growing economy, we know that skilled trades represent high quality and well-paid middle-class jobs that are critical to Canada's growth. However, we also know that women can face significant barriers to entry and advancement in these highly-skilled fields.

On a tour through the Halifax shipyard recently with Irving Shipbuilding, I learned about the work of the Women Unlimited association and what it was doing to help change this. It is a not-for-profit Nova Scotia women's organization that promotes full participation of women in trades and tech. It is working to address the systemic barriers that limit the participation of women in these fields.

We must do something about the massive gender gap and apprenticeship training. In 2018, women are still only accounting for about 11% of new registrants for Red Seal trades. We are with Women Unlimited on this to encourage more women to pursue careers in these traditionally male-dominated and well-paying Red Seal trades. We are allocating \$19.9 million over five years to pilot a new apprenticeship incentive grant for women.

I see I am being given the signal to finish up, so I will do that and continue at a later time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

The Budget

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion, the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1755)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 462*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Benzen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
MacKenzie	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nater	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sopuck
Sorenson	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 84

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)

Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Jolibois	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Khera	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Érables)
Soeurs	Moore
Monsef	Murray
Morrissey	Nassif
Nantel	Ng
Nault	Oliphant
O'Connell	O'Regan
Oliver	Paradis
Ouellette	Peschisolido
Pauzé	Petitpas Taylor
Peterson	Picard
Philpott	Poissant
Plamondon	Qualtrough
Quach	Rankin
Ramsey	Rioux
Ratansi	Rodriguez
Robillard	Romanado
Rogers	Rudd
Rota	Rusnak
Ruimy	Sahota
Saganash	Sajjan
Saini	Sangha
Samson	Scarpaleggia
Sarai	Schulte
Schiefke	Sgro
Serré	Sheehan
Shanahan	

Private Members' Business

Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weir	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Young— 214

It is our job to work hard to make Canada a better and safer place to live. We hear all too often about the tragedies that occur because of distracted and impaired driving.

This is a debate that is important to each and every Canadian. No riding is immune to the devastation caused by distracted and impaired driving. We know that distracted driving occurs frequently in Canada.

Bill C-373 focuses on hand-held electronic devices, such as cellphones, which is an important issue. However, it is not comprehensive of all factors that go into distracted driving.

Distracted driving is not just an issue of texting behind the wheel; it is much more than that. The RCMP define distracted driving as a form of impaired driving as a driver's judgment is compromised when the driver is not fully focused on the road. This includes talking on a cellphone, texting, and reading, whether that be books, maps, or newspapers. Distracted driving also includes using a GPS, watching videos or movies, eating, drinking, smoking, and personal grooming. Even talking to passengers and driving while tired, either mentally or physically, can be forms of distracted driving.

We need to focus on the statistics here, because they are alarming.

Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to cause injury. Distracted driving is now the number one risk on Canadian roads, contributing to eight in 10 collisions, according to the CAA.

Further evidence according to the Government of Ontario says that one person is injured in a distracted driving collision every half hour. Even when drivers use a hands-free phone, they are less aware of the traffic around them. They tend to react more slowly to a critical event, or they may not detect the danger at all. One study highlighted that in 80% of collisions, the driver had looked away from the road three seconds prior to the crash. The take-away from all of these statistics is simple: distracted driving is a serious issue that must be addressed.

When it comes to texting and driving, there are various statistics. According to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or near crash event compared to non-distracted drivers. This study also highlighted that while driving at 90 kilometres per hour, a driver checking a text for five seconds has travelled the length of a football field without looking. A study from the National Safety Council said that about 26% of all car crashes involve phone use, including hands-free phone use. The same study estimates that drivers using phones look at but fail to see up to 50% of the material in their driving environment.

In my riding, the intersection at Highway 7 and McCowan Road was the site of 112 crashes in 2016. The government should be doing more to reduce driver fatalities in every instance, since driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol poses just as much, if not more, of a risk to Canadians as driving while using a cellphone.

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the hours of sitting and the order of business of the House on Thursday, March 29, 2018, shall be those of a Friday, provided that any recorded division deferred to or requested on that day in respect of a debatable motion, other than an item of Private Members' Business, be deferred until Monday, April 16, 2018, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

It being 5:57 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1800)

[English]

FEDERAL FRAMEWORK ON DISTRACTED DRIVING ACT

The House resumed from November 30, 2017, consideration of the motion that Bill C-373, an act respecting a federal framework on distracted driving, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to speak to an issue I care deeply about. It is great to have the privilege to speak to Bill C-373 in this place today.

Private Members' Business

A 2017 study conducted by MADD showed that cannabis was the leading cause of fatal drug-related crashes in eight provinces and was responsible for 530 deaths nationwide. We know drugs can affect a driver's judgment, reaction time, and decision-making skills. Canadians are not entirely aware of the risks that driving while high poses.

According to a Health Canada survey, of respondents who had consumed cannabis in 2017, 39% admitted to driving within two hours of consumption, and only 2% reported being stopped by police as a result of driving under the influence.

● (1805)

I would like to touch on some further statistics to highlight the issue of distracted driving.

Bill C-373 is an excellent example of the way road safety in Canada can be improved. However, why is it that the Liberals are addressing this one aspect while continuing to promote their plan to make marijuana legal without properly considering the effects it will have on drug-impaired driving occurrences? According to the RCMP, driver distraction is a factor in about four million motor vehicle crashes in North America each year. Further, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, distraction was a factor in nearly six out of 10 moderate to severe teen crashes. Distracted driving is dangerous and is hurting our children. The paradox I want to highlight here is that the government would like to consult with law enforcement officials to make recommendations on this issue of distracted driving but was fine ignoring the advice of law enforcement when it came to developing an effective prevention and detection strategy to deal with drug-impaired driving. Both distracted driving and impaired driving pose very real dangers and both should be taken seriously.

The Liberal government supported legislation that imposed stricter fines and penalties on drivers impaired by alcohol, yet it has failed to do so when it comes to the same risks posed by drivers impaired by cannabis. In testimony to the justice committee, Students Against Drunk Driving's community liaison Arthur Lee made the point that students told him "the general sentiment among their peer groups was that driving under the influence of marijuana was—quote—"better" than being impaired by alcohol." How will this misconception ever change if the Liberal government constantly prioritizes road safety in every other aspect except when it comes to properly dealing with the drug it intends to legalize?

According to the Government of Canada, economic losses caused by traffic collision-related health care costs and lost productivity are at least \$10 billion annually. That is about 1% of Canada's GDP. According to the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the economic and social consequences of road crashes in Canada are estimated to be \$25 billion per year, including direct and indirect costs.

Bill C-373 fails to mention or consider the territories in its text as currently written. At this time, it only makes mention of the provinces. The penalties for distracted driving vary immensely between the provinces and territories. A mixture of demerit points and cash fines is a common standard of practice to deter Canadians from committing this offence. Nunavut is the only province or territory in Canada that does not have penalties put in place as a measure to discourage distracted drivers.

From all of these statistics, we can see there is a definite need to address the concern of distracted driving. The provinces are looking for federal leadership here, and we need to take this seriously.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight to speak to Bill C-373, an act respecting a federal framework on distracted driving. I want to thank the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley for tabling the bill. I sit with the member on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. It is obviously a personal issue for him and I applaud him for taking action to solve a very preventable issue.

For our part, New Democrats support improving vehicle and road safety, and we understand and sympathize with the pain experienced by the families and friends of victims of distracted driving. We urge the federal government to provide better oversight of vehicle safety.

Indeed, the occurrence of distracted driving in our communities should be of concern to everyone. Distracted drivers not only put their own lives at risk, but also those of their passengers, other drivers and their passengers, as well as pedestrians and cyclists, among others.

I share the member's goal of making our streets safer. I sponsored Bill C-312, which would create a national cycling strategy. It is not that different from this piece of legislation. It seeks to make our roads safer for cyclists among other provisions, including side guards on trucks. We know that all users of the road need to work closely together to create more safe cycling. I mention this fact to highlight for the member that I share his commitment to make our streets and communities safer.

On Vancouver Island, where I am from, distracted driving is a huge concern in every neighbourhood and every community. Vancouver Island is no exception. In a story published just yesterday, the *Parksville Qualicum Beach News* reported on a crackdown on distracted driving by the RCMP in Oceanside. In that story, some statistics from the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia were presented.

ICBC found that distracted driving is responsible for more than one-quarter of all car crash fatalities in British Columbia. Distracted driving is the second leading contributor of car crash fatalities in B. C. and results in 78 deaths each year, on average. Distracted driving has moved ahead of impaired driving-related fatal crashes. On average, 89 deaths occur in speed-related crashes and 66 in impaired-related crashes. Every year, on average, nine people are killed in distracted driving-related crashes on Vancouver Island. All of them could be avoided.

Private Members' Business

In another story, the *Comox Valley Record* reported on March 2 that the Province of B.C. and ICBC are rolling out tougher penalties for distracted drivers beginning this month. We are grateful for that. For Vancouver Island residents, it is both timely and important that we are debating this bill today to coincide with those actions.

Bill C-373 would enable the Department of Justice and Department of Transport to develop a federal framework to deter and prevent distracted driving. More specifically, the Minister of Justice would work with the Minister of Transport and provincial governments to establish a federal framework to coordinate efforts in the provinces to deter and prevent distracted driving, especially the use of telephones while driving.

The framework prescribed in Bill C-373 must cover all of the following elements: the collection of information and statistics relating to incidents that occur as a result of distracted driving involving the use of handheld electronic devices; the administration and enforcement of laws respecting such distracted driving; the creation and implementation of public education programs to deter distracted driving; the role of driver-assisted technology in reducing the number of incidents that occur as a result of distracted driving; the sharing among the provinces of best practices regarding deterrence and prevention; and recommendations regarding possible amendments to federal laws, policies, and programs.

It is difficult to oppose the idea of increased road safety and the reduction of distracted driving, but I do have some real concerns about this piece of legislation. While the bill is not fundamentally detrimental to road safety, there are at least three main concerns that my New Democrat colleagues and I have about the bill.

We have concerns related to federalism and jurisdictional matters between the federal and provincial governments. As well, we are concerned that such co-operation could be redundant given the significant level of co-operation currently between the federal and provincial governments through their road safety strategy 2025. Finally, we are concerned that Transport Canada is already seriously deficient in the management of vehicle safety standards and that the bill, if passed, could increase this deficiency.

● (1810)

With regard to our jurisdictional concerns in Canada, road safety is a shared responsibility of the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments. Distracted driving, such as driving while using a cellphone, is considered a regulatory offence in the provinces and territories. Therefore, depending on the circumstances, distracted driving can also be deemed a criminal offence under section 249 of the Criminal Code if the court is convinced that an individual was driving in a manner that is dangerous to the public. As such, it is the provinces and territories that are primarily responsible for road safety legislation. New Democrats believe that they are best placed to identify priorities in this area.

On the possible redundancy, we must be reminded again that the existing goal of the road safety strategy 2025 is to standardize the improvement process across the country using best practices for specific issues. The main ones are as follows: raising public awareness and commitment to road safety; improving communication, co-operation, and collaboration among stakeholders; enhancing legislation and enforcement; improving road safety information in

support of research and evaluation; improving the safety of vehicles and road infrastructure; and leveraging technology and innovation.

While the road safety strategy 2025 and Bill C-373 use different language and their scope is somewhat different, when looking at their provisions together, it is hard to imagine that the objectives of the latter would not find a good home within the work of the federal and provincial governments as they implement the former.

On our concern about the capacity of Transport Canada to effectively implement new policies, indeed Transport Canada is struggling mightily to address the concerns raised by the Auditor General in his report entitled “Oversight of Passenger Vehicle Safety”. In that report, the Auditor General stated, “We found that the absence of long-term operational planning led to several decisions that affected research activities and other operations. [...] We also found that the operating budget for crashworthiness testing was cut by 59 percent for the 2016–17 fiscal year, from \$1.2 million to \$492,000.”

Since Transport Canada is already failing to show the leadership that we are calling for, in terms of cutting funding for existing safety programs, we have to wonder if it makes sense to further burden this department with additional new responsibilities.

Those are our concerns, and I would hope that they are addressed in a meaningful way when this bill reaches committee.

In closing, I want to thank the member again for tabling this proposed legislation. It is greatly appreciated. I want to reiterate that my New Democrat colleagues and I share his concern for making our streets and communities safer. In spite of some flaws, which I hope can be addressed in committee, I offer him my support for Bill C-373 at second reading. Again, it is an honour and pleasure to rise today in support of this bill.

● (1815)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the second reading debate of Bill C-373, an act respecting a federal framework on distracted driving. On the whole, I fully support the federal, provincial, and territorial work that is already being done on the very pressing issue of distracted driving.

Before I discuss the proposals in Bill C-373 in detail, I would like to acknowledge the commendable objectives and hard work on this bill, and express my gratitude to the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, who introduced this bill in the House. I am not just saying that because he is my bench neighbour. He has put in a lot of hard work and energy into this bill, and I commend him for it.

Private Members' Business

At the outset, I think it is important to recognize that distracted driving poses a serious concern and risk to road safety, and those concerns are indeed escalating. The rate of motor vehicle collisions resulting from distracted driving has accelerated over the past decade due in large part to the widespread use of smart phones and other electronic hand-held devices.

[*Translation*]

I will now discuss certain specific proposals of Bill C-373. This bill would require the Minister of Justice, in co-operation with the Minister of Transport and the provincial and territorial governments, to develop a federal framework for the implementation of measures to deter distracted driving involving the use of hand-held electronic devices.

The proposed federal framework must cover six key elements: the mandatory collection of information and statistics; the enforcement of laws; public education programs on the dangers of distracted driving; driver-assistance technologies; the sharing of best practices among the provinces; and recommendations regarding possible amendments to federal laws, policies, and programs.

Four of these six key elements involve the use of both federal and provincial resources. The sharing of best practices among the provinces would only involve the provinces. The bill would also require the preparation of a report setting out the federal framework. This report must be tabled within 18 months following the coming into force of the bill. Within three years of the tabling of the first report, a report resulting from a comprehensive review of the federal framework must be tabled in Parliament. This comprehensive review must be undertaken in consultation with the provinces, territories, and key stakeholders.

• (1820)

[*English*]

As I have said, the objectives of the bill are laudable, but the government is unable to support this legislative initiative for a number of reasons. First, it is the provinces and territories who are primarily responsible for measures that respond to distracted driving. Virtually all of the provinces and territories already have legislation or regulations concerning the use of electronic hand-held devices while driving. Nunavut's legislation will be coming into force later this year.

Second, the Criminal Code includes a criminal offence of dangerous driving under section 249. If a distracted driver operates a motor vehicle in a manner that is dangerous to the public, police already have the authority to lay criminal charges of dangerous driving. I would also note that in April of 2017, the government introduced Bill C-46, an act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances) and to make consequential amendments to other acts. The bill is currently being considered by the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in the other place. It would reform the entire Criminal Code regime dealing with transportation offences by repealing all of the current provisions and replacing them with a modern, simplified, and coherent new part in the Criminal Code. It would also reform impaired driving laws to strengthen existing drug-impaired driving laws and create a regime that would be among the strongest in the world.

During federal, provincial, and territorial discussions leading to Bill C-46, the issue of distracted driving involving the use of an electronic hand-held device was raised. It was accepted that the current dangerous driving offence in the Criminal Code sufficiently covers distracted driving that rises to the level of creating a danger to the public and that should result in a criminal investigation and charge.

A third reason that the government is unable to support this legislative initiative is that the bill would duplicate the actions and efforts already being coordinated by the Minister of Transport and Transport Canada. The Minister of Transport presently co-leads a distracted driving working group under the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators. The imposition of a new federal framework on top of an existing initiative is very likely to conflict in some ways and overlap in others. Provinces are likely to see federal legislation on this matter as potentially intruding in the areas of their jurisdiction and as an implied criticism or expression of concern with regard to their efforts. This may undermine federal-provincial collaboration, which already exists and is going very well.

Over the past year, the Minister of Transport has advocated for nationally consistent enforcement measures and higher sanctions for drivers who violate provincial or territorial laws by using a hand-held device while driving. Provinces and territories have been encouraged to improve their data collection and create harmonized rules across all jurisdictions. Many of those jurisdictions have responded favourably to these suggestions and have agreed to continue to discuss these matters through the federal, provincial, and territorial council of ministers responsible for transportation and highway safety.

A fourth reason that the government is unfortunately unable to support Bill C-373 is that fully implementing the proposals in this private member's bill would have cost implications for both the federal government and the provinces and territories. It would not be surprising if provinces and territories looked to the federal government for assistance in funding some of the elements of the proposed federal framework.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

The government strongly supports measures to address the serious problem of distracted driving. The work of the CCMTA, which is co-lead by Transport Canada, is an important demonstration of the type of federal, provincial, and territorial co-operation that exists on this issue.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Developing a federal framework would not have a greater impact on deterring distracted driving beyond what is already being done at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. It would not significantly improve existing co-operative efforts, and indeed could duplicate processes that are under way and potentially diffuse those initiatives. For all of these reasons, the government cannot support the proposals in Bill C-373. Of course, voting against the private member's bill will ensure that existing federal, provincial, and territorial discussions will remain intact, constructive, and productive. It will allow us to continue to focus on the exceptional work that is already being done to address distracted driving.

Notwithstanding all of these comments, I want to end where I began, by commending my hon. colleague for his efforts, his energy, and for the passion that he brings to this important subject.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we resume debate, I want to remind everyone in the House that a debate is going on. It sounds like there is a bit of a rumble that continues with people speaking to each other, and it makes it hard for all of us to hear the great speeches that are being given tonight.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on Bill C-373. It is a great bill. It brings a lot of information, but as the last speaker said, it has some problems. I am going to address those a little later.

Last month I got up here and spoke to Motion No. 148, which established a National Impaired Driving Prevention Week. Impaired driving has been a Criminal Code offence in Canada since 1921. It is still a problem. It has not gone away. We still need to address it. Statistics tell us that one in five drivers involved in fatal collisions have been drinking. I even look at my own province, the province of Alberta, and between 2011 and 2015, 389 Albertans were killed and 6,000 were injured due to driving with alcohol.

Impaired driving is still a problem, whether it be alcohol, drugs, or a cellphone. Motion No. 148 received unanimous support in the House, and I want to thank all the members for that because it was an important motion.

Today, Bill C-373 focuses on distractions. The number of deaths are equally close to those of impaired driving by alcohol. In fact, there are a number of provinces, including Ontario and B.C., where distracted driving now outnumbers the fatal collisions caused by impaired driving. That is not good. That is bad.

Drivers who text are 23% more likely to have an accident than those who do not. I remember last year a police officer from Vancouver pulled over a driver, and he shared a photo of the distracted driver that went viral across Canada and North America. As the officer approached the pulled over vehicle, he saw the driver had attached his phone to his steering wheel with a piece of string. Then he went through all the trouble to wedge his tablet between the wheel and the phone. He even had his headphones stuck on his head plugged into the phone, and was driving with them. It is a wonder he ever even noticed the policeman trying to pull him over, and it took quite a while to get that done. That is ridiculous. It is almost criminal when we think about how stupid people can be.

I am going to speak a little about my earlier days as a police officer, because I think I can add a few stories that will bring a little understanding to the situation we have here. It is not new, folks. It has been there for a long time. One day I was driving down the road and it was snowing outside. It was slushy and it was early in the morning. I was going just under the speed limit because it just was not quite safe to go that fast. I saw this guy going by me, and I was quite surprised. I looked out the window, and there he was driving down the road with one hand on the wheel of the car and one hand on a razor, shaving himself at six o'clock in the morning while driving down a slushy, wet, slippery highway.

I remember once driving and following a lady who was kind of weaving a little bit. I could see her keep looking over at the mirror. I pulled her over. She was putting makeup on as she was driving down the road. Another time I was driving down the highway and I swore I had an impaired driver in front of me. He was weaving to the right, weaving to the left, and I could see his head bobbing up and down. I thought, what the heck? I thought I had an impaired driver, so I followed him long enough to get the evidence and then I pulled him over. Yes, he was driving impaired. He had a book on the steering wheel of his car and he was reading as he was driving down the highway. Now, the last two definitely got tickets for it.

Today, cellphones are a big problem, driving and texting a bigger problem, and even talking through a Bluetooth system is dangerous. I will try to clarify that a little. As I said earlier, drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or a near miss. The statistics are out there. Whether texting or even talking, a person can fail to see 50% of the information in front of them because their mind is thinking about what they are talking about or what they are texting. Fifty per cent of what that person is driving toward is being missed.

● (1830)

It has been said that trying to text and drive is like driving blindfolded down the length of a football field, which is 110 yards, yet people continue to do it. Every day we see them going down the road. They are texting and they are driving. They are putting their lives and others at risk. Even talking as a person drives poses a risk. We do not believe it does because we think that the Bluetooth is a safe addition to our car. However, people are not paying full attention. As I mentioned earlier, a person misses stuff in front of them.

The technology we have today is great. Most of us have Bluetooth technology in our vehicles. Evidence shows that even talking, connecting, or disconnecting from a wireless phone system distracts the driver for 27 seconds. They calculated that out. They figured that out. They watched people driving around. Twenty-seven seconds at 40 kilometres an hour is like driving down the length of three football fields. That is getting close to 1,000 feet. That is a pretty long distance to be distracted.

Private Members' Business

Just think about it. All of us have freeways in our constituencies. It might be 110, but everybody drives about 120. That is about the average on the freeways in Canada. Thus, 120 is three times faster than 40 kilometres an hour and getting close to 3,000 feet. That is half a mile that a person has missed. A lot can happen in half a mile.

It becomes scary when we start putting the math to it and the statistical data that is out there. Recent stats, according to Statistics Canada, indicate that distracted driving plays a role in 23% of fatal accidents and 20% of those with injuries. The numbers are continuing to rise.

This bill focuses on handheld electronic devices, but this is where I think the bill kind of failed a little bit. I think we could have gone further. As I mentioned earlier, distraction comes in many forms. I just want to read what we, in the RCMP, had as a quote. It said that this is “a form of impaired driving as a driver's judgment is compromised when they are not fully focused on the road”. That is what I am talking about. It continued, “Distracted driving qualifies as talking on a cell phone, texting, reading...using a GPS, watching videos or movies, eating/drinking, smoking, personal grooming, adjusting the radio/CD and playing extremely loud music.” Hey, we all do it quite a bit. “Even talking to passengers and driving while fatigued...can be forms of distracted driving.”

This bill focuses on handheld electronic devices but distractions come in many forms. In the RCMP, as I mentioned before, distractions like people shaving or putting on makeup are a problem. It is happening today. However, there are other distractions such as other people in the vehicle who are talking, arguing, or playing loud music. That takes our attention away from driving. That is distracted driving. As well, people have a fondness for pets. We have all taken our pets and put them on the seats of our vehicles as we drive. We pet them and look at them, and pet them again. Those are all forms of distracted driving and I believe that Bill C-373 was trying to reach them. I think that we need to look at it, but maybe we should expand it.

One concern I have is that I do not understand why the territories are excluded from this bill. Maybe I missed this, but it only mentions the provinces. However, statistics show that since 2006 the Northwest Territories and the Yukon have a high percentage of drivers using cellphones.

One thing I like about Bill C-373, and I think it is very important, is that it proposes a national framework on distracted driving. It would improve the collection of information and statistics. This is so vital. When I was looking up the research here, there was not enough for all the problems that I know are out there.

To make this bill work, we need collaboration between law-makers, enforcement agencies, citizens, provinces, and industries. Therefore, we all need to work together to eliminate distracted driving. Bill C-373 is a necessary piece of legislation, but I am not sure if we can enact it when I look at all of the legal ramifications.

I would like to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. I think it is very worthy of having a good debate and discussion in the House.

• (1835)

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to provide the closing statement on my bill, an act respecting a federal framework on distracted driving. I want to thank all of my colleagues who stood here today and provided thoughtful and fruitful debate.

The last time I spoke to my bill in the House I shared the stories of Amutha and Senhit, who both had their lives taken away by the driver of another vehicle who was distracted by her cellphone and drove through a red light. Sadly, this story is not unique. The loss of a loved one by a distracted driver is an experience shared by families from coast to coast to coast.

Between the first hour of debate when I shared this story and today, more families in Canada have been added to a growing anthology of grief and sadness. Right now, statistics show that people are more likely to be the victims of a distracted driver than a drunk driver.

In my home province of Manitoba, last year was one of the safest for drivers since 1982, with a 32% decrease in fatalities from 2016. While this is a significant improvement, that statistic still represents 73 fatalities in 65 collisions. While a full analysis of the collisions is still under review, Manitoba Public Insurance has stated that distracted driving continues to be a primary contributing factor in fatal collisions.

It is time to address this issue.

Just as we were able to address drunk driving by changing federal and provincial legislation, by providing law enforcement with the necessary resources and tools, and educating Canadians on the dangers of drinking and driving, it is time to seriously address distracted driving.

My bill calls upon the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Transport to work with their provincial counterparts to develop a framework with six provisions on the collection of information; the administration and enforcement of laws respecting distracted driving; the creation and implementation of public education programs; the role of driver-assistance technology; the sharing of best practices among jurisdictions; and recommendations regarding possible amendments to federal laws, policies, and programs. When combined in a national framework, these can lead to common measures that will help curb distracted driving. This would be an opportunity for the federal government and the provinces, in the spirit of co-operative federalism, to expand the good work they have done together.

Private Members' Business

If a framework to prevent distracted driving can lead us to solutions to get people to not pick up their cellphones, can provide provinces with the right information, can provide law enforcement with the right tools and practices, can change technology in vehicles, and can save lives, then I have done my duty for my constituents and so has everyone in this chamber.

In my time in the emergency room I have set too many bones, I have patched too many wounds, and I have stopped too many people from bleeding out to not speak out. I have watched too many die. While I am no longer in the emergency room helping to treat victims of collisions and distracted drivers, I am here in the House to work with my colleagues and to the best of my ability to stop people from being victims at all.

Whereas I am aware of the government's reservations about this legislation, I am committed, if the bill passes, to making significant amendments to it in committee in order to address these concerns. I call upon the support of all of my colleagues to help me pass this legislation and save lives.

• (1840)

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:

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 21, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:43 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 307, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-369 under private members' business.

* * *

[*English*]

BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP) moved that Bill C-369, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Indigenous Peoples Day), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today in the House of Commons to present the first hour of debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-369. In short, my bill seeks to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a national statutory holiday.

My bill proposes that June 21 be designated a day to honour and recognize the unique culture and views of first nations, Inuit, and Métis status and non-status peoples and the contributions they have made to our collective society.

As a first nations woman and the member of Parliament for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, I stand in determination not only for the communities in my riding but in solidarity with the first nations, Inuit, and Métis from coast to coast to coast. I also stand with those indigenous youth who are no longer with us.

It is important for this House to recognize that my bill was originally meant to be presented on February 14, but it was pushed back because of the take-note debate on the indigenous experience in Canada's justice system.

The lives and memories of indigenous peoples affect us all, in both profound and simple ways. I would encourage all members to take a moment to reflect on these influences today.

One aim of my bill is to bring a sense of hope to indigenous communities across Canada by creating a day that recognizes their lives, their culture, and their influence. My bill responds to one of the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The commission said:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

It does not get any clearer than that. If we, as partners in reconciliation, want to take the process of reconciliation seriously, it is crucial that the members of this House support my bill. My bill would create a public opportunity to better engage and understand the impacts of critical issues affecting indigenous peoples and settler society. Among these issues are the long-lasting impacts of residential schools, the 60s scoop, child foster care issues, our treaty relationships, and missing and murdered indigenous women.

These are not issues that exist in the past. First nations, Métis, and northern children and youth are hurting. Their families and communities are struggling to secure employment and make ends meet. Families do not have access to services and they become trapped in the cycle of poverty and foster care.

In Saskatchewan alone, 87% of children in foster care are indigenous. We must ask ourselves what our children see. Do indigenous children and youth, girls in particular, see a country that, in both word and deed, champions their intrinsic importance? Do the different levels of government and those in different positions of authority, communicate that their lives are valued?

Private Members' Business

Let us reflect on these questions as we consider the overrepresentation of indigenous children in foster care, the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and the overrepresentation of first nation, Inuit, and Métis in corrections facilities and prisons.

More than two years ago, the ruling of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal was clear. The Canadian government was guilty of racially discriminating against tens of thousands of first nation children in systematically underfunding federal services. The tribunal's ruling called on the federal government for immediate, medium-, and long-term reforms so that children can receive the treatment they deserve. Children are entitled to feel safe, to be cared for, and to feel and be valued, and they deserve the same opportunities as everyone else.

Now that we see the budget for 2018, we acknowledge the commitment of the government to help indigenous people in Canada. However, funding is only one aspect of the reconciliation project. Canadians also need encouragement towards understanding indigenous history, identity, and nationhood, in tandem with Canadian history.

● (1845)

In order to strengthen the public's awareness and increase support of the nation-to-nation process that is vital to reconciliation, my bill provides an opportunity for all people living in Canada to celebrate, recognize, and honour first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic contributions.

Passing Bill C-369 allows for a national opportunity, not only to reflect on our history but also to celebrate indigenous culture. My bill would create time for all Canadians to reflect on our treaty relationships and other agreements with indigenous nations. It creates a platform for us all to gather and involve ourselves in the conversation that leads to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities within indigenous communities. Only when we work together can we make progress toward reconciliation. After all, we are stronger when we are together.

My bill is not the first time that National Aboriginal Day has been brought up in the House. National Aboriginal Day was the result of consultations and statements of support made by indigenous groups across the country. In 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations, launched a campaign to have National Aboriginal Day recognized as a national holiday. In 1986, June 21 was proclaimed National Aboriginal Day by then Governor General of Canada Roméo LeBlanc.

Those who are paying attention will note that June 21 is also the summer solstice, which holds a special significance to many indigenous peoples in Canada. Now known as National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21 is recognized as a statutory holiday in the Northwest Territories, and last May it was declared a statutory holiday in Yukon. A similar bill was tabled in the Ontario legislature in September 2017, which was titled "Indigenous Day Act: A Path to Truth and Reconciliation". My bill is not unprecedented, and its principles have had success in Canada in the past.

The Assembly of First Nations has been pushing for National Indigenous Peoples Day to be recognized federally for years. In fact,

in 2016, the AFN passed a resolution at its annual general assembly calling for June 21 to be a statutory holiday.

Chief Bobby Cameron of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations has supported my motion. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples supported Bill C-369 when it was tabled under its original name. National Chief Robert Bertrand was present at the press conference to voice his support publicly. UFCW Canada has endorsed this bill, and reports that in six collective agreements in four different provinces, National Indigenous Peoples Day is recognized as a paid holiday. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union has endorsed the call for National Indigenous Peoples Day to become a statutory holiday. The Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society has expressed the need to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a statutory holiday. We have received numerous letters and calls from Canadians, indigenous and non-indigenous, who are in favour of making June 21 a statutory holiday.

Despite the historical precedent and significant support, I want to speak to some of the criticism I have received about my bill. It is no surprise to members of this House that the nature of our jobs brings criticism from those people who do not believe we are doing our jobs well enough. However, a lot of what I have heard with regard to this bill has been unprofessional, illogical, uncalled for and, plainly put, racist. Being a first nations woman from northern Saskatchewan, I have heard this type of language before, and I will hear it again in the future. Too many indigenous peoples live with this language on a daily basis, and I firmly believe that taking steps toward reconciliation will alleviate at least some of the pain caused by this language.

My bill has also been discussed publicly at the same time as the verdicts in the cases related to Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine. While much of the public conversation about Colten and Tina has been filled with love and calls for justice, too much of it has been about hate, misconceptions, biases, and individuals saying that the system worked. This is the language that a settler society uses to continue its oppression of indigenous peoples.

● (1850)

Individuals will always be free to speak their minds, but if the government is committed to changing the conversation with and about indigenous peoples in this country, we need to take steps that will change the spaces in which those conversations take place. My bill is one such step. We as a government cannot change the hearts and minds of Canadians or limit their expression, but what we can do together is change the environment where the process of reconciliation is taking place.

Private Members' Business

As I have already said, my bill creates a day of reflection and celebration of indigenous history and contributions to our collective society. It takes the extra step of allowing most Canadians a day off work to join our indigenous friends and neighbours in celebrating their cultures and remembering their history. My bill is a necessary step toward changing the public conversation about indigenous people in this country. It is on us as members of this House to make time to do those things.

We all know it is not unprecedented for this House to make time for everyone in Canada to celebrate together. Every year, Canadians gather on July 1 to celebrate the history of our nation, and most people are given the day off to celebrate with their neighbours. Every year, Canadians are given the day off work to celebrate Christmas or to take the day to spend time with their families and celebrate their own religious holidays. We also recognize new beginnings and give Canadians January 1 to think about the new year ahead of them. These days, among others, are days of national celebration.

Further, this House recognizes days of reflection and mourning as part of our national experience. November 11 is our day of remembrance, a day to understand and appreciate those who have served Canada in war, armed conflict, and peace. We also use Labour Day to remember the workers who have suffered in dangerous conditions and enshrined workers' rights as human rights.

In both of these respects, celebration and reflection, my bill fits with the historical precedent of statutory holidays in Canada. Let us not be bogged down by the conversations I have both listened to and been a part of that another statutory holiday is unnecessary and goes too far. Canada is a complex country full of complex peoples and complex ideas. In many ways, we have too much to celebrate and too much to remember, but that should not take away from our national project of reconciliation.

It feels as though the time will never be right for a bill that asks for special recognition of indigenous culture and history, but the government has continuously stated that the most important relationship is the one with indigenous peoples. That same government has committed to answer the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the spirit of healing and truth. It begs the question, when is the right time?

If the burden of reconciliation is too difficult for us to take on as a country, then we must seriously consider our roles as elected leaders in Canada. If reconciliation is too hard for our government to support in full, then we must seriously reconsider our government. Reconciliation was not meant to be a label or a chapter title for a settler government to adopt as a symbol of progress. Reconciliation is not a feel good promise of better days ahead for a colonial society. Reconciliation is not seeing the indigenization of our institutions for the betterment of those who are already in power. First nations, Inuit, and Métis people are tired of waiting for the right time to come along. Indigenous people cannot wait for the next election year to get another empty promise from the government.

I ask that as elected officials we go beyond talking points and formally make June 21, National Indigenous Peoples Day, a statutory holiday. This would create an opportunity to share, to celebrate, and to open up a dialogue for all people living in Canada to better understand and empathize with first nations, Inuit, and

Métis people. I encourage hon. members on all sides to consider this bill to begin building the bridges of understanding between Canada and the first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

• (1855)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing this bill forward.

The member talked about the celebration of indigenous cultures as a key element of this, yet call to action 80 talks about reconciliation, residential schools, and the black mark on our history.

I realize we have different national holidays with different purposes. Remembrance Day is a very solemn holiday, while New Year's Day is one that is very celebratory. It strikes me that in the true spirit of the calls to action that the real theme of a national holiday such as this one would be more akin to self-examination and reflection as opposed to celebration. Would the member care to comment on that?

• (1900)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, I would like to break it down into different themes. As an indigenous person living in Canada, I see a number of avenues.

First, why do we not get a chance, as indigenous people across Canada, to have an opportunity to celebrate like everyone else in Canada? We are the original people of Canada, yet we are still waiting.

Another angle I like to take is reconciliation. As an indigenous person, indigenous people across Canada understand the word "reconciliation" obviously differently than the hon. member across the floor. My understanding of reconciliation is of celebration, respect, love, acceptance, and the list goes on. To me as an indigenous person, that is what it means. Across Canada, indigenous people will feel the same way.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to thank my colleague for her passion and commitment. I worked with her on the indigenous affairs committee and I know how passionately she advocates in many areas of importance.

We have had this debate in the House on many occasions. I will use Remembrance Day as an example. On Remembrance Day, the legions, in particular, feel that having a statutory holiday, a paid day off, is not the best way to recognize and celebrate Remembrance Day. In the riding I represent, Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, when we have celebrations, schoolchildren come with their classes and their parents join them.

Again, I am not sure, in spite of the member's good intentions, that we would not have a more effective celebration in which we commit to come together, but not necessarily on a day off. Quite frankly, sometimes people prefer to go shopping as opposed to really reflecting on the spirit of the day.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to break it down.

Private Members' Business

I have one question I like to ask, based on the question of the member. Does she not want Remembrance Day anymore in Canada?

The way I understand it, the national Remembrance Day in Saskatchewan is well revered. In Canada, I know that for Canadians it is well revered. Youth are being taught in school about the importance of the contributions that Canada has made at the international level to save Canada, to protect Canada, and to ensure Canada remains a strong nation. The children have that opportunity in school.

A national holiday allows Canadians to be at home, to be among each other, and to sit and reflect. I have participated in discussions with Canadians on the importance of Remembrance Day and the importance of a national holiday. As with the national indigenous state, it is very important to have the same respect for indigenous people across Canada.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-369, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code (National Indigenous People Day), introduced by the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

The bill proposes to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code to modify the definition of holidays within each of these acts to include National Indigenous Peoples Day as part of these definitions. As a result, it would establish National Indigenous Peoples Day as a paid non-working holiday for approximately 904,000 employees working in the federally regulated private sector. This represents about 6% of Canada's workforce.

[Translation]

National Indigenous Peoples Day has been celebrated across Canada for 21 years. In 1996, the Government of Canada, in cooperation with national indigenous organizations, designated June 21, the summer solstice, as a day to recognize indigenous peoples in Canada. This day was designated National Aboriginal Day by way of a proclamation signed by the Right Hon. Roméo LeBlanc, the then Governor General of Canada, on the advice of the Queen's Privy Council. In 2017, the Prime Minister announced that the government intended to rename June 21 National Indigenous Peoples Day.

● (1905)

[English]

This day aims to highlight the unique and significant heritage, cultures, and contributions of first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day fosters greater knowledge and understanding of our history and of the traditions and customs that played a key role in shaping the country we know today as Canada. It provides the perfect opportunity to learn about the people, places, and events that are a part of the history of our land and it permits us to realize the importance that diversity plays in our great country.

[Translation]

National Indigenous Peoples Day is one of the four celebrate Canada days. This suite of special days starts on June 21 with

National Indigenous Peoples Day and includes Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day on June 24, Canadian Multiculturalism Day on June 27, and Canada Day on July 1. The celebrate Canada days put a spotlight on Canada's diverse cultures. They help us honour the heritage and backgrounds of those who came before us and those who continue to strive for a Canada that is reflective of all its citizens, a Canada that is truly inclusive.

[English]

Celebrations in 2017 were an opportunity for a greater number of Canadians to participate in activities in all parts of the country. Indeed, as we marked the 150th anniversary of Confederation, more Canadians than ever took part in community events and celebrations on National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Through its celebrate Canada program, the Government of Canada made such investments so as to provide funding for over 1,700 community celebrations in 2017. Events were held in each province and territory. Additionally, high impact events marking the day were held in eight cities across Canada and were broadcast through a partnership with the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and through social media. An unprecedented 1.2 million Canadians had the chance to take in these celebrations.

[Translation]

Every year, there is a wide range of activities on offer, including ceremonies, cultural displays, and stage performances. These activities highlight the traditions and contemporary vision of indigenous peoples. They give children and families a chance to taste foods, listen to stories, and marvel at the art and artistry of the descendants of the first inhabitants of this land.

From traditional smudging ceremonies to concerts, National Indigenous Peoples Day showcases a broad spectrum of indigenous culture and proves that it is alive and important.

[English]

The legacy of residential schools is a stain on our past and we must seize every chance we get to rebuild relationships between indigenous communities and the rest of Canada. As the Prime Minister has stated, no relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with indigenous peoples.

In 2015, the truth and reconciliation commission presented a report that included 94 calls to action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation. The Government of Canada committed to implementing these recommendations, including call to action 80 that urges the federal government, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish, as a statutory holiday, a national day for truth and reconciliation to honour survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure the public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process.

● (1910)

[Translation]

To that end, the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River has introduced a bill to make National Indigenous Peoples Day a paid statutory holiday for some of Canada's workforce, namely federally regulated private-sector employees.

Private Members' Business

Under the Canadian constitutional framework, this is the first step in establishing a new statutory holiday. It is important to note that in order for us to designate this day as a paid holiday for all Canadians, federal public service collective agreements have to be amended, and the provinces and territories have to amend their respective laws if they have not done so already.

I should note that June 21 has been a paid statutory holiday in the Northwest Territories since 2001 and in Yukon since 2017.

[English]

I am pleased to contribute to today's debate and to call upon the House to carefully consider all the implications of the bill before us. I think we can aspire to an outcome that is aligned with the commitment to renew the relationship between Canada and indigenous peoples based on recognition of rights, respect, and co-operation in the same way the designation of National Indigenous Peoples Day 21 years ago was the result of a process that engaged and co-operated with the community.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this important debate on my colleague's private member's bill, Bill C-369, which proposes to turn National Indigenous Peoples Day into a statutory holiday.

Conservatives have proudly marked National Indigenous Peoples Day annually, both in government and in opposition. We have encouraged Canadians to take part in local celebrations to learn our history and also celebrate the immense contributions of indigenous peoples to Canada.

The leader of the official opposition has stated that National Aboriginal Day is a celebration of the cultural heritage, achievements, and contributions made by first nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. National Indigenous Peoples Day is not considered a national federal holiday. Bill C-369 seeks to change that. As such, it would amend the Bills of Exchange Act and the Interpretation Act in order to take this new holiday into account in the computation of time. It would also amend the Canada Labour Code in order to include the National Indigenous Peoples Day in the definition of a general holiday.

We certainly heard from the speaker just prior to me that this would not be a holiday for all Canadians. This bill would actually impact 6% of the labour force. There are issues with the provinces and territories. It is important to be very clear that this is not something that would happen across Canada.

We believe in reconciliation with all indigenous peoples. The opportunity for poverty reduction should be a key priority. First nations people should expect and have the right to a transparent and open government. We respect and appreciate National Indigenous Peoples Day, but we are not sure that creating a federal statutory holiday is the approach to take.

As I look over time, we have had many additions to our national holidays, but we have never actually talked about taking any away. I know private industry becomes increasingly concerned as more challenges are put on them, but what we never do is look at what might be more important than an existing holiday. If the House is going to support a measure like this to go forward, we need to look at existing holidays and talk about if all of them still make sense.

Quite frankly, when the non-partisan Library of Parliament was asked to consider what the costs would be to Canada's economy, it said that there did not appear to be any empirical studies. We will actually be voting on something, adding something, not taking anything away, and we will not have any real understanding of what the costs would be related to that. This is a private member's bill that would have significant impact, and I think we need to have a pretty clear understanding of what that impact would be.

We also know that we currently have a government that is spending lots of money. The Liberals are spending more money than they said they would spend. The deficit is going to be significantly higher than what was committed to Canadians. The Liberals' spending is out of control. To add more costs in terms of what the government is doing means we need to find out where it is going to start being sensible about its expenditures. More importantly, there is the issue of whether there is a holiday that should be taken away if we are going to look at adding one on. There is a significant impact on federally regulated businesses, but also potentially in terms of the federal public service.

I go back to the Royal Canadian Legion and the whole discussion around Remembrance Day and whether it is a statutory holiday. It is very different across the country. Legion officials have always expressed their worries that having the day off does not encourage people to attend the celebrations. The War Amps of Canada officials explicitly stated, "Our stance is that it should never be a holiday; you take away the uniqueness of being able to educate the younger generation on the horrors of war."

• (1915)

In terms of the National Indigenous Peoples Day, I have had the privilege and honour to be both in my riding and in Ottawa on June 21. In McDonald Park in Kamloops, people come together and the celebration is amazing. Teachers come with their students to the park. Parents come to the park. It is truly an honour and a celebration. It is a recognition, locally, of the incredible contribution. Later that day, we gather on the grounds, and they have another celebration. These are very well-attended celebrations. The school-children who come, and many do come and join us, are particularly enlightened, in terms of having the opportunity to benefit.

In Ottawa, it is the same thing. Many of us here have gone to the ceremony when the sun comes up and have enjoyed the Inuit music. We have enjoyed the celebrations, the dancing and singing of the Métis and the first nations. We all come together.

I am not always convinced that giving a day off is the best way to celebrate and honour this, and for people to learn. Again, I look at the experience in the community of Kamloops and across British Columbia. The evening newscasts on June 21 show amazing celebrations across the country.

Private Members' Business

I recognize the important intent of what my colleague would like to do. I think it needs some really important discussion to see if this is the best way to honour and recognize this, or whether continuing as we are is the best way forward.

I noticed that when my colleague was talking about the people who support this, she actually did not talk about the people who are going to be directly impacted, in terms of the federally regulated industries also providing their support for this particular bill. That is certainly something that is important, to see that federally regulated institutes across this country are on board. To date, we have not seen that.

In conclusion, we are having an important debate right now. I think we need to make sure it is a very fulsome debate.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to my NDP colleague's Bill C-369. I am especially pleased that she introduced this bill, because this subject is very important to me. Designating a national indigenous peoples day would allow indigenous peoples to organize activities and talk about their culture, their history, and how they have influenced this country. On top of that, making this day a holiday would allow non-indigenous people to take part in the activities. That is the most important part.

Sadly, the history of the indigenous peoples is often poorly explained in our history books. We all took history classes in school, and we often heard the official version, rather than what really happened. There are still many people who do not know what really happened in the residential schools, for example. There are still people who do not know that such schools even existed.

This day would allow us to draw closer. It is important to understand the reality and experiences of indigenous peoples. That is why a statutory holiday is needed, because it would allow people to participate in activities. The indigenous communities in our ridings could organize events and invite people to join them, and people would be able to go because it would be a statutory holiday. People are happy to have the opportunity to participate in family activities. If this day were made a statutory holiday, the whole community could participate.

In its report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission indicated that reconciliation is not an indigenous problem, it is a Canadian problem. We must be able to re-examine all aspects of Canadian society, and turning National Indigenous Peoples Day into a statutory holiday, as my colleague's bill proposes, would be a way of doing just that.

Neighbouring communities must help indigenous communities preserve their culture. We need to get involved because we all have a responsibility to contribute. Whether we like it or not, indigenous culture is part of the history of our regions. Abitibi-Témiscamingue would never have been the same without the contribution of indigenous peoples. Our history is closely tied to what happened with the Algonquin.

When the first settlers arrived in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, they were practically abandoned. They were told that they would get land

and that they would have to fend for themselves and hope to survive winter. Without help from indigenous communities and the Algonquin who were living in the region and who showed these people how to survive and adapt to this reality, we would not be here today. I think it is right for us to celebrate this day together. We are talking about a holiday in celebration of one of our country's founding nations. Our country would definitely not be the same without the indigenous peoples. It is even likely that the first settlers would not have survived without help from indigenous peoples and that the venture would simply have been abandoned.

The first settlers who arrived with Jacques Cartier would probably not have survived if not for indigenous peoples. They would probably all have died of scurvy. I do not understand how anyone could think that such an important time in our history should not be celebrated with a holiday. This is about increasing dialogue between communities, so that we can eventually work towards reconciliation. It should be a time to pause.

Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to participate in powwows held in my riding in mid-June. This has given me the chance to learn more about the communities. I have also learned about the traditional foods, because there are all kinds of learning activities on indigenous and Algonquin culture at these powwows.

● (1925)

Every time I go to one, I think about how wonderful it is that we can attend, because there used to be some uncertainty. Lots of people were not even sure they were welcome. Some people approached the community of Pikogan, which is one of the powwows I have attended. Community members said they would be pleased to welcome non-indigenous people. It is a learning opportunity for people. For example, when an eagle feather falls, they take the time to explain what is going to happen and what has to be done. Hundreds of people from my riding who attended the event learned more about indigenous peoples. If this day is not a statutory holiday, it will be hard to get people to go to an event happening after supper, when everyone is busy running around doing all the things they have to do.

We need to take the time to stop and learn about what indigenous peoples have contributed to our society and the challenges they face. We really need a dialogue between what are unfortunately, in some cases, two solitudes. I think we would all benefit from that.

I cannot express how fascinating it is even just to learn about the languages of our indigenous peoples. In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, many waterways, towns, villages, and mountains have Algonquin names. It is really interesting to learn where these names come from, why they were chosen, and what they mean.

I believe that all parliamentarians should support this bill because it is about the reconciliation of indigenous people and the communities living in the same territory. Once again, we need a statutory holiday to be able to truly take advantage of this time and what it can bring us.

Private Members' Business

The trauma of the past is too great for us to continue living in isolation, apart from one another. I hope that we as parliamentarians are ready to give indigenous people this day so that we can learn about one another. It would be so beneficial to learn about and discover one another. We should never close ourselves off from approaches that facilitate such exchanges.

I strongly recommend that all my colleagues support this bill and read what all the different indigenous organizations had to say about it. I believe that the majority of these organizations support the bill. Several members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission support it. Therefore, I invite all my colleagues to read this excellent bill, to learn about it, and to support it.

Again, I thank my colleague. She has done a remarkable job. I am pleased to sit with her and to constantly have discussions with her.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise and speak to a very important issue. It is virtually universally well received how important the National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21 is. Community members throughout our great nation, indigenous and non-indigenous, have made a note of that particular day. They recognize just how important it is that we take time to appreciate the many different contributions that indigenous people have made to who we are today as a nation. After listening to other members provide comments with respect to Bill C-369, I want to add a few thoughts.

First and foremost, I would like to recognize the efforts that the Prime Minister has put into this particular issue of indigenous people and the sense of commitment he brings to the table, wanting to work with indigenous people and garner the respect that is warranted in order to move forward, which is quite different from what we have seen with previous prime ministers. We see that attitude and that special relationship being incorporated and encouraged, from the Prime Minister's Office to the cabinet table and members of the Liberal caucus, but also members on all sides of the House. Whether or not we hear strong indications of support for the statutory holiday, all members of the House will recognize how important it is that we have a National Indigenous Peoples Day.

I would like to think that whatever side an MP might fall in on the issue, we recognize that something encouraging comes from the House of Commons today, and it is reflected in many of the speeches I have heard over the years. The whole idea of truth and reconciliation, calls to action, and the recommendations we have all been challenged to live up to is something we should all take seriously. It is one of the reasons I was so pleased to see the division of the department. We now have a minister who is looking solely at the issue of services, and we have an incredible minister of indigenous affairs who will do a fantastic job, continuing to go out and meet with individuals, solicit that very important input, and re-establish that relationship.

In my riding of Winnipeg North, I have had the opportunity to participate in the National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, walking down Selkirk Avenue and on the school grounds of Children of the Earth High School, which is truly a unique school in

western Canada, and I would suggest in all of Canada, where there is that special celebration. It is very encouraging that not only is our indigenous community getting engaged, but numerous non-indigenous people take the time to understand and appreciate just how important it is that we value these contributions.

The sponsoring member made reference to some very important issues in addressing the bill. It is important that we recognize the history. I had no idea that this bill was coming up today, but just this past Sunday I was on the grounds of the Manitoba legislature, where there is an individual named Joseph. I do not know his last name. He has a large tent and there are other indigenous people who participate. From what I understand, they are sleeping on the grounds of the Manitoba legislature.

• (1930)

It reminds me of another demonstration that occurred a few years prior to that. Community members beyond the indigenous community were trying to draw attention to the thousand-plus murdered and missing indigenous girls and women and how important it was to have a public inquiry.

In Winnipeg and Manitoba in particular, that issue is starting to resurface in terms of how important it is that the government makes sure we get this right. We had a recent court decision in regard to Tina Fontaine. For those who are not familiar with the Tina Fontaine case, she was a 15-year-old indigenous girl whose body was found in August 2014. She was pulled from the Red River. The sad reality is that there are far too many of those types of actions and discoveries taking place in our country. We need to get a better understanding of that.

The member opposite made reference to the issue of residential schools and the harm that has caused our society. I look at the area that I represent in Winnipeg North and the number of children who are in foster care. We can talk about many other issues where there seems to be a higher percentage of indigenous people, and elected officials need to look at that.

When we think of June 21, it is important to reflect on those types of issues, but it is also important that we celebrate the enormous contributions that indigenous peoples over the years have put in place to enable us to have the homes we have today. Canada as a nation is envied around the world. We would not be where we are today if not for indigenous people.

Getting a better appreciation for what a smudge is, or a powwow, or the many different wonderful contributions that have been made, also need to be highlighted. Earlier this week, I made reference to Folklorama. The Métis community has provided a pavilion over the years. We have had a first nation pavilion. These are popular pavilions. Individuals want to participate so they can become better educated about the culture and heritage of indigenous people. There is so much that is positive.

When I see the Métis tap dance with the violin, and how enthusiastic people are, or the many different types of dances and drums used within our first nations, the heritage of the hoop dance, it is truly amazing. There is a huge interest from the public to get a better understanding of them.

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However, it goes far beyond that. I think in terms of indigenous people and the way they treat the environment or mother earth. We have a great deal to learn from that. We have so many other aspects of indigenous culture and heritage. We could be a better society by getting a better understanding of that.

There are many good reasons for why we should be celebrating June 21, and it is a day that I will continue to celebrate. I look forward to the debate on this very important issue in regard to whether it should be made a statutory holiday.

• (1935)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith will have three minutes and then another seven minutes coming to her when the debate continues.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be standing in support of the long overdue action to have a National Indigenous Peoples Day made a statutory holiday. This is consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations. I am very grateful to my colleague, the member of Parliament for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, for bringing this forward.

If I were the Prime Minister, I would have adopted a bill just like this in 2016, on June 21, or in 2017. It is aligned with what the government says its objectives are. If it truly believes that its relationship with indigenous people is of the highest order and the highest precedence, then surely it would create space in our country for people to come together and talk about the legacy of residential schools, the overrepresentation of children in the child welfare system, and the overrepresentation of indigenous people, women in particular, in our jails.

We have a lot of work to do as a country. For a government that says that it wants to do the right thing and is very willing to spend money on all kinds of things, if it were to put its money where its mouths is, the Liberals would vote yes to this very constructive and concrete proposal.

I am honoured to stand in support of Bill C-369, representing Nanaimo—Ladysmith, and, in my community, to stand with the leaders and communities of Snuneymuxw First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, and Snaw-Naw-As, or Nanoose First Nation. These are leaders who have taught me a lot. In our community, on June 21, the solstice is increasingly the space being taken to recognize the past wrongs in the relationship with indigenous peoples in our country and the positive future we can have if we do. As my colleague says, "we are stronger when we are together".

There is great work to do. For the families of Colton Boushie and Tina Fontaine, I am embarrassed and saddened by the failure to find the killers of their children and to witness the racism that has been unleashed in our country as a result of those trials. It tells us more and more that we have work to do as a country. Voting yes to the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River's bill would be the least we could do.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the House to vote yes for this constructive, positive, forward-looking motion, consistent with the government's promises on indigenous peoples and consistent

with its promises to fully implement the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

• (1940)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have seven minutes coming to her when this topic comes back to the House.

The time provided for the consideration of this item of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow up on a question I asked the minister on November 8, 2017. At that time, it was day 76 of the occupation of two open net salmon farms in the Broughton Archipelago. I asked the minister if he would meet with B.C. and first nations governments to discuss moving these farms off the wild salmon migration route, yes or no. The minister replied, "The simple answer is yes." Today is day 208, and they are still waiting. They have no other choice but to take the government to court.

The 'Namgis First Nation is in court this week, seeking a judicial review of Fisheries and Oceans Canada policy that does not mandate testing for the blood virus, piscine reovirus, or PRV, before the scheduled transfer of Atlantic salmon smolts to Marine Harvest's open net salmon farm in 'Namgis territory. The first nation is also seeking an injunction to prevent the minister from issuing a licence permitting the transfer of those smolts.

Despite the first nations' repeated attempts to engage the minister on this crucial issue and despite what the minister says, he has not consulted with them.

Even with their constitutionally protected rights and the government's promise to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, Canada has not consulted nor sought 'Namgis consent to the unlawful transfer of disease-infested salmon into its territory.

Chief Don Svanvik states:

We have made every attempt to engage Canada in good faith on their PRV policy and the transfer of Atlantic salmon into our territory, but it refused to consult with us...Namgis has no other option to protect wild salmon, our title and rights and ultimately who we are as a people but to ask the Court to intervene to prevent the serious, irreversible harm being visited upon us by Canada and Marine Harvest.

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As the parliamentary secretary knows, I asked the minister about this at committee this morning. The minister said that he had the opportunity to meet with 'Namgis leadership in previous visits to B. C. and that senior officials were in regular contact. He said that the assertion that they did not or had not consulted with 'Namgis was not representative. However, a press release from the 'Namgis states:

Marine Harvest is preparing to restock their Swanson Island fish farm approximately 16 km east of Alert Bay ('Namgis territory) with Atlantic salmon despite 'Namgis' strenuous objection and lack of consent...the Minister has not consulted with 'Namgis and has not even replied to any of the multiple letters 'Namgis has sent to the Minister over the last three months.

Is this what first nations can expect from the government when it comes to consultation?

Will the government accept the 'Namgis' assertion that they have not been consulted and call them instead of forcing them into court?

The parliamentary secretary is from British Columbia. He is fully aware of the following. When it comes to RAS, recirculating aquatic systems, the train is leaving the station and B.C. is not on it; Canada is not on it. Canada has no strategy for modernizing salmon aquaculture. Land-based closed containment aquaculture represents an opportunity for Canada, B.C. in particular, to play a leading role in an emerging market.

• (1945)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comments. He and I are neighbours; we share a border. We also share a passion for serving our constituents, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue today.

As a British Columbian, I understand the very real concerns that individuals have about finfish aquaculture. In fact, since taking the role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I have spent a considerable amount of time researching and learning about this particular issue. I have done site visits at facilities throughout British Columbia, have had meetings with stakeholders, and have worked with members of the Pacific caucus who have expressed great interest in the overarching issue. I have compiled more than 500 pages of reports and have participated in meetings with more than 100 stakeholders.

The situation is of concern to our government, and we are very much looking for constructive ways to move forward in a way that is satisfactory to indigenous people, the aquaculture industry, the province, as well as the federal government. As we have said many times before, the only way we can find solutions to these situations is through meaningful and constructive dialogue. We saw demonstrations of this when we held various symposiums last summer.

The minister has previously noted the many opportunities he has had to discuss aquaculture in British Columbia with provincial and indigenous leaders, covering the full range of issues in respect of environmental concerns, scientific evidence, the importance of the sector as an economic driver, and importantly, following through on the government's response to recommendations made by the Cohen commission. These meetings are always fruitful and aim to find common ground.

Of paramount importance in these discussions is respect, respect for the rights of indigenous people, respect for the rights of individuals to engage in peaceful protest, as well as respect for free enterprise that is operating within the regulatory framework which has been put in place to protect the marine environment.

The aquaculture sector currently has 20 economic development agreements with numerous indigenous nations covering approximately 80% of all salmon farms in the province. Moreover, industry has committed that no new farms will be developed without the full support and direct participation of indigenous communities. This, combined with the broader national discussion, is an important backdrop through which to consider the situation at hand and the occupation of the farms in question.

While we may not be able to reach a similar agreement in this particular case, I do believe that industry as well as indigenous communities can co-exist in the province. In fact, I have been encouraged by the many conversations I have had that point to how we can work closely together to create real economic benefits for communities while protecting our marine environment.

Our government also takes our commitments under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples very seriously and we are actively committed to building a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples. The minister and I had the opportunity to discuss how this can be accomplished in concrete terms with four different indigenous groups when we visited British Columbia just last week.

Renewed nation-to-nation relationships based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership is the foundation for transformative change. Fisheries and Oceans Canada officials are presently engaged in concluding negotiations for treaties and reconciliation agreements at six treaty tables in British Columbia alone.

I believe that through these and other respectful and constructive discussions, we are demonstrating to the Canadian people and the world that we are following through with our commitment to indigenous peoples.

• (1950)

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments, but I ask him to encourage his government to work with the Namgis First Nation and its company Kuterra on a transition plan to modernize this industry to safe, land-based, closed containment. Speaking of that, it is very time sensitive that Canada move on this.

I want to point out a few very important facts. Several commercial-scale Atlantic salmon land-based, closed containment projects are already underway around the world. The U.S.A. has six facilities in development that will produce more than 200,000 tonnes of land-based farmed salmon. Other countries that are also following this lead are Norway, Scotland, Denmark, Poland, South Africa, Switzerland, China, and France. Here in Canada we have three companies, Kuterra, CanAqua, and Sustainable Blue, and they—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite bringing up RAS and closed containment. I, along with the member from West Vancouver, had the opportunity to visit Kuteria in British Columbia last summer and tour the facility with indigenous leaders from the community. We have also worked with many stakeholders to examine the potential of this technology.

In our most recent budget we invested in the fisheries and aquaculture clean technology adoption program which encourages Canadian fisheries and aquaculture industries to reduce the potential environmental impacts of their activities. In addition, our government continues to respect our commitments under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights Indigenous Peoples, not only through treaty table discussions on fisheries, but in many other areas as well.

Again, as I noted in my previous comments, we are concerned with the ongoing protests at aquaculture sites in the Broughton archipelago and are very much committed to taking concrete steps toward a respectful and constructive solution.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise tonight and participate in this adjournment debate. I want to follow up on a question that I first asked on February 12 in question period. At the time, I asked the question of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who as members know is also the member for Papineau. Unfortunately, at the time he did not respond. Rather, the response came from the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. The question was on interprovincial trade. Challenges at that time were being experienced between our friends in Alberta and British Columbia. Members will recall that due to the British Columbia government's efforts to block the TMX, the Trans Mountain expansion, Alberta was threatening to ban the import of B.C. wine into Alberta.

As we know, the industry within Canada is greatly affected by trade barriers between our provinces. It falls on the Liberal government to finally take a stand to end trade barriers between our provinces. The challenges that are faced by provinces because of trade barriers account for up to \$130 billion in lost economic activity. This all stems from the interpretation of the Constitution, section 121, which states:

All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall, from and after the Union, be admitted free into each of the other Provinces.

Unfortunately, over the years, the interpretation of that section has been deemed to mean only tariffs. However, the reality is that non-tariff barriers between our provinces are having a significant impact on our economy.

In fact, the Liberal government's efforts to sign the Canadian free trade agreement were a failure. If we look at the CFTA, we find that the agreement itself is 353 pages long, yet 146 of those pages are exceptions that permit trade barriers to remain in place. They range on issues from mining to livestock medicine to timber processing to wine and beer. As I travel through my constituency and constituencies across this country, I get the opportunity to meet with small business owners. They may be distilleries or craft breweries, but they are small business owners who are trying their best to develop a product, develop a business, and to market it across

the province and the country. In talking to some of these business owners, they tell me it is easier for them to import into the United States than into a neighbouring province. This is wrong.

In fact, Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* wrote about the failed efforts of the Liberals on interprovincial trade. He stated, "for all the attempts to paint the new Canadian Free Trade Agreement as a heroic achievement there was no disguising the fact that what the ministers were here to announce was a failure."

Therefore, on February 12, as shadow secretary for interprovincial trade, I asked the government about its failed and poor record on interprovincial trade. In response, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development said, "we strongly advocate and support free trade among the provinces and territories." Then he pointed to the Canadian free trade agreement as an example of this. However, as I have outlined, most of that was exceptions to the rule, and so poor was the Canadian free trade agreement on many of the issues that only two provinces have introduced legislation to ratify the CFTA.

I want to ask the government and the parliamentary secretary why they will not stand up for small businesses and tear down the trade barriers that are blocking our economic productivity.

• (1955)

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to comments made earlier by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington regarding interprovincial trade.

Our government has shown tremendous leadership in advancing internal trade throughout Canada. On April 7, 2017, our government and all of the provinces and territories announced the successful completion of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Our government is proud to have played a leadership role in the agreement's negotiations. We worked in collaboration with provinces and territories in order to craft a new agreement, an ambitious and modern framework for more open trade within Canada.

It is the most comprehensive reform to Canada's internal market in over 20 years. Since entering into force on July 1, 2017, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement has delivered. It includes a comprehensive new process to align regulations, remove barriers, and help reduce business costs. It provides broader access for Canadian companies to billions of dollars in government procurement contracts across the country. In fact, for the first time, Canadian companies operating in certain regulated professions, such as engineering, are now able to compete for government contracts across the country. In addition, suppliers to most publicly owned energy utilities can also now bid for a range of government contracts in many parts of the country.

The agreement's rules provide a framework that opens up trade within our borders in virtually every sector of the economy. It helps ensure that businesses based in Canada have the same or better access to our market as our international trading partners. More open markets are helping Canadian businesses scale up at home so that they can compete globally.

This agreement maintains strong provisions to ensure that Canadians can work in different jurisdictions across the country. It also ensures transparency and accountability for regulatory notification and for public reporting. The Canadian Free Trade Agreement has increased maximum monetary penalties to better ensure that governments comply with the agreement's rules.

Finally, the agreement is forward looking. It sets out a process and timetable toward enhanced trade in the few sectors of the economy that are not currently covered. That includes the sale of alcoholic beverages. To that end, our government worked with provinces and territories to secure a commitment to establish a working group on the interprovincial trade in alcohol. This working group is mandated to propose actions within one year to further liberalize domestic trade in alcohol in a socially responsible manner. Its work is well under way. Our government is committed to working hard to stand up for freer trade in our country.

We want to enhance the flow of goods, services, investments, and workers across the country, without any impediments. We want to continue working with all parties towards the rapid and co-operative resolution of any issues.

● (2000)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary says that the CFTA has delivered. The fact of the matter is that is simply not true. There are still 146 pages of exceptions out of 353, and it is still illegal in most provinces to transport beer and wine for personal use.

The parliamentary secretary talks about the working groups that have been established, yet when I asked an Order Paper question

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about how those working groups were progressing, what I got back was zero information. In fact, the government said it could not even provide the list of attendees of the working group meetings, the agenda items, or the decisions and agreements made, because it would be injurious to federal-provincial relations.

How poorly are these working group meetings going that the government cannot even disclose the attendees of the meetings without it being injurious to federal-provincial relations?

Why will the government simply not stand up for the right of individuals to transport beer and wine across provincial boundaries without impediments? It is good for the economy.

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt about our government's commitment to strengthening trade within Canada. We have made the biggest strides in a generation to modernize Canada's internal trade framework. In the face of continued global uncertainty, we have taken a leadership role in working together with provinces and territories to enhance our domestic market.

We remain committed to freer trade within Canada, because we know that is good for the middle class and that is good for our economy.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:02 p.m.)

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