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Monday, February 4, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 4, 2019

The House met at 11 a.m.

[*English*]

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House the government should: (a) establish a national suicide prevention action plan, including among its provisions (i) commitment to the actions and resources required to establish culturally appropriate community-based suicide prevention programs as articulated by representative organizations of the Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples, (ii) establishment of national guidelines for best practices in suicide prevention based on evidence of effectiveness in a Canadian context, (iii) the creation of a national public health monitoring program for the prevention of suicide and identification of groups at elevated risk, (iv) creation of programs to identify, and to attempt to fill, gaps in knowledge relating to suicide and its prevention, including timely and accurate statistical data, (v) development of tools to promote responsible and safe reporting of suicide and its prevention by media, (vi) establishment of national standards for the training of persons engaged in suicide prevention, whose contact with potentially vulnerable populations provides an opportunity to identify at-risk individuals and direct them to appropriate assessment and treatment, (vii) creation of a national online hub providing essential information and guides to accessing services, in English, French, selected Indigenous languages, and other languages spoken widely in Canada for suicidal individuals, their families and friends, people bereaved by a loved one's suicide, workplaces and other stakeholders concerned with suicide prevention, (viii) conducting within 18 months comprehensive analyses of high-risk groups of people, and the risk factors specific to each such group, the degree to which child sexual abuse and other forms of childhood abuse and neglect have an impact on suicidal behaviour, the barriers to Canadians accessing appropriate and adequate health, wellness and recovery services, including substance use, addiction and bereavement services, the funding arrangements required to provide the treatment, education, professional training and other supports required to prevent suicide and assist those bereaved by a loved one's suicide, the use of culturally appropriate suicide prevention activities and best practices, the role that social media plays with respect to suicide and suicide prevention, means to reduce stigma associated with being a consumer of mental health, bereavement and other associated services, and ways in which society can reduce access to means and methods for people to harm themselves; and (b) report to Parliament annually on preparations for and implementation of the national action plan for suicide prevention, including data on progress over the previous year, and a comprehensive statistical overview of suicide in Canada for the same year.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today for my first intervention in the new House to move a motion on the need to establish a national suicide prevention action plan. This motion presents an opportunity for members of Parliament to work together and do what it takes to resolve Canada's suicide crisis.

I want to say at the beginning of my speech how honoured I am to be rising in this new chamber, this new Parliament, that was smudged by Claudette Commanda of the Algonquin nation, the first time in any legislature in any nation. We begin this new Parliament with a sense of hope and commitment to making change. I take very seriously my opportunity to speak on a matter as important as this.

I think back to one of the first debates we had in this 42nd Parliament, not a debate but a common discussion, during the Attawapiskat suicide crisis in 2012. It was a powerful moment for this Parliament because members came together. The problem is that the deaths continue, and good words alone will not change the reality unless we come together to recognize the role that the federal government has to play.

[*Translation*]

There is an example that shows that it is possible for Canada to find a solution. Twenty years ago, Quebec established a provincial plan to reduce the rate of suicide among Quebecers, and the outcome was extraordinary. This plan reduced the number of suicides in Quebec by 40%. Imagine the positive impact a similar plan established by the Parliament of Canada could have at the national level.

[*English*]

Suicide touches every one of us. It touches all our communities. It touches across age groups, across race. I come at this issue from the experience I have seen in the communities of the far north, through one horrific crisis after another, and realizing that without the support of a coherent strategy, children have needlessly died, and will continue to die, unless we change.

I was recently at Northern Lights Secondary School in James Bay. I walked into that school, and I saw a school of hope. I saw young people engaged. I saw them playing music. I could feel it in the halls, that sense of determination and of a future. I remember being there 10 years ago in the middle of the suicide crisis. I saw the trauma on the faces of the first responders and the families, because children were dying, not singly but in twos and threes. At that time, there was no one from the federal or provincial governments, no departments, helping out.

Private Members' Business

Ron Pate, who was the principal, said he would keep the school open all night long, every night. He said he was not going to lose another child on his watch. Those words have stayed with me ever since.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

What kind of nation sits back and does nothing while its young people lose hope? What kind of nation chooses to clip the wings of its youth?

[*English*]

What kind of nation sits back as young people are dying and does not send in all the support necessary and learn the lessons so that we can change this? How is it possible that we can have these patterns again and again without putting in place a coherent response?

Again, from my region and the region that I represent, where we have seen some of the highest suicide rates in the world, I have seen the potential of young people to transform this nation. Every time we lose a young person, we are losing the future of our nation.

We have lost Sheridan Hookimaw, Deandra Anderson, Chantel Fox, Jenera Roundsky, Jolynn Winter, Azraya Kokopenace, Emily Ellison, Amy Owen, Kanina Sue Turtle, all in the last few years. I want their names on the record, because those children were loved.

We are here to tell their families and their community that they did not die in vain. We have an obligation to work together for young people like Amy Owen, who wrote on Facebook that life was so hard she could not go on, at age 12. That is not the Canada that I want to be in, and that is not the Canada any of us want to be in. We, as a Parliament, can make a difference.

We have models, but we need to first of all establish a community-based response that is culturally understanding of the various realities in our country. The last thing we need is another Health Canada program with posters. That will not change anything. We need to be empowering and ensure that the grassroots organizations, cultural organizations, indigenous organizations are at the table to say what they need, because they know what works. That would be a big step along the way of making change.

We also need to develop national evidence-based best practices. We do not have to invent rocket science here. There are mental health organizations and indigenous organizations that know what needs to be done, but they need a willing partner.

We need to raise awareness about how coverage of suicide in the media is dealt with. It is said that suicide rates increased 10% in the United States after the death of Robin Williams. We need to talk about media. We also need to talk about bereavement in families who are left on their own and have no one to talk to.

The fundamental difference between suicide and other health crises is that suicide is like a psychic shock wave. It goes through a family, a community, a school, and its lingering effects are for life. We have seen this particularly in the far northern communities when we do not respond with a coherent strategy. That psychic shock wave has echo effects, so we start to see, especially in young people, imitative behaviours that are incredibly destructive.

We need a national online resource hub, in multiple languages, to reach people. That is something that the federal government could do. We need to have a set of national training standards for people who are engaged in suicide prevention work and those who want to know how to help, so that we have better protocols and it is easier to access those protocols.

The other thing is that we need a coherent set of numbers. If I said that 11 people are dying every day in car accidents, we would say that is terrible, that people should drive more safely because 4,000 plus people die every year. We use those numbers about suicide. However, what if we started to point out that we had the evidence that they are not dying at random, that there are pressure points? If we said in a car accident case that a number of people died at one crosswalk, we would go there to find out what was wrong.

Without the statistical evidence and a coherent strategy, we do not know where to put the resources in place. For example, I was shocked in my research that the highest numbers we were coming across were in middle-age men. Why is that? No one was talking about that. I know that when a mill shuts down or a factory shuts down, people anecdotally will say, yes, and then they started to die. If we identified the risk in advance, we could start to reach out to those men and have the programs in place, so that those who are losing their jobs in times of transition are not on their own. This is what evidence gives us. Evidence gives us a focus to move forward, and that is something that the federal government can do.

I have been at this business in Parliament, and honoured to do this, for many years. One thing I have come to realize is that the government members get up, hug us, and say it is a wonderful motion and dear to their hearts and then nothing ever happens. This is why the motion calls on the federal government to do a regular progress report to Parliament.

● (1115)

If we have the progress report on the numbers on issues of identifying factors such as child sexual abuse, if the government is obligated to present to Parliament an annual report, then we can begin to see how we are making a difference and if we are making a difference. Where we are not making a difference, we can start to ask why.

That was the real beauty of the Quebec model. It began to say it could change things by identifying where the problems were and putting resources there. We are the only G7 country without a national suicide action plan. It astounds me that in some regions of Canada we have the highest suicide rates in the world, yet every time a number of young people die the best we get is a tweet from a minister saying that it is a tragedy. It is not a tragedy; it is preventable.

I saw this in the Attawapiskat crisis. We saw it in Neskantaga and La Loche. We have seen it again and again. A tragedy is when a child walks out and gets hit by a bus. However, when a pattern is repeated again and again, we have to ask ourselves what is causing that pattern. What are the numbers?

For example, in the far north, we did not have the on-the-ground proactive teams that limited and diminished the risks to young people. We did not have access to mental health services. We did not have any understanding or any way to find out whether child sexual abuse was a factor. We needed that in each of these cases.

We have gathered support across this country. The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention has been doing incredible work on this. For years, it has been asking for this strategy. The Canadian Medical Association supports it, as well as the regional Chiefs of Ontario, the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association and the Canadian Nurses Association.

I want to pay special tribute to Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, ITK, and its president Natan Obed, who established a plan for the Inuit. ITK is getting really good statistics so it can start to identify the problems.

I want to give a special thanks to Jack Hicks, who has been one of the front-line advocates for getting a strategy for suicide prevention. He approached my office during the horrific suicide crisis in Wapekeka, when we lost Chantel Fox, Jolyn Winter and Jenera Roundsky. The trauma of those deaths led to numerous other young women dying in that far north of Treaty 9. Jack asked us why we were not putting in place this national strategy. We were overwhelmed and dealing reactively, and he said that it was time Parliament acted proactively.

Therefore, I come to my colleagues across the political spectrum saying that as legislators, as adults, as parents, as the people who are supposed to be the voice of Canada, we need to start talking about how we address this horrific crisis that is causing so much pain and devastation. For any person we lose, we are losing the future of our nation. I look into the eyes of young people and ask myself how they can give up. How can they not believe that this nation is there for them? If we are not there for them, we have failed.

This is our opportunity. In the dying days of a Parliament that has been pretty fractious, one that has perhaps not lived up to what Canadians expected of it, we can do something that says that, together, we are going to put people first and start to talk about how to deal with the horrifying crisis of suicide.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his speech and for his dedication to this sensitive issue that concerns all of us.

I would like to ask him to take a few minutes to tell us more about the progress report based on new figures. What would be the point of that report? I was under the impression that we already have a number of organizations working on those issues. Is that not enough?

Are there not concrete, practical approaches, such as education and sports, that we should be focusing on that would help us achieve better results?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague. We are both members of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Private Members' Business

His question is an important one, and I do want to make it clear that extraordinary work is being done to reduce suicide risks.

Provincial and territorial authorities are responsible for meeting their citizens' health care needs. The federal government is responsible for the health care needs of indigenous communities, soldiers and veterans. The federal government also has to work with the provinces to create a national plan for things like statistics and to figure out the best way to respond to this crisis.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, for bringing the motion forward.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, suicide is occurring at an epidemic rate. As recently as Friday, I was at an eating disorder awareness week kickoff, where a young girl gave testimony that one in five young girls with an eating disorder commits suicide. I would love to see that included in the study.

I am also very interested in those who suffer sexual trauma. I hope that when the member brings this forward, people will look at those who have had sexual trauma in the past and at the penalties that are happening. In my riding, we just heard that another 13-year-old girl was raped and the perpetrator received months in jail, not years. This girl will be high risk for suicide. I hope that is addressed in the member's motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, certainly the point she made about eating disorders is shocking. I had never heard that.

That is why we need to be gathering the statistics to find out where the pressure points are. Once we know that, we can start to look at possible solutions.

In terms of the issue of sexual abuse, I was involved in one horrific suicide crisis. I remember calling in to the police and asking if we had numbers and if we knew whether it was a factor. An officer said he did not have the resources and that he did not know. I was calling the child advocate, asking if we knew. I was told we do not have the resources. Everyone was on the lookout, but we did not know.

We must realize the importance of saying, proactively, that there are communities that have suffered higher levels, especially regarding intergenerational trauma. We have seen the intergenerational trauma of residential schools. We can start to see these factors. Once we start putting that in place, then we will know where the proactive resources should be going.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his longstanding dedication to these important issues. As members know, he has repeatedly tried to rally us all to this cause.

Does he think it is possible to gather data about what led to such despair, to these fatal acts, and to show that the health care system lacks professionals and family doctors?

Private Members' Business

Bit by bit, our health care system is becoming a two-tier system, and we do not even realize it. Because of this system, have-not families may not get a diagnosis, and I suspect this problem is even worse in Canada's north.

• (1125)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, inadequate access to mental health services is a critical issue. The lack of resources must be addressed in order to prevent suicide.

There is a lack of resources in major urban centres, and the situation is brutal in the Far North. When I speak with officials following a suicide crisis, I ask them about the mental health services that exist for young people in those communities. They always tell me that programs and services do exist. That is false. When we look at the causes of a crisis, we routinely find the problem of inadequate access to mental health services. It is unacceptable.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to discuss suicide prevention in the context of the debate on Motion No. 174 moved by my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Suicide is a complex issue that affects many Canadians, as well as their families and communities. That is why suicide prevention and improving Canadians' mental health are a priority for our government. I would actually like to take this opportunity to point out that this week is National Suicide Prevention Week in Quebec. This is Quebec's 29th National Suicide Prevention Week, and this year's theme is "Talking About Suicide Saves Lives". That is what we are doing here today.

I am honoured to speak today about a few initiatives and broader government investments regarding suicide prevention and mental health.

The Government of Canada is working with partners to foster and protect the health of Canadians. To that end, we support programs that improve mental health and well-being and help prevent suicide.

Mental health support is key to suicide prevention. In 2017, our government signed an agreement with the provinces and territories to provide funding for mental health over the next 10 years. This funding includes \$5 billion in new targeted investments to help the provinces and territories improve access to mental health and addiction services.

Some provinces and territories have included suicide prevention activities in their agreements. For example, the Northwest Territories are developing a suicide prevention and crisis support network to support suicide prevention activities in communities and provide expert and timely intervention in times of crisis. Saskatchewan will support community-developed strategies to prevent suicide and build clinical capacity to assess and treat mental health concerns in children and youth.

The federal government bases its comprehensive suicide prevention efforts on the 2016 federal framework for suicide prevention, which harmonizes federal suicide prevention activities and complements the important work carried out by our partners. The primary objectives of the federal government framework are to reduce stigma and raise public awareness of suicide prevention; connect Canadians,

information and resources; and accelerate the use of research and innovation in suicide prevention.

A nearly \$3-million investment in this framework to support the Canadian suicide prevention service will give people across the country 24-hour access to crisis support.

Suicide has been a concern in indigenous communities. The suicide rates are higher than average in some first nations communities and in all Inuit regions.

The parts of the national suicide prevention action plan specific to indigenous peoples are in line with the frameworks guiding our government's approach to mental wellness, such as the first nations mental wellness continuum framework and the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy.

These frameworks speak to the need for a transformative and whole-of-government approach to supporting mental wellness and promoting reconciliation and healing. They present a comprehensive approach to mental wellness services by putting the emphasis on cultural continuity, self-determination by the community, and social determinants of health specific to indigenous peoples.

Every year, our government contributes \$350 million in funding for mental wellness community services in first nations and Inuit communities.

This funding is used to support mental health and suicide prevention programs, substance use prevention and treatment, mental wellness teams, the Hope for Wellness Help Line, and the Indian residential schools resolution health support program.

We also know that suicide affects several other populations receiving federal government help, including members of the Canadian Armed Forces and veterans.

• (1130)

That is why we released the CAF-VAC joint suicide prevention strategy in 2017. The strategy is a comprehensive approach to preventing suicide among our military members and veterans.

This strategy is consistent with the approach outlined in the federal framework for suicide prevention, which states that suicide is a serious public health issue. It outlines an approach that seeks to reduce risks, build resilience, and prevent suicide among military members and veterans, as detailed in two action plans developed by the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada.

Private Members' Business

Some of the actions in the Veterans Affairs Canada action plan include a new emergency fund that provides financial support to veterans, their families or their survivors whose well-being is at risk; sustained expansion of the network of operational stress injury clinics; mental health first aid training for veterans; a veteran family program; an education and training benefit; and online support for veteran families and caregivers.

As part of this strategy, the Canadian Armed Forces partnered with the Canadian Psychiatric Association and released the Clinician Handbook on Suicide Prevention. This evidence-based handbook equips health care providers to screen, assess and manage patients at risk for suicide. The Canadian Armed Forces also continue to expand their telemental health resources to reduce wait times and geographic obstacles that would limit access to care.

Our government supports and also establishes partnerships to conduct research on mental health and suicide prevention. From 2013-14 to 2017-18, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, or CIHR, invested more than \$15 million in suicide research.

To address one of the main challenges to suicide prevention, the rapid access to mental health services, CIHR, in partnership with the Graham Boeckh Foundation, supports ACCESS Open Minds. This national initiative is transforming the way in which youth aged 11 to 25 access mental health services by developing and testing evidence-based mental health solutions. This initiative guarantees quick access to mental health assessment services and to appropriate services matching specific needs.

The ACCESS Open Minds network currently has 14 sites in six provinces and one territory. Each site serves the local needs of its respective community. This initiative represents a total investment of \$25 million by the federal government and the foundation.

What is more, mental health and suicide constitute one of the priority areas in the government's pathways to health equity for aboriginal peoples initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to promote health equity for aboriginal peoples and apply knowledge to improve health. The research projects funded under this initiative will help develop an evidence base to guide the design, implementation and delivery of programs and policies to prevent suicide and promote the health and well-being of indigenous people.

We are also interested in approaches that decrease the impact of suicide in communities across the country. The Mental Health Commission of Canada launched the roots of hope project, which draws on community expertise to implement relevant, evidence-based suicide prevention interventions in Canadian communities. Experimental research projects are under way in Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, and the opening of another site in Alberta has been confirmed.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada also worked with partners to design suicide prevention training for health care professionals and to develop resources for people who have attempted suicided and those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

Going forward, our government will keep working toward suicide prevention together with service providers, our partners, and those with lived experience, including national indigenous organizations and indigenous communities in general.

We know that by working together and collaborating with our partners, we can build a country in which suicide is prevented and hope and resilience become a reality for us all.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to participate in this important debate on Motion No. 174. I do so not with any particular satisfaction, but I believe that few in this place are better qualified to speak about the hurt and pain that can be caused by someone taking their own life.

I want to say how privileged we all are to be in this new chamber. I would like to echo the comments by the mover of this motion that this is an opportunity for all of us to do what is right.

My remarks today are mine and mine only, and were not prepared by anyone else.

Three days from today, Thursday of this week, will mark one year since I received a phone call at midnight from my wife, saying that our 45-year-old daughter had taken her life. It is a call that no parent should ever have to receive.

Again I would like to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for raising this important issue in the House. I recognize that with limited time before this session of Parliament ends, this motion might not go much beyond the debate, but the debate itself is important. It is important because suicide is not an easy issue to talk about, but hopefully, if at least one person hears our words today and decides not to act, it will be time well spent.

The member who introduced this motion today focused a great deal on situations in his riding, especially those impacting our first nations communities. I do not for one minute want to downplay those tragic situations, but I want the House and all Canadians to know that this is not a problem experienced strictly by our aboriginal population or by marginal groups, because in the past year I have had countless people either write to me or tell me personally about the loss of a family member or friend by suicide.

It is easy to say that suicide is a mental health issue and if we just spend a little more money, that would be the answer, but I happen to believe differently. There is no question that factors such as depression or mental instability can be directly related to suicide. However, in recent years, several prominent business leaders in Alberta chose to end their lives; suicide can be caused by financial stress or a dependency that was more serious than it appeared. I do not consider that to be mental illness. I know others will disagree, and that is why it is important to have this discussion and develop an action plan, as suggested in this motion.

Private Members' Business

If spending more money to deal with mental illness is not the solution, then what is? I have thought a lot about it and I think that education is where we need to start. Learning about suicide should maybe start in grade school, and not be about why suicide is wrong but for students to hear real-life examples of the hurt and pain that is left behind when someone chooses to end their life. I say that because suicide is not an easy subject to talk about, but it does help to get rid of some of the anger. I think if a young person is made aware of that hurt and pain, it may change future decisions. If young people realized that nothing they ever did in their lives made a parent more angry, they might not make that decision.

When I think of my daughter, I think of someone who never wanted to hurt anyone or anything. In fact, she would become very angry when hearing the news of a person or animal being abused or mistreated, so we have to ask ourselves why she would hurt everyone around her by taking her own life. Obviously, that never occurred to her.

● (1140)

I am sorry, Mr. Speaker; when I practised this morning, it was much easier.

I ask whether it would have made a difference if in grade school she had heard first-hand about the pain and suffering experienced when a family suicide occurred. Perhaps it would have more impact if it were in junior or senior high, because it is a time in life when young people are easily influenced, but as the member mentioned in his opening remarks, the opposite seems to be occurring today. Young people are following celebrities on social media who choose to commit suicide, so they think it is okay. Unfortunately, that social media focus in on the person taking his or her own life rather than those who are left behind to pick up the pieces.

Last week I followed closely the victim impact statements that were made by families of those killed in the Humboldt bus crash. They were heart-rending but powerful. I ask, what if similar stories were shared with school children by families of suicide victims? It might have lifelong impact.

Also, early in life we teach our children a lot about sharing and not being selfish. Committing suicide may be the most selfish thing one can do. I would say that our daughter was somewhat selfish. However, I doubt that it ever occurred to her that committing suicide was a selfish act, so I think we need to instill in our young people that suicide is a selfish, hurtful act. It is hard to do that, however, if someone feels uncomfortable talking about their situation, so I hope that we can encourage Canadians through this debate to share their stories with others and help prevent similar situations of hurt and pain.

I have heard it said that suicide has almost become an epidemic. It seems as though every day we see in the obituary column that another young person has died suddenly. If all suicides were caused by depression, people could probably be treated, but unfortunately they are not. We must deal with the fact that suicide seems to have become the easy way out. For the individual at that moment in time, it may seem that way, but rest assured that such a decision leaves a lifetime of hurt, pain and anger.

What can we do as political leaders to combat that?

We need to start to have these discussions. We cannot be afraid to open up about our hurt, pain and anger. We cannot think that because our daughter chose this action, it has somehow brought shame on our family. We need to get over the feeling of guilt and anger and help others. Therefore, I urge anyone who experienced suicide by a family member or friend to consider sharing their feelings openly, to be a source of hopefully preventing someone from taking their own life. By being open, they can also be a resource for someone today facing what we experienced last year.

Many in this chamber are fortunate not to have a personal experience with suicide. Standing here one year ago today, actually in the other chamber, that was me. Today, one year less three days later, I look at this issue through an entirely different lens.

Supporting this motion and participating in the debate today is easy for me. Hopefully my remarks, and those of others who speak, will ensure this motion moves forward so we can begin the work of developing a national action plan to combat this epidemic.

● (1145)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the member for Calgary Signal Hill for his courage to speak about his own life experience. When we take the opportunity to discuss suicide in a public place, we make a difference in the world to families and individuals. We take the stigma and darkness away from them. It is very important for people to talk about their pain. I want to acknowledge my colleague's bravery.

It is an honour to stand here today to speak to the important motion brought forward by my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, and to acknowledge all the work he has done on this issue and his leadership.

The motion calls for the federal government and indeed all of us in the House to provide leadership to create and implement a national suicide prevention action plan.

Like my colleagues, I want to acknowledge the family members, friends and our colleagues here today who have been touched by the death of someone they have loved by suicide. I want to also acknowledge the many indigenous communities, including communities in my province, that have been dealing with immense grief and sadness with the suicides of so many young people, and those communities that are struggling to get governments to take notice and invest in much needed services, support and mental health services in their communities.

I would also like to acknowledge Marilyn Irwin from Saskatoon for her fierce advocacy around the importance of investing in mental health services with respect to preventing suicides in our communities.

Private Members' Business

The motion calls upon us to move to action. Frameworks have been put in place as well as a scattering of programs within different jurisdictions and different departments, but we really need to act beyond those frameworks. Too many people have died and many of those deaths could have been prevented if action had been taken.

I want to make three general comments on the role of the federal government on this issue. To me, there are some similarities to the issue of homelessness.

Where governments fear to tread, or stay back in Ottawa, or create frameworks or talk about policies, communities have had to step in and take the lead. If there were ever a time for governments at all levels to really learn how to work alongside communities, this would be the time. It is time for the federal government to really understand the issue and to do that well.

Prior to becoming a member of Parliament, I spent over 30 years working in the community. It had always been a struggle for communities to work alongside the federal government as true partners. If we were ever going to find a way to do that, and do that well, and build on that capacity within the federal government, this is the action plan that could allow us to do that.

I have one final comment with respect to the federal government and this issue, and that is jurisdiction. Jurisdiction is a government issue, not a community issue. People's lives are not divided into jurisdictions. People's bodies are not divided into jurisdictions. Governments need to figure out those issues themselves and find the resources to do that so they truly can sit down with communities and tackle issues in their entirety, as opposed to saying it is not their jurisdiction, which we have heard before. People have died because governments have been unable to figure out their roles.

● (1150)

I also want to commend my colleague for the thoroughness of his motion. It really includes everything we need to create a national action plan, to move the federal government beyond a framework, to move the federal government beyond a sort of patchwork of systems of care, all those kinds of things, to really bring everyone together, all hands on deck, so to speak, and to move forward and have an impact on the lives of people.

My colleague had an opportunity to talk about some of the things that needed to be included in an action plan. We also heard a member from the opposite side, from the government, talk about some of the programs in place.

However, we know from the motion and the work my colleague has done that there are certain things we need to have in an action plan to actually have some impact. The most crucial one is culturally appropriate and, as I mentioned, community-based suicide prevention programs, particularly in indigenous communities. There is nothing wrong with starting an action plan focused on those communities that are most impacted or most vulnerable. We can all benefit from that work.

My colleague and other members have spoken about the need for evidence, such as national evidence-based guidelines on how to intervene in suicide and what the best practices are, which is an excellent role for the federal government; monitoring, such as a national public health monitoring program for prevention and

identification for at-risk groups; creation of programs to identify and fill the knowledge and data gaps. This is always important when look at an issue that has had a lot of stigma attached to it. A lot of people have not talked about it, but we really need to know what is going on and the gaps in the data.

We need to develop the tools to promote safe, responsible media reporting of suicide and national suicide prevention training standards. All of this is included in the action plan provided in the motion today.

We need an online hub for suicide prevention resources in multiple languages. My colleague also mentioned the need to have that in indigenous languages.

We need to pool all the resources together and all of our expertise to analyze the risk factors and potential solutions. We have talked about some of those: the impact of childhood experiences; the role of social media; and the best way to reduce stigma around accessing mental health services, which we know will play a key role in addressing the epidemic.

As we have also heard, suicide impacts every community in Canada. We heard a very personal story about what happens, as well what is left behind and the trauma people face from the sudden death of a loved one. It is a sensitive subject, but we have done an important job today in talking about it in the House of Commons so we can move forward on a very important topic. We have an example in Quebec, which created a province-wide action plan that has impacted the suicide rates in the province.

In my province, just last May, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations released a report on the suicides in first nations and brought together some of the things that we needed to do to address that issue. Therefore, groups are leading the way, bringing their work to the national level in order to have a real impact.

● (1155)

I want to acknowledge that leadership from the FSIN. In particular, it looked at the impact of racism and colonialism and how we needed to not just look at suicide individually but look at how communities, governments and systems had played a role in the very large numbers of suicides we had seen in indigenous communities.

I am very proud to stand today. As others have mentioned, if we are to do anything between now and June, before the next election, I sure hope it is through this motion. I want to thank my hon. colleague for bringing it forward and giving me the opportunity to speak on it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Signal Hill for sharing his story with us. It was a very real and surreal moment. I often find that some of the most passionate discussions we have in the House of Commons is when members relay their personal stories.

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Although a year has almost passed since the passing of his daughter, I would like to offer my personal condolences. I can only try to appreciate the gravity of the situation my colleague and friend has gone through as a direct result. Education is so critically important. If those individuals, who made the decision to take their life, really understood the pain and suffering caused to others, whether it be family and friends, or the impact it had on the communities, it might have caused them to think twice.

My colleague made reference to the Province of Quebec having a suicide prevention week. I suspect if we were to canvass different provinces and territories, we would find there are different ways we can understand and appreciate the importance of education. When we do that, by having such things as weeks, months or days designated to this issue, it allows governments at different levels to bring this very important issue to the fore of their respective jurisdictions and draw attention to it.

Many years ago, I was the health care critic for the Province of Manitoba. The issue of mental health and not being able to address it in the way we wanted resulted in a higher than acceptable suicide rate. There is no simple answer. However, I know we need to see the different levels of government and the many different stakeholders, because it is not just governments, at the table, advocating from that grassroots position. We know that all of the intentions of Minister of Health, the government and members of the House are good. We are trying to raise the profile of this issue, looking at what we can do as individual members, as an opposition, as a government.

In the past number of years, we have seen hundreds of millions of dollars invested in mental health. Many meetings have taken place, whether it is the Minister of Health, the Minister of Indigenous Services, the parliamentary secretaries or members of the House. All have afforded opportunities to communicate. Some are more formal than others. Maybe ministerial meetings take place with respect to jurisdictions, in which people are afforded the opportunity to talk about mental health. There is a very high correlation between mental health issues and suicide. We need to have a better understanding of some of the tangible things we can do.

A number of weeks back, I had the opportunity to go to the north end of Winnipeg to walk with the Bear Clan Patrol. I understand other members of the chamber have been to the north end as well and have walked with the patrol. In principle, the Bear Clan Patrol is an excellent idea. It is not all about money. The patrol is made up of people who volunteer their time and come together. The most obvious difference is we see a group of people walking in the north end and the inner city, trying to show the citizens that they are improving the community. Those are some of the direct benefits.

● (1200)

The indirect benefits are what I would now like to share with the House. Many might recall Shania Pruden, who is a member of the Bear Clan. She is one of the faces of mental health care. Her sister, just a few years back, committed suicide. I had a wonderful discussion while on a walk with Shania. She is a very inspiring young person of indigenous background. Today she is a mentor and indigenous activist who blogs on a regular basis. She has a story she wants to tell young people. Other people I have walked with have

had interesting lives. Some have dealt with issues related to crystal meth and having no hope.

What makes the Bear Clan unique, from my perspective, is the way it has brought people together who are starting to form a family unit of their own. Everyone needs and wants to feel loved. People want to have a sense of hope. We need to recognize that there is a role for all levels, whether that be government, non-profits, communities or individuals. It does not take much.

When one Googles suicide hotlines, one sees that there are services out there for children, seniors and everyone in between. Suicide occurs far too often, but there are initiatives that can be taken. I encourage our Minister of Health to continue to explore how our national government can show leadership and continue having dialogues, as I know she is, with stakeholders on the issue of suicide and suicide prevention. It goes beyond any one department or level of government.

Back when I was the health critic for the Province of Manitoba, we talked about suicide and suicide prevention. We know that there is no cure in the sense that we will be able to get rid of suicide. It has been happening since the beginning of time. However, there are programs and opportunities. If we take advantage of them and promote education, we can prevent some people from committing suicide. I look to schools, which can have an impact. We can hear the stories like the ones Shania and the member for Calgary Midnapore have to share. We can understand the consequences and have a better appreciation of those individuals who want to help.

There are many in society who are there to help. As I said, if we Googled it, we would see a number of organizations, such as the clinic in Winnipeg that has saved so many lives. Often, if we talk to individuals who have contemplated or attempted suicide, they are very grateful for the conversations they had during a very difficult time of their lives, and they are doing well today as a direct result of that consultation or program that may have prevented them from committing suicide. It is a fight worth having.

● (1205)

I would encourage all members, government and the opposition side, to continue to do what they can to heighten a very important issue that affects all people in all regions of our country.

[*Translation*]

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1210)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAXES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

That, given:

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- (a) 81% of middle-income Canadians are seeing higher taxes since the government came to power;
 - (b) the average income tax increase for middle-income families is \$840;
 - (c) the government's higher Canada Pension Plan premiums could eventually cost up to \$2,200 per household;
 - (d) the government cancelled the Family Tax Cut of up to \$2,000 per household;
 - (e) the government cancelled the Arts and Fitness tax credit of up to \$225 per child;
 - (f) the government cancelled the education and textbook tax credits of up to \$560 per student;
 - (g) the government's higher Employment Insurance premiums are up to \$85 per worker;
 - (h) the government's carbon tax could cost up to \$1,000 per household and as high as \$5,000 in the future;
 - (i) the government's intrusive tax measures for small business will raise taxes on thousands of family businesses all across Canada;
 - (j) this government tried to tax employer-paid health and dental benefits which would have cost up to \$2,000 per household; and
 - (k) this government tried to tax modest food and discount benefits that retail employees receive from employers;
- the House call on the Prime Minister to provide written confirmation that the government will not further raise any taxes on Canadians.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before we buy a product, we have to know the price, and elections are no different. That is why politicians should tell Canadians the price tag before Canadians vote. The Prime Minister is not doing that, because he is afraid that voters will have sticker shock. Instead, he is trying to get voters to hand him a blank cheque before the election that he can cash after the election.

He learned this from his two mentors: Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, the former Liberal premiers of Ontario. Their record was to double Ontario's debt; double electricity prices, driving the poor to food banks and our jobs out of the province; and of course, lying before every single of their four election victories about their future plans to raise taxes. This record led to the worst middle-class income growth of any province in the country and the highest poverty rate of any province in the country.

These consequences and these costs, unfortunately, were not known until after the elections were over, because these two mentors of our current Prime Minister would lie blatantly about their real plans and the true cost until it was too late for voters to do anything about it.

Who was the architect of this dishonest tax hiking strategy? It was Gerald Butts, the principal secretary to the current Prime Minister. He was the one who, behind the scenes, drafted the talking points and spun the media to trick everyone into believing that all the pre-election goodies promised would come for free. However, after the election was over, Ontarians again and again were hit with heavy bills that they had no reason to expect, and as a result, they were stuck paying for a product they would not have otherwise purchased.

How do we know that the Prime Minister will repeat the strategy of his two Ontario Liberal mentors? First, he has already started. He has begun raising taxes on middle-class Canadians, who are paying, on average, \$800 more per family of four. These tax increases have targeted families where one spouse earns more than the other by cancelling income-splitting. They have taken away tax credits for kids' sports and arts, for university students' textbooks and some of their tuition costs, and for transit users, who lost their bus pass tax cred. Small businesses now face new penalties for saving within

their companies or sharing the work and earnings with their family members. These same small businesses are paying higher payroll taxes for each employee and higher carbon taxes on their energy use, a cost that will not be compensated for with any form of rebate.

The government is fond of claiming that it will only tax rich people. Let us examine that very carefully. To believe that, we have to accept that soccer moms who put their kids in sports are all rich. They are the ones who lost the children's fitness tax credit. We have to believe that students who buy textbooks or pay tuition are rich, because that was the justification the Prime Minister used to take away their education and textbook tax credits.

We have to also believe that anyone on a bus is rich. According to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, that is the case. He claimed that only rich people were claiming the transit tax credit. I do not know when the last time was he was on a bus anywhere in Canada, but there are not a lot of millionaires and billionaires rolling around on public transit. I understand that the Prime Minister does not know that. He has probably never taken a bus. He has always had a driver, but it has never been a transit driver.

Our leader, of course, grew up in a family without a car, and he therefore took a bus everywhere he went as a kid. He would be able to tell the Prime Minister, as would most Canadians, that millionaires and billionaires do not typically ride around on public transit. It is not believable to suggest that only the rich paid more when the government cancelled the tax credit for public transit fees.

● (1215)

It is interesting, though, that Liberals talk about taxing the rich, because when they designed their tax policy, they specifically ensured that those with large family fortunes, like the Prime Minister, or those with billion-dollar companies, like the finance minister, would not face any new taxes. They were sheltered from the changes. That means higher taxes for those who take the bus, buy textbooks and put their kids in soccer, but those with a trust fund, a family fortune or a billion-dollar company are protected under the government's policies. When the government engages in class warfare, I think we can all agree that it is just a little bit rich.

Business of Supply

This is even more true if we look at the actual data. CRA published data in the aftermath of the government's tax changes to ascertain how much people in various income groups are paying in taxes. This data, which was published in a front page Globe and Mail news article, found that the wealthiest 1% is paying \$4.6 billion less in income tax after the tax changes that the government brought into play. In other words, those in the middle class are paying \$800 more, while those who are part of the elite 1%, with trust funds, family fortunes or billion-dollar companies, are part of a group paying \$4.6 billion less. The result of that broken promise is that everyone else has to pay more to make up for the hole left behind by the rich, who are getting breaks from the government.

The second way the Prime Minister is seeking a blank cheque is with respect to tax increases that he attempted to implement, but on which he was caught and therefore forced to put on hold. He attempted a 73% tax on the passive investments that small businesses make within their companies. Prior to the changes proposed, those businesses already paid an automatic in-year tax of 50.7% on all income they earned from investments in stocks, bonds, mutual funds and other passive instruments in which they set aside money for retirement, maternity leave, a rainy day or future active investments. They are already paying half of those gains in taxes, but the government wanted to tax them twice for the same dollar, bringing the full tax burden to 73%. Of course, I caught the Liberals. We caught them. Small businesses caught them, and as a result of the backlash, they put that change on hold.

They also considered taxing health and dental benefits and got caught. They put that proposal on hold. They attempted to take away the disability tax credit from diabetics, even though the law says that anyone who needs 14 hours of life-sustaining treatment and has diabetes is entitled to receive that tax credit. They even attempted to tax employee discounts so that the waitress who takes a 10-minute break at midnight and has a free chicken salad sandwich at the restaurant would have to pay income tax on that sandwich at the end of the year.

Do members want to know something else about all of these attempted tax increases that the Prime Minister has put on hold? He has not once stood in this place or anywhere else and said it was a mistake, that they were wrong and that he never should have contemplated them. He simply backed away temporarily because he knew the voter backlash would threaten his chances of re-election. However, with that election behind him, when he no longer needs voters but still needs their money, we can be sure he will bring every single one of those unjust and exorbitant tax increases right back, because he still believes they are the right thing to do.

Then we have the carbon tax cover-up. The government has released documents containing the true cost of the present carbon tax proposal. There is only one problem: It blacked out all of the numbers. Why would the government do that if it has nothing to hide? If Canadians are really going to get back in rebates what they pay in taxes, the government should be thrilled to have everyone know the exact cost of the tax, rather than just having some numbers published in government press releases. However, those numbers are still blocked out, and this government is under investigation by the Information Commissioner for its refusal to release that data.

That is just at the current rate of the carbon tax. The government currently admits that it would impose a \$50-a-tonne carbon tax. However, that tax rate would lead this country to fall 79 million tonnes short of reaching its Paris accord commitments.

• (1220)

How do we make up the difference? According to a February 27, 2017, briefing to the finance minister, the carbon tax will have to increase in "severity" in order to reach the government's targets. That is right. The carbon tax is so ineffective at reducing emissions, it has to be significantly higher than the government admits in order to have its intended effect. That is why Conservatives are suspicious about the true post-election carbon tax rate, and there is more reason that we should be.

A 2015 Environment Canada briefing document said that the tax would have to rise to \$300 a tonne, not \$50 a tonne but six times higher at \$300 a tonne. That is not only six times higher than the planned carbon tax, but 15 times higher than the rate that would be in place this year. Based on the government's own figures, a \$300-a-tonne carbon tax would lead to a cost for the average family of \$3,000 per year in Ontario and \$5,000 a year in Saskatchewan. These higher costs would come in the form of increased gas, heat and grocery bills. Basically, anything that needs to be moved, heated or cooled would become significantly more expensive.

Herein lies the trick. Liberals will send people a few hundred dollars in rebates before the election and then give them \$5,000 in higher costs after the election. Does that not remind everyone of the Kathleen Wynne-Dalton McGuinty scam I described at the beginning of my speech?

I will move to the next reason why we should expect higher taxes from the government if it is re-elected, and that is the runaway deficit. The reason Liberals raise taxes is that they have an insatiable appetite to spend other people's money. We have seen that so far. Government expenses are up by 25% in just three years and while the Prime Minister promised that the budget will balance itself in the year 2019, here we are and this year the deficit will be \$20 billion and growing. Far from balancing the budget this year, Finance Canada now says that will not happen until the year 2040, two decades from now, when the national debt will be \$1 trillion.

In fact, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we will be spending two-thirds more on interest for the national debt within just four years. Forty billion dollars in interest to wealthy bondholders and bankers is good news if one is a rich guy that lends the government money, but bad news if one is the taxpayer paying for it and getting nothing in return. Forty billion dollars is a hard number to comprehend. To put it into perspective, that is what we spend on transfers to the provinces for health care, an absolutely astronomical sum of money vanishing from working-class taxpayers into the hands of wealthy bondholders.

Business of Supply

We know what Canadians know, and that is that the Prime Minister broke his promise on deficits and he will break his promise on taxes. That is what Liberals do. The only way to pay for the exorbitant increase in debt will be with an increase in Liberal taxes after the election when they no longer need voters. This tax increase will cost Canadians a fortune and the current Prime Minister knows something about fortunes. He inherited one.

The Prime Minister's family wealth originated with his grandfather's petroleum empire, which is a great irony now that the Prime Minister is putting oil workers out of jobs and has blocked three pipelines. Three of the biggest worldwide pipeline companies were ready to put shovels in the ground when the Prime Minister took office and all three of them have left and taken their money and jobs with them down to Dallas and Houston. All of our exes are in Texas, and back here in Canada, we are unable to get our own product to market. The Prime Minister, ironically the same Prime Minister who has caused that heartache for petroleum sector workers, continues to live off of the fruits of his grandfather's petroleum empire.

• (1225)

Nobody should fault the Prime Minister's grandfather. He was evidently a brilliant entrepreneur who created wealth and opportunity for many of his peers in his time, which is all Canadians are asking for today. However, the one unfortunate consequence is that his grandson has no idea what it is like to live in the financial real world with everybody else. He believes budgets balance themselves because that is how it has always worked for him. He has never had to balance a household budget, so he believes budgets balance themselves. He has never had to worry about costs because he has always made others pay for his mistakes. He inherited a fortune and now he is costing Canadians a fortune.

Before one buys the brand name, one should know the real cost and also know that cost will not fully be understood until after the election. Also, there is no money-back guarantee. Instead of giving this Prime Minister a blank cheque, Canadians should elect a government with an affordable plan, one which forces itself to live within its means and make life more affordable so that Canadians can get ahead.

As Conservatives, we understand the cost of government leads to a higher cost of living. This is why we will run a government that lives within its means and according to the budgets of everyday Canadians, who work hard, pay their taxes and play by the rules. We will grow spending only at sustainable rates equal to or lower than inflation and population growth so that Canadians can keep more of what they earn and we can return to a balanced budget in a reasonable time frame.

That is how we make space for families and entrepreneurs to build their own dreams and ambitions. On this side of the House of Commons, we believe in a country based on meritocracy, not aristocracy; where small businesses and entrepreneurs get ahead by having the best product, not the best lobbyist; where businesses make a profit when they obsess over customers, not when they obsess over pleasing politicians; and where every Canadian can achieve his or her own ambitions without politicians standing in the way, but rather with a government standing by their side.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the member for Carleton's speech, the Conservatives sound pretty nervous about the next election. Out of their fear, they are resorting to making up complete falsehoods to try to scare Canadians into voting for them. That is quite the political stance, "Please vote for us or we will scare you into it."

Getting back to the member's speech, Conservatives will not listen to the IMF, the OECD or the Government of Canada's independent statistics. They have been forced to rely on the phony Fraser Institute, where they cherry-pick the numbers. The fact is that Canadians are paying less under our government, and two-earner families are paying less.

In fact, the only group that taxes were raised on was the middle—sorry, the top 1%. The top 1% was the only group that taxes were increased on. Will the members opposite and the Conservatives finally acknowledge it is the richest 1% they are really standing up for?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary almost made the mistake of telling the truth. She was in the process of saying that middle-class taxpayers are paying more, and she would have been absolutely right. Had she completed the sentence, it would have been her only accurate statement in that entire intervention.

I am relying on CRA data. That data shows that in the year 2016, the wealthiest 1% paid \$4.6 billion less. As for the middle class, anybody who believes soccer moms, transit users and university students are middle class has to acknowledge the tax burden has gone up because all of them have lost their tax credits and have had no tax reduction to compensate for the full cost of those increased taxes. That is the opposite of what the government promised, but it is precisely what it delivered. If people are worried their taxes have gone up too much, "you ain't seen nothing yet". The worst is yet to come if Liberals are re-elected.

• (1230)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the motion from the member for Carleton. He was part of a government that brought in the HST. In fact, he has mentioned Dalton McGuinty, who was a participant with Harper in bringing that in. There was \$4.3 billion then transferred from the federal coffers, at the time of a deficit, which we are still in to this day. It was used to basically bribe the Ontario Liberals under McGuinty into this arrangement. In fact, the Liberals under Ignatieff needed the then minister of public safety to get this passed in the chamber, because it was a minority parliament. Therefore, it is pretty rich to come here with a lecture on taxation.

Does the member for Carleton know how much the borrowing cost was for the HST expenditure that we had for Ontario? It has been about 10 years and we have had to pay interest on that. I have the information on the numbers if he wants it, but since he was at the decision table, does the member at least admit we have increased costs from bringing in a new tax from him and his government?

Business of Supply

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member has his facts wrong. His memory has played a trick on him, as is a common phenomenon over there in the corner with the NDP. The New Democrats have worked themselves up into such a frenzy in their efforts to support the Venezuelan Maduro dictatorship that they have forgotten to look at the real numbers. If they had, they would realize that what the Conservative government did under Harper with respect to consumption taxes was to cut the GST. We cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We promised it and we delivered it, actually three years ahead of schedule. That has resulted in massive savings for Canadian taxpayers every single time they make a purchase. Canadians have saved money ever since as a result of that tax reduction.

They want all the money to go to the government. We believe in leaving it in the hands of consumers.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Carleton for his speech. I would hope that in future debates we do not stoop this low to attacking the Prime Minister, or attacking any members because of their inheritance. I would challenge him to ask any farmer in his area whether it was wrong that they inherited the farm from their fathers or their grandfathers or grandmothers.

I will also point out that regarding any leader of the official opposition who wants to be Prime Minister, when a 35-year-old like me has more private-sector experience than the leader of the official opposition, I would not go there.

However, to get back to the real debate, does the member for Carleton know that line 39 is the tax rate of 20.5%, and does he plan on increasing that back to 22% if he wants to form government?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the answer, of course, is no. Conservatives never raise taxes. The member never needs to ask that question, because he knows that when people are dealing with Conservatives, taxes always go down, period. That is our record.

As for the Prime Minister's family fortune, I have heard a lot of defences, but this is an interesting one. The member is now comparing the Prime Minister to a farmer. The only thing that the Prime Minister has ever farmed is a trust fund.

It is also ironic that his government, only just over a year ago, attempted, through the Liberals' small-business tax changes, to double the tax that farm families would pay when transferring the farm from father to son or mother to daughter. Also, it would have created a tax advantage for transferring that farm to a foreign-owned holding company instead of to the farm family. If we had not stood up and fought back, his government, under the leadership of this Prime Minister, would have turned our young farmers into tenants on their ancestral farmlands. Thank God the Liberals put that on hold. We know they will bring that proposal back if they are re-elected, and that is why Canadians, especially farmers, will ensure that does not happen.

• (1235)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would note that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell did not mention his experience in the office of former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty, but I digress.

Listening to the comments from the member for Carleton, it is exceptional to hear the number of Liberal tax increases over the past three years raising taxes on middle-class families. I am almost led to believe that Canadians are stuck paying for the mistakes of this Liberal Prime Minister. I am going to give the member for Carleton the opportunity to expand on the real concern that average Canadians, especially young Canadians, are now paying for the mistakes of the current Liberal government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the member for pointing out a detail that I missed in my response to the Liberal member.

He worked for Dalton McGuinty, and he told me, by yelling across the floor, that the year 2004 was the year when Dalton McGuinty's lie became known. He won the election in 2003, saying, "I will not raise your taxes." In 2004, he brought in a \$1,000 per family tax increase called "the health premium". None of it went to health care, of course. It was a regressive tax; it was a flat \$1,000 tax that targeted the most vulnerable people and pushed people into poverty. People who were just on the end of being able to pay their bills were hit with a \$1,000 tax increase that his boss had lied about in the foregoing provincial election.

Now, that member who was there and who helped drive the getaway car is here again. It is the same group, the same gang, with Gerald Butts, the strategist for Dalton McGuinty, who orchestrated all of these tax increases on unknowing Ontarians to whom the Liberals had lied. They are back at it again, and they are trying the same trick that they did so many times in Ontario.

Ontarians are too smart. Canadians are too smart. We will not fall for it.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the hon. member for Carleton has a mixture of cherry-picked statistics that obscure more than they reveal. His speech reminded me of a saying by a former councillor from when I was on Pickering council. The Conservatives have their minds made up. They don't want to be confused by the facts. Let me go over in the chamber those important facts that the Conservatives do not want to be confused by.

First, we have a growing economy, and Canadians are benefiting from that growth. During the past three years, hard-working Canadians have created more than 800,000 new jobs, pushing the unemployment rate to its lowest level in 40 years. Wages are rising, and this year Canada is expected to remain among the fastest-growing economies in the G7. In fact, the work our government is doing is attracting praise from around the world. Recently, the U.S. News & World Report's ranking of 2019 best countries put Canada at number one for quality of life. This tells us that our plan to invest in people and communities is working.

Business of Supply

From the beginning, our government has put people at the heart of its plan for economic growth. Our government is building a strong Canada, a better Canada, and we will continue to ensure that our fiscal plan is sustainable by maintaining our fiscal anchors. As part of that, our government will continue to reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio.

We began our mandate determined to help hard-working Canadians have more opportunities to share in the benefits that come from a strong and growing economy, and that is exactly what we have done. We have taken decisive and effective action based on the shared values that define us as a country to make the priorities of Canadians a reality. We asked the wealthiest 1% of Canadians to pay a little more so that we could cut taxes for the middle class. That middle-class tax cut is benefiting over nine million Canadians, who now have more in their pockets.

We also created the Canada child benefit. Compared to the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is simpler, more generous and better targeted to those families who need it most. It is also entirely tax free. Rather than offering boutique tax credits to millionaire families, we decided to help Canadians who need it the most. With the CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system, and Canadian children are better off as a result. The CCB has already helped to lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. The extra support it gives makes a big difference for those working hard to make ends meet. This additional support from the CCB helps pay for the things that can make a real difference in a child's future, like nutritious food, sports activities or music lessons.

Thanks to the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, a typical middle-class family of four will receive, on average, about \$2,000 more each year to help with the costs of raising their children, save for their future and help grow the economy for the benefit of everyone. With our middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, a two-earner couple, one earning the average wage and the other earning two-thirds of that wage, with two children, now keeps nearly 85% of their income. For a single parent of two children earning the average wage, or for families with two children where only one parent is working at the average wage, the benefits are even more significant.

According to the OECD, when the CCB and other benefits are added to family income, those families effectively pay personal tax rates of just 1.8% and 1.2% respectively. That means they keep more than 98% of what they earn. The fact is, a majority of Canadians are paying a lower effective tax rate under our government. Individuals are paying less, single-earner families are paying less, two-earner families are paying less and single mothers are paying a lot less. The only Canadians who are paying more are the top 1%, so we can lower taxes on the middle class.

We have gone even further to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are widely shared. We will continue to stand up for the middle class while Conservatives continue to advocate on behalf of their wealthy friends.

● (1240)

I would like to point to the Canada workers benefit, the CWB, as a good example of what our government has done to help those people working hard to join the middle class.

Beginning this year, the CWB replaces the working income tax benefit. It will provide a benefit that is more generous and more accessible. The CWB will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, encouraging more people to join and stay in the workforce and offering real help to more than two million Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

To give members a sense of what this will mean for Canadians, a low-income worker earning \$15,000 could receive up to almost \$500 more from the Canada workers benefit in 2019 than under the old working income tax benefit in 2018. That money can be used to support their priorities and help them get ahead, making a real difference for Canadians who are working hard to join the middle class.

Our government has also taken action to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the opportunities we are creating and will continue to benefit from our actions in their retirement years. We have worked in collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners to enhance the Canada pension plan, the CPP, so that Canadians can enjoy a secure and dignified retirement.

We also reversed the Harper government's disastrous changes to the guaranteed income supplement and to old age security, which would have plunged 100,000 seniors into poverty each year.

The CPP enhancement will be phased in starting this month. It means more money for Canadians when they retire, so that they can worry less about their savings and focus more on enjoying time with their families.

Over time this enhancement will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit by up to 50%. This translates into an increase in the current maximum retirement benefit of nearly \$7,300, from \$13,855 to more than \$21,100 in today's dollar terms.

With the action taken by Quebec to enhance the Quebec pension plan along similar lines, all Canadian workers can now look forward to a safer and more secure retirement.

On their side, the Conservatives planned to push back the age of retirement and take money away from our seniors. They even called for the CPP to be scrapped.

Second, Canada has a favourable investment climate. Our government recognizes the importance of a beneficial tax environment for small businesses. That is why we reduced the small business tax rate, first to 10% as of January 1, 2018, and then to 9%, effective January 1, 2019.

The combined federal-provincial-territorial average income tax rate for small businesses is 12.2% in 2019, the lowest in the G7 and the fourth-lowest among members of the OECD.

Business of Supply

Even with this good news, we cannot take Canada's economic strength for granted. The year 2018 was challenging, especially with regard to the recent tax changes in the U.S. and concerns about what ongoing global trade disputes might mean for Canadian businesses.

Last summer our government heard from a number of business leaders that there is strong interest in making investments, the kind that can position businesses for long-term growth and create good, well-paying jobs for Canadian workers. We heard from many businesses that welcomed our new trade deal with the United States and Mexico, because securing that deal really does help when it comes to being able to confidently invest for the future. We welcome this new modernized trade agreement because it will help support good, well-paying middle-class jobs right across this country.

In total, Canada has signed free trade agreements with our neighbours to the south, the United States and Mexico; with our partners with whom we share the Atlantic Ocean, the European Union; and with Asia-Pacific countries, with whom we share access to the Pacific Ocean.

Today Canada is the only G7 country to have trade agreements with all other G7 countries. In all, we have 14 trade agreements covering 51 countries. These agreements in total give Canadian businesses privileged access to 1.5 billion consumers worldwide. These trade agreements lead to business confidence, which leads to business investing in middle-class jobs.

• (1245)

In the 2018 fall economic statement, our government took forward action to strengthen Canada's already competitive position. This includes allowing businesses to immediately write off the full cost of machinery and equipment used for the manufacturing and processing of goods and the full cost of specified clean-energy equipment to spur new investment and the adoption of advanced clean technology in the Canadian economy.

We also introduced the accelerated investment incentive, which will allow businesses of all sizes and in all sectors of the economy to write off a larger share of the cost of newly acquired assets in the year the investment is made.

Under the accelerated investment incentive, capital investments will generally be eligible for a first-year deduction for depreciation equal to up to three times the amount that would otherwise apply in the year the asset is put into use. Tripling the current first-year rate will allow businesses to recover the initial cost of their investment more quickly. This means reduced risk and a better incentive for businesses in Canada to make investments. The accelerated investment incentive applies to all tangible assets, including long-lived investments like buildings. It also applies to intangible capital assets, such as patents and other intellectual property.

With these two measures, the average overall tax rate on new business investment in Canada, as measured by the marginal effective tax rate, or METR, will fall from 17% to 13.8%. This means that Canada will have the lowest rate in the G7, one that is significantly below the United States. The METR is important because it provides a good representation of the overall effect of many of the tax factors affecting businesses in any given location.

However, that is not all. We also took steps to do more to modernize regulations so that it is easier for businesses to grow.

We believe that concrete, comprehensive and systematic measures such as the ones I have mentioned are more effective than the piecemeal and ineffective boutique tax credits mentioned by the hon. member.

Our government has also made it clear that gender equality is very important for Canada's economic growth. Canadian women are among the best educated in the world, yet they are less likely to participate in the labour market than men and are more likely to work part time. This under-representation continues in positions of leadership, and businesses in Canada are overwhelmingly owned by men. It reflects a number of factors, including the fact that Canadian women often have greater demands from unpaid work, preventing them from pursuing opportunities to reach their full potential.

Our economy is not working to capacity when women who wish to participate cannot do so, and the evidence is clear. RBC Economics estimates that adding more women to the workforce could boost Canada's GDP by as much as 4%. Our economy is strengthened when women and girls have opportunities to contribute to economic growth and to benefit equally from it. The time is now to ensure that all Canadians, and women in particular, are provided with an opportunity to succeed and lead. That is why we took several actions to move Canada toward gender equality.

Budget 2018 legislation provided help for new parents to care for their children during those critical early months through the new employment insurance parental sharing benefit. It encourages a more equal sharing of child care responsibilities within the home and allows for more flexibility to go back to work earlier, especially for mothers, if that is their choice, feeling reassured that their family has the support they need.

We also took steps to address the gender gap in federally regulated workplaces by requiring equal pay for equal work of equal value. About 1.2 million employed Canadians fall under the scope of this legislation.

In conclusion, our government is committed to growing the economy by helping all Canadians. We maintain that a strong economy is the result of a strong middle class, and our policies and results reflect this. Over the past three years, our government has invested in Canadians and in the things that matter most to them. These investments reflect the choice to reject austerity policies and instead invest wisely in strengthening the middle class and growing the economy.

• (1250)

That is what we have done, and middle-class Canadians are now better off. I can assure hon. members that we will continue to build on our good work in budget 2019.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to pick and choose which of the rhetorical tools the member used to refute first. I will begin with my favourite one.

Business of Supply

The member claimed that the middle class somehow had a tax cut, which is not true. Every single member in this House received a bigger tax cut than the middle class because of the way tax system works. It is progressive. Every member in this House received an \$820 tax cut. If we take in the 20.5%, that is maybe closer to \$600, but every single Canadian who earns \$45,000 or less got nothing. In fact, they got a bill for every single mistake the Prime Minister has made, including promising a \$1-billion surplus this year and instead delivering tens of billions of dollars in deficits and new debt, as well as deficits and new debt well into the future going into 2040.

Can the member answer me this? If she claims the middle class is better off today when we have record high deficits and debt going into the future, and we know that today's taxes are not offsetting the higher deficit so today's deficits and debts will be tomorrow's taxes, how can she claim the middle class is better off? How can she claim our children will be better off paying for the current Prime Minister's mistakes?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. Today a typical middle-class Canadian family is \$2,000 better off than under the Harper Conservatives. We cannot take any lessons from the Conservatives, who believe in trickle-down economics. It has never worked. It does not work. We know that boutique tax credits do not help the families that need it most, but our investments do. We have made investments so that 800,000 new jobs have been created for Canadians. We have lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty.

Our investments are to ensure that the economy is growing for everyone, not just for those at the top, those the Conservatives are so focused on defending.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Pickering—Uxbridge, in whom we often see a youthful exuberance. It is important to have our young MPs take the floor.

However, I cannot ignore the fact that she is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, and I expect her to provide an explanation, since I believe she is objective and intelligent. Can she explain why her boss, the Minister of Finance, steadfastly refuses to have Netflix collect the GST? It is outrageous. Everyone is laughing at us. Television producers, cable companies and Internet service providers around the world are laughing at us.

I hope that my colleague will give me something other than the usual answer that there is a lot of discussion about corporate taxes within the G20. We are talking about a consumption rather than a destination tax. I would like a clear answer.

•(1255)

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, we have been focused on working with content creators and dealing with measures that work for everybody. We have made investments for content creators. The Minister of Heritage has worked with Netflix to ensure that there is content that reflects our country's priorities. In addition, when the ministers were negotiating the new NAFTA, we ensured that Canadian content was an important and integral part.

We know that a focus on Canada's rich and unique diversity across this country is critically important. That is why it is found in multiple levels of our government's priorities.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I made an effort not to use the word “culture” in my question. I did not say culture or content. I spoke about the GST, which Netflix, unlike its competitors, does not have to pay. In return, I heard more rhetoric about culture.

Could I just get an answer that is not more obfuscation?

The Deputy Speaker: I acknowledge that the comments by the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert are interesting. However, this is not a point of order. The member will have several other opportunities to ask questions.

[English]

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard a lot from the Liberal member about how good things were in Canada.

From talking to people in Alberta, as well as right across the country, I know things are not looking quite so rosy. One of the things that is very aggravating to people in general is when politicians promise things. People try to accept it. They look at the platforms and so forth.

We know that in 2015, the party across the way promised tiny deficits and that we would have a balanced budget this year. However, we know that has not come to fruition. We now have debt going through the ceiling. Billions and billions of dollars that are being spent could be spent on health care and other programs.

Why did the party across the way absolutely not tell the truth, saying that it would have a balanced budget? It has just not come to fruition. In fact, there might never be a balanced budget if the Liberals stay in power.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, our commitment to Canadians was to ensure we grew the economy for everybody and not just the wealthy millionaires who the Conservatives looked after during 10 years of feeble economic growth under the Harper Conservatives.

The Harper Conservatives' type of investment included fake lakes and gazebos. This meant they could not balance the budget. They added \$150 billion to the debt and they had some of the worst growth since the Great Depression.

Our investments are in Canadians, not fake lakes, not gazebos. Canadians are seeing the results.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the investments that we had made in Canadians.

Business of Supply

When we look at the motion before us today, Canadians can clearly see that the Canada child benefit is putting \$2,000 more into families pockets, compared to 2015. That is having a real impact.

In order for Canadians to have utilized some of the tax credits that the Conservative Party named in the motion, they needed to afford to pay for it in order to get that tax credit somewhere down the road. We have changed that. We have made our policies such that we are putting more money in their pockets so they can choose to do what they want for their families.

Could my hon. colleague speak a little more to the investments we have made in Canadians?

• (1300)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what we heard from Canadians in 2015. What I certainly heard from people when I was knocking on doors was that those benefits were really only helpful if people could afford them in the first place. They also wondered whether it was the type of program they actually needed.

The Canada child benefit is tax-free money that goes to the families that need it most. This has made a transformational difference in the lives of Canadians. As I have said, 300,000 children have been lifted out of poverty. Somehow the Conservatives seem to think this is a bad thing, that this should be cut and that we should not send that support and help to the families that need it most.

The Conservatives believe in austerity and cuts, and Canadians will suffer for it.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is clearly in denial. The facts remain that 46% of Canadians are \$200 a month away from insolvency. The member can talk about how much better the Liberals have made it, but how can a government then go and implement a carbon tax that will be six times what it has already talked about, costing thousands of extra dollars for people who are already that close to insolvency.

Why is a Liberal government, which is supposed to be open and transparent, keeping that information from Canadians?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the member opposite's riding specifically.

On average, families in her riding receive \$7,400 each year because of the Canada child benefit. Is she going to turn to those families and tell them they do not need it anymore, that they do not need those funds or the help with the cost of living and that it is going to be taken away because the Conservatives believe in cutting and austerity?

With this program, the average payment in her riding is actually \$620 a month and 16,000 children are benefiting in her riding alone from the Canada child benefit. Why does that member want to take this support away from those 16,000 children in her riding?

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

I am pleased to participate in the debate. I know the member for Carleton started this discussion and talked about a number of different things, including the issue of Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Liberals and taxation policy. What has been left out of that is the history which is so important when we talk about fairness for

consumers, accountability for Canadians and how we continue to deal with debt from the former Harper government bringing in the HST.

In fact, the HST was not just a harmonization of the sales tax by the Conservatives, agreed to by the Liberals in this chamber, to get through a minority Parliament. It was also done with Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals and the Liberals in British Columbia as well. We are still paying the interest for that tax as we continue to run deficits. The Conservative government borrowed around \$6 billion to bribe Ontario and British Columbia. The absurd reality is that Canadians are paying interest on a new tax put on other Canadians.

For those who want to say that the HST was just a simple harmonization of taxes and that there were no new taxes, there were. There were new taxes for a number of different things, such as car repairs, hair cuts, school supplies, retirement savings and even on parking fees at a hospital. When someone visited a loved one in the hospital, the Conservatives added a new tax to that visit. There are many more examples of that harmonization, but I want to focus a little on the economics behind it.

In particular, Stephen Harper and his government arranged a \$4.3 billion transfer to Dalton McGuinty, despite all of their banter and rhetoric about the hatred toward the McGuinty government and its behaviour. However, the former Conservative government found a co-operative partner with the McGuinty government to bring in this new tax. They knew it was not popular.

It was the same thing in British Columbia, which led to a number of different votes and measures. The government borrowed that money to bring in new taxes on everything from car repairs, hair cuts, school supplies, retirement savings and even visits to loved ones in the hospital.

The member for Carleton may have forgotten about those new taxes his government implemented, but I and Canadians have not. In fact, requested an analysis of it. It was not done by a left-wing think-tank, which the member always likes to embellish upon in the House. It is called the Library of Parliament. The Library of Parliament has economists, lawyers and researchers who serve all members, including the member for Carleton. These people provide members of Parliament with good advice and good materials every day.

The report, which we requested from the Library of Parliament, said:

In 2009, the federal government agreed to transfer about \$5.9 billion to the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia to help fund the provincial costs of transitioning from their current retail sales tax systems to a harmonized sales tax (HST) that would be collected concurrently with the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST). With respect to these proposed transfers, the province of Ontario would receive two transfers from the federal government: the first, valued at \$3.0 billion, upon implementation of the HST or Ontario Value-Added Tax... and the second, one year later, valued at \$1.3 billion. The province of British Columbia would receive a single transfer of about \$1.6 billion upon implementation of the HST or British Columbia Value-Added Tax... The federal cost of these proposed transfers - including the principal and associated interest cost is almost \$10 billion dollars...

The amount of value that we have over interest and the subsequent cost is closer to \$10 billion that we are currently paying for this new sales tax.

Business of Supply

• (1305)

That is a problem because it occurred at the time when we were entering a recession. At a that time, the Harper government, which had co-operation with then Liberal leader Ignatieff, was able to bring in this new tax in a minority Parliament. We are still paying for it to this day. The \$10 billion that we have now incurred between the payout and the interest will still continue to accumulate and snowball. It will be the lottery money that Canadians will never receive as taxpayers. They will never collect any of the earnings, but they will get all of the negativity of it. Unfortunately, they have already bought their tickets over and over again. It is the worst type of lottery system that one can imagine, yet we are in it for the long haul.

I would like to transition to sales tax, which is also about affordability and the protection of Canadian consumers. The HST was added to things like car repair. This was done at a time when some automotive companies were doing an improper thing by blocking or conditioning people to choose certain service models when they had to get their car repaired. The Conservative government was introducing a new tax to people while rewarding the companies.

I had a bill called the “right to repair” bill, which was adopted by the Conservatives as a voluntary agreement. I thank them for that and for their support. As a result, companies had to follow laws similar to those in the United States. My specific point on this is that we were taxing Canadians on consumer goods for companies that were engaging in bad behaviour.

That goes to my next point, which is with respect to the pipeline that the government has purchased. We have a government that has reduced corporate taxes in the past. We have seen the continuation of this policy. At the same time, the Liberals have been willing to turn away from the fact that we are paying for a bailout with respect to the Kinder Morgan pipeline and we are going to continue to pay for it.

There is an important message regarding the HST that marries with the current financial investment we have. It is interesting to use the car analogy with regard to the purchase of the pipeline and it being problematic. We purchased this pipeline but when we drove it off the lot, the cost of it, or the price we could get back, depreciated because there was a small market for getting rid of it. The warranty on that pipeline was poor at best, if not non-existent. We have already seen not only in Canada but also in the U.S. that it requires extensive repairs and maintenance. The return for those repairs will be very minimal.

Moreover, at a time when the government is saying “no” to housing and to equality on a number of different issues, we are paying interest in perpetuity for a pipeline that somewhat exists. We have the land rights for expanding it, but we know we will never see that happen. We also have all the legacy of that to pass on as debt.

There is a lesson that should be learned with respect to the Conservatives' HST debacle, for which we continue to pay. There was supposed to be a cascading effect that would be passed on to consumers, that by harmonizing the tax, things would get easier and better, and Canadians would get the break. We were supposed to see

that benefit, but where is it? We have not seen that. Have cellphone prices become cheaper? Have insurance prices gone down? Has electricity pricing and other pricing related to things for houses and repairs gone down? No. Where is all the economic benefit that was promised through the HST? It has never materialized?

The other argument was that it would magically improve manufacturing. This has not been the case. We just had the announcement that General Motors was pulling out of Canada. Supposedly, the HST was added to help manufacturing but it never helped. It never swayed the day.

I could make the same argument with respect to this pipeline. Supposedly it is magically going to open up new economic and other opportunities that we are supposed to benefit from, but we have not seen them in a concrete way. Furthermore, no cost-benefit has been done with respect to the borrowing that will take place. We have invested billions of dollars and we will pay in perpetuity for it and for the interest incurred on it.

• (1310)

To conclude, when we look at taxation policies and a motion like this, we should be getting some value back if Canadians are going to give something up. Something has to break, be it health care, education or the environment, and we are going to pay for it and pass it on to our young people. Unfortunately, the motion again reinforces a broken record of the Conservatives, who say that they are fiscally accountable and responsible, but the reality is an example like the HST.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the Conservatives and the NDP, the first thing that comes to my mind is how focused this government has been on Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it. We have seen many different policy initiatives from this government that have given strength to Canada's middle class. By doing that, we have given strength to our economy, and we are seeing results. We are seeing incredible job numbers that we have not seen in decades. We are talking about 800,000 plus. We are seeing other opportunities, such as the enhancement of social programs.

All in all, I believe that Canadians will see what we have been able to accomplish in three and a half years and recognize that there is more to be done, and we hope to be able to do that into the future.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question there.

The government has missed opportunities. It is a mediocracy we have. A malaise has taken over, and that is unfortunate. It is hard work that sets things up. I would point to the General Motors example. The government was presented an auto policy two years ago in Detroit. Ironically, we had to go to Detroit to meet with the domestic auto industry from Canada. Ray Tanguay presented a domestic auto policy report for Canada. The Liberals paid for that report. They asked him to do that report. They have done nothing since that time. One year later, the Minister of Industry had to go on bended knee to Detroit to meet with General Motors to hear an explanation as to why we are getting the lion's share of the layoffs and firings versus the United States.

Business of Supply

• (1315)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the impacts he is seeing in his riding. We know that the Liberals have increased taxes in so many ways and have put in place a very uncompetitive business climate. Could the member share how these increases in taxes are impacting the businesses and jobs in his area?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, being a border community, we can see the effects of government decisions and the lack of support. For example, I would note community benefits for the Windsor—Detroit region. I know that the member is active with regard to the Blue Water Bridge. It is very important work that has blended the border more solidly into the community in terms of being a partner. That is versus the Ambassador Bridge, in my riding, which is seen as a very hostile relationship. The government made what is called an order in council to build a new bridge. An order in council does not pass the chamber here and it does not go to the Senate. It is basically a gift; just peel the ribbon off the package, and there it is.

Bad policy has created indecision and uncertainty as we build a new public border crossing, the Gordie Howe International Bridge. This one is lurking out there as another issue, with no community benefits and no connection to the community. It is indicative of mediocrity and malaise. The Liberals try to please everyone, including a U.S. billionaire, versus doing the right thing for Canadians at the right time.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the Conservative opposition motion.

I feel as though I am dreaming. It was only last Tuesday that the Conservatives moved another motion on taxes. Today is Monday, February 4, and we have a motion before us that deals with basically the same subject, does pretty much the same thing and will probably have the same outcome. When you do the same thing twice, you often get the same outcome.

Still, I find it strange that the Conservatives have moved another motion about taxes. Its purpose is definitely to scare us and to scare Canadians. It also contains several paragraphs, from (a) to (k). It says things like “would have cost up to \$2,000 per household”; “up to \$2,000”; “up to \$225”—we are talking about tax credits here—“up to \$560 per student”; “up to \$85 per worker”; “could cost up to \$1,000”; “as high as \$5,000 in the future”.

Note the conditional tense used here. Paragraphs (j) and (k) even state, “this government tried to tax”. The Conservatives are using the same old scare tactics; they claim that the government tried to do certain things so as to justify today’s motion, but the Liberal government has already rejected these claims.

The Conservatives are once again resorting to their old scare tactics, but the real driver behind this motion is the Conservatives’ fiscal policy, which is out of touch with reality. They want to resurrect their fiscal policy, a policy that did not work for Canada during their decade in government. They cut taxes on big corporations and multinationals from 22% to 15%, which failed to yield the results expected by prominent neo-liberal economists who say that cutting taxes boosts economic activity. The Conservatives’

fiscal policy, which is based on theories like that, clearly did not produce the desired results.

Currently, Canadians’ debt levels are among the highest in the world. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are on the verge of bankruptcy, one paycheque away from financial disaster. There is also a severe national housing crisis that requires concrete measures. I raised that subject last week in the debate on the NDP’s opposition motion.

We rarely have an opportunity to move a motion for all MPs to vote on. When people in our party have that opportunity, we raise important issues that matter to Canadians’ everyday lives. We do not engage in fearmongering to score political points. When NDP members have a chance to move an opposition motion, we take it very seriously. We develop real policies and real proposals. We do not just jot things down on the back of a napkin just for the sake of putting something out there and triggering a debate on taxes. I am curious about what the Conservatives are trying to accomplish here, but, just like last Tuesday’s motion, I do not think this one will amount to much.

Last week’s motion asked for taxes never to be increased again in Canada, and today’s motion says substantially the same thing. At the end of the motion, it says that the House should “call on the Prime Minister to provide written confirmation that the government will not further raise any taxes on Canadians”. It does not mention any specific time limit, circumstance or taxpayer. That is the main reason why the NDP will be opposing this motion.

• (1320)

I said it last week, and I will say it again today: in 2019, we cannot tie our hands by promising not to raise taxes on anyone, under any circumstances and for an unspecified amount of time.

That would not be responsible, yet the Conservatives are doing it anyway. However, we know all too well that the Conservatives are not fiscally responsible. Let us not forget that they added \$150 billion to the public debt when they were in government. In any case, one of the main reasons we are against this motion is that we must not tie our hands today, February 4, 2019, by promising not to raise taxes for an indefinite period.

The NDP has options. We have the courage to say that we can raise taxes, that we can get more taxes from the richest citizens, who are currently not paying their fair share. It is important to have the courage to say that in this debate. As I was saying earlier, under the Conservatives, big multinational corporations got their taxes cut from 22% to 15%. That did not yield the desired economic results. It did not confirm the theory of trickle-down economics, which is that tax cuts for big multinationals trickle down and benefit everyone.

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On the contrary, large multinationals, the banks in particular, are pocketing record profits, while people are sleeping on the street right outside their doors. Every year they pocket more and more money, and the government gives them tax breaks. They stash their money away without putting it back into the economy. The figures show that the large profits stashed away by large multinationals lie dormant and are not reinvested into the economy. The money does not trickle down to benefit the vast majority of Canadians. This is a reality that seems to be lost on the Conservatives, who are forever caught up in their tax-cuts-for-everyone ideology.

I apologize for repeating myself, but this topic is so similar. Last week I spoke of the need to understand that taxes serve a purpose in our society and in the world. They allow the public to receive services. Everyone contributes to a common pot so that everyone can then receive quality services. We are fortunate in Canada to have quality public services that are accessible and affordable, and ideally, sometimes even free.

In fact, taxpayers paid for these services. Having everyone contribute their share to a pooled fund is a way for society to organize itself and ensure that we can get decent services. Once again, the Conservatives do not seem to grasp the concept of people helping each other. In a community, we can pool our resources to ensure that as many people as possible can benefit.

When we look at the real cost of public services, we see that the majority of people get more services and money than they pay into the pooled fund. That is how we make society inclusive and give everyone an equal opportunity to succeed. That is why we must go even further. The NDP thinks we must go even further to give everyone an equal opportunity. Those who have the means should contribute more to this pooled fund to serve as many people as possible as well as those who need it most, in other words, the less fortunate.

That being said, I would be remiss if I did not mention the failures of the Liberal government, which has done nothing to improve the situation since taking office. This is a Conservative motion, but unfortunately, we have to admit that the Liberal government has failed to take action to address serious crises, particularly the housing crisis, which I mentioned earlier. The government has been ignoring the housing crisis, but immediate, concrete action needs to be taken. The government is doing a little but certainly not enough to properly address such a crisis.

Let's talk about the Liberal government's poor choices. Governing is all about making choices, making decisions. The most recent example is the government's decision to buy an oil pipeline. The Liberals bought the pipeline for \$4.5 billion U.S. when the Parliamentary Budget Officer's assessment shows that they could have gotten a lower price. That was a choice that the government made. Rather than investing in Canadians and the housing crisis, the government would rather invest in a 60-year-old pipeline and its expansion, which, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, could cost up to \$10 billion to \$12 billion more.

• (1325)

That is the reality of the choices the Liberals are making. They decided to invest in a pipeline rather than in the well-being of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate today the parliamentary secretary made a comment about how the Liberals are in place to grow the economy for everyone, yet everyone does not seem to include everyone in my riding and other parts of Canada, because the Liberals are killing the oil and gas sector. They are killing pipelines.

The hon. member is well aware of the carbon tax and how it will be \$20 a tonne on April 1 and will go up to \$50 a tonne and will go even higher after that. We are continually asking the present government what that figure will be, but it refuses to give that answer.

I would like to hear from the member how he feels that is going to affect his constituency and his constituents in creating jobs and how he feels it is going to affect the economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which is on another one of the Conservatives' favourite topics, the carbon tax. We are really doing the rounds, talking about all their favourite subjects, from taxes and the carbon tax to balanced budgets. We will have covered virtually all the Conservative bases by talking about those three topics.

With regard to the carbon tax, I think it is important to point out that, in the jurisdictions where it has already been introduced, people have been receiving some form of compensation, such as rebates. I think compensation is necessary, which is what the government is currently planning.

Last week the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said that Canadians will receive \$307 from the government. That number is interesting. It proves that the Liberals expect the carbon tax to have economic repercussions.

Compensation is obviously necessary, since those most in need are going to be compensated. On top of that, we are going to reach the policy objective, which is reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I hope all parliamentarians would agree that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The world's foremost economists are saying that a carbon tax is a good way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Why not introduce such a tax and provide compensation for those who need it?

• (1330)

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree. Here we are with another opposition day motion talking about taxes, so it is a little like Groundhog Day for the Conservatives. I also agree with him about the Conservatives' fearmongering with this motion. It seems to be a repeat of things they are accustomed to doing.

Business of Supply

As my hon. colleague looks through this long list of cancelled tax credits in the motion, I am sure he and his constituents are aware that they would have had to have been able to afford these programs in order to receive the tax credit. With our Canada child benefit, our national poverty strategy and our national housing strategy, we are taking a holistic approach to ensuring Canadians are well off. Would he not agree that programs like the Canada child benefit ensure that Canadians have more money in their pockets and that it is not only a better strategy than the Conservative one, but one that allows them to choose what they want to do for their children with the money?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention. I also thank her for raising the matter of non-refundable tax credits, something the Conservatives are obsessed with, especially when it comes to public transit and children's fitness and arts tax credits.

The members across the way seem to forget that you have to pay taxes in order to get non-refundable tax credits. I would remind the Conservatives that the least fortunate Canadians need these non-refundable tax credits the most. However, those Canadians cannot get these tax credits because those who are better off are the ones who pay taxes. When the Conservatives talk about these tax credits, they fail to mention that these are non-refundable tax credits.

They need to face the facts. The numbers speak for themselves: those who benefit from these tax credits are mainly, but not exclusively, the wealthy. This policy was endorsed by several economists who reviewed the use of non-refundable tax credits. It is time to have another debate on why we should make these tax credits refundable.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak to the opposition motion. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Today I will be talking about the taxes that the Liberals have increased, their adverse effects, and the future.

[*English*]

To start, let us talk about the taxes that the Liberals have raised.

Since they came into power in 2015, the Liberals have made continual attempts to raise taxes on Canadians and on small businesses. Overall, middle-class Canadians are paying over \$800 more in taxes. How did we get there?

First of all, a lot of the tax credits that were in place under the previous government were removed. We need only to look at how much that cost. Let us think of the fitness tax credit, which was \$1,200 per child. A family with two or three children could have received \$3,600 right there. The education and tuition tax credits were also removed. I remember having two children in university, and the amount received then was \$5,000 per child. We are talking about thousands of dollars in taxes there. When the credit is removed, it essentially means that taxes are being increased.

There were many Canadians who were taking advantage of income splitting, and depending on their income, that could be as much as \$12,000 or \$13,000.

If we add up the number of things that were taken away, it could be as much as \$20,000.

For all the Liberals' talk about adding back a child benefit and how a family with young children would get \$5,400 each, a family with no young children but with kids in university would be much worse off. We see that in the data that shows that 46% of Canadians are within \$200 of insolvency every month. That is the result of the Liberal government continually squeezing them.

The Liberals have tried to squeeze Canadians in other ways, such as trying to raise taxes on health and dental benefits. We sounded the alarm and were able to get them to walk back on that. They tried to put some taxes in place on small businesses that would have caused undue circumstances. They tried to tax the passive income in corporations at 73%, which clearly resulted in outrage and an outcry from Canadians. We were able to get the Liberals to walk that back.

This is important because it follows the principle that we talked about in science about boiling the frog. If we gradually raise the temperature one degree at a time, the frog will eventually die because it does not realize that it is getting into really hot water. That essentially is what has happened under the Liberals: They have increased taxes so many times that now the whole country is in hot water. Canadians are really struggling to afford to live, and that is even before we count in the carbon tax and the impact it will have.

We do not know exactly how much impact the carbon tax will have, because the open and transparent Liberal government has not disclosed that information to Canadians. The Liberals have said they will give Canadians \$300 back at the end of the year and have asked Canadians to trust them that this is the amount it is going to cost. Depending on where we live in this country, if we think about an increase of 11¢ a litre on gasoline for the current carbon pricing and we think about the increase to the cost of home heating and the cost of groceries, we recognize that it is going to be more than \$300. The government is really getting more money than it is going to give back, which is in essence a tax increase as well.

We know it is not going to stop there. We know that after the next election, the government is going to continue to increase this carbon tax because it is a cash grab. Documents show that this tax will increase by a factor of six. It could cost Canadians \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year. Let us think of what that would do to families that are already precariously on the brink.

There have been many negative impacts. I talked about the impact on Canadians, but the impact on small and medium-sized businesses is something that we are seeing in my riding, where businesses are either closing up or moving to the United States because of the tax advantages there versus operating in Canada.

Business of Supply

• (1335)

What did we really get for all of the cash that the government is taking out of the pockets of Canadians? A lot of that money has not been of benefit to Canadians. Let us think about the \$15 billion that the Liberals took from the municipalities that was supposed to be for their roads and bridges but was put into an infrastructure bank that has benefited nobody. What about the \$1 billion the government is spending on allowing illegal immigrants to come into the country, paying to put them up in hotels for the four years needed to process them because of the backlog?

We have seen the government's many trips around the world. There was the disastrous India trip, the China trip, the Davos trip. People were flying all over the place, with 183 people going to COP 21, where the government is spending billions of Canadians' dollars with no real benefit to Canadians.

Of course, there were millions of dollars spent on the Canada food guide so we could all know that we should drink water and enjoy our food, which was a huge revelation to many, I am sure.

It seems that tax increases keep coming, and the government is not being open with Canadians about what they can expect after the next election, should we be unfortunate enough to have the Liberals remain in power.

We know that more taxes are coming. We know the Liberals tried to put in place a tax on health and dental benefits, and they will try to put it in place again. They will again increase the carbon tax. They will again reach into the pockets of small businesses, because the government has a spending problem. They are spending way more than they promised. They promised small deficits of \$10 billion for three years and a return to a balanced budget this year. Here we are in 2019, and the budget is not balanced.

We cannot believe the promises made by the current government. It has a track record, depending on whether we go to the TrudeauMeter or a promise tracker, of keeping 25% of their promises, so Canadians should definitely keep that in mind as we look to the election and see what might be coming down the road.

Let us talk about the future. We know that tough times are ahead. Economists are predicting that we are approaching recession conditions, and growth has certainly slowed. After glowing accolades and the Prime Minister singing about the victories of his government, all of a sudden we see that growth is grinding to a halt and that there are concerns of a recession. Here we are with more debt than anyone could manage, and there is no end in sight. That will certainly cause us to pay more interest on the deficit and keep us from doing other things.

Let us think about the \$40 billion that was transferred to the provinces for health care. We know we have an aging population and a rise in chronic disease, so we definitely need more money in the health care system, but that \$40 billion that we could be putting on top of our existing transfer payments is going toward paying interest to wealthy bankers and investors. I do not think that was the intent.

Clearly, the government has been wasting taxpayers' dollars. It has been raising taxes on taxpayers and it will keep doing that as we move toward the election and it is not going to be open and

transparent about it. Liberals clearly do not intend to tell Canadians the real story, and that is why Conservatives moved this motion today: to make sure Canadians are informed about what has already taken place and what they can expect in the future.

• (1340)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague said that Canada is in hot water. I want to get a sense from her of the exact temperature of that water, because it seems we are doing pretty well. We have the lowest employment in decades, which means Canadians are working. In fact, with our investments, Canadian businesses have helped create over 800,000 new jobs.

My hon. colleague went on to talk about the Canada child benefit. In her riding of Sarnia—Lambton specifically, over 8,600 payments have been made through the Canada child benefit. There are 16,000 children in her riding who have received these payments. I know my hon. colleagues on the other side are heckling, but I am sure the parents of these children appreciate having this money, an average of \$600 per month.

The record of this government is that our investments in Canadians have allowed them to create jobs, put more money in their pockets and ensure they have a better quality of life.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, the member asked about the temperature of the water in Canada. Well, let us talk about it. When 46% of Canadians are within \$200 of insolvency every month, the fact that they are working is great, but the fact that they cannot make ends meet is not great. She also referenced the number of people who have received the child benefit in my riding. The reality is that if we give somebody \$6,400 and take away \$7,200, they are \$800 worse off. That is the situation that has happened under the current government. It has increased taxes more than what it has given back.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to acknowledge my colleague for speaking French at the beginning of her speech. She did a great job, and I think it is important to acknowledge that.

The figures she mentioned come from the Fraser Institute. However, she left out some important details. The Canada child benefit was not taken into account in this analysis. The Canada child benefit has made a huge difference back home. People tell me they are getting an extra \$2,000, tax free. This is a lot.

She also forgot to mention that during nine of the 10 years that the Harper government was in power, that government ran significant deficits. One of these deficits was among the largest in modern Canadian history. It was \$56 billion for a single year. The Conservatives added \$150 billion to the deficit during this period.

The Canada child benefit is having a positive impact on our families and has helped thousands of children out of poverty, so why did she and her party vote against this important measure introduced by our government?

• (1345)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I hope to continue speaking in French. I have improved.

Business of Supply

[English]

When it comes to the question that the member asked about the child tax benefit, there is a lot of fearmongering on the other side implying that the Conservatives would somehow remove that, which has never been said. That is point number one.

Point number two is that if we give people \$5,400 per child but take away \$1,200 per child for a tax credit, \$5,000 for education and tuition credit, \$13,000 possibly for income splitting, and then add on carbon tax and all of these things, at the end of the day, the person is worse off then they were at the beginning, because they have less money in their pocket.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and give my first full speech in this beautiful chamber on an important issue that is near and dear to the residents of my constituency of Edmonton Manning and Canadians all across our great country.

I have been spending a great deal of time out in the community, speaking to residents about the issues that are important to them. I spent the summer knocking on doors. Over the winter adjournment, I was again out connecting with the residents. One of the biggest issues I keep hearing about in my community is that life is getting more expensive and unaffordable for Canadians. There are fewer opportunities than there were only a few short years ago. People are worried about having enough money by the end of the month, and they do not know where they are going to save for their retirement, their children's education or even to buy their first home.

In my community, Canadians are under no illusion as to why they are not able to get ahead. The Liberal government's policies are chasing away investments in Alberta. It is a fact that investments in Alberta are next to zero. That means the loss of job opportunities. We can feel it when we go door to door and talk to Albertans.

What is happening right now is preventing the private sector from creating the well-paying jobs that Canadians rely on to keep a roof over their head and put food on the table. The Liberals are also raising taxes to pay for their out-of-control spending at a time when many members of the community can barely get by.

It is clear that the Liberal government is completely out of touch with the reality of everyday Canadians. I say that because I can see and hear that the government is trying to convince Canadians, as well as itself, with respect to the child benefit policy. The 2016 budget shows that it only gave \$1 billion more to the child benefit program compared to the previous government. It eliminated three programs and replaced it with one. However, it has only given it \$1 billion. That \$1 billion divided by 36 million Canadians equals about \$27 or \$28 a year per capita. The government has convinced itself, and is trying to convince Canadians, that with that \$28 it is going to fix the Canadian economy. It is a shame that the government thinks it is going to fix the Canadian economy with one single policy.

While there are numerous examples that I can draw upon, one that deserves to be highlighted happened this past Friday. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said, without irony, that one of the reasons the Liberals scrapped the public transit tax credit was because it "benefited the wealthiest." That is outrageous and shameful. The fact that the parliamentary secretary

would even suggest that is insulting. It is an insult that is compounded when we consider that they took money out of the pockets of public transit users and then gave millions of taxpayer dollars to Bombardier to help ensure its executives received millions of dollars in bonuses. Imagine that Canadians had to lose their tax credit for giving their money away to a company that makes buses and trains. The government literally took hundreds of dollars out of the pockets of public transit users, who generally speaking were using it due to its affordability, to put millions of dollars in the accounts of corporate executives. It then had the nerve to come into this chamber and suggest to the shadow minister for finance, the member for Carleton, that it was a decision to get rid of a tax tool that was benefiting the wealthiest Canadians.

• (1350)

Now, over the course of the day, we have heard a great deal from the government benches about the Canada child benefit. I just spoke about how shameful it is for a government to try to base its economic policy and approach to building the Canadian economy on a single program such as this one.

We know that the government is telling Canadians that it is lowering taxes for the middle class and those aspiring to join it. Every time anyone points out the many ways that the Liberals have made life more expensive for Canadians, they point to this benefit to call them out. The parliamentary secretary did it on Friday to the members for Carleton and Louis-Saint-Laurent, and I would be very surprised if one of the members across the way did not rise in the time for questions and comments following my remarks to tell this House how many families in my riding receive the benefit and to the tune of how many dollars.

From an academic standpoint, it is an interesting argument, because the government is simply stacking logical fallacies and hoping it will get away with it. It starts with a red herring. We talk about its irresponsible tax policies that Canadians cannot afford, and it talks about the child tax benefit and suggests that some Canadians are getting more money than they were before it augmented the existing benefit that our former Conservative government put in place. After that, the government introduces the false dilemma that if some Canadians are getting more money under the augmented program, then there are lower taxes for everyone in the middle class and those aspiring to join it. Of course, that is not inherently true, or true at all, in this case. That is why they are called logical fallacies.

The government has done the same thing with the income tax rate. It lowered one number, but offset the savings that middle-class Canadians should have seen by eliminating tax credits and implementing other policy changes to make sure the Liberals would not have to curb their spending.

Statements by Members

The Fraser Institute did an excellent job of outlining this in its 2017 report entitled “Measuring the Impact of Federal Personal Income Tax Changes on Middle Income Canadian Families”. The report concluded that 60% of the 3.88 million families covered in its study are paying more in taxes. Almost half of Canadian society is paying more taxes under the Liberal government's programs. The average increase is about \$1,151 per family. The paper also considered just middle-income families, and found that 81% are paying more income taxes as well, to the tune of an extra \$840 a year.

Clearly, Liberals are not just asking the one per cent to pay more, as they would like to have us believe. The numbers simply do not support the Liberal talking points, especially when we acknowledge that in the first year following the Liberals' tax changes, high-income earners paid \$4.6 billion less in taxes than the previous year. One of the symptoms of mismanagement and miscalculation is when one tells Canadians that they are taxing the richest in the country while at the end of the day showing a loss of \$4.6 billion in the financial statement's bottom line.

This does not even consider other measures such as the carbon tax and how this will affect Canadians' bottom line, or how the government's small business tax changes will adversely affect these incredibly essential job creators. For example, payroll taxes, CPP increases, EI premium increases, and passive income and income splitting were like war on small businesses in Canada. That is what the government was doing.

One thing we do know is that the government has tried to nickel and dime Canadians. That has been the notion of the government. It has been nickel and diming Canadians and small businesses for all they are worth. The previously proposed changes to the small business tax code would have been catastrophic, but, thankfully, due to outrage from coast to coast, the Liberals were forced to back down on some of their most economically harmful ideas.

• (1355)

That is one of the reasons we are here today talking about it.

I will be happy to take questions from my colleagues.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way made a comment about the sports tax credit, which had been referenced earlier.

When there is a tax credit or incentive, there is the hope to prompt some kind of a positive response. That is why that measure would be brought forward. However, if we look at the participation rates from 2000 on, participation rates, year over year, in sport were pretty steady. After the Conservatives introduced the tax credit in 2007, there was no discernible increase in 2008, 2009 or 2010. The one year we had an increase was in 2003, and that was because the women's hockey team won the Olympic gold medal in Salt Lake City. That happened because the previous government had believed in investing in facilities, leadership and coaching.

Does the member not see that targeted investments make far greater sense and pay far greater rewards than boutique tax credits?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was talking about boutique tax credits and direct investments. However, for all

the big noise we have been hearing about direct investment, we have not seen any of it. It has left no impact whatsoever.

It looks like the opposite side is against blanket benefits for many Canadians. To them, it is pick and choose: those people deserve to benefit and those people do not deserve to benefit.

We had tax policies that benefited all Canadians and that we were able to get across the country to help more Canadians than under the Liberal programs. When it comes to that, the comparison is not there. I think the hon. member is trying to find excuses for their failing policies and failing strategies.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member says there is nothing that is really tangible or that it is hard to see, what he fails to recognize is that the middle-class tax cut literally put hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of Canada's middle class.

By doing that, we are allowing for a higher disposable income. By doing that, we have a healthier Canadian economy. We realize that when we see 800,000 jobs, which came from working with industries and the people of Canada. That is what this government has been able to create. That is tangible. That is real progress.

• (1400)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the only one who believes this story is the government itself. Nobody else believes the Liberals' stories. They believe what they are saying, and it has become a disaster for Canada and for our economy. The records are telling us that most Canadian families are less advantaged under the government by \$1,151 a year for some families and \$860 a year for other families.

These are the records. It is not what the other member is saying or what the government is suggesting.

The Speaker: There will be a minute and a half remaining in questions and comments, following the speech of the hon. member for Edmonton Manning, following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

JACOB SCHWARTZ

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Jacob Schwartz, who died last week in Toronto. Jakey was born in 1997 and diagnosed with Canavan disease, which left him unable to walk, eat, see or speak.

Statements by Members

With the cards stacked against them, the Schwartz family decided to make every moment count, which they did for 21 years. While providing round-the-clock care, his mom Ellen formed the charity Jacob's Ladder, raising over \$3 million for research into Canavan disease. Dad Jeff and siblings Beverly and Ben were all part of the indomitable team that always made sure Jakey came first.

I want to close with lines from *I Rise Above*, a song written for Jake to celebrate his 20th birthday:

No need to fix me, I am my own perfect soul
There's a reason, I am here, I am love
I rise above

The Schwartz family has shown us the true meaning of love and touched our lives. May Jacob's memory forever be a blessing.

* * *

WILLIAM WINEGARD

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, former member of Parliament for Guelph—Wellington, Dr. William Winegard, passed away at the age of 94. He was part of what many call the “greatest generation”.

He grew up during the Great Depression. He was a Second World War veteran and served as the youngest officer in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy. He came back from the war, became an engineering professor and eventually the president of the University of Guelph. He was then elected to this very House of Commons and served as minister for science in the government of Brian Mulroney. Bill was an officer of the Order of Canada, a recognition of his contributions to the city of Guelph, the county of Wellington and to Canada. He was a teacher and a leader to many and a mentor to me, and for that I will be forever grateful.

I ask all members of the House to join me in paying tribute to this great Canadian.

* * *

RURAL IMMIGRATION

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rural matters. I am a proud northerner. Our government has listened, took action and announced the launch of a rural immigration pilot project to meet the labour market gaps vocalized by small business owners.

[*Translation*]

This pilot project gives hope to construction companies and associations, who have spoken about their inability to attract employees. I would like to thank the Minister of Immigration and the Prime Minister for listening to our concerns. The pilot project will have a significant and positive impact by meeting the needs of the labour market.

[*English*]

I say thanks to northern Ontario mayors, thanks to the local chambers of commerce and thanks to the building trades that have pushed so hard for this project. This employer- and community-driven initiative will improve the economic, social and democratic vitality of Nickel Belt and northern Ontario.

Rural matters.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CLAUDE BOUCHARD

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in January, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting with about 100 constituents of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to listen to their concerns. The environment, poverty, culture, electoral reform and defending Quebec's interests were the main topics of discussion. However, at this year's Saturday morning gathering, there was one distinctive voice missing, that of Claude Bouchard.

Claude died of cancer on January 16. It was a great loss for Longueuil. A karate teacher and black belt, an activist and advocate, Claude Bouchard was a key member of our community, an ambassador for a nurturing society, something far too often overlooked in our productivity-driven system. Claude was the president of the Longueuil—Saint-Hubert NDP riding association and deeply involved in politics. He gave a lot to politics, but he also expected a lot from politicians.

Claude made municipal, provincial and federal politicians truly aware of the reality of people living in Longueuil, which is struggling but is such a supportive community.

On behalf of the people of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I extend my most sincere condolences to his wife, France, his sons, Mathieu and Simon, and to his family and friends.

Thank you, Claude.

* * *

●(1405)

[*English*]

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on the eve of the lunar new year in the House of Commons to welcome the Year of the Pig, an animal that symbolizes the prosperity and good fortune that can be built with hard work and a little luck. Across the community in Richmond Hill, Canadians of Asian-Pacific heritage will ring in the new year tonight, and I will join them in their celebrations at Times Square for the official countdown.

I am pleased to have been able to partner with Times Square for this celebration and look forward to spending time with the Chinese-Canadian community in Richmond Hill tomorrow at the Liaoning Chamber of Commerce, where I can share my first-hand experience visiting China this January, where I had the opportunity to learn about the strong trade and economic, education and cultural linkages between both countries.

As families bring generations to the table for their celebratory dinners, I wish each one of them, *xin nian kuai le, gong hey fat choy* and *gong xi fa cai*.

*Statements by Members***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will soon be presented with a new budget, and for the fourth consecutive year, the government will be running a substantial deficit.

Since coming to office in 2015, the government has added almost \$60 billion to the debt. The debt now stands at two-thirds of a trillion dollars. Our annual interest payments are \$26 billion annually, and that exceeds all of our military spending. Worse yet, these interest payments do not reduce the overall debt and continue to increase our debt each year. Huge new spending, additional taxes and larger deficits, none of this was promised in the last election.

The current government will be seeking a new mandate soon, and I urge all Canadians to think about those broken promises and elect a strong Conservative government.

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CANADIAN SCHOOL COUNSELLING WEEK

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

[Member spoke in Cree as follows:]

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[Cree text translated as follows:]

Mr. Speaker, to all my relations, I say hello. I am very proud to be here.

[English]

Today we launch Canadian School Counselling Week, highlighting the tremendous impact of school counsellors on the academic achievement and career development of students.

Across the country, Canadians recognize the unique contribution school counsellors make in supporting student success. School counsellors are mental health professionals who support the personal, social, educational and career development of students and make positive contributions to the mental health and well-being of all Canadians. On a daily basis, school counsellors are actively engaged in helping students examine their abilities, strengths, interests and talents. School counsellors support families and work with teachers and other educators to provide an educational system where students can appreciate their potential and set realistic and healthy aspirations for their future.

During Canadian School Counselling Week, let us take this opportunity to thank school counsellors for the important role they play in schools in Winnipeg-Centre, Manitoba and across Canada.

* * *

SIEN LOK SOCIETY OF CALGARY

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *gong hey fat choy*.

The year 2019 is not only the Year of the Pig, but it is also the 50th anniversary of the Sien Lok Society of Calgary. It is my honour to congratulate it on 50 years of making real change in our

community. Its initiatives include Sien Lok Park, establishing a scout troop, hosting events and more.

True to its translated name, “Happiness through good works”, Sien Lok is committed to promoting and preserving Chinese Canadian heritage. As long as there has been a Calgary, there has been a Chinese community. Together we continue to create a better place for everyone to live, work and play.

Special recognition to Raymond Lee, Sien Lok's first president. As a kid, I delivered the Calgary Herald to Mr. Lee. He is a very kind man, and the same can be said of John Dong, who was named president last fall.

Here is to another 50 years of the Sien Lok Society of Calgary.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax cover-up continues.

For most Canadians, life is becoming more expensive. They just cannot get ahead, yet for the Prime Minister, life has always been lived on easy street. He has never had to worry about making ends meet, because he inherited a multi-million dollar trust fund. While he gets to vacation on billionaire island, ordinary Canadian families are being forced to pay for his carbon tax that will make it much more difficult for them to take their own vacations.

Now we find out from the government's own documents that, after the next election, the carbon tax will be 15 times higher than it is today. That is \$5,000 more in taxes for every Canadian family, each year.

Yes, the carbon tax cover-up continues, and who is going to pay the price? It will be families across Canada who are already struggling to make ends meet. Shame on the Prime Minister and shame on this Liberal government.

* * *

●(1410)

[Translation]

THE NEW HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House, in our magnificent West Block, in this Black History Month. Skilled people have been working on renovating this building for years, and it is obvious that they have done a great job. We are grateful for their years of dedication.

[English]

Looking upward at the soaring glass roof supported by steel columns like giant trees, I am reminded that, while we remain rooted in both a proud and painful history, we as parliamentarians are boundless in our capacity to create positive change for Canadians. It takes a team of world-class artists to create an environment that invokes in each of us a tremendous sense of responsibility and duty, while at the same time inspiring us to push boundaries, redefine the status quo and amplify the voices of those most marginalized in our communities.

Statements by Members

I thank all who were involved in this project. It is truly an honour to continue to serve the people of Whitby in this majestic place.

* * *

WORLD CANCER DAY

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each year, on February 4, Canadians come together to recognize World Cancer Day, an international day of awareness. Take a moment to look around this chamber. Imagine half of us hearing the words, "You have cancer." On any given day, 565 Canadians will hear those words. One in two Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. The magnitude of this is staggering for individuals and their families.

We need to help those facing cancer live their lives more fully and see life beyond the diagnosis. To do this, we must expand access to credible cancer information and ensure that support services like those offered by the Canadian Cancer Society are available from coast to coast to coast so that nobody faces cancer alone.

I would like to thank Lynne Hudson and all her colleagues at the Canadian Cancer Society for everything they do to support Canadians in the fight to eradicate cancer and to enhance the quality of life of people living with cancer.

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FINANCE

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time after time my colleague and I have stood in this place and asked the Prime Minister how on earth he expects the financial situation of Canadians to improve when Liberal actions are causing the cost of everything to go up. The government likes to brag about its record, but for my constituents in Edmonton West, and across Alberta, the only record we see is record high unemployment and record fleeing of investment.

It is no surprise that the government has trouble understanding basic economics. When asked about the management of his own finances, the Prime Minister said, "I no longer have dealings with the way our family...is managed".

It is time for the Ottawa Liberals to recognize that their plan is leaving Canadians struggling to make ends meet. It is time for them to realize that today's deficits are tomorrow's tax hikes. Where will four years of broken promises, sky-high deficits and Liberal incompetence leave us? It will be with the Prime Minister raising taxes and making life even more expensive for Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being Black History Month, I would like to tell you about Jean de Dieu Cyhubahiro Rwihaniza, a resident of the riding of La Prairie.

Jean de Dieu left the Republic of the Congo for Rwanda in 2004 because his community was persecuted during the civil war. In 2014, he came to Canada because he and his family were no longer safe. His wife and two children went to Belgium.

He quickly integrated into Canadian society, first working in communications and then in banking. He sponsored his wife and children, who came to Canada in 2016. I would like to salute this exceptional man's courage and perseverance. He chose to live in a society governed by the rule of law, a society where all people have a chance to reach their full potential. He says that he lost two countries but gained Canada. Jean de Dieu is a caring and hard-working man, and I thank him for choosing us and for contributing to our society. I wish him all the best in becoming a citizen.

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● (1415)

MICHAEL FERGUSON

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured to rise to pay tribute to a great Canadian who passed away suddenly over the weekend, Michael Ferguson. Our thoughts are with his family.

Today, we remember this great man who was a dedicated public servant right up until his death. He graduated from the University of New Brunswick with a degree in business administration, and then spent three full decades as an auditor and comptroller in New Brunswick. He was known for his excellent work, which enhanced the transparency and integrity of the Government of New Brunswick.

He then came to Ottawa to become the Auditor General of Canada. He was known for his credibility, candour and impartiality in all of his work. The best interests of Canadians were always his top priority.

I hope that my colleagues will join me in extending our sincere condolences to his family, friends and many colleagues. They can rest assured that he was an example to all Canadians and that he leaves behind a great legacy for all future auditors general.

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[*English*]

FINANCE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister thinks Canadians do not care about how the government manages the country's finances, but that is simply not true. Canadians have said the number one priority should be to manage Canada's finances and balance the budget.

The Prime Minister promised Canadians in the last election that he would balance the budget this year, but he had no intention of keeping his word. The Canadian deficit keeps getting bigger and is forecast to hit \$31 billion this year. Higher deficits today mean program and job cuts, higher taxes and pension risk tomorrow. The Liberals do not understand the hardship this causes for families. For the first time, Canadians are just getting by and not getting ahead.

On how he runs his own finances, the Prime Minister said, “I no longer have dealings with the way our family fortune is managed”. He is out of touch and does not care. We are all paying for his mistakes.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHAEL FERGUSON

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I heard about the passing of Auditor General Michael Ferguson on Saturday, I felt like I had lost a close friend. After three years of working alongside him as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I came to know him as a quiet man who was incredibly passionate about public service. Working with Michael Ferguson in his role as Auditor General taught me a powerful lesson about what our most important role should be, namely to ensure that Canadians have a government that meets their expectations and nurtures their dignity and aspirations.

I am sure that all the colleagues who, like me, have served on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts since 2011 share my profound admiration for Michael Ferguson's dogged determination to master the French language and his outstanding efforts to examine government actions from the perspective of citizens, not programs. I will always remember him as a paragon of integrity and humility.

I offer my deepest condolences to his family and all his colleagues.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

MEMBER FOR SPADINA—FORT YORK

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tweeted that the Premier of Ontario should be “whacked”, a mobster term for killing someone, which clearly the parliamentary secretary would have known.

Why has the Prime Minister not called for his resignation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will address the member's question shortly.

Michael Ferguson devoted his life to public service, both in his home province of New Brunswick and across the country. We will remember him for his tireless dedication to promote a transparent, open government that is accountable to Canadians.

[Translation]

His work as Auditor General over the past seven years helped strengthen our democracy and maintain the integrity of our public institutions. We are all greatly saddened by his passing.

[English]

I offer my deepest condolences to Mr. Ferguson's family, friends and colleagues.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while we all very much appreciate the Prime Minister's words, there is an opportunity for ministerial statements later today, and I look forward to hearing the statement at that time.

This is an issue the Prime Minister needs to take very seriously. The parliamentary secretary has shown this kind of behaviour before, when he had to apologize for trying to bully and intimidate a female Conservative MP, the member for Richmond Centre. The Prime Minister says he has no tolerance for this kind of behaviour. Again, why will the Prime Minister not ask for this parliamentary secretary's resignation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware the member in question has apologized for his tweet. It is important that we have civil debates in the House and elsewhere when we engage in disagreements over public policy.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tweet is still up. The Prime Minister talks about positive politics, he talks about zero tolerance, but we have a parliamentary secretary who has done this before.

What kind of example does the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development set, and furthermore, what kind of example does the Prime Minister set by continuing to tolerate this type of behaviour from that parliamentary secretary?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the parliamentary secretary has apologized for his tweet. It is important that we all remember that there can be strong disagreements over policy, over questions of substance, but we need to remain civil and keep away from the personal accusations and the personal invective whenever we have political debates.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to restore Canadians' faith in politics is to keep one's promises. In 2015, the Prime Minister promised to deliver a zero deficit in 2019, but that will not happen. He promised to run small deficits, but over the past three years, his deficits have reached nearly \$60 billion. He did not keep his two key public finance promises. The way this Prime Minister is running things, Canadians know they will have to pay sooner or later.

What tax hikes does the Prime Minister have in store for Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, Canadians had a simple choice to make. The Conservatives wanted to create economic growth by giving the very wealthy all kinds of goodies, but we wanted to create economic growth by investing in the middle class and our communities. Once again, Canadians chose well.

Oral Questions

Over the past three years, we have seen economic growth thanks to our investments in the middle class, to the help we have given families, which has raised 300,000 children out of poverty, and to investments in infrastructure—

The Speaker: The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is really unfortunate that the Prime Minister has forgotten his key election promise from 2015.

Canadians were sold a bill of goods by the Prime Minister, for they believed him when he said he would run small deficits and balance the budget in 2019. He has done the exact opposite. Unless something changes, we will not see a balanced budget for another 21 years. Inevitably, under a Liberal government, Canadians will pay more.

How much more are they going to pay and when—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did was lower taxes for the middle class, because we know that investing in the middle class creates economic growth for everyone. The Conservatives do not understand that. They are always talking about making cuts to balance the budget at all costs.

Are they going to cut the Canada child benefit? Are they going to cut the 4,700 infrastructure projects we are developing across the country? Are they going to cut the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, which we increased by \$1,000? What are they going to cut?

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last campaign, the Liberals promised to eliminate subsidies for the oil and gas industry. They promised to properly consult indigenous communities on projects that affect their lands. The Liberals have completely failed on both counts. The Federal Court sent the Liberals back to the drawing board when it comes to consulting with first nations on Trans Mountain, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that the Liberals overpaid the pipeline when they acquired it for \$4.5 billion.

How can they fight climate change by buying a pipeline? How can they talk about nation-to-nation relations without proper consultation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the other two parties in the House, we know that the economy and the environment have to go hand in hand. The Conservatives do not want to do anything for the environment and, unfortunately, the NDP does not know how to grow the economy.

We know that investing both in our prosperity and in protecting the environment is the only way forward. We are making progress in eliminating subsidies for fossil fuels. We will meet the commitments we made for 2025.

• (1425)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that, when the Liberals are abroad, they promise, hand over heart, that they will keep their climate change commitments.

The first time, in Paris, everyone believed them. The second time, in Katowice, people were a little more wary. That is because, when the Liberals come back to Canada, they do the opposite of what they promised. They keep the low targets set by the Conservatives and, according to the federal Commissioner of the Environment, they will not even be able to meet those. They buy pipelines, they increase subsidies for the oil and gas industry, and they exclude the biggest polluters from carbon pricing.

Is that really fighting climate change?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are in a situation where the Conservatives, who do not want to do anything about climate change, are accusing us of doing too much, while members of the NDP, who do not want to do anything to create economic growth and protect jobs, are accusing us of not doing enough.

The reality is that, with a price on pollution, our plan to protect oceans and our investments to help families cover the additional costs associated with the price on pollution, we are striking a balance between protecting the environment and creating economic growth.

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly anxious about climate change.

Last October, a UN report concluded the planet only had a dozen years to make dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or face a catastrophe. Canada's environment commissioner warned that meeting our Paris commitments "will require...actions beyond those currently planned or in place." Canadians cannot wait for the government to get its act together to urgently address climate change.

Why does the Prime Minister think that sticking to Harper's climate change targets will get the job done?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put in place a comprehensive pan-Canadian action plan to fight climate change, which includes putting a price on pollution and, yes, bringing in a price on pollution on those Conservative provinces that have not wanted to move forward to give pollution a cost.

We have also moved forward on eliminating coal-fired power plants, on investing in renewable energy and on investing in green solutions and green technologies. At the same, we are creating greater protection for our natural parks.

We know there is much more to do, and we have a plan to do just that.

Oral Questions

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Victoria, people are so frustrated by the Liberals' stale talking points and by the gigantic gap between rhetoric and action on the environment.

No matter what the Prime Minister says, climate change leaders do not use public dollars to buy pipelines. People are clear that action is needed now.

When will the Prime Minister stop giving fossil fuel subsidies to giant corporations and get serious about climate change?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a country that is serious about fighting climate change knows that it takes investments in renewables, investments in innovative solutions, investments in the kinds of things we need to do to prepare for a lower carbon economy in the future. Getting a discount of \$20 billion, \$30 billion or \$50 billion a year because we cannot get our oil to markets other than the United States is unacceptable.

That is why we are moving forward responsibly, to get our oil to new markets, while at the same time we fight climate change with all the tools we need. That is a Liberal approach.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax cover-up continues.

For many Canadians life is becoming more expensive thanks to the Liberal carbon tax. However, of course the millionaire Prime Minister does not get it, because as he said, "I no longer have dealings with the way our family fortune is managed." How many Canadians have that problem?

Now we find out that the carbon tax is going to be 15 times greater than it is today and Canadians will have to pay more. When will the Prime Minister tell us exactly how much his carbon tax will cost? Will he now answer?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to hear that when we are dealing with an issue that is so important to Canadians and citizens around the entire world, the Conservatives put misleading information out there in order to trick Canadians into not taking action on climate change.

The fact is that we are putting forward a plan that involves investments in public transit, making our electricity generated 90% renewable by 2030, and yes, putting a price on pollution.

If the hon. member is so concerned with the affordability of life, he will take pleasure in knowing that our plan is going to reduce emissions and leave Canadian families better off.

• (1430)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only plan is to tax Canadians until there is no more money in their pockets.

The Prime Minister has inherited a great family fortune. Canadians pay their own bills. Every dollar counts when they are managing their family finances. They are already paying for this

inefficient carbon tax and now government documents reveal that the Liberals have a plan for a 15-fold increase. Canadians cannot afford a \$5,000 a year tax bill.

Why is the Prime Minister covering up the actual cost of his carbon tax until after the election?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is putting forward figures that have no basis in reality in order to scare Canadians against taking action on climate change.

The fact is that we have the answer on what we can do and that answer includes putting a price on pollution that will bring our emissions down and make life more affordable.

It has been 281 days since the Conservative leader said he would put forward a plan. I know it was Groundhog Day this weekend, but it does not have to mean there is going to be six more weeks without a climate plan.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals carbon tax plan is not an environmental plan; it is a tax-on-everything plan.

The government's own documents show the carbon tax will cost a family of four up to \$5,000 a year and is expected to go up even higher after the next election. The Prime Minister, who in his own words has a "family fortune", might understand the impact of an extra \$5,000 a year if he actually related to middle-class Canadians and had to manage his own budget.

When will he stop making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I grew up as part of a generation where doing something to protect our environment and fight climate change was informed every day of my life until now. The fact is that Canadians know that climate change is real and that people like us who have been given this platform actually have a responsibility to do something about it. The fact is that people are actually feeling real practical fallout from the inaction that we have seen over the past number of decades.

We are moving forward with a plan that is going to invest in public transit, that is going to make electricity 90% generated by renewable resources by 2030 and that is going to put a price on pollution that will see our emissions come down and leave Canadian families financially better off at tax time.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberals who are exempting major emitters and it is the Liberals who are dumping sewage into our rivers and oceans. It is the Prime Minister who wants to phase out the oil sands and his plan is working. Meanwhile, Albertans are out of work and struggling to get by. Now the Liberal carbon tax is driving up the price of everything.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister does not understand the impact this tax is having because he inherited a large family fortune. When will the Prime Minister stop making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative strategy seems to be to mislead Canadians in order to avoid taking action on climate change.

The fact is that we know climate change is a real threat. We have an opportunity and an obligation not just to do something about it, but to do the most effective things that we know how. We have talked to leading experts. In fact, last year's Nobel Prize winner in economics has discovered that the best thing we can do to reduce emissions is put a price on pollution that makes life more affordable for Canadians.

I am disappointed that the hon. member throws rhetoric out there and makes personal attacks instead of bringing a single idea to the table. If he finally comes up with one, I am all ears.

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FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister's own words. He said, "I no longer have dealings with the way our family fortune is managed." However, because he has never had to balance a household budget, he thinks budgets balance themselves. He is not worried about costs because he just makes others pay for his mistakes.

His deficits are now out of control and breaking his own promises. Sooner or later, if he is allowed to continue, they will lead to higher taxes. How much will his tax plan cost Canadians and who will have to pay?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the really good news is that the member for Carleton can find out exactly what our tax plan is. We already introduced it back in 2016. We reduced taxes on middle-class Canadians. What that means is that 30,000 people in his riding, the riding of Carleton, have lower taxes. We also introduced an increase in the Canada child benefit, which means that 16,000 children in his riding are better off, \$4 million better off in total.

That is what our tax plan is. It is helping middle-class Canadians.

• (1435)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty rich for someone with a billion dollar family business or a family fortune to claim that people are better off because they pay higher taxes by losing their children's fitness tax credit, by losing their transit tax credit or by losing tax credits for tuition and for textbooks. All of these middle-class Canadians are already paying more, but they know that the out-of-control runaway Liberal deficits will make it even worse after the election.

Will the government come clean? How much will it raise taxes and who will have to pay?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what real challenge looks like. It looks like October 22 for the member for Carleton when he is out trying to find a job, talking to employers about how he can do half of an analysis and get to the

wrong answer. That is what he continues to do, half of an analysis and the wrong answer.

The whole analysis, what that tells us is that middle-class Canadians are better off, \$2,000 better off this year than in 2015. That is the middle-class tax plan for the Liberals.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, China arbitrarily detained Canadian citizens for political purposes and the Liberals said that it was business as usual. A former SNC-Lavalin executive pleaded guilty to breaking political financing laws in what has been called the "biggest fraud case" in the country, but it continues to get huge federal contracts. It seems that whenever there is a buck to be made, the Liberals' moral compass breaks down.

SNC-Lavalin should be suspended from bidding on federal government contracts until Canadians have all the details of this fraud. Will the Liberals order the suspension or do they have a price for every principle?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, SNC-Lavalin has a long history, including in my own province of Quebec. It supports tens of thousands of Canadian men and women. The jobs on the projects support hundreds of thousands of Canadian men and women. What I want to know is why the member is talking down Canadian jobs. That is what Canadians want to know.

I can also assure the member that we have an accountability regime that is among the most stringent in the world. We will continue to enforce that. Canadian companies will have the highest degree of ethical behaviour.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members on the other side of the House clearly have no principles.

The Minister of National Revenue has been on the job for three years. In that time, there has not been a single charge or conviction related to offshore tax evasion, as the Canada Revenue Agency itself admits.

People who pay their taxes every year are starting to think that the Liberals are going too easy on the privileged 1%. Who can blame them? What with the Panama papers, the Paradise papers and the Bahamas leaks, we have seen three scandals in three years but zero results.

What will it take for the Minister of National Revenue to do her job like everybody else, go after the real tax cheats, and get some real results out of that plan she claims is working?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to disagree with my NDP colleague. Unlike the Conservatives and the NDP, our government sees tax evasion as a priority.

With respect to offshore tax evasion, under our leadership, the Canada Revenue Agency has done twice as many audits in three years as the Harper Conservatives did in 10 years.

We currently have over 50 ongoing criminal investigations related to offshore tax evasion, and, thanks to our historic investments, we are going to keep working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the millionaire Prime Minister does not realize that taxpayers are not his personal ATM and that ATM does not stand for automatic trust fund machine. The Prime Minister has left Canadians with only debts and deficits, with no sign of a balanced budget. Canadians know that the extravagance of the Liberals will soon become the burden of middle-class families as they continue to raise taxes to pay for Liberal mistakes.

Dollars do not fall from heaven. They have to be earned on earth. Will the Prime Minister come clean and tell Canadians the truth about his plan to raise taxes?

•(1440)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even after the previous Conservative government left an additional \$150 billion worth of debt, we still moved forward to make investments in Canada. That is what we knew we needed to do. We made investments in middle-class Canadians. We lowered their taxes. That has been our plan from day one. Increasing Canada child benefits means they are better off today. Our economy is better off.

Low unemployment, higher growth: That is the Liberal plan for success in our country, and we are going to stick to it, not only now but after the next election.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, his plan is not working. When you incur a debt, you must have a plan to repay it. A deficit today means higher taxes tomorrow for us, our children and our grandchildren. The Prime Minister will have to increase taxes to pay for his irresponsible and out-of-control spending.

Will this Liberal government tell Canadians the truth for once?

When will the Prime Minister unveil his plan to increase taxes?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our plan is very clear. We started by cutting taxes for the middle class. That was very important. We increased and enhanced the Canada child benefit.

This approach is working for the middle class and, at the same time, helping our economy grow. We now have the lowest

unemployment rate in 40 years. Our plan is working. We will continue with our approach.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when negotiating NAFTA, the Prime Minister made the mistake of giving in to all Donald Trump's demands. Canadians are now feeling the effects of his mistakes.

The governments of Ontario and Quebec have both sent letters to the Prime Minister urging him to do something to remove the harmful tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum. When will these tariffs be lifted?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the U.S. imposed its illegal tariffs on our steel and aluminum, we acted quickly. We have already provided \$624 million in support to companies and workers, and we quickly imposed counter-tariffs, perfectly matched, to protect our workers.

Meanwhile, Doug Ford's Conservatives are calling for us to unilaterally surrender to the Americans by unconditionally removing our tariffs. While our government is fighting for our workers, all the Conservatives can do is surrender.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem here is not Doug Ford. It is the Prime Minister's mistake of giving in to Donald Trump.

What is important here is the Canadian economy and Canadian jobs. Manufacturers across Canada cannot afford to continue to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes. What is the plan to get these tariffs lifted? Canadians cannot wait forever.

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for Canadian companies facing illegal U.S. tariffs. Our tariffs on \$16.6 billion worth of U.S. imports are working. Just last week, senior Republicans called on the U.S. administration to lift the U.S. tariffs because of the impact of our retaliatory measures. Meanwhile, the Conservatives want to surrender.

Instead of trying to score cheap political points on the backs of our workers, Doug Ford and his Conservative friends on the other side of the aisle should join us and stand up for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last night Unifor ran an ad intended to continue the fight for thousands of Canadian GM workers who will lose their jobs in Oshawa. Unlike the Prime Minister, who is sitting this one out, workers are fighting for their jobs and community.

The Conservatives gave GM billions in incentives, without a guarantee to protect jobs in Canada. Now the Liberals leave workers left stranded without a paycheque. It is about choices. Why will the Liberals not show some courage and stand up for Canadian workers?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for Canadian auto workers. When I went to the Detroit auto show, I met with Mary Barra and was very clear. I highlighted the fact that they are making a mistake by leaving Oshawa. We will not make that same mistake. We will continue to defend the automotive sector. We will continue to defend the automotive workers. We have seen investments of \$5.6 billion since we formed government in 2015, because we have policies and programs to support this critically important sector. We will continue to fight for our auto workers.

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[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after three years of deficits, the Liberals are now in infrastructure mode. It is about time they started taking care of our infrastructure. They should have invested right away. Our big cities and small towns can no longer wait. The Liberals chose to create an infrastructure bank to make their friends rich, but now comes their pre-election tour.

Do the Liberals realize that Canadians are the ones who will pay for their broken infrastructure promises?

• (1445)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015 we promised Canadians that we would invest in infrastructure to create good jobs for the middle class and develop our economy. We are investing in projects that will make everyday life easier for Canadians, including schools, public transit, housing, culture and recreation, and waste water treatment.

Our government is making unprecedented investments to build the Canada of the 21st century.

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[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, February 4, is World Cancer Day. Almost everyone in this House, and indeed all Canadians, has a friend or family member whose life has been touched by cancer. It continues to be the leading cause of death in Canada. Almost half of all Canadians will develop it in their lifetimes. We all know the devastation a diagnosis can have for a family.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health what our government has been doing to fight cancer.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Brampton South for her important question and her tremendous work on the health committee.

As the health minister, I have certainly heard heartbreaking stories about people affected by cancer. That is why this government has invested over \$1.7 billion over the past 10 years in cancer research. Also, we are promoting healthy eating and physical activity. Last year we unveiled new tobacco rules that the Canadian Cancer Society actually called the best in the world.

While it might be tough, I know that together we will be able to one day beat cancer.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more than 125,000 oil and gas workers have lost their jobs under the Liberals. The Prime Minister vetoed northern gateway with no consultation. He killed energy east with red tape. He overpaid for Trans Mountain, and every delay costs taxpayers more. His mistakes have caused the crisis in the energy sector and have recently threatened the jobs of over 2,000 CNRL workers in northeast Alberta. Now Imperial is cutting rail shipments and considering cancelling a new oil sands project.

Will the Liberals stop their no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-69 is to fix a broken system that was implemented by the previous government in 2012. It took away the ability of indigenous peoples to participate in a meaningful way. It took away the ability of Canadians to participate in the review process. It took away the ability for us to protect our environment, waterways, fish and fish habitat. We are fixing a system that will allow us to move forward on large energy infrastructure projects in a way that makes sense for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, four major new pipelines were built under the Conservatives. The reality is that not a single new inch has been built under the Liberals. Most Canadians agree that the lack of pipelines is a national crisis and that the Liberals are to blame.

The Prime Minister said he wants to phase out the oil sands, and he is doing it. Last week, StatsCan said Canada's economy shrank in November because of low energy production, along with losses in construction, manufacturing and finance. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at risk.

The Prime Minister has a family fortune made mostly from oil and gas, so he really does not care. Why is the Prime Minister forcing Canadians to pay with their jobs for his mistakes?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canada's natural resources have been a source of prosperity for all Canadians and that thousands of jobs have been created in that sector. The previous government failed to diversify our export markets. Ninety-nine per cent of the oil from Alberta goes to the United States. That was the case in 2006, and that was the case in 2015.

We are moving forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in the right way to ensure that we are able to expand our markets. As to the pipelines the hon. member cited, none of those will allow us to get our resources to non-U.S. markets.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Border Services Agency had to reassign up to 550 employees to deal with the illegal migrant crisis. What is more, the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates that this will cost taxpayers over \$1 billion by the end of next year. That does not even include the costs covered by the provinces, which are still waiting to be reimbursed. All of this chaos is creating an increased security risk.

Will the minister commit to appear before the committee to explain his and the Prime Minister's mismanagement of the situation?

• (1450)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Canadians is our government's top priority.

With regard to asylum seekers, we are working closely with the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure that this is actually the case and to give them the resources they need. Even the CBSA said that the deployment of staff from across the country to support the processing of irregular migrants had no impact on the agency's daily operations.

Unlike the previous government, we are taking measures to protect Canadians. We have invested in our security and will continue to do so.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no impact on the operations of the agency? That is in spite of these stories from recent weeks: an individual was deemed a national security concern but was still granted permanent residency; an illegal border crosser was able to enter Canada in spite of admitting to an extensive criminal record. However, there is no discernible impact.

Will the minister appear before a parliamentary committee to be held accountable for Canada's immigration screening processes?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we will never compromise on the safety and security of Canadians. We are working closely with the Canadian Border Services Agency and the RCMP to ensure that this is actually the case. Wherever we need to put resources in place, that is where we are going to put them.

At no time was there any compromising the security of Canadians. I want to quote the CBSA on this. "[T]he deployment of staff from across the country to support the processing of irregular migrants had no impact on the agency's daily operations."

Conservatives may not believe the CBSA. We do, and we support it.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the online application process for the parents and grandparents sponsorship program was a farce. Grace had tried to apply for four years, but the link did not even show up for her on the IRCC website, despite her upgrading her Internet. Yuna felt cheated, as no one told her about the game rules. She opened the form at 9:01. It said she had 10 minutes to complete it. She finished it in three. Then she went over it to make sure everything was correct, but after seven minutes, she was kicked out. Later she heard that she only had to fill out the name and the contact information to be accepted.

How is this a fair process? What will it take for the minister to do the right thing and eliminate the cap?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we inherited a backlog of 167,000 people in the parents and grandparents program. Under Conservative leadership, families were waiting eight years to be reunited with their parents and grandparents.

We have brought that process time down to less than two years. We have quadrupled the number, from 5,000 to 20,000 spots, so that more parents and grandparents can be reunited with their families. We have put in place a fair, first-come-first-served process.

Oral Questions

We will continue to do better. We have already improved the system in many ways. We are—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals came to government, they have left \$372 million unspent at Veterans Affairs, even as service levels deteriorate. Last November, Parliament unanimously supported the NDP motion to end lapsed spending and to ensure that all lapsed spending went to veterans so they would get the services they need and deserve.

I would like to congratulate the new minister in her new role. My question is simple. Will she honour Parliament's unanimous vote to end lapsed spending at Veterans Affairs and ensure that money budgeted for veterans is actually spent on veterans?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member across the way for joining me in the chamber this morning as we conducted the closing ceremonies.

To the member's question, as the member knows, our benefits are demand driven, so no matter how many veterans come forward, when eligible they will receive their benefits. These are based on estimates, and this process guarantees that whether veterans come forward this year, next year or beyond, they will receive benefits.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are showing their true colours when it comes to Quebec. Despite their hypocritical smiles, they are not listening to what Quebeckers need.

The Prime Minister is ignoring the consensus in Quebec regarding the single tax return, concocting some big story about how it could lead to more tax evasion in Quebec. He might as well call us a bunch of thieves.

Why are the Liberals incapable of granting a legitimate request from Quebeckers?

• (1455)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in Shawinigan this morning, along with my colleagues, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, to announce the construction of a new building that will accommodate the 1,300 or more Canada Revenue Agency employees in Mauricie.

This morning I delivered a very clear message for our employees and their families, namely that we are investing in Shawinigan because they are important and because we believe in their future. Unlike the Conservatives, we believe in the importance of investing to maintain and create good jobs in Quebec's rural regions.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a single tax return means getting rid of a form, not public servants. No one will lose their job in Shawinigan or Jonquière or anywhere else in Canada.

The display of bad faith and fearmongering by the Minister of National Revenue is just pathetic. It is the same old story with the Liberals. They say they are open to Quebec and as soon as Quebec trusts them then it is too much of a bother and they stop. They start fearmongering and upsetting everyone.

Can the minister do something positive and tell Quebec it can have a single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was no shortage of fearmongering in Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands in 2011 when the Harper Conservatives brought in their EI reform.

The Maritimes and eastern Quebec were terrified. The Harper Conservatives and today's Conservatives are doing exactly the same thing. In the coming months, we are going to see two categories of promises: one for Quebec and one for western Canada. Divide and conquer is their motto. I encourage them to make “Chop, chop, chop” their next campaign slogan.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue has made a fool of herself again by completely disregarding a request by the Premier of Quebec, the National Assembly of Quebec and the vast majority of Quebeckers.

Instead of using her position to make things easier for Quebeckers, she is chopping away at Quebec's requests. A single tax return, chop! The supply ship *Obelix*, chop! The fitness tax credit, chop! The joke has gone on long enough.

Will the Minister of National Revenue stop viewing Quebeckers as a threat and let them have a single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, had the Conservatives done their homework during the 10 years they were in power, they probably would now have a better understanding of how things work at the Canada Revenue Agency.

The federal government, representing nine provinces and three territories, harmonized its definition of “income”, while Quebec has retained a different definition.

Do we ask the provinces and territories to harmonize their system with Quebec's or do we try to require Quebec to harmonize its system with that of the rest of Canada? We will continue to work with our colleagues—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

*Oral Questions***STATUS OF WOMEN**

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things our government did after it was elected was announce the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

[*English*]

In its interim report, the national inquiry highlighted the need to fund commemoration activities to help honour the lives and legacies of indigenous women and girls and LGBTQ2S individuals.

[*Translation*]

Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality tell the House how our government has responded to the inquiry's recommendation?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her strong advocacy on behalf of the people of Saint-Laurent and her good work on the status of women committee.

We have heard from families and survivors across the country on the need for a commemoration fund to honour the lives and the legacies of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, including LGBTQ2S individuals. We delivered, with a commemoration fund worth over \$10 million, because we know that when we come together to remember, to ensure that the stories of the missing and murdered find a dignified place, we all move forward on this path to reconciliation.

* * *

TOURISM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government says one thing and does another. It promises a balanced budget by 2019, and then deficits for decades to come. It promises to make life more affordable for Canadians, and then increases the cost of everything with an unfair carbon tax. It says that the environment and the economy go hand in hand, and then refuses to negotiate fairly and honestly with the Sunshine Village ski area.

Can the Minister of Tourism explain how threatening to kick a family business off the land it has used for 38 years protects our environment or grows tourism for our economy?

• (1500)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will take no lesson from the Harper Conservatives, who decided to make cuts in the tourism sector by cutting into Canada's marketing to international visitors, basically letting down the 1.8 million Canadians who work in the sector. On this side of the House, we believe in the 1.8 million Canadians who work in the tourism sector. We have reinvested \$100 million to promote Canada's tourism brand to the world, and we will present a good tourism strategy to make sure that Canada is the destination in the world to come to. We all know—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for three years now, the Liberals have been promising reforms to protect our culture from the flood of American content on Netflix and its ilk. Ten days ago, artists from Quebec media and culture gathered in Montreal, and the one message I heard tossed around was “just do it”. The Liberals keep saying that to profit from our culture, one must contribute to our culture, and that there is no free pass. The government should do something, then. Everyone involved agreed that Ottawa already has the tools to start stemming the tide.

Everyone wants the minister to adopt interim measures before the election. Will he take action, or would he rather let our culture slowly die out?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always the same old story. He sounds like a broken record.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to calm down and not shout in the House. There may be times when we do not like what a member opposite says, but we must remain calm and respectful and try to wait our turn.

The hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: I like him a lot too, Mr. Speaker.

I have been travelling around Canada, around all the regions, including several parts of Quebec. What I have been hearing, what people are telling me, is that our producers are happy with the investments we have made in CBC, in Telefilm Canada, in the National Film Board and more. After 10 years of Conservative government cuts, what we have done is put culture and creators back at the centre of everything we are doing.

I have said it before and I will say it again because the member needs to hear this. Those who participate in the system will have to contribute to it.

* * *

[*English*]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors are an important part of families, communities and workplaces in my riding of Surrey Centre and across this country. They help grow Canada's economy and bring valuable knowledge and experience.

Last week in my riding of Surrey Centre, we announced \$3.5 million for the investment in a new AGE-WELL national innovation hub digital health circle.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development please tell the House how this investment will help benefit seniors in my riding of Surrey Centre and across British Columbia?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member of Parliament for Surrey Centre for announcing this next step forward in our innovation and skills plan, and particularly for all his hard work and advocacy.

Our government is committed to the health and vitality of Canadian seniors. By helping commercialize preventive health technologies, the digital health circle will create jobs and reduce health care costs. This is an investment in the independence, dignity and quality of life of British Columbia's seniors. We will continue to invest in British Columbia and in seniors.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES, PROCUREMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks since the Davie shipyard workers protested against the Prime Minister's inaction in Quebec City. As usual, he did not listen to them, and the workers walked away empty-handed.

The Prime Minister is also ignoring the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on National Defence, which is urging the government to take action for the navy. With his family fortune, this Prime Minister does not need to worry about paying the bills, but the shipyard workers and their families do. The shipbuilding strategy is sinking under the Liberals. Costs are skyrocketing, and delivery times are getting longer.

When will the Davie shipyard and the Royal Canadian Navy get the *Obelix*?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear in our national shipbuilding strategy. The *Obelix* is not a solution that we are considering at this time.

I would ask my hon. colleague why he did not stand up for the workers, the men and women of Davie, when he was in government and the Conservatives excluded that shipyard. Our government is working on providing opportunities for the Davie shipyard. That member and his government did nothing for Davie.

* * *

● (1505)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after many difficult years of austerity, Quebec achieved a balanced budget while still meeting its responsibilities in health, education, early childhood centres and so forth.

While Quebec was tightening its belt, money was flying out the window in Ottawa. A \$19-billion deficit is going toward dirty oil in Alberta, a used pipeline, and railcars to transport their oil to Quebec.

Instead of putting Quebec in debt for generations to come, will the government start to use Quebecers' money for Quebecers?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the middle-class tax cut and the enhanced Canada child benefit applied to all Canadians, including Quebecers.

It is very important to strengthen the middle class across Canada. That is our approach, and it is working. We have the lowest unemployment in 40 years. Our economy is growing, especially in Quebec.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a \$19-billion deficit for oil. Considering this government masquerades as the Green Party all over the world, that is a total slap in the face. This money is not going towards compensating our farmers, fighting tax havens or paying for migrants. Furthermore, federal health transfers are declining.

Could the government explain to Quebecers why it is spending their money left and right without sparing a thought for their priorities?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue with our approach. It is clearly a good way to improve the lives of middle-class Canadians across the country.

In Quebec in particular, the economy is now growing and the unemployment rate is very low. That means our approach and the approach of the Quebec government are working well together. This is a great situation for Quebec.

* * *

[English]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, when asked last week about Greyhound pulling out of B.C., the Minister of Transport said, "We are working with the provinces.... We will be there if they request us to help them on a cost-sharing basis."

The Saskatchewan Transportation Company has been shut down and sold off. Is the federal government also offering to share the cost of restoring needed bus service in our province?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said last November, we are there to help, on a cost-sharing basis, those provinces that are willing to invest in providing some of the routes that have been abandoned by Greyhound and that have not been taken up by other companies in the private sector.

That applies to all the four western provinces. We are there because we realize that certain people depend on the bus service; they have no other alternative. We will be there.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, you will find the unanimous consent of the House to table the following document: the Liberal Party platform from 2015. Page 76 talks about returning to a balanced budget in 2019.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, during question period, I mentioned the report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, which gives 14 reasons why the Liberals should immediately award the Davie shipyard a contract to build the *Obelix*. I am seeking unanimous consent, in the spirit of transparency, to table this important report for taxpayers, for the Navy and for the Davie workers.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to keep our promises in both official languages so that I think you will find unanimous consent to allow me to table in the House of Commons the Liberal Party platform showing that the budget will be balanced in the year 2019, which is this year.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

● (1510)

MICHAEL FERGUSON

Hon. Jane Philpott (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fellow parliamentarians, House of Commons staff and honoured guests, I rise today in sorrow to pay tribute to Auditor General Michael Ferguson, a dedicated and honourable public servant who died too soon. He was just 60 years old.

[*Translation*]

Over the past seven years, Mr. Ferguson was a tireless champion of a transparent, open government that is accountable to all Canadians. He never wavered in his mission, even in recent months as he fought cancer.

During my time as minister of health and later as minister of indigenous services, I quickly came to know him as a man dedicated to helping the most vulnerable citizens, particularly in the context of justice and equality for indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

A son of New Brunswick, Michael Ferguson devoted his life to public service. His career serving the people of New Brunswick took

him from comptroller of the provincial books to auditor general of New Brunswick, and then deputy minister of finance and secretary to the Board of Management. Along the way, he spent time as the president of the New Brunswick Institute of Chartered Accountants and spent three years on the province's Public Sector Accounting Board before being elected to the Fellowship of the New Brunswick Institute of Chartered Accountants.

In November 2011 Mr. Ferguson was appointed to be Canada's Auditor General, just the 14th person to hold the position since Confederation, following in the footsteps of the formidable Sheila Fraser.

[*Translation*]

Diligent, dedicated and humble, he was a model public servant. All Canadians owe him a debt of gratitude.

[*English*]

As Auditor General, his office examined such foundational issues as rail safety, tax collection, access to health services for remote first nations communities, food protection, cybersecurity and military procurement.

All governments must be open to outside critique. Michael Ferguson was able to focus on the granular details of government while also recognizing systemic issues. He was always striving to make us better as a government and as a country.

[*Translation*]

Michael Ferguson helped strengthen our democracy and maintain the integrity that Canadians expect from our public institutions.

[*English*]

Two days ago, he passed away surrounded by his wife Georgina and sons Malcolm and Geoffrey.

He is gone too soon, but we know that his was a life well lived.

On behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I offer our deepest condolences to Mr. Ferguson's family, friends and colleagues.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too join the President of the Treasury Board and rise to pay tribute to an extraordinary public servant who dedicated his entire professional working life to making Canada a better place. I offer my deepest condolences on the passing of Auditor General Michael Ferguson, who succumbed to cancer and passed away this past Saturday surrounded by his family.

Michael Ferguson had a distinguished career, serving the Province of New Brunswick in several senior roles prior to being appointed Auditor General of Canada in 2011 by then prime minister Stephen Harper. Michael Ferguson quickly established his reputation for tough, thorough audits. Over successive governments, he never shied away from bringing the failures of government departments and agencies to Parliament's attention.

Oral Questions

When Michael Ferguson appeared as a witness at a committee meeting, Canadians knew that a very bright light was about to be shone into the corners of their government and that accountability would be demanded. He made no attempt to sugar-coat the facts. His reports and committee testimony were delivered without passion or rhetoric. The strong terms he used to describe failures of government were always presented factually, and he was never afraid to be exact and precise regardless of the topic or possible consequences for the government of the day. He leaves a legacy of forcing governments, and indeed all public servants, to constantly improve in order to serve Canadians.

He will be missed by the thousands of public servants from across Canada who want to deliver the best service that they can to Canadians. He will be missed by the dedicated staff at the Office of the Auditor General. He will be missed by all parliamentarians, and in particular by my colleagues from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. He will be missed by all Canadians who demand accountability from their government.

To his wife and sons, I extend my deepest sympathies. On behalf of the Conservative opposition, our condolences, thoughts and prayers are with them.

• (1515)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a friend and Canada's Auditor General, Michael Ferguson.

Canada has lost an exemplary public servant. On behalf of the NDP and myself, I want to begin by expressing my sincere condolences to Michael's family and his colleagues at the Office of the Auditor General.

A true professional who understood the importance that oversight has on the performance of government, Michael was a leader in the field of auditing and highly respected across Canada and around the world.

I would like to begin my short remarks by reading quotes from Michael Ferguson to us, to Parliament. This is actually from a report entitled "A Message from the Auditor General" in 2016. This is Michael talking to us:

I believe that the Office of the Auditor General of Canada is uniquely equipped to support Parliament in its oversight role. Indeed, in our work, it does not matter who sits on which side of the House of Commons. Our business is to examine the activities and programs of government, and to provide parliamentarians with impartial information about what is working and what is not.

The report goes on:

Despite those good outcomes, I believe that government could get more value from our audits if it used them differently—if departments and agencies focused on becoming more productive and put more emphasis on what they are delivering. After all, in one way or another, everything that government does is intended to serve Canadians. As such, government should "do service well," to benefit Canadians, both individually and collectively.

That "do service well" was a main theme that he instilled in the current public accounts committee: the idea that at the end of the day, all of the measuring, all of the performance audits, all of the accountability are about Canadians receiving the service that they are entitled to. That is what Michael was all about.

I was actually the chair of the public accounts committee during the transition from Sheila Fraser to Michael Ferguson. I am going to be honest with colleagues. The only thing that was on my mind when Sheila's term was up was who on earth and where on earth were we going to find anybody who could fill Sheila Fraser's shoes. I mean, Sheila was a force of nature. The world knew about the work that Sheila Fraser did.

Then along came this name. I had met him at Canadian Council of Public Accounts meetings, but I did not really know him. He was a long drink of water named Michael Ferguson, the auditor general from New Brunswick. He did not speak French, which was a problem politically. He did not speak French at that time, as my friend from Quebec is emphasizing.

I think the important end of that story is that he made commitments to ensure that he was as fluent as he needed to be in our second official language, our equal official language, and from all accounts he did that. It was another commitment that he kept when he made it to Canadians.

However, those things were working a bit against him, as members can imagine, given the politics of the day, and I did not really know where to go. I had heard he was pretty good, but we had this French problem, and what were we going to do?

Then I got a phone call from Sheila. I knew Sheila well. We worked together for seven years on the public accounts committee. I do not think I am betraying any confidences at this point now, given where we are. She said to me, "Look, David, I know that there is the issue around the French, and you have to deal with that. I won't speak to that. That's not my role, but I am here, David, to say that if you believe that I have any credibility and you respect my word as the former auditor general of Canada, then please do everything you can to make sure Michael Ferguson becomes the next Auditor General."

Boy, did she have that right. Michael Ferguson was our Auditor General. By the time Michael was done, Michael was the people's auditor. The people in Canada knew that they had a friend, an ally, in Michael Ferguson, just as they had with Sheila Fraser, and that his sole purpose was to provide accountability and transparency regardless of what party was in power, knowing the importance of working with a non-partisan public accounts committee.

• (1520)

Those who have served on it know that it is a special calling. One does not perform the same way one does on other committees. One's job is to leave one's membership card at the door, go in and deal with the Auditor General's report findings as a parliamentarian. That is what Michael was about. He was about making sure the system worked for Canadians.

In closing, I would like to quote Michael. He said:

Parliamentary committees play a crucial role in challenging departments. I believe that there is an important role for parliamentary committees, whether those of the House of Commons or the Senate, to use our audit reports not just to understand what has happened, but also to make sure that changes take place. Committees should invite departments and agencies to appear before them multiple times, until it is evident that they have made the changes needed to improve their services to people.

In a few years, when this government is at the end of its current mandate and I am nearing the end of mine, I wonder if I will find myself repeating these words, or if I will be able to talk about real improvements in government services built around people.

I thank Mike for everything he has done for our country. He has left behind an incredible legacy and challenged us to do service better. It is now up to us, colleagues, to rise to that occasion.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Does the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel have the unanimous consent of the House to add his remarks?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' confidence in our institutions is largely based on the diligence of those who occupy the highest offices. Those individuals have a duty to be exemplary and above reproach. Auditor General Michael Ferguson lived up to that expectation right up until his death, which we were shocked and saddened to learn of today.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to offer my condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

Mr. Ferguson showed a great deal of respect for the French language. When he was appointed as Auditor General, he did not speak French, but he immediately committed to learning it. Just a year later, he kept that promise when, much to his credit, he delivered his first report in both official languages, demonstrating a very respectable knowledge of French. By so doing, he showed that he understood his responsibilities as Auditor General.

Mr. Ferguson was also known for the quality of his work. He submitted comprehensive, targeted reports that were always relevant. The Bloc Québécois always had a very good relationship with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and always appreciated Mr. Ferguson's attention to detail, objectivity and warmth.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave Mr. Ferguson's family and friends with a quote by the great French author Alexandre Dumas, who said:

Those whom we love and lose are no longer where they were before. They are now wherever we are.

• (1525)

The Speaker: There have been discussions among representatives of all the parties in the House, and I understand that there is unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of Michael Ferguson, Auditor General of Canada.

I invite the House to rise and observe a moment of silence.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

Routine Proceedings

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Carleton, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 5, 2019, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

The Speaker: I must say to the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington that today is my wife's birthday, and she was born in Chatham.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she is a very lucky woman to be able to lay claim to that birthplace. Please convey my best wishes on her birthday.

I have a number of petitions, quite a stack actually.

Back in the 41st Parliament, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling for the government to create a national strategy on palliative care to ensure that every Canadian has access to high-quality palliative care at their end of life. As such, this petition is calling on Parliament to establish that national strategy on palliative care.

NAVIGABLE WATERS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents who are calling on the Parliament of Canada to support protections for the Thames River system.

The Conservative government stripped environmental regulations covered in the Navigable Waters Protection Act and thousands of rivers were left vulnerable, particularly heritage rivers like the Thames. Despite the Liberal government promising to reinstate the environmental protections that were gutted, it did not.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to support my Bill C-355, which commits government to prioritizing the protection of the Thames River by amending the Navigation Protection Act.

* * *

• (1530)

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.

*Business of Supply***PRIVILEGE**

ACCESS TO INFORMATION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on December 11, 2018, by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington concerning the government response to written Question No. 2001. I would like to thank the member for having raised the matter, as well as the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for his comments.

In raising this matter, the member for Perth—Wellington explained that, in response to his written Question No. 2001, the government had indicated that:

...a response could disclose personal and solicitor-client privileged information. Therefore, the Government must respectfully decline to respond.

This, he argued, amounted to the government boldly refusing to answer the question and, hence, should be considered as a deliberate defiance of the authority of the House.

[*Translation*]

For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader contended that, as it is the prerogative of a minister to refuse to answer a question that is considered a *sub judice* matter, this was simply a matter of debate.

As explained in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 529:

As with oral questions, it is acceptable for the government, in responding to a written question, to indicate to the House that it cannot supply an answer.

[*English*]

Speaker Lamoureux had also addressed this in a ruling on May 5, 1971, at page 5515 of the Debates, when he stated:

It is correct, of course, to state as a general principle that a member should not be impeded in the discharge of his parliamentary duties. I suggest that this in itself does not create an obligation on the part of the government to supply any and all information sought by a member, either by way of an oral question or a written question.

[*Translation*]

Additionally, the authority accorded to the Speaker to judge responses is limited. Bosc and Gagnon, at page 529, is clear on this when it states:

There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions.

[*English*]

Accordingly, I do not find that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAXES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by 16 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada I think most of us envision is one that is prosperous, socially just and environmentally healthy. The motion on the floor of the House today, in a sometimes roundabout way, touches on a number of these themes. However, there is an additional theme it touches on as well, perhaps unwittingly, which is the importance of truth in our political discourse.

Given the economic focus of so many parts of the motion, it is important we examine its contents in the economic context we find ourselves today. It is important we start by acknowledging that over these past few years, things have actually been going very well for the Canadian economy. We know that since 2015, the Canadian economy has added over 800,000 jobs, primarily private sector full-time jobs. We also know that unemployment is at a historic low, the lowest in over 40 years, since we began tracking that data.

However, it is not enough to simply acknowledge the economy might be doing well. We have to ensure we take steps that make the economy work for everyone. In particular, we need to make sure the economy is working in a way that makes life more affordable for Canadian families struggling to make ends meet. This has been a focus of our government from the very beginning.

In particular, we can point to the fact that we know Canadian families today are, on average, about \$2,000 better off than they were at the time of the last federal election. There are a number of reasons this is the case. First and foremost, we have introduced certain social policies that put more money in the pockets of ordinary Canadian families. If we look at the Canada child benefit, this is a program putting more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families. To date, it has lifted over 300,000 Canadian children out of poverty. In the area I represent, it helps about 11,000 kids every month. The average benefit for families who qualify for this program is about \$6,800. That is \$48 million a year coming to the communities in my constituency and making life more affordable for Canadians.

While it is all well and good to be pointing out these statistics, which are meaningful, it is extremely important we remember there are human beings behind every one of these statistics. I remember a conversation with a single mom I bumped into in the town of Stellarton, who told me that she was able to afford a new outfit for her kids for the first day of school for the first time after she started receiving the Canada child benefit. She said that every year in September it was an embarrassing time of year for her because she never felt she could afford to put clothes on her kids' backs. These are the stories that will stick with me, as a representative, for the rest of my life.

Business of Supply

I have talked to other families who have said that they have been able to enrol their kids in swimming lessons. I have spoken to other families who have said that they are trying hard to put healthier food on the table. These are positive social outcomes. It does not matter which party one represents, we can acknowledge that when families like this are better off than they are well served by government policies.

We can look at policies like the Canada workers benefit, which can put up to \$500 more in the pockets of people who are working hard but unable to get ahead. We can look at policies like the tax cut on the middle class, which raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadian income earners and made life a little more affordable for the rest of us.

On a number of occasions, the motion before the House today suggests that life has somehow become less affordable under this government. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not just these measures I can point to that demonstrate that life is actually becoming less expensive for Canadian families. If we look at the point in the motion that refers to the Canada pension plan, seniors are better off today than they were three years ago, and that is for a number of reasons.

We have rolled back the age of eligibility for old age security from age 67, under the previous government, to age 65. We have boosted the guaranteed income supplement, which helps low-income single seniors, some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, who can now receive up to \$947 extra dollars a year as a result of this policy change. When it comes to the Canada pension plan, it is helping the generation currently working today have a more secure and dignified retirement when they finish their careers.

When it comes to students, which I know are referenced in the motion as well, we have made certain changes to previously existing boutique tax credits, but we have reprofiled benefits for students so that low-income students can afford to go to school. We have done this by increasing the Canada student grants program by 50%.

• (1535)

We have also made it more affordable on the back end of students' education so they do not have to start repaying Canada student loans until they were earning at least \$25,000. Coming from the province of Nova Scotia where so many young people get educated and have to move away, knowing they will have this relief on the back end of their education from one of our many universities or colleges will encourage more people to stay in the communities where they came from or where they gained an education.

The thing that is perhaps most disappointing is that each of the measures I just listed, that make life more affordable for Canadians could not earn the support of the Conservative Party of Canada. On the one hand, the Conservatives criticize us for making life more expensive. However, at each and every turn, when we put forward policies that are designed to improve the quality of life and affordability of life for Canadian families, they vote against those measures.

I note that the Conservatives have suggested in the motion as well that somehow small businesses are worse off as a result of the policies our government has introduced. This is completely false. I

note in particular that as January 1, the small business tax rate has come from 11% to 9%. Put simply, nine is a smaller number than 11, and small businesses are saving money as a result of this policy change. A small business that is able to take full advantage of the small business tax cut can save up to \$7,500 in an ordinary year.

However, it is not just the lower tax rate from which small businesses are benefiting. We have new trade deals with the European Union, the United States and with countries around the Pacific Rim as well. These are creating opportunities for small businesses to export their products and to hire more people in Canadian communities.

If we look at the measures that were announced in the fall economic statement this year, we are investing in measures that help businesses create jobs rather than just allowing a single person who might own all the shares in a company to become wealthier.

We are allowing businesses to achieve tax incentives if they invest in things like new equipment or new buildings that are going to help increase their productivity. I note as well that we have boosted investment at regional development agencies in Atlantic Canada, such as ACOA, that will help diversify our regional economy and create jobs.

Again, when we had a motion on the floor last year to increase support for Atlantic Canadian business growth, every Conservative member of Parliament voted against that measure. I do not want to beat a dead horse here, but we have extra investments in innovation and in infrastructure that are leading to projects in my riding, like the highway twinning between Sutherlands River and Antigonish, the creation of a new institute of government and centre for innovation on campus at one of my alma maters, St. FX University, and a new Pictou Campus trades innovation centre for the skilled trades in our community. Investments in infrastructure are putting people to work for local small businesses.

I have a specific interest in one particular part of the motion, given my role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment. Subsection (h) of today's motion suggests that the cost of our environmental policy could go as high as \$5,000 in the future. These numbers are just being picked out of the air. The Conservatives' strategy when it comes to the environment seems to be to trick Canadians and not take action on climate change.

Realistically, I assume the vast majority of us in the House can agree that climate change is a serious problem. If we can agree that it is a serious problem, and not all of us do agree on that, we can turn the debate to what steps we should implement to solve that problem rather than throw our hands up in the air, saying that this is not good enough, that we are not going to contribute anything to the debate.

In my opinion, we have a responsibility and an obligation not only to take action, but to identify the most effective measures. Canadians, by and large, know how serious the threat of climate change is. It was outlined in significant detail in the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to the United Nations. We are staring down the barrel of a serious problem and it is incumbent on all of us in the House to take action to do something about that problem.

Business of Supply

Our plan, despite the singular focus of the opposition on our plan to put a price on pollution, contains many different elements that will help us achieve meaningful climate emissions reductions in order to prevent catastrophic damage to our communities.

● (1540)

What a lot of Canadians do not realize is that we are putting forward policies that are going to ensure that by 2030, 90% of our electricity will be generated by renewable resources. We are making the largest investment in public transit to encourage more commuters to take mass transit to work rather than their own vehicles so they can minimize their own carbon footprint. We are phasing out coal by 2030, which is more than 30 years in advance of the schedule under the previous government.

The great thing about investing in these different kinds of programs is that this leads not only to a solution to a problem we are dealing with, but to an extraordinary, once-in-a-generation economic opportunity.

When I look at our plan to make investments in energy efficiency, I see that jobs are already being created in the communities I represent. I have talked about them a few times in the House. However, I will bring up the example once more of the Trinity group of companies, based out of Pictou County, Nova Scotia.

It was started by a couple of guys who were good craftsmen. They were able to do home repairs. It was just two people in the beginning. However, when they started to benefit from government programs that invested in energy efficiency, they realized there was a market to not only bring down our country's emissions, but save ordinary Canadians money on their home heating bills each year. This was done by replacing old windows with more energy efficient ones, installing smart thermostats and taking other efficiency measures.

They are able to help bring down the cost of living for ordinary Canadians. They are able to take part in the global fight against climate change. Importantly, they are able to create jobs. There are dozens of employees working at home for this business now, making life more affordable and reducing our emissions at the same time.

However, this is not the only example that stands out. We can look at CarbonCure, which is in the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour's riding. It has discovered a way to strengthen concrete by sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere.

There are some incredible technological developments going on. By investing in the green economy, we are able to achieve economic growth by being on the front end of a very important economic wave.

Of course, the policies I have referred to are not the entirety of our plan to combat climate change. Yes, our plan does include putting a price on pollution. Now that I have more than the 35 seconds allowed every day in question period, I am happy to make an attempt to explain it so more people can understand what is actually going on.

When we acknowledged climate change was a problem and when we acknowledged that we had to do something about it, we went through a process. We asked experts who had been studying climate

economics and science for their entire careers about the best and most effective path forward. We learned that the single best tool we had to reduce emissions was to put a price on pollution, while maintaining the affordability of life, which I know is a real concern for so many of the people I represent. People will change their behaviour and we will bring emissions down over time and the revenue collected from the price on pollution will be returned to families to ensure that at the end of each year, they are left better off. This plan puts more money in the pockets of Canadians and brings emissions down.

Members do not have to take my word for it. They can talk to last year's Nobel Prize winner in economics, Professor William Nordhaus. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for his discovery that the method I just described was the most effective way to bring climate emissions down. When asked where we could look for models to implement the system, he pointed to the system in British Columbia.

This is a bipartisan idea. Stephen Harper's former director of policy is advocating for our plan. Preston Manning, who I think everyone in the House would recognize as a household name, is advocating to put a price on pollution. Even members of Doug Ford's team in Ontario testified before Parliament just a few years ago that the single most effective tool we had for transition to a low-carbon economy was to put a price on pollution.

A number of notable people on both sides of the political spectrum in the United States recently signed a letter, including chairs of the Federal Reserve and chairs of the economic advisory council to the President, saying this was the best opportunity we had to achieve meaningful emissions reductions.

It is important we talk about facts that we can agree on, rather than lobbying numbers in the air to trick Canadians about how expensive this plan will be, so we can debate the merit of ideas. If members of the opposition have ideas about how we can reduce our emissions, I will listen to them. If they are more effective than our plan, I will approach that conversation in good faith.

However, the response we have seen to date regarding our plan to price pollution and make life more affordable has been to spread misinformation about the cost. This is not a helpful contribution to the debate. It is perhaps the most important public policy debate we will have in my lifetime.

Many of us here are parents. We want to ensure our kids have a healthy environment to grow up in and to experience, as we did.

● (1545)

We also want to ensure that we capitalize on the \$23 trillion opportunity, according to the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney. We have to take advantage of these opportunities. If we are not one of the first to market, we will miss the boat. It is the only way forward and it is the responsible way forward to meaningfully approach the threat posed by climate change.

Business of Supply

However, I have good news. We are going to achieve social cost savings by making these kinds of investments. The cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of taking action. We are already paying the price if we look at municipal property taxes. I was speaking with a representative of the Insurance Bureau of Canada today. He indicated we were paying more today as a result of climate change and our failure to take action over the previous decades.

If we look at the big bond rating agencies, they are going to make it more expensive by downgrading the credit rating of municipalities that do not have a climate plan. They are going to make it more expensive to build, for example, flood mitigation infrastructure. They are going to make it harder to borrow money to deal with climate change on the back end if municipalities do not have an effective plan to combat climate change on the front end.

We recognize that we are already paying the costs. By 2030, I believe the estimate is that we are going to be paying about \$5 billion to deal with the results of climate change, such as floods, wildfires and hurricanes.

It is important to make one final point during my remarks today. One of the themes that runs through each of the sub-points made in today's motion is the fact there are a lot of half truths and omissions that the Conservatives have used to try to drive home the point that life has somehow become less affordable. At the beginning of my remarks, I established that it was simply not true.

This assertion that 81% of middle-income Canadians are seeing higher taxes is false. The next point, that the average income tax increase for middle-income families is \$840, is also false. There are allegations in here that we are trying to discount employee benefits and dental benefits. That is not happening. The Conservatives are suggesting that the price of our environmental plan is going to be \$5,000 per family.

All pieces of information are false. The entire strategy of the Conservatives seems to be to throw information out there that is completely false in the hope that Canadians grab onto it and are scared to embrace a responsible plan that is creating jobs, reducing our pollution and helping ordinary families get by.

At a time in our global political discourse when we are seeing certain movements around the world rely on false information in the hope they can grab lightning and have some sort of populist movement is greatly disappointing.

As well, at certain times when the media calls out some of the falsehoods being peddled, there are attacks on it. We are operating in a post-truth era of politics and it is greatly disappointing.

While, in my opinion, the motion is inaccurate and somewhat ridiculous, it is disappointing to me that the strategy to earn the support of Canadians is to trick them into believing things like life being more expensive or plans being ineffective. If we are going to have a debate about ideas, it is essential that we rely on facts, not these half truths in order to deceive folks.

I want the people who are watching at home to pay attention to politics. We have the opportunity and a platform here to do serious good, to make life more affordable for Canadians, to improve our environmental protections and to grow our economy. If they watch

closely, they will see that there are members, probably of all parties, who take liberties with the facts. However, there is something going on that we all need to be diligent toward, and that is ensuring the debates we have here are based on science, facts and evidence, not ideology and misinformation. Therefore, if they are watching and they see something they do not like, I encourage them to get engaged. If people are not going to take steps to move forward on the things they care about, nobody else is going to.

I am thankful for the opportunity to stand and debate the motion today. I care so strongly about making life more affordable for the folks I represent, for protecting our environment and ensuring we create economic growth opportunities so people in places like Pictou County, Antigonish and the eastern shore of Nova Scotia have an opportunity to make a living or to stay at home if they choose.

● (1550)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to continue speaking to those people watching, the voters of Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, those parts of Nova Scotia, in the vein the member was. He is criticizing our position on the carbon tax and our questions about how much more it will cost rural Nova Scotians who heat their home with home heating oil. He basically is suggesting we are lying to Canadians. This from a government that blacks out the documents it has, showing what the costs of the carbon tax are to his constituents in rural Nova Scotia.

Seniors on a fixed income do not have more money to pay higher costs for home heating oil, for driving to get their groceries or for the groceries themselves. If he wants to have the honest debate he suggests, when will he go to the Prime Minister and ask him to unblock the lists and not to black out the pages with the costs? If he wants a real debate, the government should stop hiding the figures.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, as a starting point, there is a helpful fact that we need to understand. There are only a few provinces where our price on pollution applies. Nova Scotia is not one of them. The provincial government took a leadership role and established its own pricing system, the cap and trade system, so it does not necessarily even apply in Nova Scotia.

If the member is concerned about the cost of living and home heating for the seniors he raised in his question, I am curious as to why the Conservative Party did not support the boost to the guaranteed income supplement that I raised in my remarks. It could put almost \$1,000 more in the pockets of low-income single seniors. I am curious as to why it opposed the changes to old age security, reducing the age of eligibility from 67 to 65. Its motion specifically attacks the Canada pension plan.

To address the point that the hon. member made, families will be better off under our plan because they are going to receive an incentive at tax time that will make life more affordable.

Business of Supply

•(1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague opposite for his speech. It goes without saying that in Parliament we must always try to find solutions, especially to the problems that will affect the planet and all of humanity.

With that in mind, we must remember, however, that the Conservative motion calls on the government to not raise taxes on Canadians. What they are criticizing is the carbon tax, which regular consumers will have to pay but big polluters will not.

I am asking the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change whether it is possible to introduce measures that do not amount to political grandstanding. You announced \$1.6 billion in assistance to the oil industry. Everyone would have thought it sensible to invest this money in a cleaner method of oil extraction, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would remind the member that he must address the Chair, not the parliamentary secretary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member is committed to the cause of doing something meaningful on climate change, and I have had a few conversations with him on that topic.

Before I address the real crux of his question, when it comes to big emitters, there is a point that needs to be made. There has been a lot of talk in the House that they are somehow exempt from our plan. That is simply false. Big emitters pay the same price on pollution. They are subject to the exact same price signal that everyone else is. I wanted to put that on the record.

When it comes to the portion of his question that dealt with the energy sector, it is important to recognize that we cannot just flip switches and change our economy overnight. We know there is a global transition towards increased renewable fuels over time and that we need to support those in sectors that will be affected, like the energy sector. It is and has been a good job-creating industry in our country for a significant period of time. However, we also have to make investments to catch the front end of the next economic wave in the green economy that allow us to get those kinds of renewable jobs, allow homes to become more efficient and communities to become more effective as well.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is sometimes frustrating when we talk past each other. In the end result, what are Canadians really looking for? They are looking to see how much more money is in their pockets than there was before. In this Conservative motion, we are talking about statistics that come from a Fraser Institute study from September 2017. In footnote 1, this study says very clearly that what is not covered by this report are government transfers, including the new Canada child benefit program. The government's argument is that the Canada child benefit has, through a different measure, placed more money in the average family's pocket than these taxes have taken away.

Therefore, in the end result, the real question is, which plan puts more money in the average person's pocket? The semantics being used is that their taxes are going up, but the report saying that does not cover the main reason the government is saying that more money is in people's pockets. We are all talking past each other. I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary if he agrees with that analysis.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I not only agree with the analysis but I would suggest that it is indisputable. It is in the report he mentioned. For the record, the Fraser Institute has no connection to me being a Fraser as well. I would like to distance myself from it as far as humanly possible.

The reality is that if members were to knock on doors in my riding, the median income is a little over \$20,000 a year for an individual. When I knock on doors, sometimes kids answer who have not had enough to eat. I have the power company on speed-dial because so many people call me about not being able to pay their power bills at the end of the month. Through measures like the Canada child benefit, the average family that qualifies in my riding will be \$6,800 further ahead, tax free. This is a meaningful change for families. It is going to allow kids to eat more healthy food, to go to school with new outfits and allow more kids to take part in sports and other activities. It is good policy.

•(1600)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member is very well intentioned when it comes to wanting to help the planet, but he is misleading Canadians when he talks about the carbon tax. Taking money out of Canadians' pockets and putting it back at the end of the year is going to do nothing for the planet. Even if Canada totally eliminated its footprint, it is less than 2% of the global problem, so it would have an insignificant effect.

We know that the carbon tax does not work. Australia had one, but it got rid of it because it drove the cost of everything up. B.C. has one, and its emissions have gone up. Quebec has cap and trade, and its emissions have gone up. These mechanisms do not work and they take money out of the pockets of Canadians.

Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the level of discourse that she brings to the House. She was always a pleasure to chat with when we previously worked together on committee.

However, when it comes to the effectiveness of these measures, every climate economist who has looked at this has suggested that this is the most effective tool we have. If people try to build houses and they do not use a hammer and nails, they are going to be a lot less effective in doing it. We have to use the best tool that we have in the tool box, and we will be better off with this plan than without it.

There is one argument that the hon. member made that I cannot buy into, and that was that Canada is too small to make a difference. It is frustrating when I hear this. We never had that argument debated when we were talking about Vimy Ridge, when we were talking about Canada's contribution to the Second World War. The fact is, Canada has always been a small country that has punched above its weight.

Business of Supply

We are in the fight of our time right now, and if we cannot demonstrate a leadership role, then who is going to do so?

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Madam Speaker, when the parliamentary secretary talks about a tax on pollution, does he agree at all with any of the statistics that are coming from the other side?

Mr. Sean Fraser: The short answer, Madam Speaker, is no. The somewhat longer but still short answer is that every leading climate economist who has looked at this issue has disagreed with that point of view. We have talked to people who have won Nobel Prizes, who have chaired the Federal Reserve in the United States, and political leaders from both sides of the aisle in Canada. Consistently, the answer is that emissions will come down and families will be better off if we put a price on pollution and return the revenues directly to Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, first off, I should tell you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, because we have much to say about this issue.

I want to pick up on my colleague's last few words. If the Liberals' carbon tax plan was really intended to return this money directly to Canadian families, why did they not propose such a plan in the first place? Instead, they asked the provinces to impose a carbon tax, and any holdouts had this solution forced on them. What a load of claptrap. Whenever we bring up the carbon tax with the members of this government, their story changes by the hour, and unfortunately, nothing is being done to help our planet.

We are here to discuss a real issue for Canadian families and indeed for all Canadians, namely the consequences of the Prime Minister's mistakes. He is making Canadians across the country pay for his failures and for his inability to balance the budget. That means taxes will go up again, which will leave us more vulnerable to a possible economic downturn. Again, that is not something that is happening today, but it is something we can expect to happen, and Canadians will be the ones paying the price.

In 2015, the Prime Minister promised to balance the budget in 2019. Today, I just heard a speech about honesty in politics, openness and how to get people to pay more attention to politics. How can we trust a party whose leader promised over and over that if Canadians voted for him, he would post small deficits, then an even smaller deficit, and ultimately return to a balanced budget in 2019? That claim appears in his platform and was repeated many times. It was not just anyone saying it, it was the party leader, the person leading the government today.

What happened when that party took office? Once it got what it wanted, it no longer felt obligated to keep its promises and commitments and to run only small deficits, so we now have enormous deficits. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Department of Finance, with this government, it will take years to balance the budget. With a party that does that sort of thing, where is the honesty, justice and transparency for Canadians?

Every year that the Prime Minister runs deficits, he is borrowing money from future generations, my children and grandchildren and those of all Canadians. One day, someone will have to pay back that money. Unfortunately, it is our future generations that will have to

pay for this Prime Minister's mistakes, mistakes he will continue to repeat as long as he is the head of government. It is time to put an end to this government before the damage becomes irreversible.

That is why our motion today calls on the government to do one simple little thing. It would take the Prime Minister's Office two minutes to agree to the request in the motion we moved today. We just want the Prime Minister to confirm in writing that he will not raise Canadians' taxes any more. When the Prime Minister is in the House for question period, he can often be seen signing all kinds of documents. If he wanted to, he could take two minutes tomorrow to write up a little note saying that he promises not to raise Canadians' taxes any more.

However, judging from the speeches today and everything the Prime Minister and government members have said, they clearly have no intention of making any such promise. Why? Because they have no intention of keeping it.

Our motion summarizes the facts. I would like to take a closer look at it because I think that will be helpful to Canadians who will soon have an opportunity to put an end to the mandate of a Prime Minister who is more concerned about image than about Canadians' well-being. The only thing he is really interested in is Canadians' money, and that is because he needs to cover his massive deficits.

● (1605)

The motion begins as follows:

That, given:

(a) 81% of middle-income Canadians are seeing higher taxes since the government came to power;

The fact is that the people of my riding, Mégantic—L'Érable, simply do not believe that the Liberal government has improved their lives in any way, shape or form since 2015.

The motion goes on:

(b) the average income tax increase for middle income families is \$840;

Despite the government's rhetoric, it is always careful not to mention all the schemes it is using to try to take more and more money out of the pockets of middle-class Canadians, the very ones it claims to want to help.

Of course, the Prime Minister does not need to worry about a tax hike of \$840. However, for many Canadians who are just \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills every month, that is a lot of money.

Returning to the text of the motion, it continues:

(c) the government's higher Canada Pension Plan premiums could eventually cost up to \$2,200 per household;

This is another Liberal government scheme. The Liberals take Canadians for granted, and they know full well the money will eventually run out because they keep posting deficit after deficit.

Business of Supply

Every measure the government takes ends up with the need to come up with even more money. Where is the Liberal government going to get the money to pay for its out-of-control spending? Obviously, that money is going to come out of the pockets of Canadians in the middle class and those working hard to join it, as the government likes to say. They are the ones who have to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

The government is looking for money, but the benefits will not materialize until much later. By some magical thinking that I cannot even describe, the Liberal government thinks that the money will somehow end up in taxpayers' pockets. However, anyone who pays for a phone bill, power, bill, heating, groceries or a child's education knows full well that the family budget does not balance itself.

According to the Fraser Institute, more than 90% of Canadian families will pay more in taxes once the Liberals' increases in Canada pension plan contributions are fully implemented by 2025.

It goes on:

(d) the government cancelled the Family Tax Cut of up to \$2,000 per household;

The government, however, claims to want to help families.

Next:

(e) the government cancelled the Arts and Fitness tax credit of up to \$225 per child;

Thousands of Canadian families got a nasty surprise when the Liberals announced they were eliminating this tax credit, even though this was not mentioned in their election platform. This decision had an impact on hundreds and even thousands of young people. I know that many young families decided not to register their children in certain courses. Some children were deprived of their physical and cultural activities just because their parents could not afford it.

At one time, I was the head of a gymnastics club. I know just how hard the parents who volunteer at these clubs work to bring down costs as much as possible so that children can practice their sport. The more competitive an activity, the greater the cost. As the head of a club, I can tell you that many talented young people were no longer able to compete in their favourite sport because their family could not afford it.

Children are the big losers when a fitness and arts tax credit is eliminated, along with the parents who volunteer and the clubs themselves, which work hard to succeed.

The motion states the following:

(f) the government cancelled the education and textbook tax credits of up to \$560 per student;

(g) the government's higher employment insurance premiums are up to \$85 per worker;

(h) the...carbon tax...;

(i) the government's intrusive tax measures for small business will raise taxes on thousands of family businesses all across Canada;

This is a shameless attempt to dip into farmers' pockets.

I could go on for another 20 minutes, and unfortunately I had a lot more to say, but my time is quickly running out.

I want to conclude by saying that we are right in demanding that the Prime Minister to provide written confirmation that he will not further raise any taxes on Canadians.

• (1610)

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always listen to my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable with great interest.

Earlier today, the member for Sherbrooke pointed out that today's motion was remarkably similar to last week's motion. He also said that we would probably make the same or similar comments.

I would like to hear what my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable has to say about one of our government's key measures. He talked about family earlier. I want to talk about families in his riding. In Mégantic—L'Érable, 7,780 families receive tax-free Canada child benefits, which help 15,000 children. These families receive, on average, \$7,560 tax free. This means that the money goes into their pockets. It is not a tax credit. Someone has to be paying taxes to receive a tax credit.

How will my colleague tell his constituents that he opposes this measure?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we are not against it. On the contrary, ours is the party that brought in the Canada child benefit, and we did it while balancing the budget. Our party will keep the program in place, so that is fine. However, I would like to know why the Liberal Party is determined to make families, the very families it claims to be helping, foot the bill. The Liberals are borrowing billions of dollars on the backs of the young people they claim to be helping now. That is the real issue here.

The Liberals were elected on a false promise. The Prime Minister did not tell Canadians the whole truth during the last election campaign. Today the Liberals are distancing themselves from those promises and pompously throwing around all kinds of numbers even though they know perfectly well that borrowed money must be repaid. They are not the ones who will have to repay it; our children and grandchildren are.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives' motion is interesting. They say they are against any and all tax increases, and they offer up a number of measures and examples they feel are important. Some of those measures are in fact interesting. However, what we have a problem with is the idea of being against all tax increases. Some very high income earners evade taxes. Some rich taxpayers are taking advantage. For example, some web giants and foreign companies pay no taxes.

Does my colleague opposite think it is okay for those companies and individuals not to pay tax?

Should we be congratulating the Conservatives for wanting to help the very rich with this motion? Ultimately, they would not really be helping the very poor.

Business of Supply

•(1615)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, tax evasion is immoral, it is unacceptable, it is illegal and we must fight it every day. What the member just said is completely unrelated.

We are opposed to tax increases. We are not fighting so that people can reduce their taxes to the detriment of the system. That has absolutely nothing to do with our motion. I think my colleague should instead support our message, so as to ensure that Quebeckers pay less in sales tax and income tax and that their taxes do not increase over the next few years, because this government is irresponsible and is spending too much money.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Liberals have continually increased taxes since 2015. I think they are wasting Canadian taxpayers' money. They have not really done anything with that money.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I think it would be hard to say what exactly the government did with all this money. Never has a government spent so much to do so little. There was talk of infrastructure. I remember during the last election campaign that the Liberals promised to bring in an infrastructure program. They promised to run two deficits of \$10 billion followed by one deficit of just under \$10 billion before balancing the budget and then running a surplus. The infrastructure projects were supposed to provide jobs for Canadians.

In my riding, and in most of my colleagues' ridings, we are still waiting for infrastructure money. That money has not really materialized. The money went into a system or who knows where. What we do know is that the government kept borrowing and not a single shovel or backhoe has hit the ground. That is the real problem. We do not know what the Liberals have been spending all this money on for the past three years.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the very comprehensive motion before us, which is focused on taxes. A lot of it is focused on not raising taxes in the short term. However, most importantly, we also do not want to see this continuing growth of our deficit and debt in the long term. Therefore, it is about both the taxes of today and the taxes of tomorrow.

As we know, and as any family knows, a certain amount of income comes in, and there is only a certain amount of debt it can service. The current government seems to have an outrageous problem with spending.

If we go back to the campaign of 2015, the Liberals promised a balanced budget. They would run small deficits for the short term and then get back to a balanced budget. They predicted a recession and that things would be difficult. The former Conservative government left them with not only a balanced budget but things in place to create success in the economy. I would argue that the success of the economy, at least in the first couple of years, had nothing to do with the Liberals' policies but was a result of the

appropriate moves the former government made, which left them in a good position.

Not only have the Liberals had deficits, they have had good times. Their argument was that they might have to spend a little money to stimulate the economy. Well, if we have to stimulate the economy in bad times and stimulate the economy in good times, and increase debt as we do it, we will run into a whole bunch of problems, and that is exactly what the government has done.

Quite frankly, I know a lot of people who call themselves Liberals. They were certainly Chrétien-Martin Liberals. They remember the 1990s. They remember the challenges of the massive problem we got ourselves into in terms of debt that was increasing and the very difficult job of getting ourselves back into a reasonable fiscal position. I will give the former Martin-Chrétien group credit for recognizing that there was a serious issue and for making some of those hard choices. Of course, they paid down some of the debt. The Conservative government, in good times, before the global recession, also paid down significant debt.

What we have is a Liberal government that made a specific promise, and quite clearly it has broken it. A recent report by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute says that the Liberals are leaving what will be a really unfair tax burden on our children and grandchildren. When they talk with pride about spending money here and spending money there, what they really mean is that they are leaving debt for our children and grandchildren. Perhaps they should look more closely at that. This report is not from a right-wing think tank. It is a very reasoned report in terms of the current situation. It is saying how unfair it will be to our children and grandchildren if they continue in this way. Quite frankly, we cannot afford another four years of this total disregard for taxpayers' dollars and how they spend it.

What we are talking about is a lot of taxes. The Liberals have a desire to spend money and have a very tough time saying no to anything. They are trying to find ways they can pay for this spending and maybe not have that debt look quite as significant and severe.

Let us talk about some of the things they have tried to do in terms of sneaking in extra taxes to pay for their out-of-control spending. We all remember the changes the Liberals were going to make for small businesses and the uproar from small businesses across the country. The Liberals backed away partially from that move.

•(1620)

We all remember what happened all of a sudden for someone who worked in a McDonald's and maybe got a complimentary Big Mac meal. These people make minimum wage, but they might get a meal. All of a sudden, government wanted to tax that as a taxable benefit. The Liberals quickly heard that that was not going to work. They could not get tax money there, so they backed off from that.

Then the Liberals were going to try to tax health and dental benefits. Again, they quickly heard an uproar and moved back from that idea.

Business of Supply

Then, of course, who could forget when the CRA decided to go after diabetics, who have huge challenges in terms of the management of their disease and the number of hours that they have to spend managing their disease? All of a sudden, the Liberals decided that managing a chronic disease such as diabetes was not really that bad and that diabetics really did not deserve to have the disability tax credit.

What we see are broken promises, out-of-control spending, the inability to not say yes to everything, and now the Liberals are looking for ways to actually pay for what they are spending.

So far the Liberals have backed off from these unpopular decisions, but as I have indicated, if they are in power for another four years, we could see not only those issues coming back to the table but many more that might be up their sleeves.

Let us go a little more into taxes and what is truly happening in the real world for small business operators. I am going to use an example.

I met with a number of people who sell small boats, little fishing boats, and they are scattered across British Columbia, where we have beautiful lakes.

In the summer these businesses were saying that the aluminum tariffs were really going to be a challenge for them, because they had to order right then for their product to arrive for the 2019 season. They were asking if the tariffs were going to be removed and whether they should wait a few weeks or months to do their orders, because it would have a very significant impact on their business if every boat they brought in from an American manufacturer was subject to a significant tariff.

I could not answer that question at the time, and it is a good thing I did not answer it, because had they decided not to order their product, they would still be looking at the same issue many months later. They would not have any product coming in. What many of them had to do was just go ahead, do the order and pay the tariffs, which would be passed along to the consumers.

Not only that, but at the same time, these business owners in British Columbia were being hit with an employee health tax that the provincial government decided to impose. The Canada pension plan premiums are going up. All of a sudden small businesses are facing increases in payroll taxes, employment insurance, Canada pension plan, the new employee health tax and a 15% premium on the products they are bringing on.

What has happened for people like these small boat manufacturers is that they have had to lay off staff, and in some cases their businesses are no longer viable. It has been incredibly crippling. It is just raising the cost of everything, even if they have consumers who can actually afford what could be a 20% or 25% increase in terms of the product.

I have to use British Columbia as an example in briefly mentioning the carbon tax. The Liberals love to talk about how the carbon tax in British Columbia has worked so well and has been there for 10 years and is just great. What they never tell anyone is that with a stroke of a pen, what was a revenue-neutral carbon tax in

British Columbia became a tax grab by the NDP government. It was done with the stroke of a pen.

The Liberals can say all they want about how they are going to give a cheque to those four provinces that do not have their own plan and how they are going to take as much out of the right as they are going to put in with their left, which no one believes, because they could never put as much in when they take that much out. No one believes it is going to be the same amount of money. More importantly, as everyone knows, it is not going to take very much—just one slash of a pen—for that to go from revenue neutral to a tax grab to pay for the Liberals' out-of-control spending.

● (1625)

I think we can see small businesses right there.

This is an important motion, and there are very good reasons that we have put it forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. However, I have to say that I do not really agree with what she said. She gave the previous government credit for our current economic growth.

We, the Liberals, created 800,000 jobs. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. The Canada child benefit is helping families in my riding and I assume that that is the case in hers as well. Our economic growth is among the highest in the G7.

I would like to know what my colleague will say to the families in her riding, Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Every month, 10,380 tax-free payments are made to these families. We are talking about 18,000 children. People receive an average tax-free payment of \$6,960 a year.

I would like to know what my colleague will say to those who ask her why she voted against it.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, I will answer the second part of the question and then I will go to the first.

Absolutely, the Liberals took a plan that we had, tweaked it and made a few changes to it. I think families find it welcome to receive that money. Again, that was actually started under the former Conservative government, and they tweaked it and changed it.

We absolutely will take credit for getting through the global recession and having a plan. I remember when the late Minister Flaherty set out a plan that was going to stimulate the economy by this much and bring us back to a balanced budget in every year. I watched him follow that plan and follow through with his promises. We left the government in a very good position, with good policies and with a good way to go forward.

Absolutely, the Liberals can enjoy the fact that we created the good economic opportunities that they have had.

● (1630)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's speeches.

Business of Supply

One of the things that concerns me always is the use of selective facts. In this case, I refer back to the motion with reference to numbers from one study from the Fraser Institute in which the first footnote of the study says that it did not consider the Canada child benefit.

I would like to ask my colleague this. How can she justify the numbers used in the motion to pretend that Canadian families are not doing as well as they were before, when the one study that says this also says that it is not using the numbers about the Canada child benefit, and that number is the one that shows why we believe families are doing better? I do not understand.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, I think I gave some really good examples. When businesses like those boat owners have to lay off people, we have some serious issues out there due to the policies of the government and the tax system it has in place. The unresponsiveness to small business is creating huge challenges in the country.

I do also want to make note of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute with regard to the debt that the government is adding, the debt that it does not care about, the debt that the Liberals promised in 2015 would be gone by now. When the Liberals say they are leaving that for their children and their grandchildren, I do not know how they can stand there and justify their economic plan.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to use a statistic that is not in the motion, but it is one that I think is very relevant.

StatsCan data about income taxes collected in the year 2016, which is the last year for which data is available, shows that the bottom 50% of Canadians are paying more tax as a percentage of their income than they were in any year before, going back 10 years. Actually, the top 1% of Canadians are paying less tax than they have in the past 10 years.

I would like to hear the member comment on this, because it is a pure reflection of the policies of the Liberal government.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, we all recall that in 2015 there was going to be a middle-class tax cut and that the upper-income Canadians were going to pay for it. Clearly, that did not happen. That is another piece of mismanagement that has added to the debt of the government, debt that is going to our children and grandchildren.

[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 London—Fanshawe, Transport; the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, Public Services and Procurement.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Hébert.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today about our government's significant enhancements to the betterment of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

It is important when we look at the country we are building to note the difference between the two parties that are sharing this debate with great vigour today. One party simply builds balance sheets, and that is it. We see that they are not even very good balance sheets when we look at that party's historic record. The other party is focused on building the strength of Canadians, their communities, and by extension, the country as a whole.

Our investments over the last three years, since the last election and in our first few budgets, really show where we are making a difference in the lives of Canadians. For example, the Canada child benefit, the improvements to the Canada pension plan, the investments in housing and infrastructure are all about not just building capacity in the lives of ordinary Canadians and Canadians who have real and determined needs, but also about making sure the communities they reside in also get stronger and in turn build a strong economy with new jobs that employ Canadians as we move forward together.

In fact, Canadians have been given the opportunity over the last three years to produce well over 800,000 jobs through investments we have made. That is because the dollars are getting out the door, contrary to some of the criticisms we may hear from the opposite side. They know as well as we do that the government pays the invoices on completed projects. We do not simply mail cheques to municipalities and say "Go build something." We pay what is expended, as opposed to what is projected. That is one of the ways we apply good fiscal management to the infrastructure dollars.

It also means, however, that it appears that a lot of dollars have not been spent, when in fact those dollars are being spent in communities right across the country, including in my riding, where we have literally billions of dollars being spent in infrastructure being developed in partnership with the previous provincial government and our municipal partners.

We also have financed this by taking steps to make the tax system more equitable. Yes, we can listen to the talking points of the American-funded Fraser Institute and we can do math that has only half the equation, which is a terrible way to do a balance sheet, but the reality is that we have lowered taxes on Canadians and raised them on some who are more affluent as part of building a social contract to deliver greater capacity to the government and also greater fairness to Canadians right across the country. Since 2015, as a result of these very careful investments, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years.

Business of Supply

We often hear the Conservatives say the best social policy is a job, and while I do not think a job is a social policy but a function of good economic investment and stewardship, the reality is that when 800,000 more Canadians are working than when they were in charge, that is good news. Only a Conservative could see that as bad, but somehow that is the negativity we encounter from the opposite side.

We have also seen in the past three years that Canada has one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7. Again this is directly due to some of our investments. In fact, the World Bank has looked at the Canada child benefit. We made it tax free so that we do not send money to Canadians and then claw it back. This makes it much more robust and makes sure Canadians get it as a right, as opposed to having to go through a very complicated application process.

We are renewing and enrolling people automatically and using Service Canada to look for those gaps where people are not receiving the proper benefit. In doing so, we have invested substantial dollars into the economy. These are substantial dollars that have supported Canadian families in building good, strong, resilient kids as we move forward.

This has caused enormous economic growth in the country. In fact, because it is delivered in ways that are equal right across the country and in low-income communities, the investment into families has generated economic activities in those communities. When families have more to spend on supporting their families and their children, we see the corner store do better. We see the Canadian Tire down the street do better. We see people starting to invest in the local businesses on the main street. Then those main street businesses have the capacity to hire more people. This is one of the ways we stimulate positive economic growth. We have done that, and it is good policy.

My fear is that the party opposite wants to roll the clock back to Stephen Harper's days, when the only tax credits Canadians could get were boutique tax credits that required them to have the money to spend up front and then perhaps they would get a little back a year later. That kind of policy benefited affluent families, but it left low-income families at the side of the hockey rink, not watching their kids play. It left students who could not afford their books to begin with having to rely on skipping the purchase of all the books required for university and college courses. It was a reactionary approach to economic development. More importantly, it left low-income Canadians outside the conversation about how to better their families.

• (1635)

As I said, the Canada child benefit is one of the reasons why we are most optimistic about our plan and one of the ways that we measure our success, because of the number of kids that have been lifted out of poverty, which is a good thing for everybody but most importantly for those children.

We know that it is expensive to raise children. Healthy food, warm clothing and winter boots are not cheap. We know that when we can deliver those dollars and they are delivered tax free, parents do not have to worry about the taxman coming at the end of the year to claim the money back.

We also know that as we introduced the Canada child benefit the most important thing was that, in modelling that program, we modelled it with the other social programs to make sure that new dollars arriving in the front door of a family that had needs were not being clawed out the back door by other governments. We think this is also important. If we are going to make social investments, they should not displace other levels of government programs from making a difference. They need to be layered into people's lives and make a real difference.

The other thing that is important is the way in which we have done things like rolling back the age of retirement. We know this is going to prevent hundreds of thousands of Canadian seniors from falling into poverty, but then we have also looked at the impact that gender has as people age. We know that men die sooner than most women. We know that men often carry the pension and often carry a lot of wealth because of past inequities in our system. We know that if we do not specifically address single seniors, the predominance of them being women, with special top-ups, we cannot alleviate seniors' poverty either.

The increase to the guaranteed income supplement is one of those investments that targets specific Canadians in specific ways and makes their lives that much better and easier. We are proud of those investments. We will not back away from them as we move forward as a country together.

The other thing I am most proud of is the investment in housing: \$5.7 billion has been invested since we took office. We know that the previous government was walking away from housing, literally in places like Alberta, pulling subsidies from seniors' residences or rent geared to income, suggesting that they could pay their own subsidies. Somehow the poor were going to subsidize the poor in some sort of assistance.

We have restored and tripled those subsidies with transfers to the provinces. We have doubled the amount of money being spent on homeless individuals and this investment of \$5.7 billion has in broad numbers been invested almost one million times in Canadian households across the country. Close to 15,000 new units are being built and close to 150,000 have been repaired, keeping people in housing that is safe and secure. As well subsidies for close to 700,000, almost 800,000, Canadians have now been delivered on a month-by-month basis, making sure they have the dollars to pay the rent and stay housed.

The cost of not doing things, the cost of only focusing with a very narrow intent on the balance sheet means that we miss the opportunity to support Canadians in very dynamic ways that prevent poverty. We know from every study that has been done that the cost of poverty has a huge impact on educational outcomes and has an impact on Canadians supporting themselves as they grow older.

We also know that as we de-house people or cut housing support, it has a huge impact on the health care system. Housing is one of the most important determinants of health. When we can make these investments, not only do we employ people fixing and building the housing, but we give people a place to call home and that prevents them from falling into harm's way and in particular prevents costs accruing to the health care system, which is one of the most cost-intensive parts of the federal budget.

Business of Supply

These programs that we have stepped up with and invested in have created not only the strong economic growth, not only the strong job numbers, but they have also been investments in ways to prevent other costs from accruing to the government. If we were to cut away these supports, it would be penny-wise, but perhaps pound foolish, as the old saying goes. In other words, cutting away these sorts of supports has a negative impact on Canadians from coast to coast.

The Conservatives brag and campaign on a series of pledges that they wish to go back to the days of Stephen Harper, when we had low growth and high unemployment, when there was still \$150 billion added to the deficit and there was the failure by that government, despite repeated promises, to balance the budget. They only did it by selling GM shares. That is like selling the furniture to pay the rent. When we hear proud proclamations that they want to go back to those times, I can only say that this government is committed not to doing that.

• (1640)

Canadians will have a choice in the next election. Canadians can decide between a party that knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, or they can choose a party that sits down with Canadians from coast to coast to coast; examines the regional differences in this country, the economic differences in this country, the opportunities that support can provide; and understands that when we grow the economy and the capacity to pay debt and keep the GDP ratio as low as we have, good things happen. Canadians are working and healthy.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, a parliamentary secretary is a representative of Her Majesty's government and the words he or she speaks, whether inside or outside the House, carry a lot of weight. They are a representation of what the Government of Canada believes. The parliamentary secretary made a very ill-advised tweet on the weekend, calling for the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, to be whacked.

I invite the parliamentary secretary to reflect on his minister's mandate letter that states, "Canadians expect us, in our work, to reflect the values we all embrace: inclusion, honesty, hard work, fiscal prudence, and generosity of spirit." I am going to give the parliamentary secretary a chance to apologize to the premier and all Canadians for his ill-advised comments.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I know the Conservatives like to cut things. I did not realize they had cut their sense of humour. The reference was made to Whac-A-Mole. It was made to a cartoon. If they choose to take the words deliberately out of context, it fits a pattern.

I made a statement later in the day when people were clearly taking the word "whack" to mean what the member opposite thinks it means. It cannot only mean one thing. I obviously said political violence has no place in this country and my words were not meant to incite violence in any way, shape or form. It was in reference to a cartoon of Whac-A-Mole. It is a popular game at many arcades and the idea was that the Ford government in Ontario was floating so many cuts so simultaneously that the only real way to deal with it was to deal with the government at election time by beating the government at the polls.

When I say "beat it at the polls", I am not, again, inciting violence.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would simply like to ask my esteemed colleague, who knows a lot about housing, if he can explain his vision for the national housing strategy and the impact it could have in communities across the country. If this is of particular interest to Quebec, I would be interested in hearing his comments on this matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, the national housing strategy builds on the \$5.7 billion we have invested in the first budget when we took office and now adds \$40 billion on top of that \$5.7 billion over the next 10 years. It really reprofiles a package of housing programs that deal with everything from building housing to repairing house to subsidizing people in housing and also provides supports for the people who need supports to stay in housing.

The great thing about housing is that we have to build it in the communities where people live. If there are housing needs in certain ridings, regardless of whether they are rural ridings, urban ridings, coastal ridings or northern ridings, the investments land and employ local tradespeople in those communities. It builds good, strong economies. It also builds capacity in towns that might be struggling for population growth, but the other thing it does is that it locks stability into people's lives and allows the other investments we make to social programs to be much more effective. It cuts costs for government as well, in terms of health care and the criminal justice system. Well-housed people do not cause problems for government because they succeed and support themselves.

It is a great tool for building a strong economy. It is a great tool for building strong economies right across the country in every single community. I am very proud of the investments we have made because they are making a difference in Canadians' lives from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned that investing in housing saves money. I remember when I was on the public safety committee a few years ago, I heard a story about a gentleman who lived on the street. He had a disability. He was acting out quite a bit and it was costing the Calgary police force hundreds of thousands of dollars to respond to incidents created by this gentleman. One day they found him a place to live and no more interventions were required. I want to underscore that what the hon. member is saying is true and fact in reality.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: We know this, Madam Speaker. When we support Canadians and give them the platform to succeed, they do not just thrive; they exceed expectations. That is the 850,000-plus jobs we have seen created since we took office. That is the growing and strong economy that has led the G7 in growth over the three years we have been in office.

We also know that we mitigate social harm by making good, smart social investments in housing, in transit and in making sure that climate change has resistance and resiliency strategies.

Business of Supply

When we protect our communities and our families and invest in children, we get resilient kids, strong families, better communities and a strong Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion moved by my Conservative Party colleague today, but I do not know where to begin addressing this motion riddled with misinformation.

Canadians made a choice in 2015. They supported a plan to invest in the economy, strengthen and grow the middle class, and provide real help to the people working hard to join the middle class. We came in determined to help hardworking Canadians share in the benefits that come from a strong and growing economy, and that is exactly what we have done.

That is why our government's first action was to ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay more tax so that we could cut taxes for the middle class. We asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a bit more tax so that we could lower taxes for the vast majority of Canadians. As a result of these tax cuts, over nine million middle-class Canadians have more money in their pockets. They can save more, invest or buy what they need.

Instead of offering tax credits to millionaire families, our government created the Canada child benefit, or CCB, which is a more generous tax-free benefit designed for the families that need it most. Thanks to the CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more money than under the previous government. This benefit has lifted hundreds of thousands of children across Canada out of poverty. In my riding, as in every riding, this benefit has made a huge difference in the lives of many families in need.

As a result of the tax cut and measures like the Canada child benefit, a typical middle-class family of four is receiving, on average, about \$2,000 more each year to help with the cost of raising children, save for the future, and help grow the economy for the benefit of everyone. That is \$2,000 more than that family was receiving in 2015, under the previous government.

This completely contradicts the misinformation presented in the motion moved by the member for Carleton, which is based on a study that falls apart under closer scrutiny. Naturally, since the Fraser Institute does not take the Canada child benefit into account, it is hard for it to come up with reliable figures.

The fact is that most Canadians are paying a lower effective tax rate under our government than they did under the previous government. Individuals are paying less, single-earner families are paying less, two-earner families are paying less, and single mothers are paying a lot less. The only Canadians who are paying more are the wealthiest 1%, so that we could lower taxes for the middle class.

A typical middle-class family of four is receiving on average about \$2,000 more each year. That money is changing those families' lives. For example, it is helping them put healthy food on the table, clothe themselves, prepare for back to school, and buy warm clothes for winter.

Moreover, in the fall of 2017, the government introduced measures to help low-income workers, and this led to the creation of the Canada workers benefit, or CWB, in budget 2018, and I am very proud of that. The CWB is basically an enhanced, more generous and more accessible version of the former working income tax benefit. Beginning in 2019, the CWB has made it possible for low-income workers to keep more money in their pockets. This new measure will also encourage a larger number of workers to secure and keep jobs while providing real assistance to more than two million hard-working Canadians.

We also recognize that small businesses are key, vital drivers of the Canadian economy. Small businesses provide 70% of all private sector jobs in Canada. That is why, in January 2018, our government lowered the small business tax rate to 10%. In January of this year, we lowered it again to 9%. The combined federal, provincial and territorial average tax rate on small businesses is now 12.2%—by far the lowest rate in the G7.

Consumer confidence remains strong and corporate profit margins are good, which opens the door to other investments that could lead to the creation of more meaningful, better-paying jobs for Canadians.

Our efforts to build a more just and equitable society where we give more back to the middle class have helped make Canada's one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7.

Over the past three years, through their hard work, Canadians have created over 800,000 new jobs, most of which are full-time jobs. As a result, our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in over 40 years.

• (1650)

Our government is also committed to advancing gender equality, which will support long-term growth in Canadian businesses. The costs of the unequal participation of men and women in the economy are not only moral but also economic. The studies are clear on that.

We also signed new trade agreements, which will create more economic opportunities for Canadian businesses in the years to come. Canada is making historic investments in infrastructure, innovation, science and research. Budget 2018 included the biggest new investment in science in Canadian history. We are also making investments in skills development and training to ensure that Canadians have the skills they need to succeed in the labour market.

The policies and measures that we put in place are in keeping with the commitments that we made during the election campaign and the course of our mandate. We have taken concrete measures for Canadians. These measures were the right thing to do to create new jobs and lay the groundwork for long-term prosperity for Canadians.

Business of Supply

• (1655)

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about some of the impacts that the Liberals' policies have had, because it is clear they are very out of touch with what is going on in the country. We know that 46% of Canadians are within \$200 of insolvency. We know that small and medium-sized businesses are struggling. Some of them are shutting down. Many of them are moving to the States because of the lack of competitive environment here.

The member sings the song like he is the band playing on the *Titanic*. Could he please update the House on why he is not in touch with what is really happening and the struggles that Canadians are facing?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, my colleague alluded to the group that was playing music on the *Titanic*, but I imagine that she knows the song well, since she was part of the former government that led Canada into a technical recession. During the last election campaign, we were debating whether Canada was in a recession or on the cusp of a recession. Technically, we were in a recession.

We have changed course since 2015. The government has made the necessary investments, including in science, to keep us competitive for the long term. For 10 years, the Conservatives curtailed investments in science. In Quebec, at Université Laval, that was a very lean decade. The Conservatives made cuts to innovation, compromised the well-paying jobs of tomorrow and undermined Canada's competitiveness. That is the legacy of the Conservative government, which refused to make the necessary investments in areas such as science and innovation.

My colleague talks about the economic spinoffs of our measures, but the opposition motion is based on a study by the Fraser Institute that was discredited and debunked by everyone who looked into it, since it does not take into account the Canada child benefit, which is so very important. The Canada child benefit has had a considerable positive impact on children's lives, especially in my colleague's riding, where 16,000 children and nearly 9,000 families are getting on average \$7,440 a year, tax free, thanks to the benefit. This is changing people's lives.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I meet regularly with the people of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who share with me their concerns about the significant debt accumulated by the Liberal government over the past three years.

Earlier today, we commended the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who recommended establishing a deadline for balancing the budget.

Why is the parliamentary secretary not responding to this request that there be a deadline for returning to a balanced budget which, I have to say, was also made by my Conservative colleagues? This is worrisome for many Canadians.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is actually a question I am asked by my constituents who have concerns. My response is that we have to compare the size of our deficit and our debt to the size of our economy. This ratio continues to shrink. Canada has the best record and is in the best fiscal position of all G7 countries.

Our government's spending allows us to address the other deficits we inherited. For example, after a decade of Conservative rule, there was a deficit in investment in science. That was also the case for infrastructure. When you put money back into the pockets of Canadian families, you boost their confidence. When you invest in housing, you build the foundation for long-term prosperity in Canada.

To respond specifically to my colleague's question, it is important to remember that our debt-to-GDP ratio is steadily shrinking and we have the best fiscal position of all G7 countries.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Louis-Hébert said that we were giving tax credits to wealthy families. After knocking on 40,000 doors in my riding, I found that, on the contrary, the families using our tax credits were not wealthy. Under the member's government, 46% of these families are \$200 away from insolvency at the end of the month. Perhaps they could have used some tax credits.

I have a very specific question for the member. We signed Canada onto the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the CETA, which are major forward-looking projects. We also developed a shipbuilding strategy to ensure that Canada is prepared to defend itself in the world.

Can the member name a single visionary project, not for today, but for 50 years from now, that his government could have developed? I would like to hear his name just one.

• (1700)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, where do I start?

First, I encourage the member to find a family of millionaires that is still receiving the child benefit. We stopped the Conservatives' practice of sending out cheques, regardless of family income. They increased the TFSA limit to \$11,000. How many people in Beauport—Limoilou have \$11,000 to put into their TFSA at the end of the year after taxes? Frankly, who did that measure help?

[English]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be joining this debate late in the day. Before I continue too far, I want to say that I will be splitting my time with my newest colleague, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I want to make sure I say that, because I am known for running on and speaking too much. I want to make sure I give the member part of my time.

Business of Supply

I want to address some of the things I have heard during the debate so far today in the House on this very reasonable Conservative motion to ensure that Canadians' taxes do not go up again. We have had difficulty, obviously, in convincing the government of this fact. As we have seen in the Liberal election platform, it means nothing to them. Every promise that is made by a Liberal government is meant to be broken.

The most important of those promises was balancing the budget. This year, in 2019, Canadians were promised a balanced budget of \$1 billion. Instead, what they have is a deficit that is closer to \$20 billion. That brings up a Yiddish proverb, and members know I love Yiddish proverbs: "Anything in excess is unhealthy." Excessive deficits, debts, and piling on the debt, are unhealthy exercises of the government's power to borrow on the backs of Canadians and future Canadians.

I am sure that a Liberal MP will stand up and say that the previous Harper Conservative government borrowed gobs of money, ignoring the fact that there was a great recession, while also conveniently ignoring that it was the Liberals at the time who called for three times as much borrowing. All they need to do is go back to a time when a certain leader, Stéphane Dion, signed a coalition agreement calling for more spending, which was three times as much as proposed by the Conservatives.

Today, the Liberals will say that the Conservatives did it too. However, the Liberals have neither a great recession to face or a minority government. They simply have an inability to spend within their means, something that every Canadian family has to do at the end of the month. If their bills do not add up, if the debits and credits do not add up to zero, or close to zero, these families would be taking on more debt which they have to pay back. They do not have the luxury of a AAA credit rating that they can just keep borrowing on well into the future. Canadian families do not have that great advantage that the Government of Canada has. It is easy for governments to borrow large amounts of money.

There is no expectation of a balanced budget until 2040. There is no chart in any of the budget documents thus far demonstrating a return to a balanced budget or the method by which the government will do so. If we add up the national debt along with Crown corporation debt, it is over \$1 trillion already. It is \$1 trillion right now. If we add in provincial government debt and municipal debt, it would probably be closer to \$2 trillion.

The taxpayer has to pay all of that. There is no one else to pay for it. If corporations are taxed, they will simply pass the higher prices on to consumers, which is the main reason we are opposed to the carbon tax. Government document after government document demonstrates that the carbon tax, per GHG tonne, has to go up. The pricing has to go up in order to meet international obligations, in order to meet the government's own goals. The Liberal government's own documents demonstrate that the costs must go up for families.

What we saw with the Australian taxpayers, Australian citizens, was that after two years of carbon tax, they said, "We have had enough. The experiment has failed. Try something else." That exact same scenario is repeating itself here in Canada today.

The cost of living is going up. Monthly bills are getting higher. That is the feeling that Canadians have. We all saw the reports from RBC saying that almost 50% of families are \$200 away from not being able to make ends meet. That is because their daily cost of living is going up, something we call affordability. I call it the cost of living, and it is all going up.

We have had a succession of costly mistakes. There was the expropriation of the Trans Mountain pipeline by the Government of Canada. We found that the government paid the sticker price. Basically, it walked into a dealership and said, "We would like that Denali pickup truck, please." It was told the sticker price, and then they said, "We will buy it. No negotiation is necessary." The government bought it, just like that. It overpaid by \$1 billion.

It is not the Conservative opposition saying that. It is not the New Democrats saying it. It is the Parliamentary Budget Officer saying it. The PBO did an analysis showing that the government overpaid for the pipeline.

• (1705)

This is a pipeline that has to be expanded, which will cost another \$9 billion. After the evaluation is done, we will not even get that \$9 billion back for a pipeline that today the Government of Canada is losing money on. The operating fees and royalties being paid on the contract are not equivalent to or more than the cost of borrowing the \$4.5 billion. Somehow the Government of Canada is managing to lose money on the most profitable part of the oil and gas sector: the shipping. It is amazing.

When I go door to door in my community, when I talk to people in the coffee meetups we have or when I do Facebook town halls, I have a lot of oil and gas workers who are unemployed, underemployed or barely getting by, and they cannot believe we can lose money on shipping. Extraction is one thing. Running a refinery is one thing. Those are difficult parts of the oil and gas industry, the downstream and upstream, but not the middle. How do we lose money on that?

There are more mistakes. Illegal border crossers are costing Canadian taxpayers over \$1 billion. We have resources being reallocated to ensure the public safety of Canadians.

Business of Supply

The cost of government is up 25% from 2015. We heard the member for Carleton say this. This is not President's Choice; this is the Prime Minister's choice, and it comes with a 25% surcharge. We are paying more for government. I meet very few people who say that they are getting their money's worth from the federal government in terms of services provided or transfers provided. I do not think anyone on the opposition side could say that we are getting value for the money being spent by the Liberal government. We are paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes. Canadian families are paying for his mistakes, and it is just the beginning. After the 2019 election, as the member for Carleton as well as other members on this side of the House have said, Canadians will pay even more, because that is when the full bill will come due and the decisions the government has made thus far will come to roost.

As I said at the beginning, anything in excess is unhealthy. Large government borrowing is destabilizing to the economy. I often hear Liberal caucus members claim that we have the best growth numbers ever. Everything is great. Everything is going well. However, in every single budget document tabled so far, the GDP growth numbers have been revised downwards. I wonder why. When we look at OECD numbers, we are not leading in the G7. The United States is leading. Our main competitor, main supplier, main consumer, and main client is growing faster than we are. That discrepancy between the two is pretty significant.

Our numbers keep being revised down, and we now have a stress test that will eliminate 200,000 residential construction jobs between now and 2021. We have successive government decisions that are again hurting job creation, reducing job creation, and providing an inability for the private sector to maximize the return of opportunities. We have a government getting in the way of the private sector, the energy sector, making it more difficult for Alberta's, Saskatchewan's and British Columbia's energy workers to get back to work and actually earn an income so they can pay taxes and pay fees and the companies can pay their royalties. All those things are beneficial. We have a government intent solely on obstructing and getting in the way. It is another mistake. Canadians will pay. Over the next eight months, they will pay even more, but the bill will come due only after the election.

I know that Liberal caucus members will sing and dance about how they have introduced the CPP enhancement, which will not do anything for anyone today. No senior today will gain more than maybe a few dollars, at best. The federal government's own website says that one can work for 40 years before one gets the full benefit of the CPP enhancement. That means that if 2025 is when it is fully phased in, it will be 2065. My kids will be able to take advantage of it, but no senior today will. The baby boomer generation retiring today will not get almost any benefit out of that. However, the Liberals are claiming great victory. They will use rhetoric. They will use personal attacks on members on this side of the House in both parties. They will also attack, as we saw from one parliamentary secretary, their provincial counterparts. It must be their new intergovernmental strategy to improve their relations with the provinces.

The motion before us is very reasonable. What we want to see is a commitment in the House to not raise the taxes of Canadians and to stop making them pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

● (1710)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a lot of doom and gloom coming from the other side. The member spoke of rhetoric, but there is a lot of negative rhetoric coming from the other side.

If we really want to know how the economy is doing, should we not rely on the opinion of those who have a real stake in the financial health of the markets? If the economy was doing so poorly, would Canada's rating not be affected? Canada has a AAA rating. We have also seen, following economic updates, when there has been talk about the debt, which, by the way, is declining as a percentage of GDP, that the financial markets, those that care deeply about economic conditions, do not react.

We can spread rhetoric. We can talk about doom and gloom, but at the end of the day, we should trust the opinions of those who have a lot of money invested in the economy.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, we should rate it by how much Canadians are paying today.

In a previous exchange with other members, I mentioned that according to Statistics Canada data, in 2016, the last available income data right now, the top 1% of income earners paid less as a total share of income taxes. It is actually below 20% for the first time in about 10 years. The bottom 50% of Canadians are paying more taxes than they were before. That is a direct result of the Liberal government's decision-making, which the member is supporting by voting in favour of the budget and the estimates and all the other motions that have come before the House on spending.

The Liberal government is also the government that, when it raised taxes on the so-called one per cent, somehow managed to bring in \$4.6 billion less in revenue in 2016 from the top 1%.

The government's policies are not working, and everyday Canadians are paying more.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for recognizing me, because I was very keen to speak.

As my colleague was saying earlier, our credit rating is among the best. Our results speak for themselves. Thanks to a strong and growing economy, Canadians and the middle class can see that our plan is working. There are 800,000 new jobs. A typical family has \$2,000 more in its pocket. Furthermore, the previous government offered tax credits, but in order to qualify for a tax credit, a person has to pay taxes. The Canada child benefit is a tax-free benefit. It is a sum of money that is received. I was checking my notes. I do not know if my colleague from Calgary Shepard is aware, but Alberta is one of the provinces with the largest number of children receiving the Canada child benefit. Could the member tell me what he is going to say to those families? He voted against this. The families of 29,500 children receive about \$6,240 a year each. That is quite a lot of money.

Business of Supply

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her comments and for giving me the statistics on the number of people in my riding who receive the Canada child benefit.

I would like to say to her that when I go door to door in my riding, people do not thank me for getting their own money back from the government, minus an administrative fee. Instead, they tell me they cannot understand why the Prime Minister's government is working to wipe out the oil sands and the energy sector, why their jobs are disappearing, why they cannot go back to working at Imperial Oil, Emerson, or another energy company. They ask me why the Prime Minister is waging war against jobs in Alberta's energy sector.

● (1715)

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to give my maiden speech and to speak to today's Conservative motion on taxes.

I would like to start with what brought me to run for the riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, and that was the passing of my friend and mentor, my predecessor, Gord Brown, who dutifully served in this House for the residents of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes and all Canadians for many years. Gord was a great Canadian, and I learned a lot working with him. He was very generous with his time in teaching me about the work he did and the work we can do as parliamentarians for our communities.

In seeking the nomination, I had great support from my constituents and my community. The list goes on and on. There were people like Randy and Gloria Stowell, Ena and Rick Ward, Nancy and Chris McCluskey and Tory Deschamps and Erin Merkley, to name a few. With the support of those volunteers and supporters, old and new, we achieved a positive result. It brought me to be able to campaign in a by-election, where I heard about many of the things being discussed in this House today: affordability, taxes and the direction of our great country.

I had many volunteers who helped me. There are too many to name. The days started with Bob Hayes pounding in signs at all hours. There was Reilly Dwyer, my financial agent, and Michael Jiggins, Renee Jackson, Andrew McCue, Ken Neuman and Isaac Roke. The list goes on and on of people who were committed to delivering a Conservative member back to this House to advocate and fight for the things that are important to them. As I said, those are the things being discussed here today.

I would be remiss not to mention my family and the support of my mom and dad, Chris and Anne Barrett. My mom took an interest in politics very early on in life and, in fact, was raised here in Ottawa. She never sat in the gallery in the chamber to attend a debate. The first time she took a seat in the gallery was the day she watched me take my seat in this great place and took in question period. I am so blessed to have had the support and to have had them present here that day.

I had many mentors over the years, including Jack Doyle and the McCluskey family, Peter, Bonnie and Ian. Of course, I had my siblings, my sister Allison and her husband Kyle MacDonald; my brother Matthew Barrett and Sulin Quant; and Liz and Rob Waring.

My in-laws, David and Arlene Bruce, filled a very special role during my by-election. My wife and I had had our fourth child, James, who arrived prematurely. They were very giving of their time and their house, along with Natalie and Mike Coulter, Tiffanie and Rob Comeau and of course, their children.

I would like to mention my grandparents, Francis and Betty Barrett. Francis was a civil servant, serving the RCMP and CSIS. They were unable to join me on the day of my swearing in but did watch from home and were so proud.

I know that right now at home, eating three bowls of plain noodles with just butter on them, are Luke, Ama and Michaela, and beside them is James, with my wife Amanda.

I mentioned that my son James arrived prematurely. That my wife Amanda knows the importance of the work done in this place was very apparent to me. After a week in hospital with James, my wife said to me, "This is great." I looked at her, and I looked at James. They were both alive and healthy, and I thanked God and said, "Yes, this is great." She said, "Yes, now we are not going to have a baby in the middle of an election." She is such a wonderful supporter. She knows that I have spent my life wanting to be here. I worked incredibly hard to join the 337 parliamentarians who work in the best interests of their communities and their ridings, and I am honoured to join them. I consider it a blessing and something I have been called to. I am honoured to be here.

● (1720)

I did also say I would speak to our opposition motion today, and it is so important to do so. These are the things I heard about across my riding as I met thousands of my neighbours and constituents. I knocked on many doors and sat at many kitchen tables, which was a nice relief because it was very cold to stand on the doorsteps at the time.

When the Conservative government was in power, it delivered on its words with great action. That is juxtaposed against what we heard in 2015. There was a promise of three modest deficits in exchange for an infrastructure program the likes of which we had never seen.

In my riding alone, the former Conservative government delivered infrastructure, as it did across Canada. There was a \$12-million investment in the Port of Johnstown, in partnership with the municipality and the Province of Ontario, and \$110 million were invested in broadband in eastern Ontario. After my election, I met with chambers of commerce, business leaders and members of the community regarding access to broadband. Many would be surprised to know that many Canadians do not have access to reliable Internet for their businesses and homes and for their kids to do homework. That is sorely lacking.

Today, I call on the government to make that investment, to invest in our rural communities and invest in broadband, as the Conservative government did when in power.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives made \$25 million in investments in local infrastructure for roads, bridges and facilities across my riding, and a \$60-million investment at the two international border crossings, which eased both tourism and trade in eastern Ontario and in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. We have seen what an effective infrastructure program can look like. We have seen what happens when a government lives the phrase “deeds and not words”. That is what we saw with the previous Conservative government.

Now we have a Liberal Prime Minister whose failure to get tariffs lifted after renegotiating NAFTA is hurting businesses. We have businesses that are paying tariffs when they buy the raw material and when they export the finished product. They are getting hit both times, and they do not understand why the government will not stand up for them.

Canadians are tired of paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes. They know that his out-of-control spending and ballooning deficits will be the taxes of tomorrow. Tomorrow is not that far away.

On April 1, we will see the implementation of a carbon tax in Ontario. It disproportionately and unfairly targets all people, including the people in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

We have just experienced very Canadian, very cold weather. We have one of the coldest climates on the planet. Heating our homes is not a behaviour that needs to be corrected. Driving a car to work or taking children to dance, hockey or soccer is not a behaviour that needs to be corrected. Driving to get groceries or to the doctor is not a behaviour that need to be corrected with a carbon tax.

The good people of Westport would love to hop on the GO train to head over to Merrickville, or take the SkyTrain from Kemptville to Cardinal or take OC Transpo from Gananoque to Prescott. However, public transit is not available throughout most of my riding, and it is not available throughout most of Canada.

We need a government that is going to reduce the burden on Canadians, cut taxes and make life affordable. That is what we are calling on the government to do. That is what the residents of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes sent me here to do, with the support of the people I listed and the support of hundreds more.

• (1725)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to welcome the new member to the House.

His riding neighbours mine. I drive through his riding, both going to Ottawa and coming home at the end of the week. As I am half Italian, I grew up eating a lot of pasta and butter. I always drive through his riding around dinnertime on Thursday nights, so he can feel free to invite me over. I would love to stop by.

I heard him speak about rural Canada and what the government, in his perception, had not done. When the budget comes out in a couple of months from now, will he take an honest and open look at it and assess for himself whether it provides for rural Canada? If it does, would he consider voting in favour of it?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, answering a question is another first for me, and I am happy to do that.

We saw the budget tabled by the government. The real challenge we will face on this side of the House, as will Canadians, is that promises were made in 2015 and promises were made in the budget. We know the promises made will be promises broken.

The government has turned a blind eye to the more than half of Canadians who are only \$200 away from insolvency. We know that hard-working, low-income, wage-earning retail workers were targeted with taxes. These were not in the platform in 2015 that came to pass or almost came to pass with the government. Therefore, that is what we are going to be looking for.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his election. It is a great pleasure welcoming him to our justice and human rights committee. It is also a pleasure to see the House of Commons from the eyes of a new member, recognizing the awe we hold this place in and how lucky each and every one of us, from all parties, is to be part of this great place representing Canadians.

Therefore, I am going to throw a really tough question at him, for his first question period after his speech. Who was more proud of you when you were elected? Was it your mom, your dad or your wife?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member knows he is to address the questions to the Speaker, and all of them are proud of me.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I thank the member very much for his kind words. I am proud to sit as a member of the justice and human rights committee.

In answer to his question, I would hope there would be another day where we would have as many smiles in the House as I see now. It has been a tremendous honour to share this experience with my family.

I call my mom on my drives back to my riding. I drive back to my home every day. My mom is very proud to share this with me, as is my whole family. Right now, many more people who I listed in my speech are watching on CPAC, so CPAC is seeing its numbers bumped. That is how many people are proud of me today.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. Gord Brown was a good friend of mine. We are glad to have someone in the House to represent the area. Those were very kind words to start.

I cannot say whether the member for Malpeque is in the House or not, but we also participate in the Canada-U.S. parliamentary association. I know, on behalf of him, we would extend an invitation for the member to hopefully join that association. Gord Brown did such great work on it, not only for his party but also our country.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I look forward to participating in that association and furthering relations with our American neighbours.

Business of Supply

•(1730)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I second the suggestion from the member for Windsor West, and I congratulate the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

I will be splitting the time with the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to this opposition day motion. However, I have to admit I am somewhat saddened that the official opposition, under the leadership of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, would allow such an absence of truth in the written and spoken word. I say that seriously. It is becoming very obvious that there has been a great attempt in recent weeks by the Conservative Party of Canada to misrepresent the work of the Liberal government in this the 42nd Parliament.

Through my remarks today, I will deal, one by one, with the misrepresentations of the facts by the member for Carleton in his motion.

In parts (a) and (b), he tries to allege taxes are higher. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that starting off, in our very first budget, we reduced taxes for the middle class, while raising taxes on the wealthiest 1%. Specifically, the government lowered taxes on the middle-class tax bracket of \$44,702 to \$89,401 to 22%.

An hon. member: Wayne, you can do better than reading notes of Gerry Butts.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Maybe the member heckling over there would like to pick up the tax code and check the facts instead of listening to the rhetoric that comes out of the research department over there. All the Conservatives know how to do is not talk about facts but attack and misrepresent.

In addition, this government introduced the Canada child benefit, which will help nine in 10 families. Better yet, we made it tax free. Those two measures will mean a typical middle-class family is now \$2,000 better off per year than they were under the Harper Conservatives.

In fact, for the member for Carleton's riding, the Minister of Finance told him in question period today that 30,000 people in his riding of Carleton had lower taxes and 16,000 children in that riding benefited as a result of this government's measures with respect to the Canada child benefit.

The bottom line is that a majority of Canadians are paying a lower effective tax rate under this government as a result of the actions we have taken since 2015. Regardless of how the official opposition tries to confuse and fudge the numbers, those are the facts. Lower taxes for the middle class and better opportunities as a result for families moving forward are the facts.

On his third point, the member for Carleton talked about the government's higher Canada pension plan premiums and used an exaggerated number out decades from now. Do the Conservative members not meet with seniors in their ridings? Do they not understand the facts on the ground, that people without pensions can hardly afford to put food on the table? The Canada pension plan

changes are all about that. It is not a tax, but an investment in the future of seniors so future generations of MPs in our positions do not have to see the agony of people coming through the doors when they do not have the money in their pensions to meet the necessary essentials of life.

The Canada pension plan is an important vehicle for retirement. Private pensions are disappearing across the country and around the western world. Pensions are a fundamentally important mechanism to ensure Canadians have security in retirement.

Again, pensions are not taxes but investments in the security of seniors in the future. Members who are worth their salt have seen those seniors come into their office without the money to meet their needs.

•(1735)

In their motion, the Conservatives came up with a number on cancelling the family tax credit. Again, they misrepresent the facts. We instituted, as I said earlier, the Canada child benefit, which has seen more money going to more families than before, stopped giving money to the highest-income families and has indexed that benefit to inflation. It is a more efficient model than the previous model, because it more effectively targets families and parents who need financial assistance.

As stated earlier, in the riding of the member for Carleton, 16,000 children will benefit from the Canada child benefit. Is the member and the leader of his party telling families in his riding that they want to do away with that and go back to the old system where their benefits were taxed? Is that what the member is saying? There are consequences to some of these points that members opposite make.

Conservatives talked about the cancelling of a couple of tax credits. Members on the opposite side maybe do not understand what a tax credit really is. Tax credits are only available to those who have the means to get them. In other words, they have to have a substantial income in order to benefit from them. That means that those who do not have that kind of income do not get the tax credits, and they are the ones who really need the chance to enter sports and other areas.

Tax credits like the ones mentioned are marginal at best, because tax credits are only helpful to people who can afford the goods and services in the first place. If people want to sign their children up for summer soccer, send their children to university and claim eligible books or any other eligible deductions, they have to have already had the money to acquire those things in the first place. Tax credits do not assist individuals who are the most financially vulnerable. There are people who live paycheque to paycheque. They do not get the benefit from those tax credits, because they cannot afford to send their kids to soccer in the first place. That is not effective tax policy. We need effective tax policy, and we need to ensure there is fairness in the tax system. That is why the tax credits were done away with and we moved to the Canada child benefit and other means.

The member's motion states that the government's higher employment insurance premiums lead to higher costs per worker. Do the members opposite believe they are telling the truth when they make that statement? Let me turn to insurance premiums in the documents from EI. In 2013 through 2016, the rate was \$1.88. Today it is \$1.62. Can members opposite not add and subtract? That is a lower rate: \$1.88 down to \$1.62. It means that the maximum annual employer premium has gone down from \$1,337.06 to \$1,204.31. That is not increasing premiums. Come on, folks. Let us at least lay out the truth in this place.

As a final note, we in this government invest in Canadians and the things that matter most to them. We are keeping a close eye on our fiscal track, carefully managing deficits and protecting Canada's long-term fiscal sustainability, with a steady declining debt-to-GDP ratio. Canada has, by far, the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio among the G7 countries.

Across Canada, more Canadians are working, and middle-class Canadians have more money to save, invest and grow the economy. We will continue to stand up for the middle class, while the only plan of the Conservatives is austerity and cuts. As we have seen in this motion, we cannot believe what they claim to be facts, because they are, quite honestly, not truthful.

• (1740)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech, albeit I do find it a little rich that he is claiming that the leader of the Conservative Party is misleading Canadians when that is exactly what he is doing.

The fact of the matter is that Canadians actually do not have more money in their pockets. That is because the Liberals are jacking up taxes. We know that is going to happen in the next couple of months, when we will see a new carbon tax. I am confident in saying that the people in Simcoe—Grey know that they have less money in their pockets today to do the things they want to do with their families than they did in 2015 or before that.

Maybe the member could revise his creative analogies around our leader, because our leader is focused on making sure Canadians have more money in their pockets and no carbon tax, unlike that government, which wants to jack up their taxes.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely surprised that I have not changed the member for Simcoe—Grey's mind. She must have under her pillow at night the research from the Conservative Party of Canada, which has absolutely nothing to do with the facts that I have laid out.

I would ask the member for Simcoe—Grey to read the motion. She will see that the motion put forward by the member of Carleton is absolutely not factual. The member can go back and look at my remarks. Canadians are paying lower taxes today, but the 1% is paying higher, and we understand that.

We have also invested in research for science. We have put money into the Canada child benefit, which benefits many families in the member's riding.

We have had to get over the 10 years of cuts by the Harper government, of which she was a member when in cabinet. Canadians paid dearly for these cuts. Now we have to invest in Canadians'

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future, which is exactly what we are doing, and we are doing it while staying on track, managing our fiscal responsibilities well and keeping a lower debt-to-GDP ratio. Ours is the lowest in the G7. In fact, our unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 40 years.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was glad that the member talked about the Canada pension plan and the investment it truly is for Canadians. No doubt we need to plan for retirement with an aging population. We do not need to pass the buck or kick the can down the road. However, where the New Democrats differ from the Liberals is on the issue of pensions in the private sector, where, as he noted, pensions are becoming rare.

In the case of Sears, for example, workers have already paid into their pensions as a deferred wage. They signed a contractual agreement upon employment. Money was taken out of their paycheque and put into another fund. However, those workers are now getting ripped off through the bankruptcy laws we have in Canada, which allow corporations and CEOs and a whole series of other entities to come first, before the workers can receive their deferred wage of a pension.

I would ask the member to address that issue and describe where his government might be on it. We have had this issue with so many people across the country, and it is a good example of the need to modernize our Pension Act. The member believes that investing in pensions is good for us and for our workers, but when we have theft by the companies during bankruptcy, in my opinion, it needs to change.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what policy the government will be coming out with, if we are, but I will certainly tell the member where I am at personally.

I believe that pensions should be paid into in the same way as CPP and EI premiums. They should be put into a fund and guaranteed to be there for the workers who work in corporations and other companies. If the company fails in those obligations, then the board of directors should be responsible for those obligations to those citizens for the work they did for those companies over the years. That is where I stand.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rising in the House today gives me the opportunity to talk about the greatest country in the world, and that is Canada. In my opinion, the greatest value of this country is fairness. It does not matter where one comes from, what race one is, what religion one believes in, the size of one's wallet, how much money one has or who one is connected to, this country is about opportunity, fairness, hard work and our people.

We in this country are so lucky. We are rich in resources. We have oil and gas. We have iron ore, nickel, and we have diamonds. However, our greatest resource is our people, and investing in our people is what makes this country the greatest place on earth.

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That is why our government believes in investing in our greatest resource, our people, and investing in their health care, in the infrastructure in their communities and helping businesses. Our plan includes investing in transit, in providing more CPP, so that our seniors will have more money in their retirement years, and increasing the guaranteed income supplement for our seniors and our vulnerable people.

Our plan included bringing forward the Canada child benefit, which impacts so many families. Nine out of ten families have more money in their pockets today to invest in their kids.

Our plan includes lowering the cost of higher education for our students, so that they can have hope and the opportunity through their hard work to become our future astronauts, construction workers, nurses, doctors and any other profession under the sun.

This is our competitive advantage. Canadians know that when everyone is at their best, when we work together, we build together, dream together, we can achieve anything.

Canadians deserve to feel confident that their hard work will be rewarded with greater opportunities and a fair chance at success. We believe that a fair tax system is fundamental to instilling this confidence. When middle-class Canadians have more money to invest, save and grow the economy, all Canadians benefit.

Right from day one, our government has taken action on this understanding. Our first legislative action was to raise taxes on the wealthiest Canadians in order to cut taxes for the middle class, and now nearly nine million Canadians are benefiting from this middle-class tax cut. Single individuals who benefit from the middle-class tax cut are saving on average \$330 a year, while couples who benefit are saving about \$540 a year.

We then moved to provide simpler, more generous and better targeted support to those Canadian families who needed it the most. We did this by replacing, in 2016, the old child benefit system with the Canada child benefit.

During the first year of the new benefit, over 3.3 million families received more than \$23 billion in CCB payments. As a result of the CCB, 9 out of ten families were better off during that first year. These families received on average almost \$2,300 more in tax-free benefits, unlike the previous program. I am proud to say that the CCB has helped to lift about 300,000 children out of poverty. What an amazing measure. The government has worked on poverty reduction for many years, but the CCB made a monumental difference in the vision we have, that no child and no family should live in poverty in our great country.

To ensure that the CCB continues to play a vital role in helping those Canadian families, our government strengthened the CCB by indexing those benefits, and we did that to the cost of living. We did that for two full years before we made an announcement. That will help to grow our economy and help our fiscal position.

● (1745)

This is an important achievement, not just for those looking to build a better future for their families but for all Canadians. Thanks to the middle-class tax cut and the Canada child benefit, now a typical middle-class family of four receives, on average, about

\$2,000 more each year to help with the cost of raising their children, saving for the future and growing our economy for the benefit of everyone.

Following this success, our government went even further to deliver tax support to those who need it most. We know that low-income Canadians are working sometimes two or three jobs so that they can join that middle class. They are working hard. We have to give them those rungs on that ladder so that they can continue to climb. They want to give their children and their grandchildren a better chance at success. Like all Canadians, they deserve to have that through their hard work and be rewarded through opportunities that we will provide.

Through our budget 2018, we introduced the new Canada workers benefit, a new tax benefit that would put more money in the pockets of low-income workers. The new Canada workers benefit builds on the former working income tax benefit, or WITB, to give even more people greater financial benefits from working. Compared with the WITB, the new Canada workers benefit will increase the maximum benefit and raise the income level at which the benefit is entirely phased out. That means now that somebody working under WITB, a low-income worker, would earn up to about \$500 more. On an income of \$15,000, that is a huge difference.

All together, our government's actions mean almost \$1 billion of new support starting in 2019 for low-income workers under the Canada workers benefit. By increasing these financial benefits associated with joining the workforce and staying in the workforce, the Canada workers benefit is proving that the best way to take people out of poverty is through a job.

Our government knows that small business is a key driver in our economy, accounting for 70% of all private sector jobs. I know that in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, from going to the restaurants or financial services or the local garages, how hard those small business people work. That is why over the years and up to this year, we have lowered that small business tax from 11% down to 10% and now to 9%. What I am hearing from my small businesses is that this is terrific. They can now hire more people and they need more people. What all the businesses around my area are asking for is more people. That is because our economy is doing so well.

Our economy has created 800,000 new jobs since we came into government. That is tremendous. What that is doing is fuelling our communities and fuelling our neighbourhoods. We know that our plan, with all of these ingredients, is working. That is what has caused these 800,000 net new jobs. We are supporting small businesses by lowering their taxes.

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Last year, we showed leadership by introducing pay equity legislation in federally regulated sectors. We are committed to ensuring that women receive equal pay for work of equal value, again all of this getting back to that so important value of fairness. In many countries this is not possible but here it is and we continue to invest in that value of fairness because that is our competitive edge. However, what we hear from the Conservatives is that they want to back out. They are talking about cuts to infrastructure, cuts to investments, cuts to health care, cuts to education, cuts to our communities and cuts to the hardest-working people in Canada.

We have to give people hope. People are working hard. We want to give them hope. Through our successive budgets that is what we have done. That is what I am hearing from people in my community. They say to continue to provide these incentives and to continue to give them help so that they can invest in their families, invest in our community, invest in our country and continue to make Canada the greatest place on earth.

● (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague for his passionate speech on fairness. That is what he talked about.

He has good reason to sing Canada's praises on many fronts, and it is true that efforts are being made to increase fairness.

However, I would like to ask him whether he thinks it is fair that OTT services like Netflix are not required to collect GST.

How does he explain the fact that, among all the competitors in the cultural community, his government is favouring a web giant by not forcing it to abide by the same rules as its Canadian competitors?

● (1755)

[English]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, look at the facts. The plan is working. These ingredients to fairness are about the Canada child benefit, the GIS increase for seniors, the Canada workers benefit. All of these work together, not in silos, as a comprehensive plan to help our economy and bring forward fairness. It is working with 800,000 net new jobs. Our government has a plan and we will continue to invest in our greatest resource, our people.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the motion is there any talk about cutting, but there are things that the Conservative opposition would love to cut, such as the carbon tax and the half a billion dollars wasted on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We would cut the Prime Minister's perks that he has layered on for himself. We would cut the government's waste especially.

It seems like there are more jobs being created here in Ottawa, a strategy for strategies, than jobs being created in places such as my home province of Alberta. If we cut the war on the energy sector, in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, it would actually get people in the energy sector back to work.

Since the member has provided so many numbers, perhaps he could explain to this side of the House when the budget will actually be balanced.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to be in the House and look at the Conservative Party as we brought forward a budget that had all of these programs and the Conservatives decided to vote against it. They voted against veterans, against the environment, against infrastructure and against health care. They voted against job creation.

The facts show 800,000 net new jobs. The member might not like to hear it, but the votes speak for themselves. The Conservatives voted against all of that.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being recognized.

I listened carefully to my hon. colleague. I had the opportunity to work with him on the Standing Committee on International Trade.

I would like to hear what he has to say about his riding. Our plan is working. We created 800,000 jobs and lowered taxes for SMEs.

What did the new free trade agreements signed by our government do for the SMEs in his riding?

[English]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, when we formed government in 2015, we looked at many of our trade agreements and they were stalled. When we looked at our agreement with Europe, it was stalled. It was going nowhere and we started it moving again. We moved it past the finish line. We did it and we completed that agreement.

We also did the same thing with the CPTPP, so now we have the opportunity to trade with many of the Pacific Rim countries. It has also happened with the USMCA. All of these agreements happened because our government understands how important trade is and how important business is for our country. That is where jobs are created and that is why 800,000 net new jobs have been created. Many are through small business, but that is all part of the supply chain.

Canada's population in the world is 0.5%, but we do 2.5% of the world's trade. We punch well above our weight and we are going to continue to do so because of the agreements we were able to get signed with the rest of the world.

● (1800)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of splitting my time today with the member for Perth—Wellington.

I rise in the House today to speak to the motion on the floor and call upon the Prime Minister to provide written confirmation that his government will not raise taxes on Canadians. In order to do this, we should look at the record of the Liberals when they are in power. Indeed, it is a tale to tell.

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As writer and philosopher George Santayana penned, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” If we look at the Liberal government of the 1960s through to the 1980s, under the Liberals, federal spending rose from 30% to 53% of GDP. I am sure that many people in the chamber can remember that incredible inflation. Prime lending rates skyrocketed to an incredible 22%. Subsequently, the inability to pay such exorbitant rates resulted in both corporate and personal bankruptcies. It would be two decades before Canadians would crawl out of this economic black hole and begin to reduce the country's debt. In fact, by 1984, Canada's international debt had grown by 700%.

If we fast-track to 2019, the current Government of Canada is on the same trajectory. There is 81% of middle-income Canadians who have experienced the economic pain of higher taxes, and the Prime Minister has promised Canadians that he would not raise taxes but lower them.

Another obvious comparison to years ago is the now failed and infamous national energy program. Starting in 1980, the national energy program, with the Liberal Party behind it, single-handedly destroyed the thriving economic engine that benefited all Canadians, putting thousands of Canadians out of work and causing many to not only lose their livelihoods but their homes as well.

Enter the current Liberal government and its pipeline debacle. Because of the Prime Minister's failure to secure a pipeline, thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs. It sounds familiar, does it not? Currently, Canadian taxpayers are on the hook for a \$4.5-billion pipeline that may never be built. Last week, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the government has probably overpaid for the Trans Mountain pipeline by an unbelievable \$1 billion. This is costing the Canadian economy about \$50 million a day.

Doug Porter, the chief economist and managing director of BMO Financial Group, predicts the following: “I think Canada has a very weak competitive position. I think we're going to get crushed in the next recession”. Canadians are already feeling the crush. The average income tax increase for middle-income Canadians is \$840. In addition, Canada pension plan premiums have gone up to \$2,200 per household, and employment insurance premiums are up by \$85 per worker.

The outlook is even bleaker as the Liberals insist upon this new carbon tax of theirs. This will end up costing households about \$2,500. Sadly, the carbon tax fails to address the environment and serves to make life even more expensive for Canadians, and yet the Prime Minister has promised that he will not raise taxes. This is not the Liberal record. Fifty years ago, the Liberals inherited a strong, growing and varied Canadian economy, and when they left in 1984, Canadians were still feeling the effects of Canada's worst recession since the Great Depression.

The current Liberal government inherited Stephen Harper's zero-deficit balance sheet a little over three years ago, and over the last three years, the government has added \$60 billion to the national debt. The Prime Minister promised that the budget would be balanced this year. Instead, the deficit will hit \$21.3 billion. Again, he has promised that he will not raise taxes. This is why we are here today. We are calling upon the Prime Minister to provide written

confirmation that his government will not further raise taxes on Canadians. In light of how he has bungled our coffers thus far, it is simply not credible to believe the Prime Minister when he says that he will not raise taxes. The question that I think Canadians have to ask is, by how much? According to Finance, the budget will not return to balance until 2040, and by then racking up an additional \$271 billion of debt.

● (1805)

Financial trends are cyclical. Most economists believe Canadians and the world will be facing an economic downturn. The Prime Minister has left nothing to cushion Canada from such a forecast. Last year Canada's national debt reached an all-time high of \$670 billion, or a massive \$47,600 per Canadian family. A recent Fraser Institute report states that a very serious downturn could add more than \$50 billion per year to the government's deficit forecast. Canada's national debt would be nearly a trillion dollars by the year 2023. That is unfathomable and should be unthinkable.

When the recession hit Canada in 2009 we were largely insulated because of the prudent economic planning by the former Conservative government. I remember travelling with prime minister Stephen Harper, and it was astonishing to see world leaders lining up to speak with the prime minister. Presidents and prime ministers from around the globe would line up to ask Mr. Harper how it was that Canada was the only country in the G7 able to withstand the worldwide economic downturn. It was due in part to ensuring that we had a good financial cushion to rely on in the event of a fiscal recession. The Liberals, on the other hand, seem hell-bent on employing any fiscal policy so long as it is not in line with what the Conservatives implemented.

In addition, I remember back in 1988 when the Liberals were against implementing the GST. They had just finished coming off an election where they were against the free trade agreement, and we remember how they changed their minds on that one. All Liberal leaders at the time were against implementing the GST. Liberal leader John Turner said the GST was an attack on the weaker regions of the country, that it was regressive, against lower-income groups, invisible, sneaky and of course an administrative nightmare.

It gets better. Paul Martin stated in the chamber the following: “Mr. Speaker, the goods and services tax is a stupid, inept and incompetent tax”. He went on to say he would abolish the GST.

It did not stop there. In 1990, then Liberal leader Jean Chrétien said on September 27 of that year, “I want this tax dead”. He went on to say the following: “I am opposed to the GST. I have always been opposed to it, and I will always be opposed to it. It is a tax that is both regressive and discriminatory”.

We cannot believe any of those Liberal leaders. What they did when they returned to power was to be completely onside with implementing the GST. What I have been saying about them is that they cannot be trusted in these areas.

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I was told many years ago that the Liberals would say whatever it takes to get elected. If they think it will get them elected to be against the free trade agreement, they are against it. If it helps them to be against GST, wage and price controls, name it, over the years it was whatever they felt was necessary. However, they would always go with something afterward that was completely out of line with that.

NAFTA is just another example of their bungling of their international obligations for our country. We can see that the new NAFTA that is being presented to us is weaker than the existing one. It will raise the price of condos through the steel and aluminum tariffs. That is just one example. American farmers will have tariff-free access to 3.6% of Canada's dairy market. It will send hundreds of millions of dollars more of their product into our country, and not a single concession was made by the United States.

Why do we want to have a written confirmation from the Prime Minister that he will not raise taxes? Just have a look at the last 50 years of Liberal governments. The Liberals say one thing during an election and do something different after the election. It is our job to hold them accountable as much as we can. That is why we want to have this in writing.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for this member. He has some legislative experience and he has been around here for a while. I do question, though, some of the rhetoric that is coming from the other side of the House, in particular about this notion that somehow Canadians are paying more in tax. The reality of the situation is that when we consider the CCB, that is not the case. The only organization that I am aware of that is backing up this claim is the Fraser Institute.

The Fraser Institute was created from big money from the tobacco industry. The Fraser Institute led the charge in being opposed to anti-smoking laws. The Fraser Institute is funded by big oil from organizations such as ExxonMobil. The Fraser Institute promotes huge tax cuts for the 1% in corporations.

I cannot help but ask how this member, with all the experience he has in this House, can confidently stand up in this House and speak the way he has been when the data is being backed up by an organization such as the Fraser Institute. Does he not have just a little shame in doing that?

• (1810)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I guess the hon. member forgot to mention this, but the Dairy Farmers of Canada estimate that the new NAFTA agreement will cost them \$190 million per year. It will cost Canadian farmers \$190 million per year.

The hon. member should check them out. If he does not like the Fraser Institute, why does he not invite them into his office and sit down with them about this? If he wants to see what is going to happen when the Liberals start implementing this carbon tax, he will see Canadians right across this country, from coast to coast, saying the same thing—that this is costing them and that they have to spend more money on these things.

The hon. member should check it out, because we are not alone when we say that the government is taxing Canadians much more.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to clarify something for all Canadians. I hope I will get an answer that will make things clearer.

In your motion, you ask the Prime Minister to provide written confirmation that he will not impose any more taxes. I would like to appeal to your judgment. If the Minister of Finance found a bit of courage and finally asked Netflix to collect GST, would your caucus consider that a new tax?

I hope not because it is not right that Netflix does not have to collect GST.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert that he is to address the Chair when asking a question.

The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I agree with you on that one.

That said, we want the Prime Minister to put it down in writing for just the reasons that I have articulated over the years. The Liberals have a record going back 50 years of saying one thing during an election and doing something completely different afterwards.

I remember how emotional the Liberals were when they were against the free trade agreement. Do members remember that one, and how determined they were?

Then they were passing out erasers in my riding, saying they were going to erase the GST. We know exactly what happened on that.

It was actually the Conservative government that reduced the GST and combined it with provincial taxes to form an HST. We are the ones people can count on to do the things that we promised to do. The Liberals have a long, long record of doing the exact opposite whenever they take power in this country.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was sort of interesting. He was saying that the Liberals are now going to have a deficit this year of some \$23 billion.

Does that mean that their revenue has actually dropped, and that this is the reason, or has the revenue for the government actually increased? That would mean it has more money coming in but is spending more to create a \$23 billion deficit.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, for the Liberals it is never a problem spending money. If a report comes out that they overpaid for the Trans Mountain pipeline by a billion dollars, so what? What is a billion dollars? It is just small change for members of the Liberal Party. That is their problem.

All of us here on this side were part of a government that was very careful, very deliberate with respect to government spending. We were always being careful. This is exactly the opposite of what we are getting here today, and this is why the country needs a change of government.

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•(1815)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise in this House today to share some comments on today's supply day motion. Supply day motions are an opportunity for us, as the opposition, to hold the government to account. There sure is a lot to hold the government to account on. Just look at the litany of tax increases it has undertaken in the three short years it has been in office, as clearly articulated by the mover of this motion, the hon. member for Carleton.

Canadians in my riding of Perth—Wellington, and indeed Canadians across the country, are noticing this. They are noticing this because time and time again they see the government spending more money than it takes in. They see a government that promised, in the election campaign, teeny tiny deficits of \$10 billion. It promised \$10 billion for three short years, and by 2019, this very year, it would be back in the black. It promised Canadians, hand over heart, three short years of deficits, and then we would be back to balanced budgets. Of course, that did not happen.

This opposition day motion lays out very clearly the views of this opposition when it comes to the government's tax increases. We want a clear commitment, in writing, that the Liberals will cease their tax increases on Canadians. Canadians in my riding of Perth—Wellington and Canadians across the country are finding the cost of living to be going up. At the end of each month, they notice that there is not a lot left. They might be making ends meet. They might be getting by, but that is about it. They are struggling.

At the end of each month, Canadians sit down at kitchen tables across this country and look at their expenses and what they have brought in. They know, as Conservatives know, that they have to make those numbers balance. They have to make tough decisions. They have to decide whether they can put off that needed house repair for maybe that much longer. They have to decide whether they will be able to sock away a bit of money for a rainy day fund. They have to make difficult decisions for their kids and their futures. Do they have enough money that month to put a bit away for an RESP to plan for their kids' future education? Do they have a bit of money so maybe they can enrol the kids in a sporting activity, like soccer or swimming lessons, or will they have to forego that because money is tight? Parents have to make those tough decisions. Canadians have to make those tough decisions.

Small businesses have to make tough decisions. A small business owner has to decide whether there is enough left over at the end of the month to reinvest in the business or to pay himself or herself a salary that month. I have talked to small business owners in my riding, as my colleagues have talked to small business owners across the country, and they are finding it tough. They are finding it tough because of the challenges the Liberal government has put before them.

It is not just in my riding. It is in ridings across this country. In a neighbouring riding, Kitchener South—Hespeler, I have had some great conversations with the Conservative candidate there, Mr. Alan Keeso. Alan Keeso is going to be a great MP when he arrives in this House in a few short months. Alan has two master's degrees from Oxford, where he also played on the Oxford hockey team. He was a member of the Canadian Armed Forces. Most importantly, he listens

to his community. He listens to his neighbours. He listens to the people on the doorstep talk about their concerns about what is happening in their community.

What he is hearing in Kitchener South—Hespeler reflects what a lot of us are hearing across the country, which is that families are finding it tough. The question of affordability is constantly there. They are concerned about a carbon tax. They are concerned that the carbon tax is going to end up being a tax on everything, that it is going to increase the cost of everyday items families rely on, such as groceries and getting to and from work. Small businesses are concerned about the other changes as well, such as increased payroll taxes, a tax on both the individual and the employer.

Alan says that families are just shaking their heads about the Liberals' spending and how they can blow so much money today, which will cause increases in taxes down the road to pay for the Liberals' mismanagement.

•(1820)

Alan related a story to me about a small business owner he was talking to. This particular small business owner had to let employees go because he said the incentive was gone from growing his business. That incentive is gone because of the Liberals. That is wrong. Alan told me this particular business owner, a constituent in Kitchener South—Hespeler, raised his concerns when the Liberals' tax changes were proposed two summers ago with the hon. member for Kitchener South—Hespeler. Nothing happened. He found no support from his local MP when he raised his concerns about the disastrous proposals the Liberal Minister of Finance presented for small businesses. It is absolutely shameful.

There is hope. There is hope because the Conservatives are listening. Conservatives in places like Kitchener South—Hespeler and across the country are listening to their constituents. They are listening to the concerns of Canadians. Those concerns are real.

I talked to seniors. Seniors are concerned. A lot of seniors have spent their lives preparing for their retirements, putting money away, ensuring that when the time came for them to retire they could live comfortably. They are not living extravagantly. They are not blowing their money. They are simply living and enjoying what, quite rightfully, they are entitled to. However, now that they are on a fixed income, they are concerned about what the current Liberals are going to do to their lives. They are concerned about the cost of heating their homes. They are concerned about the cost of their groceries. They are concerned about the cost of medication as well, which is not going to be helped by the concessions of the Liberals in the recent NAFTA negotiations.

The Liberals are offering them false and I would dare say dishonest hope when they flout their changes to the CPP. In fact, the changes proposed to the payroll tax increases to CPP will not come into play in full degree until 2065, offering a false hope to today's seniors.

We all know that today's budget deficits are tomorrow's tax increases. According to the Department of Finance's own numbers, the budget will not be balanced until 2040.

I have three young kids, Ainsley, Bennett and Caroline. Ainsley, my four-year old, will be 26 years old by the time the budget is finally balanced. My nine-month old, Caroline, will be 22 years old. She will be graduating from university by the time the budget is finally balanced. Their generation will be paying the tax increases caused by the nearly \$1 trillion in debt that will exist by the year 2040. Year after year, that debt and debt financing are not going toward investments with respect to the concerns of Canadians. It will not help to build infrastructure in rural communities, in places like Mapleton, St. Marys, Perth South, Listowel, Mitchell, Stratford or Milverton. They are not building infrastructure. Money is being wasted on increased deficit and debt financing charges because the current Liberals have not lived within their means.

Canadians were sold a bill of goods in 2015. They were promised three short years and a return to a balanced budget by 2019. That has not happened.

The Conservatives will always stand up for Canadian taxpayers. Come October 2019, we will once again tell Canadians that we will be standing on the side of Canadian families, taxpayers and small business owners.

• (1825)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I enjoyed the member's speech, when I listen to folks on the other side, I often wonder where they were when their party was going to market with its 150 billion dollars' worth of borrowing in less than 10 years, accumulating, as the Conservatives have, over 65% of Canada's debt over the course of its history. However, I digress.

I have a very specific question for the member. The average family in the member's constituency is getting \$8,160, tax free, to use as they choose, for skating or piano lessons, child care or whatever the parents see fit to spend it on. How much of that money will be cut in the Conservative platform?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, we will be cutting the perks that the Prime Minister receives at taxpayer expense. We will be cutting the half a billion dollars that is wasted on building infrastructure outside of Canada. People in my riding are concerned about the roads and bridges in our communities. They are shocked when they hear the Liberals are spending half a billion dollars building infrastructure through the Asian infrastructure bank.

The member for Gatineau brought up our record from when we were in office. However, let us be very clear: That was during the global recession. Thanks to the leadership of the Hon. Jim Flaherty, we weathered that storm better than any other G7 country. At the end of our term, we returned to a balanced budget a year ahead of schedule. That is the type of leadership we want to see in a minister of finance, the leadership that Jim Flaherty showed for all Canadians during his time as our minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague whether he thinks that asking Netflix to collect GST constitutes a new tax.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for the question.

Business of Supply

Like many Canadians, I enjoy Netflix. To me, it is a good opportunity to have Canadian content on a different platform.

[English]

To the specific question about applying the HST to Netflix, I want to go one step further. Let us talk about how we can encourage the innovative economy. How can we as Canadian parliamentarians work to ensure the innovations of tomorrow are enhanced and encouraged, and not taxed out of existence? How do we as Canadians support entrepreneurs who are coming up with the next big thing, like the next Netflix or the next major innovation? That is what we should be doing as Canadians.

I would also note that it was the Conservative government that lowered the HST and the GST by two percentage points. I am proud of that record.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke of some of the issues concerning all Canadians with respect to debt and deficits. One of the finance department records indicated that had the Conservative platform and record of management continued, the country would be debt free in 2040. The debt will be \$1 trillion if we follow the Liberal trajectory.

Could he comment on that? The Prime Minister is making Canadians continue to pay for his mistakes. We want to balance the budget as soon as we possibly can to ensure that Canadian debt going into the future is not something we burden our children and grandchildren with.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful question from the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View. He is quite right about following the path that was laid out by the Conservative government, through Jim Flaherty and Joe Oliver. They had a long-term plan to ensure that Canada had the economic capacity and fiscal space to pay down the debt long term and invest in the priorities of Canadians long term.

We have seen the Liberals spend and spend with nothing to show. Their long proposed infrastructure investments have failed to move the needle on economic growth. Why? Because they are not investing in the priorities of Canadians. They are not implementing infrastructure projects in ridings like mine and in communities across the country. They are not making it happen. Canadians know better.

We on the Conservative side remain committed to working on behalf of Canadian families and taxpayers in ensuring we have a long-term plan so our fiscal house is in order for future generations.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 6:31 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 5, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

TRANSPORT

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in October, a report by the CBC's *The Fifth Estate* revealed an eight-year-old study by the Department of Transport that was not made public. That study contradicted previous Ministry of Transport statements that no evidence was available that pointed to seat belts improving the overall level of safety on school buses. How many injuries and child deaths could have been prevented across Canada in the past decade had school buses been equipped with seat belts as a result of that buried report?

Since 1999, 16 students have been killed in school bus accidents in Ontario alone, and more than 6,000 have been injured. We will probably never know whether mandatory seat belts on the bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos would have made a difference that tragic day in April last year, or whether the deaths of three and injury of 23 public transit users in Ottawa could have been prevented had seat belts been mandatory on January 11 when a double-decker bus carrying commuters crashed into the Westboro transit station.

On January 21, the minister announced a task force investigating seat belts on buses. CBC reported that Transport Canada stated, for the first time on its website in a posting December 21, that seat belts, when worn properly, do offer added protection for school-aged children.

Transport Canada has decreed that all large and medium highway buses must have seatbelts by September 1, 2020. In announcing the change, the transport minister said, "By having seat belts on highway buses, we can help reduce injuries in severe collisions, such as rollovers, and improve safety for everyone."

The federal government has the authority to mandate seat belts on all new school buses without needing provincial approval. For existing school buses, the minister has stated that he will require more consultations with the provinces to determine the source of money to retrofit school buses to provide seat belts. It seems that the minister and his department have no questions about whether or not seat belts save lives; the only question is who should pay for the retrofits.

The facts speak for themselves. After all, if it is mandatory for a bus driver to wear a seat belt for safety reasons, why would it be any less dangerous to fail to require seat belts for the passengers that the driver carries? A delay on this makes no sense at all. Why would the minister require another review when the report that was buried eight years ago determined that school buses without seat belts failed safety tests?

The government has plenty of money when it comes to paying \$1 billion more than the actual value of a leaky pipeline, or when it comes to ignoring billions in lost revenues in its refusal to close tax loopholes for the richest Canadians and corporations that hide their excessive income in offshore accounts. The government conducted bogus consultations on electoral reform when it had no intention of

keeping that election promise, and it continues to demand pointless consultations on pay equity for women.

With every day that goes by without action by the Minister of Transport, more and more Canadian lives are at risk when the solution is simple and evident: Make seat belts mandatory on buses. It is time for action on the part of the minister, not more studies, task forces and obfuscation.

● (1835)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to be very clear that protecting children on the road is vitally important to our government. Of course, we are going to, and must, do everything we can to make the streets safer for them.

School buses are built, inside and out, to protect children, including having a series of structural safety features built in that are specifically designed to protect children in the event of a collision. School buses are mandated to have high roof crush standards, reinforced joints, electronic stability control to help prevent rollovers, and a highly effective seat design, referred to as "compartmentalization".

Make no mistake: the exceptional level of safety currently afforded by school buses is owing to extensive research conducted over decades in both Canada and the U.S. It is because of this research that our government is a strong supporter of seat belts.

The Minister of Transport has taken action in this area and, in July 2018 we published regulations that include specific technical requirements that must be followed should seat belts be installed on school buses. This technical standard is directly aligned with requirements in the United States and will help ensure that when properly used and installed, seat belts can provide an additional layer of safety to complement the existing highly effective seat designs.

Building on this commitment to road safety, in June 2017 we published regulations to require electronic stability control systems on all new large school buses and other heavy vehicles. Our leadership in this area makes our large school buses the only ones in North America that are now federally mandated to have electronic stability control systems, which reduce the risk of rollover and obviously help to protect school children.

We are always looking for ways to improve road safety, and in October 2018 the minister tasked his department to take a fresh look at the issue of seatbelts on school buses. This review is now well under way.

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We are not conducting this review alone. On January 21, 2019, the Minister of Transport met with the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety to discuss this important issue. The ministers agreed to establish a task force on school bus safety, bringing together government representatives, safety associations, manufacturers, and school board representatives to assess potential safety measures, including school bus standards and operations, both inside and outside the bus. We also agreed to conduct pilot projects, which will help school bus operators across Canada to make sure that seatbelts, when installed on their buses, are always worn properly by occupants.

These pilot projects, and our review of school bus safety, are critical steps to ensure that Canada's school buses continue to be the safest way to transport children to and from school. We will not hesitate to take the necessary actions to protect Canadians, especially young Canadians.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, they have already hesitated for eight years. Task forces, pilot projects and reviews do not put seat belts on school buses.

The minister and his department's own statements reveal the truth. Evidence that seatbelts save lives is not the problem. The real question is who is going to pick up the tab, although money never seems to be a problem when it comes to propping up corporations or padding the pockets of their rich friends.

The Conservatives and the Liberals cannot seem to find the will when there is a cost involved with providing better public service like health care, pay equity or environmental protection, or when it comes to saving the lives of children.

The truth is plain to see: Seatbelts save lives. When will the government, the Prime Minister and the minister understand that we are the stewards of the public dollars placed in our trust by the Canadians who elected us? When will we see the day that good public service and good public progress take priority over personal and corporate interests? When will the minister move to make seatbelts mandatory on school buses?

● (1840)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate on behalf of the minister that protecting children on the road is of vital importance to this government, and we will do everything we can to make this transportation mode as safe as possible for them. That is why the Minister of Transport established a task force on school bus safety to work with all levels of government and a diverse road safety community, because they have a responsibility to implement any changes and see them through carefully.

While we cannot speak to inaction in 2010 on this file after the Transport Canada study, our government is very much moving forward on this matter in a serious and deliberate way. Seatbelts can indeed offer an added layer of protection when they are installed properly and when they are worn properly by all occupants.

Given the responsibilities of provincial governments and school boards in making sure that happens, we have a duty to speak with them and to ensure that any changes we make are applied correctly and improve children's safety.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since this is my first time raising a question in adjournment proceedings in this new chamber, I would like to salute the people of Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis and thank them for the privilege they have given me as I begin my 14th year as an MP. I rise this evening on their behalf, particularly on behalf of the Davie shipyard workers.

When the Conservatives left government in 2015, the shipyard had nearly 1,300 workers, and now it has only about 200 employees. They had the contract for the *Asterix* in the bag. Anyone who follows my work knows that I have been working hard to ensure that the Davie workers get the contract for the *Obelix*. Canada had two supply ships, which were built in 1969 and 1967. I was not very old when they were built, but I was born. One of those two ships caught fire and the other one was so rusted out that Vice-Admiral Norman decommissioned it, because it was kaput. This should remind the member opposite of something. When our government saw that, we got to work on the *Asterix*.

My colleague opposite, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, is well up on this file. All he has to do is tell his officials to exercise the option to purchase the *Obelix*. That is essential. Right now, the Royal Canadian Navy is renting ships from Chile and other countries. Our own sovereignty is in jeopardy. Canada is bordered by three oceans. This situation is unacceptable. My colleague has a chance to do something meaningful, to take the advice of people like Vice-Admiral Norman and to say that we need ships to resupply our vessels.

Vice-Admiral Norman is not the only one saying this. His senator friends agree. A report released in May 2017 by independent senators, who we know have Liberal leanings, recommended that the government:

Procure a second Resolve-Class Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment (AOR) ship [in other words, the *Obelix*] by 2018 and retain both vessels, in service in conjunction with the projected Joint Support Ships...

The problem with the Liberals' shipbuilding strategy is that it is costly and is yielding no ships. We desperately need ships. Shipyard workers are ready. The Liberals are proud of the *Asterix*, so they should give us the *Obelix*. We will do that on time and on budget, with no risk. It is good for taxpayers, for the Royal Canadian Navy and for shipyard workers.

My colleague will probably ask me why we did not give it to Davie in 2011. There were some issues then, but the shipyard is ready now, and it is time to award it some contracts. I urge my colleague to do the right thing. There are contracts for Halifax and British Columbia, but Quebec is just as capable of building boats. Davie is building boats, and it is time to give it these contracts.

I am eager to hear from my colleague. I hope he will tell us that the Liberals are planning to give the contract for the *Obelix* to the shipyard workers. It will be good for the navy, for workers, for the government and for taxpayers.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. As he knows, there is some background to consider.

We inherited a shipbuilding strategy that gave the Davie shipyard nothing. The lease agreement for the *Asterix* was executed and fulfilled, of course.

I would like to thank the Davie shipyard workers for the excellent work they did on the *Asterix*, a ship that proudly represents Canada around the world. That ship is proving and will continue to prove its worth.

That being said, we make decisions based on the advice and plans of our military personnel, of Canadian forces leadership. General Vance and the Canadian navy have assured us that a second interim supply ship is not needed. The shipbuilding strategy devised by our predecessors called for the construction of a supply ship at Vancouver's Seaspan shipyard, and that is what we are working on now.

What are we doing for Davie?

I have been working hard with my colleagues from Quebec and from the government to identify opportunities for the Davie shipyard, and we have found some. I had the pleasure of visiting the shipyard to announce the arrival of three interim icebreakers for the Canadian Coast Guard. The Davie shipyard also fairly regularly receives isolated ship repair and upgrade contracts. This is excellent. We continue our talks with the Davie shipyard about other opportunities, because the shipbuilding strategy provides for opportunities for shipyards other than the two main ones in Halifax and Vancouver, which were designated by my hon. predecessor and his government.

We recognize that isolated opportunities may arise, but these opportunities are strategic and long term, such as repairing our existing frigates. Other projects may come up from time to time.

I assure everyone watching us, and especially those associated in any way to the Davie shipyard, that we will continue to offer and look for opportunities for the workers who are doing excellent work in Quebec and who are doing extraordinary work for our navy.

The shipyard has already received some 16% of the \$1.5 billion awarded to Quebec companies under our shipbuilding strategy. We will continue to work on this and to give our sailors and our men and women in uniform the best equipment and ships possible.

•(1845)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts by the hon. member for Gatineau and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility regarding the shipyard, but announcing that existing icebreakers will be getting three coats of paint is not going to create jobs.

He mentioned his frigates, but that represents just a few hundred jobs in three years' time. It is not going to put bread and butter on our workers' tables any time soon. He could do that by having the *Obelix* built.

I want to come back to the icebreakers. The government was meant to buy the heavy icebreaker *Aiviq*. It would have been nice to have that ship on the St. Lawrence over the past few weeks. I am not sure if my colleague has picked up the phone and talked to his friends in the Canadian Coast Guard, but they are overwhelmed. Ice jams on the river have forced the coast guard to use ships from Newfoundland here and there. It is a mess. They need boats. The shipyard is ready and they have the expertise and knowledge. We are not going to get into the numbers, but compared to tens of billions of dollars, \$1.5 billion is a drop in the bucket. The shipyard—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I noted my colleague's very strong opinions. I can assure him that we are taking this matter seriously. I can assure him that we greatly appreciate the skills of the men and women of the Davie shipyard and the work they have done.

As I mentioned earlier, we will continue to identify the opportunities he spoke of and also other opportunities that may arise. We are in constant communication with Davie's representatives, the leadership of Canada's armed forces and the people at the Canadian Coast Guard, who serve the country so well, to determine the needs and ensure that we have the necessary equipment.

I can assure the member that Davie shipyard will be part of the solution.

•(1850)

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 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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