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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

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

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the London School of Economics states that up to 80% of Canada's hydrocarbon reserves are “unburnable” if we are to avoid catastrophic climate change, but speculators and markets are counting these stranded assets toward the value of oil companies. This carbon bubble represents at least \$236 billion of inflated assets in Canada.

If the government continues to avoid real action on its Copenhagen promises, investors will burst the bubble suddenly, taking our economy and thousands of jobs with it.

Ostrich-like oil companies, stockbrokers and the government are all betting against fixing climate change and diversifying our petro-economy. Instead, they are inflating the carbon bubble as fast as they can.

With so much at risk, the government needs to price carbon and fix its \$236 billion job-killing carbon bubble.

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YOUTH OF ELMWOOD—TRANSCONA

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the great privileges of being a member of Parliament is the opportunity to speak with the youth of Canada.

In my riding of Elmwood—Transcona, I have visited many schools. During these visits, I have enjoyed lively discussions with students from very diverse backgrounds and who have different

experiences with government officials in Canada and in other countries, yet all have an exceptional interest in this great country we call home.

It encourages me to hear how interested students are in our system of government. I had some great discussions today with students from the King's School in my riding, who have come to Ottawa this week to get a better understanding of how government works and to have conversations on the things that matter to them. Their investment in learning is imperative for our nation as we look ahead. We need to ensure we help them in their learning and equip them with the skills they need to move Canada forward.

The youth of Elmwood—Transcona are not only inspiring, but are demonstrating they will be ready to lead. It gives me great pleasure to applaud them for their resolve to make the world better for everyone.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my New Democratic Party colleagues, and as an avid basketball player and fan in support of Brittney Griner and Jason Collins.

Collins, a veteran NBA player, and Griner, the first NCAA player to score more than 2,000 points and block 500 shots and the number one pick in the Women's National Basketball Association draft, have courageously come out.

With David Testo of Montreal Impact, Griner and Collins are the first athletes in any major American sport to come out. This is a huge step forward for professional sports.

Athletes should be judged on their talent, heart and work ethic, not on their sexual orientation. We commend the good work of You Can Play, a project dedicated to equality and respect for all athletes without regard to sexual orientation.

The courage of Collins and Griner is a light for every gay and lesbian living in silence and working to overcome fear, and should be a message for all of us to proudly stand up for respect and join the universal fight for equality, justice and human rights.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past year, I have had the honour to meet some very special people who have done some very special things in their lives that contributed to their communities, their provinces, their country and their fellow Canadians.

I was honoured to present to them, in recognition of their contributions, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, on behalf of our Queen and our Governor General.

Two weeks ago my heart was really touched as I presented the Diamond Jubilee Medal to Mrs. Josephine Selkirk of Prince George, B.C. This lady, simply known as "Joey", is 101 years old and has had a remarkable life, having served in the armed forces and being active in the Second World War and in leadership in the Royal Canadian Legion for over six decades. Joey Selkirk is indeed a very special person.

While I am up, may I quickly add a big happy birthday to the most beautiful 60-year-old woman on the face of the earth, my wife Annie.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. Approximately 75,000 Canadians are living with MS and another 3 will be diagnosed today.

As a physician, I know first hand the often overwhelming effects that multiple sclerosis brings, not just to the individual, but to the entire family, including caregivers.

[*Translation*]

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada is on Parliament Hill today to pin carnations on members' lapels. The carnation is a symbol of hope for people with MS, and the Carnation Campaign takes place over Mother's Day weekend. Many of us know a mother who either has MS or has taken care of a loved one suffering from the disease.

[*English*]

Great strides have been made in MS research and treatment, but there is so much we still do not know. This is why it is important that we continue to raise awareness, fund research in clinical trials in promising new treatments and support those living with MS and their families and caregivers so that one day we can find a cure.

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HOCKEY

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Leafs nation is not defined by borders. It is not defined by citizenship and it never runs a deficit. In Leafs nation, it is a passion for the blue and white that unites us all.

While some may delight in the fact that we have not won the cup since Canada's centennial, no one can deny that our commitment to our team and to our cause not only endures but grows.

This year, every team in the original six has made the playoffs. It is a rare occurrence in today's NHL. Perhaps it is a sign of things to come, a signal that the wait for Leafs nation is over.

How fitting it is that the journey for our beloved Maple Leafs begins in Boston. It is a clash for tradition, a clash of passion and a clash of two great cities and two great teams.

Tonight, millions of members of Leafs nation around the world will gather to cheer for our team. In the words of the legendary Bob Cole, "Oh baby, this is going to be big". From every corner of the country, from every town, every rink and every member of Leafs nation, there is one battle cry: "beat the Bruins", go Leafs go.

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[*Translation*]**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is Multiple Sclerosis Day on Parliament Hill, and I would like to take this opportunity to talk to my colleagues, the public and the government about this disease. It is estimated that 55,000 to 75,000 Canadians suffer from MS.

As the disease progresses, it has a significant impact on a person's ability to work full time. Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis should not condemn a person to poverty. Those people desperately need income security. The current income support programs are not flexible enough to accommodate their situation.

That is the case with EI sickness benefits, which do not allow for part-time work, yet many people can work only part time.

I urge the government to make the necessary changes to the current programs so that they meet the needs of people with MS and enable them to fully contribute to Canadian society.

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●(1410)

[*English*]**MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS**

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day thousands of Canadians navigate their daily lives with multiple sclerosis. Today, I am wearing a carnation to support 1 Day in May, a campaign to raise awareness of MS and those who are affected.

Because of the complexity of MS, people with this disease sometimes experience difficulty staying in the workplace. Over time, up to 80% of people with MS can no longer work. People in this situation need options that facilitate their continued employment, while respecting the daily challenges they face.

Statements by Members

I urge each of us, at least one day in May, to affect positive change in the life of someone with MS. Let us also commit to ending MS in our lifetime.

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BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as an alumnus of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, I rise today to congratulate them on partnering with CIBC to end bullying and ensure that all young people feel a sense of safety and belonging. They have declared May 1 a national day to end bullying.

Too many of our young people have to live with the consequences of bullying. Those who lack positive relationships on which to rely are more vulnerable. Boys and Girls Clubs are an integral part of the solution by being a place where children and youth know they belong.

In my riding of Oshawa, the Durham region Boys and Girls Club is having a walkathon to stamp out bullying on May 29.

I would like to thank the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and CIBC for their commitment to children and youth. I invite Canadians to join them in helping them address bullying.

There is much we all can do to build caring and positive relationships with young people that will increase their sense of belonging.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, May 1st is the day we acknowledge the kind of work world we live in.

In a changing economy, where workers' rights around the world are being whittled away, International Workers' Day recognizes the long hard road taken since the origins of this day, in the late 1800s, when workers organized to fight for an eight-hour work day.

Whether in Bangladesh or at Neptune Technologies in the Eastern Townships, the battles waged even today by labour movements to guarantee fundamental human rights are of the utmost importance. These organizations must remember what they have accomplished and why they are fighting for social justice and democracy.

Too many people lose their lives needlessly because of employers' negligence. That is why occupational health and safety is always a core issue, even in Canada, a modern-day industrialized country. Next, the right of association and its corollary, the right to collect union dues, must be protected because, brothers and sisters, we are fighting for a world free of violence, free of social inequality, free of social injustice and free of this Conservative government.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, students from Crescent School in my riding of Don Valley West and Rick Hansen Secondary School from Mississauga—Streetsville were on the winning team and won gold in the 21st annual International High School Robotics Championship in St. Louis, Missouri.

Four hundred teams from 37 countries entered to create robots designed to compete with each other. In the end, the students from Crescent School and Rick Hansen Secondary School were the best robot designers in the world. It is the first time in the competition's history that two Canadians teams have teamed up to finish first.

Crescent School was founded in 1913 and the student's championship appropriately falls on the school's centennial anniversary year. I am proud to recognize the world champion robot design team from Crescent School in Don Valley West.

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ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women in Canada and around the world are demanding ethical development. From clothing manufacturing in Bangladesh to resource extraction that is devastating the environment, women are calling on government to act.

In northern Greece, Greeks are calling on the Canadian mining company, Eldorado, to halt its plan that would damage the environment and is opposed by the public. However, the Conservative government, through our embassy, is actively promoting this mine.

Women in northern Greece are speaking out against the company's agenda, which is hurting their families and communities. People expect far better from Canada. There must be the same respect for public consultation and the need for environmental protection that we would expect in Canada. This company and the government must listen to the women and men in Greece and around the world who are calling on Canada to change course.

We must be a model for sustainable, ethical resource development in Canada, in Greece and throughout the world.

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● (1415)

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Canadian veterans who fought and gave their lives during the Battle of the Atlantic. Seventy years ago marked the turning point in this battle in a moment when Allied forces finally gained the upper hand against the German U-boat threat.

Statements by Members

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest running battle of the Second World War and represents an outstanding contribution by Canadians to the war effort. Those who served during this historic battle will forever be remembered for their valiant service and remarkable bravery.

I hope that all hon. members will join me as we remember those brave men and women who fought to protect our values of peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Lest we forget.

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CHARLES KING

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to our dear friend Charles King.

He was vice-president at Shaw Communications and a partner at Earncliffe Strategy Group. A lifelong Liberal, he worked for MPs and ministers here in Parliament. In Ottawa, Charles helped to raise almost \$1 million for youth and young adults.

Just yesterday, the *Toronto Star's* Susan Delacourt said that Charles “worked diligently to get attention for others and other causes, but not for himself.” He hated the spotlight and all the attention, which is exactly what I am doing here. Sorry, Charles.

This past Monday, as the sun rose, Charles passed away. He was surrounded by his close friends. With him was his best friend and wife, Kelly. They were there not to say goodbye but to say thank you. On behalf of the many members who knew and loved Charles, his candour, his wit and warm smile, we say, “Thank you, in our hearts, Charles King. You will be there forever.”

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight for the first time in nine long years the Toronto Maple Leafs will suit up for the NHL playoffs.

Let us take a look back at the last time the beloved blue and white were in the playoffs.

It was nine years ago and Canadians were still being governed by a tired and corrupt Liberal government. Justice Gomery had not even begun his investigation into the Liberal sponsorship scandal. Nine years later, we are still waiting for the Liberals to pay back that \$40 million they stole from taxpayers. The member for Papineau was busy running Katimavik into the ground and the leader of the Green Party was a Liberal.

As we saw this week, apparently not much has changed.

Tonight I will be proud to join Leafs Nation in cheering on our beloved blue and white. Perhaps during commercial breaks we will learn more about how the Liberal leader is just in over his head.

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, the Treasury Board has lost track of billions of dollars earmarked for anti-terrorism initiatives. This is not the kind of money you lose in the couch cushions or that you find in your coat pocket come spring.

It is odd, because when the Liberals lost a billion dollars at HRDC, the Conservatives tore them apart. I want to share a quote:

...there are great amounts of money which are unaccounted for and I think this is extremely serious and warrants an investigation. Canadians would like to know what happened to this money.

Who said that? It was the current Minister of National Defence in 2000, back when he still had principles.

This is exactly the same thing. The Conservatives have lost track of \$3.1 billion of taxpayer money, period. However, the Treasury Board is currently more interested in interfering in the CBC's business. Canadians deserve better.

In 2015, the NDP will get things in order and Canadians will get their money's worth.

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[*English*]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during a time of economic uncertainty the last thing Canadians need is to worry about wasteful spending and unnecessary tax hikes. That is why our government is working hard to keep taxes low and remains focused on job creation and economic prosperity. Unfortunately, we cannot say that these priorities are the same for the leader of the NDP and his party.

The leader of the NDP is planning to generate \$20 billion through a shameful and sneaky carbon tax that would increase the price of everything, including gas, groceries and electricity. Respected economist Jack Mintz calculated that the NDP carbon tax would raise gas prices by as much as 10¢ a litre. The socialist policies of the NDP are those that Canadians cannot afford to have.

The last thing Canadians need is a \$20-billion job-killing carbon tax.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

*[English]***ELECTIONS CANADA**

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, elections in Canada are nearing a crisis. A new report is pointing to many serious problems from the last campaign. Half the documents that were audited contained errors. There were errors in 165,000 cases; 500 errors per riding. These are the kinds of errors that could overturn election results.

With Elections Canada facing all these serious challenges, why on earth would the Conservatives choose now to cut the budget of Elections Canada by 8%?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the suggestions for savings at Elections Canada were produced by Elections Canada itself, and after the election campaign.

Obviously, Elections Canada is independent. It has set up an audit that has exposed some quality control issues. I think Elections Canada will obviously accept the recommendations of that audit and we will look at those recommendations as we move forward with changes to elections law.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the Conservatives' budget, so it is the Conservatives' cuts to Elections Canada. The fact is, Conservatives are cutting the budget of Elections Canada and they are weakening our electoral system.

Elections Canada is already stretched thin investigating thousands of allegations of wrongdoing from the 2011 election without the legislative tools it needs. In fact, the government has delayed promised amendments to the Elections Act for over a year. It is clear the government is deliberately dragging its heels on giving Elections Canada the power it needs. Why are the Conservatives afraid of a chief electoral officer with real pull?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have no such fear. In fact, we have committed to come through with amendments to do precisely that.

The fact of the matter is, it is only in the last few weeks that Elections Canada has made its own recommendations in this regard. We are looking specifically at those recommendations, and as the government has indicated, we will be bringing forward amendments to the law in the not too distant future.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are saying that losing track of \$3.1 billion is no big deal. The Prime Minister says there is a lack of clarity. The President of the Treasury Board says it was the Liberals' fault. However, let me read this quote, "One would think there would be some element of shame...regarding today's report but there is none whatsoever."

That was the Prime Minister talking about the Liberal boondoggle in 2005. Is the Prime Minister now ready to show some contrition?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member suggests the Auditor General said something he did not say. In fact, what he said on this specific issue is the following, "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been."

The issue here is certain analyses that the Auditor General would like to see presented to make sure in the future that Parliament can better understand certain spending. All spending has been reported and accounted for, and the Treasury Board has accepted the Auditor General's recommendations.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Auditor General is saying is that we do not know how the money was spent. It is impossible to say whether it was spent appropriately. This amateur management of the public purse is unacceptable.

Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board said that a clearer picture will be available in 2014. That is 13 years after this spending began and five years after the budgets are expected to be completely spent on goodness knows what.

Other than the Liberals, who is going to be held responsible for this \$3.1 billion fiasco?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said the complete opposite.

He said: "We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money...was used in any way that it should not have been." This is a matter of clarity and analysis. The Treasury Board accepted the Auditor General's recommendations for its future reports.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about the \$50 million slush fund for the President of the Treasury Board's gazebos. We are talking about \$3.1 billion.

When the Liberals lost track of a billion dollars at HRDC, the current Minister of National Defence said that the situation was extremely serious and that it warranted an investigation.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that he has the same ethical standards as he did then and will he immediately announce an investigation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Auditor General said, no money is missing or lost. Quite the opposite is true.

The issue here is the clarity of certain analyses, and the Treasury Board has accepted the Auditor General's recommendations.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's answers yesterday clearly demonstrated just how out of touch he is with the needs of middle-class Canadians.

Oral Questions

Not only does he not have a plan, but he does not even understand that Canada needs a plan.

Median household incomes have flatlined. The only thing rising faster than the cost of education and child care is personal debt.

When will the Prime Minister understand that his apathy and his failure to act on behalf of our country are affecting Canadian families?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, Canada's record is better than virtually every other country in the developed world when it comes to job creation, economic growth since the recession and the position of our middle class.

Of course we can always do more. We have presented measures here in the House, such as our economic action plan 2013, that have the broad support of Canadians and economic stakeholders.

I encourage the Liberal Party to do something positive and support those measures.

[*English*]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has spent too much time walled off from Canadians. He needs to listen more so that he can learn about the challenges facing

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to listen more so he can learn about the challenges facing the middle class. Since 2006, our economy has grown, on average, a mediocre 1.5% per year. The forecast for this current year: 1.5%. Not since R. B. Bennett was in power in the 1930s have we seen numbers this bad for a prime minister.

Without a stronger middle class, we will not see robust growth, yet the budget did not even acknowledge the problem. Why not?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am listening very carefully to the leader of the Liberal Party, and I am hearing nothing of substance whatsoever. What I do know, and what Canadians know, is this country, Canada, has one of the absolute best records in the world coming out of the recession, and as the OECD has said, is one of the best prospects for the 50 years to come.

There are concrete, specific, substantive measures before the House the Liberal Party should think about supporting for a change: the Canada job grant, the advanced manufacturing fund, the hiring credit for small business, opportunities for apprentices. I could go on and on. Let us have the Liberal Party get some substance, get outside, and help us get things done.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have met more Canadians in the past six months than the Prime Minister has in the past six years. He really needs to get out more.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives know very well that their higher tariffs will reduce competitiveness, kill jobs and hurt Canadian consumers.

Will the Prime Minister finally do something to help the middle class and cancel his new \$330 million tax?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party's position is to oppose tariff reductions for Canadian consumers, while supporting special tariff reductions for Chinese companies. Their policy makes no sense at all.

That is why, here on this side of the House, we support tax cuts for all Canadians.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board claims the missing money can be found in public accounts, but the truth is, it cannot be found in public accounts. It was not presented to cabinet. It never came before Parliament, and it was hidden from Canadians.

When the Liberals lost track of \$1 billion, the opposition Conservatives howled with great disdain, yet the President of the Treasury Board continues to pretend that he was not at fault. When will he admit that he has lost track of \$3 billion Canadian?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely incorrect. I will quote, again, from the Auditor General. Just yesterday, he said:

We didn't find anything that gave us cause for concern that the money was used in any way that it should not have been.

That is from the Auditor General.

The matter relates to the categorization of expenses by the Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009. All of the funds in question are accounted for in the public accounts that are tabled before this chamber each and every year. There is no indication that any dollars are missing. We accept the Auditor General's recommendations, and we will move forward on that basis.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that someone, somewhere, entered \$3.1 billion in the wrong column in an Excel spreadsheet, but we are not supposed to worry about it because the money was undoubtedly well spent. Is that correct?

If we do not know where the money is, how can we be sure it was spent appropriately? That makes me think of a famous quote: "All of this sounds very familiar. The government denied the billion dollar boondoggle at HRDC..." Who said that? The current Prime Minister in 2002.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives were outraged that the Liberals lost a billion dollars, but they have lost three times as much. Why is that not outrageous to them?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. The matter in question has to do with the categorization of expenses by the Treasury Board between 2001 and 2009. All of the funds in question are accounted for in the public documents, including the public accounts, that are tabled in Parliament. There is no indication that the funds are missing or were misappropriated or misspent.

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[English]

HEALTH CANADA

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic. When they were in opposition, they sure wanted to know what happened to the money then.

The Auditor General has also raised the alarm about Health Canada's pathetic efforts to prevent and control diabetes. Health Canada has "no strategy, priorities, deliverables, or timelines...and no performance measures". To add insult to injury, 30% of the program costs went to administration.

How does the minister explain this abysmal failure?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have implemented or are in the process of implementing all the recommendations in the report. Prevention is critical when it comes to tackling diabetes. Our government invests in community-based programs, such as the Canada prenatal nutrition program, aboriginal head start, and nutrition north Canada, to promote nutrition and improve access to healthy, traditional and store-bought food.

I announced \$25 million over 10 years for four pathways to health equity for aboriginal people, which look at obesity and other chronic diseases to improve the health outcomes for aboriginal peoples.

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[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development needs to stop getting so worked up every time I ask him questions. I will give him another chance today.

The Auditor General was very critical of the minister's failure to work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, yet the minister knows that we all need to travel the path of reconciliation together.

The commission has 15 months left to finish its work.

I will ask the minister again today if he will stop stonewalling and give the commission the documents it needs.

• (1435)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member will be quite pleased to know that we have tabled, returned and given the commission more than 3.5 million documents. That process began long ago and it is continuing.

As I said yesterday, we are determined to reach a fair and lasting settlement, and Canada will comply fully with the Indian residential schools settlement agreement.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are doing everything they can to keep the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from doing its work but nothing to recover money associated with tax evasion.

The Conservatives are sitting on \$29 billion in unpaid taxes. Instead of allocating the resources needed to recover this money, they are cutting CRA's budget. Nothing they have done since coming to power has yielded any results.

What real plan do they have to recover the money?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General was very clear and stated that the improvements the Canada Revenue Agency has made have resulted in a significant increase in the amount of tax debt being collected. We accept all of the Auditor General's most recent recommendations, and we have already taken action on the recommendations, including measures to ensure that tax debts do not expire.

Our economic action plan proposes a number of measures to close tax loopholes, address aggressive tax planning and crack down on international tax evasion, and we will be happy to see the opposition vote for it.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about almost \$30 billion in uncollected taxes, and all we hear from this minister is self-congratulation. Her own plan cut \$68 million from the accounts receivable and returns compliance department alone.

How can the government make these cuts, when there is \$29 billion in uncollected tax debt? Then there are the billions of dollars in tax havens, which the Conservatives are taking baby steps to go after.

When will the government listen to the Auditor General and get serious about tax collection?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our government has introduced over 75 measures to improve the integrity of the tax system. The NDP voted against all of those.

Oral Questions

The Auditor General was clear and has stated that the improvements that have been made at the Canada Revenue Agency have resulted in a significant increase in the amount of tax debt collected. In the fiscal year 2011-12 alone, the CRA recovered over \$40 billion in tax debt.

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[Translation]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they are unable to recover the money lost to tax evasion and meanwhile, they are cutting public services such as the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre.

Yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed the NDP's fears about the centre's closure. Closing this centre could have tragic consequences. It will put Canadians' lives in danger.

The Auditor General has said it. The Commissioner of Official Languages has said it. Even the Conservative association in Lévis—Bellechasse has said it. What more will it take? Will the Queen have to get involved?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as indicated in the statement on March 28, the Canadian Coast Guard will delay consolidation of the Quebec region until such time as we are confident that bilingual capacity is ensured for that joint rescue centre.

The safety of mariners remains a top priority for us. We will do nothing to jeopardize that safety.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder the Conservatives are in hot water. The Auditor General said in his report that when it comes to search and rescue, the Conservatives just do not have a plan. That is why we are seeing irresponsible closures in Quebec City and St. John's. That is why helicopters and availability are inadequate, and planes are not being replaced. That is why staff had to resort to Google maps to manage the search process.

As the Auditor General said, this is a question of life and death. Who is going to take responsibility for this?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he also described the response of search and rescue technicians as adequately responding to those SAR incidents.

That is not good enough. We recognize that. We accept his recommendations. In fact, with those recommendations, we have already begun work on the issues. We have already begun working with other stakeholders, including other departments. We will continue to do so.

We will be assessing our search and rescue governance structure at all federal levels, as well as working with the other jurisdictions to ensure that search and rescue continues to improve for this country.

● (1440)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as opposition continued to build on the Conservatives' planned cuts to the cadet glider program, a gag order was sent ordering cadet corps members not to share opinions or facts on the glider program. We are not talking national security here. It is a budget cut to a program for kids. A clear decision to end CF delivery of the air cadet glider program was communicated to the cadet organization.

Now, in light of the minister's statement issued today, will he confirm that the Conservatives have reversed the proposed cuts and that the air cadet glider program will continue? Will they confirm that they have reversed the proposed cuts—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for St. John's East.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, will he confirm that they have reversed the proposed cuts and that the air cadet glider program will continue to be delivered by the Canadian Forces as before?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I addressed this fabrication two days ago.

Since coming to office, our government has made increases to the cadet program each and every year. As I said yesterday, the cadet program is one of the finest that we have for young Canadians. It is a program which many Canadians, in fact some members of this House, have benefited from. It is a terrific program that we continue to support and will continue to invest in.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us suppose Dr. Evil was thinking of ways to trip up the Canadian economy to make life harder for the middle class and prevent our youth from getting jobs. One way he would be doing that would be to shaft one million small businesses, by raising payroll taxes again and again, by slapping a tax hike on their dividends. Oh, but wait, that is what the Conservative Minister of Finance has just done.

Who really designed these tax hikes for small businesses that will be hurting middle-class Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the member opposite asks about the economy, I am sure the member wanted to take note that Canada's economy grew by .3% in January and February, surpassing analysts' expectations and emphasizing our focus on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. With respect to taxes, it is our government that brought in tax relief for Canadians, tax relief by cutting the GST.

Oral Questions

The question for the Liberals is why they are arguing for a special break for Chinese companies.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a question for the Conservatives would be why are they adding GST to certain health care services? Yesterday, the Minister of Finance refused to deny that he is adding GST to the cost of lab work for couples struggling with fertility issues. Now the Canadian Psychological Association is worried that the budget is going to add the GST to psychological assessments.

How could the Conservatives possibly justify taxing mental health services in Canada?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, health care services have always been exempt from GST in Canada. They remain exempt. The changes are with respect to legal and insurance expenses, and they are distinct from medical treatment for health purposes.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hidden new Conservative taxes on small businesses, \$550 million every year, hurting the middle class; hidden new Conservative payroll taxes, \$600 million every year, hurting the middle class; hidden new Conservative tariff taxes on everything from school supplies to the kitchen sink, \$333 million every year, hurting the middle class.

Why is the government nailing middle-class Canadians with more than \$1.5 billion in hidden new Conservative taxes every single year?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we continue to reduce taxes. In fact, it is incredible to hear the Liberals talk about taxes after they opposed everything we have done to reduce taxes, including taxes for small business. Instead of fighting for Canadians, the Liberals are fighting for special jobs and special breaks for companies from China. Under our leadership, Canadian families are saving over \$3,200 per year on average in taxes.

* * *

• (1445)

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General found that the Conservatives are failing to ensure that \$2.9 billion of Canada's development assistance is meeting the criteria under the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act. The accountability act is the law; it is not an option. This is part of a continuing pattern of mismanagement under the minister.

Does he agree with the Auditor General's findings, and will he commit to complying with the law?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are complying with the law and we are doing it in a very responsible way. However, we do accept the recommendations of the Auditor General in his report, and our government will continue to demonstrate how Canadian taxpayer investments are achieving tangible results for those most in need.

We are competent, capable and are doing exactly what we are supposed to do to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are equally served to those in greater need, for which the money is dedicated.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is unable to abide by the law when it comes to handing out international aid.

What is worse, according to the Auditor General, CIDA's reports are not transparent and the annual development report is not specific enough.

The auditor confirmed what we have been saying all along: the minister is not running his department properly.

What concrete action will the minister take to abide by the law?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that is a figment of the hon. member's imagination. I do not think I need any lessons from that member about upholding the law, which we are in fact doing in each and every circumstance.

Our efforts on the international level of assistance and development are certainly well entrenched. We are receiving appreciation from countries and others who are receiving our aid. Obviously there are some issues that we need to deal with, and we will, but to say we are not observing the law or acting otherwise is irresponsible.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative management of international affairs is getting more embarrassing by the day.

Canada has been disengaging more and more since its disgraceful failure to obtain a seat on the UN Security Council, and major world powers have been handling global peace and security in the meantime.

Recognizing that the Conservatives' bad policies are hurting our chances, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday that Canada would not make another attempt to get a seat.

Why is he ducking his international responsibilities? When will things change?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's principled foreign policy is not for sale for a Security Council seat. We are aggressively working on humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable, including Syria. We are taking real leadership when it comes to standing up against the evil that is Iran. No one is standing up more strongly against the regime in Colombo, Sri Lanka, than this Prime Minister and this government. Canadians can finally be proud of their government on foreign policy.

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is fine to go along and get along with the dictators in Bahrain, but he will not fight for a seat on the Security Council. Every priority of Canada's foreign policy, from a nuclear Iran to chemical weapons in Syria, is handled at the Security Council. This minister is admitting that he will not even try to win back our seat at the most powerful decision-making body in the world.

Does he want to be known as the minister who just gave up on Canada's most important tool to influence global affairs? Is that what he is saying: give up, quit?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say what I am going to give up; I am going to give up on this critic.

This government took the principled stand to close our embassy, and break off relations with Iran and to declare it a terrorist state. This member came out against them, only to be undermined and counteracted by his own leader. His own leader supported this government, and he did not.

This government is always prepared to stand up to do what is right, to speak up on behalf of Canadian values, to speak up on behalf of Canadian interests. That is something that the New Democrats will never understand. They are with the go along to get along crowd.

* * *

• (1450)

JUSTICE

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, bullying is a great concern to many Canadian families and their communities, and today is the National Day to End Bullying. To help raise awareness and end relationship violence, our government recently partnered with the Canadian Red Cross and Sheldon Kennedy's group, Respect Group Inc., to create an online educational workshop aimed at promoting healthy relationships for Canadian youth.

Can the Minister of Justice please inform this House of other steps our government is taking to help prevent bullying?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we all have a stake in keeping our children safe online. This is why I have called for an expeditious review of the Criminal Code to identify any possible gaps with respect to cyberbullying or the distribution of intimate images. We will continue to work with the provinces to come up with a solution in this area, but, again, this is consistent with our efforts to stand up for victims across this country, and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about youth unemployment in the month of March. In Quebec City, it was 11.6%; in Saguenay, it was 13.5%; in Montreal, it was 14.2%; and in Trois-Rivières, it was an astonishing 15%.

The Conservatives keep telling us not to worry because they have taken action. Still, unemployment rates are not going down, young people are feeling the pinch of the economic crisis more than any other group, and the employment outlook is a lot less rosy than the minister's glasses.

What is the magic number that will spur the Conservatives to action? An unemployment rate of 20%, perhaps?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing in budget 2013.

We are offering young people opportunities to acquire the experience they need for available jobs. One way we are doing that is through internships.

There are many other ways to help young people find work and prepare for the kinds of jobs that are in demand. The NDP should support our efforts to help our young people.

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tinkering around the edges will not help today's youth find a job. That is not even a plan.

When we actually look at the number of jobs available, the forecasts are even bleaker. For every job vacancy, there are 6.5 unemployed Canadians competing for it.

Canada's economic struggles are being compounded on the backs of Canada's youth. The Conservatives are simply ignoring this fact. Their failed inaction plans have resulted in the continual increase of the unemployment levels of our young people. What will they do today to mitigate the impacts of a sluggish economy for Canada's youth?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada does have one of the lowest rates of unemployment for youth in the developed world. However, it is not good enough. That is why we are expanding our programs to help young people get the skills for the jobs that are actually in demand by employers. That is why we introduced the apprenticeship grants, over 400,000 of which have now been distributed to help young people get the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

That and every other program that we have introduced to help young people have strong, progressive, reliable careers has been voted against by the NDP.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not just unemployed young people who are being shut out by this Conservative government. All four Atlantic provinces have stood as one and said no to Conservative EI cuts. They have said no to forcing workers to take a 30% wage cut. They have said no to Conservative contempt for seasonal industries. They have said no to policies that treat unemployed workers like criminals.

When will the Conservatives listen to the premiers and stop their attacks on Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is totally misrepresenting the changes that are there and that are designed to help connect Canadians with jobs. That is what it is all about. In fact, the cornerstone of our economic action plan 2013 is training and job creation, through measures like the Canada job grant that will connect unemployed Canadians with the training they need to fill the jobs employers are having a really tough time finding qualified Canadians to fill. We will help those Canadians get the skills they need for those jobs. The NDP should try doing that for a change too.

* * *

• (1455)

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what will it take for the minister to finally get the message? Her attacks on Atlantic Canadians are hurting our outposts, hurting our communities, and the news only gets worse for the east. The latest victim of Conservative cuts to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is a regional development agency in Cape Breton that is two decades old. First, it had to lay off half its staff. Now its doors have been shut for good.

The Conservatives are slashing front-line agencies that foster development. How does that help grow Atlantic Canada's economy?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision to stop contributing to the costs of the daily operations and expenditures of the regional economic development organizations will allow for a more efficient economic development in the Atlantic region by reducing duplication and overlap. This will allow us to focus our efforts and resources on providing directly to entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized businesses and communities, the programs that are aimed at creating jobs for Atlantic Canada.

* * *

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General said Canada's search and rescue was at breaking point, with a lack of personnel, aging equipment and no clear policy for search and rescue. Three weeks ago, a sailor died at English Bay of a heart attack. It took more than 48 minutes for the Coast Guard to get paramedics to his ship. If the Kitsilano base were open, it would have taken 10 minutes.

Experts predicted lives will be lost. There are now two fatalities. How many fatalities will it take for the government to reopen the Kitsilano Coast Guard base?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, there is no way we will put in jeopardy the lives of our mariners and people on the water.

As for the Kitsilano base, the member is wrong. The response time was much quicker than she indicated.

Since the closure of CCG Kitsilano base in February, the Canadian Coast Guard Sea Island station has responded to 38 search and rescue maritime distress incidents in the greater Vancouver area. These incidents involved 48 lives at risk. In all cases, the hovercraft arrived in less than 10 minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General points out that the absence of a replacement search and rescue airplane is putting Canadians at risk. Meanwhile, the Minister of National Defence wants a plane, to heck with the rules. The Minister of Public Works, on the other hand, is all rules and no plane. Meanwhile this Conservative version of Ping-Pong is dangerous to us all.

Let us finish with the Abbott and Costello routine. Will someone over there make a decision and buy us a plane?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that decision has already been made, and the funding has been allocated. The procurement process started last year. It is ongoing and it will be very competitive. We have a fairness monitor in place. The process is transparent and ongoing. We have been doing industry engagement over the last few months.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has lost track of \$3 billion and now wants to stick his nose into the negotiations of crown corporations. He cannot even do his own job. He should mind his own business.

The Conservatives' track record with VIA Rail is a disaster, and they continue to go after the CBC. Now we have to trust them to conduct negotiations with the employees of crown corporations. Really? Unionized employees are not the only ones who will have their hands tied. The Conservatives are now giving themselves the right to impose working conditions on non-unionized employees.

Oral Questions

Why are the Conservatives meddling in these negotiations? Why do they not respect the independence of crown corporations?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely false because crown corporations' finances are the government's business. We have to ensure that the costs are appropriate. Economic action plan 2013 indicates that the government will look at options to improve the financial viability of crown corporations, including compensation levels.

[*English*]

It is important that we respect the taxpayer and work with the taxpayer. That includes both our responsibilities within government and also the crown corporations that report to government.

• (1500)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first you should find your \$3 billion.

From CBC to Canada Post—

The Speaker: I would remind my hon. colleague to address his comments through the Chair. I do not have \$3 billion.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, from CBC to Canada Post to VIA Rail, the Conservatives are now giving themselves brand new powers over collective agreements at crown corporations. One moment the Conservatives say these corporations are independent, and the next they are riding roughshod over collective bargaining. These are just the latest Conservative attacks on labour rights.

Why are the Conservatives using their budget bill to handcuff collective bargaining at crown corporations?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House stand for the taxpayer and stand for accountability of these crown corporations to the taxpayer.

I cannot let it slide that the hon. member stood up just a moment ago and joked about anti-terrorism activity. Those members had a chance last week to vote on a bill that would improve our ability to attack terrorism to make sure we can protect the people of Canada. They voted no. That is their record.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to keeping our streets and communities safe. This is why I have introduced Bill C-394. My legislation targets those who attempt to recruit youth into gangs. Parents want gangs off our streets and out of their neighbourhoods. This legislation would help to achieve precisely that.

With the final vote in the House of Commons scheduled for tonight, could the Minister of Justice please inform the House about the government's position on this important piece of legislation?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the member for Brampton—Springdale for all his efforts to protect youth and for bringing forward this important legislation.

I am proud as well to say that the government will continue to support this important legislation because it is consistent with our efforts to crack down on crime and make sure that our communities are safe.

Unfortunately, this approach is ideologically opposed by Liberal members. Members will remember, of course, their efforts to fight our laws to better protect Canadians against drug traffickers. That said, I call on them for once to do the right thing tonight and support this important piece of legislation.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost a year and a half ago, I wrote to the Minister of Human Resources to alert her that foreign pilots were being used under the temporary foreign worker program to displace Canadian pilots in the off-season. This practice denies Canadian pilots jobs and prevents them from accumulating the flight hours they need to qualify them to fly larger planes.

I never received an answer to my letter. Can the minister take this opportunity to assure Canadian pilots that this practice is now over and that their career opportunities will no longer be constrained by misuse of the temporary foreign worker program?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed concerned about the situation regarding temporary foreign workers. That is why we announced new reforms to the program.

Beyond that, in terms of the airlines, we have been working with the airlines and with the pilots associations to make sure that they make every effort to recruit Canadians and to develop Canadians with the skills required for those jobs so that Canadians always get first interest on every job that is available.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health continues to abdicate responsibility in the matter of the diluted chemotherapy drugs. The problem is that, as her Ontario counterpart said, this matter falls under federal jurisdiction. Marchese Hospital Solutions even approached her department as early as 2011. Why does the minister continue to deny that drug safety in Canada falls entirely under her jurisdiction? When will a permanent solution be found for this problem?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated yesterday, a provincial committee is examining the jurisdictional question surrounding the drug service provider.

Marchese has never applied for regulatory approval. We have proposed interim solutions to provide assistance to the province to ensure that drug service providers fall within federal or provincial regulation, and we plan to work closely with the provinces and territories to address this matter.

* * *

• (1505)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this month marks the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic. It was with great bravery and courage that Canadian troops fought to defend our values in the longest-running battle of the Second World War.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs please highlight for the House the great contributions made by the Canadian air and naval forces in this critical struggle?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Oxford for reminding us that Canadians fought in the biggest battle in history against Nazism and totalitarianism. Nearly 4,600 men and women who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Canada's merchant navy and the Royal Canadian Navy sacrificed their lives.

Let us take the time to revisit this page in history where Canadians served with distinction so that we can live in a free and democratic country.

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*[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent report by the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami found that tooth decay is two to three times worse among Inuit than the average among Canadians. ITK wants to see more oral disease prevention, more health promotion and more treatment, rather than just more pulling of diseased teeth.

Considering this, why did the Minister of Health end funding for the country's only national school of dental therapy, forcing it to close, when the people most in need are her own constituents?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is the single largest investor in research around the country. We invested in pathways to health equity, and one of the five priority areas identified under that \$25 million program was related to oral health.

The provinces and the territories deliver health care. We continue to increase transfers to the provinces and the territories because they know best where to prioritize the delivery.

Meanwhile, the member for Western Arctic continues to vote against them.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House are aware of the growing humanitarian crisis created by the ongoing and very difficult hostilities in Syria. There are over one million refugees in camps in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, and there is inadequate help for those people who are caught up in the conflict.

Acknowledging that the government has increased financial contributions to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, what more can the government do? Is there a possibility of providing emergency assistance to those refugees with connections to Canada?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are obviously all deeply troubled by the humanitarian situation in Syria, which just gets progressively worse. We are not only worried about the situation in Syria, but, frankly, the wider instability that threatens the rest of the region. That is why, as the leader of the Green Party has noted, the government has brought forward some specific help to Syria and to some of its neighbours as well. We continue, through various agencies of the government and through working with our allies, to look at ways that we can help further.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32 (2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the following treaties: an Agreement Between Canada and the European Union on Customs Cooperation with Respect to Matters Related to Supply-Chain Security, done at Brussels on March 4, 2013; an Agreement Between Canada and the Principality of Liechtenstein for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters, done at Vaduz on January 31, 2013; an Agreement Between Canada and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay for the Exchange of Information on Tax Matters, done at Montevideo on February 5, 2013; and an Agreement Between Canada and the Republic of Panama for Tax Cooperation and the Exchange of Information Relating to Taxes, done at Panama City on March 17, 2013.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each of these treaties.

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36.8, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 60 petitions.

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● (1510)

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-China Legislative Association respecting its participation at the 15th bilateral meeting held in Beijing, Xiamen, Hangzhou and Shanghai, People's Republic of China, from April 7 to 14, 2012.

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following joint reports of the Canada-China Legislative Assembly and the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting their participation at the 33rd general assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Lombok, Indonesia, September 16 to 22, 2012, and the 21st annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, January 27 to 31, 2013.

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[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Finance pertaining to its study of tax evasion and the use of tax havens.

[English]

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

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report on tax evasion and the use of tax havens, as tabled in the House, successfully details the problems of tax evasion and inappropriate use of tax havens. Unfortunately, the recommendations in the report failed to adequately confront these problems and for this reason, New Democrat members of the finance committee have submitted a supplementary report.

The New Democrats' greatest concern is that Conservatives will persist in their ineffective approach in dealing with tax cheats, despite the overwhelming evidence that a stronger evidence-based response is necessary. It is our sincere hope that the government will implement our strong and clear recommendations.

NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-502, An Act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act (Humber River).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Parkdale—High Park, to request leave to introduce a bill to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act with respect to the Humber River.

Last year, the Conservative government removed most of Canada's rivers and lakes from the Navigable Waters Protection Act through its omnibus budget implementation bill. Out of Canada's hundreds of thousands of rivers and lakes, only 62 rivers and 97 lakes remain protected. That is simply not enough.

Today, I am seeking to restore the Humber River to protection under the Navigable Waters Protection Act. The river is a Canada heritage designated river, part of the historic Toronto Carrying Place trail and has over 800,000 people living within its watershed.

The Humber River has its headwaters in the ancient rock of the Niagara Escarpment and the glacial hills of the Oak Ridges Moraine. It flows through a rich mosaic of Carolinian forests and meadows, past farms and abandoned mills, before meandering through the largest urban area in Canada, Metropolitan Toronto, passing by my community of York South—Weston.

The Humber is the backyard of not only Toronto but Mississauga, Peel, York, Brampton, Caledon, King, Richmond Hill, Vaughan, Aurora, et cetera. It is a unique river that flows through the most densely populated area of Canada, but still retains many of its natural and cultural values.

By placing the full length of the river, all 126 kilometres of it, back into the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Humber would be once more protected from unbridled development, requiring full environment assessments with public consultations for any project, be it transportation, pipeline or other development to be conducted to ensure the health of the river before going ahead.

This is a river worth protecting and I look forward to support for my bill by all members of the House.

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

* * *

● (1515)

DEMOCRATIC LOCAL NOMINATION ACT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-503, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (local endorsement of candidate).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure I rise today to put forward a bill to carry forward the momentum of democracy which is sweeping the House of Commons. We saw a blow for democracy from the Federal Court last week in the decision on the Parliamentary Budget Officer and your own ruling, Mr. Speaker, that we as members of this House have the right to free speech.

To ensure our rights to free speech do not operate under the shadow of the leader's ire threatening to not sign our nomination papers, my private member's bill would eliminate the fact that currently the Canada Elections Act requires a leader's signature in order for a member to stand in his or her place as a candidate for the party. It would restore the grassroots democracy in that it would be the electoral district association of a person's riding signing the nomination papers and not the leader.

I hope this bill will have full support from all members of this House.

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

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PETITIONS

HEALTH

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents in my riding who are supporting Bill C-460, sodium reduction strategy for Canada act.

The petitioners are concerned with a number of things, which include: improving the method of communicating information about sodium to consumers, especially on food labels; ensuring public funds are not spent on high-sodium foods; ensuring that the strategy oversight is free from conflict of interest; preventing children from being targeted by commercial marketing for high-sodium foods; mandating annual progress reports from the Government of Canada to Parliament; and establishing the Government of Canada as a leader in sodium reduction goals and monitoring.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I too would like to present petitions today in support of Bill C-460. The petitioners support the sodium reduction strategy for Canada act to ensure that the amount of sodium in the Canadian food supply is reduced to safe levels.

The petitioners are calling upon the House to ensure the swift passage of Bill C-460, which we will be debating at the end of this week and voting on next week. I hope it goes through.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also proud to present more petitions from citizens across Canada who point out that every year hundreds of thousands of dogs and cats are brutally slaughtered for their fur in a number of Asian regions.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support legislation to amend the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act and the Textile Labelling Act based on Bill C-296. They urge us to approve this bill.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition from thousands of Canadians presented to me on the national day of action on Roundup Ready genetically modified alfalfa.

The petitioners are justifiably worried about cross-contamination of GM alfalfa with non-GM and organic alfalfa, which will no doubt compromise the integrity of their organic crops. They call upon the government to impose a moratorium on its release until there is a

Routine Proceedings

proper analysis of the impact of GM alfalfa on both organic and non-organic crops.

CHIEF FIREARMS OFFICERS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is from a number of residents from across the province of Ontario who call upon the House of Commons to repeal section 58.1 of the Firearms Act, amend section 61.3 of the Firearms Act, and amend the Firearms Act to eliminate the provincial and territorial Chief Firearms Office.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls for a moratorium on genetically modified alfalfa.

I present these petitions in both official languages.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition containing over 100 names of residents of Victoria.

The petitioners call for changes to Health Canada's medical marijuana laws; specifically, they are calling upon the health minister to include individual licences to grow cannabis for person medical use, with an improved inspection system.

● (1520)

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of residents of Nova Scotia who call upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa, in order to allow proper review of the impact upon farmers in Canada.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am also presenting a petition: in fact, I suspect it is the exact same petition regarding genetically modified alfalfa that was presented by my colleagues from Halifax and from Guelph.

We are not supposed to indicate our support or opposition for these things, but I will say I did meet with the presenters of this petition. They are people of goodwill who have some thoughtful and sincere things to say.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present another petition today, one signed by hundreds of people from across Canada, regarding animal cruelty.

Specifically, these constituents want to eliminate the use of electric shock collars because the practice is barbaric and unnecessary. The petitioners want Canada to follow the lead of other countries and ban the sale of electric shock collars in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition on CCSVI. Canadians with MS want to know when Conservative MPs and senators learned of their government's position to kill both the House and Senate bills for CCSVI as a decision was taken by February 6, 2012. Canadians with MS should not have been given false hope for eight months. Such treatment is unconscionable. Follow-up care continues to remain a problem. Another person was refused follow-up care this week.

The petitioners are calling upon the minister to consult experts to undertake Phase III clinical trials on an urgent basis and to require follow-up care.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

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

The first petition is from residents of Vancouver and of Hudson, Quebec.

The petitioners call upon the government to cease the efforts to ratify the Canada-China investment treaty, noting that it is an infringement on our sovereignty and threatens our ability to pass laws for the environment, labour and public security.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Sudbury, Ontario, and Langley, British Columbia, in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-442, to develop a national Lyme disease strategy.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a petition that calls upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa, in order to allow proper review of the impact upon farmers in Canada.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today.

The first petition is from petitioners who are calling upon the government to save the Kitsilano Coast Guard station. They say the recent decision to close the station is a grave mistake, one that will undoubtedly cost lives and put at peril those on the shores near Vancouver Harbour.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to immediately rescind the decision and reinstate full funding to maintain the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners calling for a shark fin import ban.

The petitioners ask that measures be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and ensure responsible conservation management of sharks. They call upon the Government of Canada

to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fin into Canada.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a thicker than normal petition from my constituents in Kingston and the Islands.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to put a moratorium on the commercial distribution of genetically modified alfalfa until a proper and public study can be done on the effects of organic certification on non-GM farmers and on the effects of international trade on farmers in Canada and, indeed, on all farmers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

Many telephone, Internet, television and banking companies have introduced a new pay-to-pay effect. It is in effect a \$2.00 or more charge to get your bill in the mail. Many people in my constituency of Davenport are very concerned about this. It unfairly targets seniors, elderly people, people on fixed incomes, people who do not have access to the Internet and people who are concerned about online banking and decide not to do that.

The petitioners call upon the government to use the means it has at its disposal to end these unfair charges.

● (1525)

URBAN WORKERS

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition pertains to urban workers. These are people in Toronto who have a job that has no pension, no benefits, no job security. Actually, almost 50% of the workers in the city of Toronto, as per a study done recently, do not have access to full-time employment. This means they are shut out of things like employment insurance.

The petitioners call upon the government to rectify that situation.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, petitions continue to roll in regarding the Experimental Lakes Area, so today I have the pleasure of presenting a petition on behalf of the residents of Thunder Bay, Kaministiquia and Murillo.

The petitioners are opposed to the government's decision to close the ELA. They want the world-renowned facility to continue operations and the government to negotiate any hand-off of the ELA in good faith so vital freshwater research can continue uninterrupted.

Government Orders

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 1223 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 1223—**Mr. Paul Dewar:**

With regard to Canadian assistance to Sudan and South Sudan going forward into the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 fiscal years: (a) what are the government's estimated projections for its funding of the Sudan Task force; (b) what are the government's estimated projections for its funding to the two countries through the Canadian International Development Agency; (c) what are the government's estimated projections for the number of personnel from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canadian Forces participating in United Nations-sanctioned operations; (d) what are the government's estimated projections for the number of personnel, expressed in full-time equivalents, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade working in the two countries; and (e) what support will be delivered to projects and activities in these two countries by the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, through the Global Peace and Security Fund?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-15, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2013 ACT, NO. 1

Hon. Julian Fantino (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to split my time with the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the consent of the House to share her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the House.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to kick off debate on Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act. As the name suggests, Bill C-60 would implement key measures from the recent federal budget, economic action plan 2013, which is a positive and forward-looking blueprint to help grow the Canadian economy today and into tomorrow. This plan would make our economy stronger by helping our manufacturers buy new equipment with tax relief, help small businesses create more jobs with a hiring credit, help rebuild our roads and bridges with record new support for infrastructure and much more.

Today's legislation, along with the standard second budget implementation bill, which will be introduced in the fall, will help implement that ambitious and positive plan.

● (1530)

[Translation]

Before I get into the substance of the bill, I would like to say that, as a proud member of the Standing Committee on Finance, I look forward to studying the bill in committee.

As the Minister of Finance said earlier this week, the study of the Economic Action Plan 2013 Act will not be exclusive to the Standing Committee on Finance.

In fact, the government members on the Standing Committee on Finance will move a motion that some other committees review specific aspects of the bill. I hope the opposition will give us its support.

In terms of the legislation we are dealing with today, we must not forget that the economic action plan 2013 is part of a comprehensive plan that goes back to 2006 when our Conservative government came to power. The priorities at the heart of the plan were the Canadian economy, job creation and tax cuts to help families keep more money in their pockets.

Government Orders

I am pleased to say that the plan worked even in the worst global recession since the Great Depression. As we conduct our study, the NDP and the Liberals will try to have us swallow bogus figures, if you will, on Canada's labour market. They will distort the facts and play every conceivable shell game to conceal the truth.

However, the facts are in. All of Canada's credible, independent organizations, such as the Bank of Canada and even Statistics Canada, have the figures and can substantiate them. Canada has created slightly more than 900,000 net new jobs since the depths of the recession in July. More than 90% are full-time jobs and nearly 80% are in the private sector.

This outstanding record has made Canada the top G7 country in terms of job creation since the end of the global recession.

[*English*]

Despite what the NDP and the Liberals would have Canadians believe, over 1.4 million net new jobs have been created since January 2006 when the Conservative government took power. We have also seen that as the best job creation in the entire G7 during that entire time period.

It is not only on the job front where Canada is leading the way. I want to share some of that positive news to counter all the talking down of Canada and of our economy that we are hearing from the NDP and the Liberals.

While the opposition will try to bash the Canadian economy with negative messages and their procedural games to scare people watching at home, I am going to try to build it up with positive facts about the relative success story Canada's economy has been.

To start with, both the independent International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are projecting that Canada will have among the strongest growth in the G7 in years ahead. Even better, here is what the IMF had to say about Canada only a few weeks ago, "Canada is in an enviable position". For the fifth straight year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system the soundest in the world. Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7.

All major credit rating agencies, like Moody's, Fitch, and Standard and Poor's, have affirmed Canada's rock-solid AAA credit rating. Our net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far.

The list goes on and on. Little wonder, when asked about Canada's economy recently, Don Drummond, a well-known and widely respected Canadian economist, said the following:

We look like the poster child for the fiscal messes around the world. We are in pretty good fiscal shape, certainly relative to everybody else.

I could not agree more with him, but as Don Drummond noted, there are some fiscal and economic messes around the world, as we are reminded on the evening news or in the morning newspapers all too often.

Some big global economic challenges from beyond our borders remain, especially in the United States and Europe. These are among our most important trading partners. Even though these are not made in Canada problems, they will continue to negatively impact Canada. Like any smart person would in any situation like this, if a problem

is out there, we protect ourselves against it. That is exactly what we are doing in economic action plan 2013 by staying squarely focused on what matters when facing a challenging global economy: jobs and economic growth, keeping taxes low and balancing the budget by 2015.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

What we are not doing is listening to the NDP and Liberal calls for spending, spending and more spending in order to expand government and add to the national debt.

The NDP and Liberal proposals are doomed to failure and will mean ever-increasing taxes.

Canadians know what happened in European countries that chose to expand government and spend endlessly, which is what the NDP and Liberals are suggesting. Those countries ended up with monster deficits, paralyzing government bureaucracy and massive unemployment.

Just this week we learned that unemployment in the eurozone climbed to 12.1% in March, an all-time high according to EU statistics agencies.

The NDP likely does not want to hear that its economic philosophy of unlimited spending and ever-increasing taxes does not work. However, economic ruin in Greece and Spain illustrate the consequences of the very policies the NDP wants to bring to Canada.

[*English*]

Our Conservative government understands what the NDP and Liberals refuse to believe. In an uncertain global economic economy, the best way for government to build confidence is to maintain its own sound fiscal position, not engage in reckless deficit spending. That belief is at the very heart of economic action plan 2013 and that is why the Liberals and the NDP so vigorously oppose it.

I want to read a great quote by one of the most respected newspaper columnists in Canada, Peter Worthington. It is worth reading at length. He said:

The federal budget...is one of those things that should please every thinking Canadian...it's reality...Think for a moment...When you look at Cyprus, Europe, the U.S. and the rest of the world, this should be a huge relief to Canadian taxpayers... jobs are more or less secure as are pensions and health-care costs. Working Canadians will continue to be the blessed of the developed world.

Although I hear the NDP and Liberals making the heckling noises, it is because they do not buy into the fact that we are leaders. We cannot help the fact that we are leaders. The world looks at us with envy because we did not follow its suggestions and we will not follow its suggestions. Canadians can rest assured that this Conservative government will maintain a low-tax plan, we will maintain a plan for job creation and we will look to prosperity for our country for years and years to come.

Government Orders

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, most observers will agree that investing in young people is absolutely essential for the future of our society and for a healthy economy. The fastest-growing demographic of youth in Canada is aboriginal youth. I would like to know why the government has provided a mere pittance to address the 30% gap between what children of first nations on reserve get compared with kids in the rest of the country. Why the gap and why did the CEO of the Assembly of First Nations tell the finance committee yesterday that the government had no meaningful consultation with first nations about education or any other topic?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is misleading because it is not true at all. In fact, we as a federal government have been providing equal or more funding for youth in first nations communities for some time now.

For Canadians watching, I would like to know why on earth the New Democrats would ask such a question and then vote against things like the \$10 million in the budget for bursaries and scholarships for first nations youth. In fact, Inspire says that the budget 2013 contains great news for indigenous youth across Canada. That is its comment. I have absolutely no clue why they would embarrass themselves and ask a question like that when they have no intention of supporting this funding.

• (1540)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I tried to take the speech seriously, but I had to laugh many times with the government talking about sound fiscal management. How does one equate sound fiscal management with, let us say, in 2015, about \$150 billion added to the national debt, with the fact that we have 1.4 million Canadians unemployed, with the fact that 10 of the last 12 trade balances have been deficits in our country? How can government members have the temerity to stand and say that they are sound fiscal managers?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite obviously does not want to hear the government talk about sound fiscal management. Let us have a look at what other organizations and people have said—in fact, organizations from the member's own region.

[*Translation*]

This is what the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec said:

The Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec supports the federal government's decision to implement fiscal restraint and spending control in order to balance the budget.

If that is not enough, here is what the Conseil du patronat du Québec said:

The federal government made a prudent and responsible choice to stay on course toward a balanced budget in 2015 by, among other things, reining in the growth of public spending.

[*English*]

I will add that we are not doing anything to shoulder all of this responsibility for fiscal management by cutting from the provinces and people across the country, as the former Liberal government did by cutting \$25 billion out of health care, as an example. We will not do that. They should be ashamed of themselves for having done it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about an extraordinary economic situation. Sometimes I have to wonder whether we are even living in the same country.

Canada's food banks are busier than ever. Nowadays, almost all young university students have to rely on food banks because their economic situation is so extraordinary.

If everything is going so well, then why are people forced to turn to food banks? Can the member explain that?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

One of the reasons for that is that people cannot pay the taxes that have gone up across the country.

For example, in my home province of Manitoba, the New Democratic government recently increased provincial taxes for all Manitoban families. That is why some families cannot make ends meet.

For its part, the federal government is reducing taxes for families by including measures to help them in the budget. I hope that all members of the House will vote in favour of these measures to help our Canadian families.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too am very pleased to rise today to speak to the budget implementation act, economic action plan 2013.

First, we have to note that this is a very timely discussion, because of course, yesterday, April 30, was our tax-filing deadline. By yesterday, there were probably about 28 million individuals throughout Canada who had filed their taxes, and we know that they put over \$120 billion into taxpayers' coffers. We have almost two million corporations who again put significant dollars into our coffers.

Too often I hear the opposition members talk about OAS for people who have been residents for only three years, 45-day work years and private members' bills and many motions that ask us to increase spending. This is not the government's money. This is not the opposition's money. We are talking about the hard-earned dollars of everyday Canadians. This is the nurse who works for maybe \$70,000 a year, but she might be paying up to \$20,000 in taxes. This is the family that works in a corner store. The mother, father and the children are there seven days a week, 16 hours a day, to try to make a living for their family and pay their taxes on time. This is the entrepreneur. He has an idea and is starting a business. He has hired some people. He has dreams and goals and is desperately trying to make it a success. He pays his taxes, and that comes in terms of opportunities he could spend that money on in other ways.

Government Orders

We as a government recognize that we have a very important obligation to the taxpayer, and that is to make sure that every single dollar we spend is spent appropriately. Canadians are generous, but Canadians also expect fair play. Canadians know that there are times when there are extraordinary challenges, whether it is health, mental health, or disability. They have challenges in their lives. They have times when they might lose their jobs.

Again, Canadians are very generous. They understand that there are times when, for the greater good, they will participate, but they do not want to feel abused. They do not want to feel that their EI programs are abused. They do not want to feel that temporary foreign worker programs are not being used appropriately. As we have this debate about the budget implementation act No. 1, it is absolutely critical to remember whose dollars we are spending and whose dollars we are talking about.

The context for the budget for this year was articulated very well by my colleague from Saint Boniface. She talked about the global recession we came through, when we had to put in some extraordinary stimulus. Then she talked about how well we have done in reports from the OECD and the IMF. Canada has come through a very challenging time in very good shape. However, we are now responsible for withdrawing that stimulus spending and returning to balanced budgets, and that is exactly the focus of this budget implementation act.

This budget implementation act focuses on three areas. Most important is ensuring that we have an environment that supports growth and long-term prosperity. Second is continuing to support Canadian families and communities. Finally is respecting the Canadian taxpayer.

The budget implementation act is divided into three sections. The first two relate to our tax structure and our GST. The third section has more details in terms of specific measures we are looking at.

We did not come to this place without a long and comprehensive process. Not only was the context set many years ago, but the conversations with Canadians had been happening for well over a year before we got to this point. As a member of the finance committee, I know that we started our consultations in the summer of last year. We heard from groups from across the country, and we gave them three themes. We asked how we support economic growth and long-term prosperity, how we support Canadian families, and how we ensure that we respect taxpayers' dollars.

● (1545)

We need to talk a bit about what we heard. Whether it was a parliamentarian sitting down with people in his or her riding or the Minister of Finance having round tables across the country, we heard about supporting jobs and economic growth.

I heard time and time again that mining is important in British Columbia. We heard that the mining exploration tax credit is an absolutely critical feature and that we should continue to support that industry, which ultimately provides so much back in terms of our tax base.

We also heard that manufacturers have been having a challenging time. They have found that the accelerated capital cost allowance is of enormous benefit. They indicated that if it continued for a while

longer, it would really support them as they continue to rebuild after what have been some challenging times.

Every member of Parliament talked to council members and mayors. They talked about the infrastructure deficit. They talked about how important the gas tax fund was and how pleased they were that it was doubled and will now be legislated. They also talked about indexing it. We heard that suggestion from our municipalities, and we took action. Now municipalities are not only able to plan for the long term, but every infrastructure program they undertake will have important jobs associated with it.

I heard in my riding that the temporary foreign worker program plays a valuable role and that there are times when Canadians are unavailable to meet the needs of employers. We also heard that we need to ensure that Canadians have first crack at these jobs. The budget implementation act would make those changes. Canadians have said that the temporary foreign worker program has a role to play and is important but that we need to make some changes to ensure that Canadians have the first opportunities for these jobs.

It is incredibly important to provide some general fairness to all Canadian taxpayers. Therefore, we have included measures that would close loopholes and ensure that everyone pays their fair share. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, I know that there are a number of measures. I talked earlier about the amount of money that comes in from individuals. Over 94% of Canadians pay their taxes on time. They pay what is due.

We know that there are some loopholes, or perhaps some inequities. We have changed that. We know that people sometimes move their money offshore. We have taken the opportunity to give the CRA more tools to deal with that.

The final theme is supporting Canadian families and communities.

Every member, I believe, has a Legion in his or her community. Members heard from Legion members about how important they were in supporting our veterans.

I see a number of items in Division 4 of this legislation. Officials from the CNIB talked to me about a hub and how that could really improve their lives. That is another important item we see in the budget implementation act.

Finance committee did a comprehensive study on charitable giving. We were looking for ways to encourage young people to give to the charities that play such an important role in our communities. The donor super credit is a fantastic idea. It is targeted at encouraging people to give for the first time. That will probably help in terms of lifelong giving.

Government Orders

The federal government is like any household, any business, any municipality or any provincial government. The principles are the same. We have a budget. We have to live within it. It is absolutely critical that we get back to balanced budgets. It is absolutely critical, as a federal government, that we create an environment that encourages jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

The budget implementation act, Bill C-60, is an excellent step in terms of the long term and fair taxes. I call on the opposition to support our government in terms of this important and strategic document with its very good measures to move forward with respect to Canada's growth.

• (1550)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for her remarks. We sit together on the finance committee. She talked about the work of the finance committee, which I think spent about a dozen meetings looking at how to increase charitable giving.

Given that this omnibus budget implementation act will affect over 50 different laws in Canada, will she now commit that the finance committee will spend at least ten meetings fully examining the important provisions that she has outlined in the budget implementation act, Bill C-60?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the minister presented the budget in the spring of this year. We had comprehensive debate regarding it. I cannot speak for the decisions of what the committee does in terms of moving forward for study.

However, if I look at the threads that go throughout the budget implementation act, we are seeing things we have actually heard for well over a year. I believe the opposition can do its homework. There are 160 some pages.

I look forward to having the opposition come on board and supporting this very important bill.

• (1555)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would make one initial observation of the budget implementation bill. By my reading, at least, everything in it was actually mentioned in the budget. That makes it a first since I was elected to this place. Other omnibus budget bills have been full of things that were not there.

I take nothing away from the member for Parkdale—High Park that we do need to have it adequately studied. There are many provisions, particularly relating to crown corporations and government involvement, in there.

My question is provoked by the member saying that this budget is budget implementation bill number one. I would like any information that she may have about what will be in budget implementation bill number two? Is there going to be another one coming?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, certainly the tradition of the House has been that there is a budget that is tabled and there is legislation that follows, so I cannot speak to what will be coming.

We do know that in the budget there were a few other measures that the Minister of Finance will perhaps look at moving forward at some other date.

Mr. Greg Rickford (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate my colleague. I intend to support the budget implementation act, but if there was any doubt in my mind, certainly listening to her confirmed that we need to move forward with this important implementation piece.

Sometimes what is more important about a budget is what is not in it rather than what is in it. I have been concerned listening to the official opposition, particularly the finance critic. When she was lightly peppered with questions around an alternative budget, she could not explain certain increases in government revenues. She said she was not concerned, in effect, with numbers.

My question to the member is, are there any hidden things in the budget, like a carbon tax? Are we focused on numbers, and does this translate into a focus on jobs for our economy?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my opening remarks, we are the government that understands that every dollar we spend is a dollar out of Marsha the nurse's pocket and a dollar out of someone else's pocket.

As I looked at the NDP platform and saw the extraordinary list of expenditures they intended to make, I could feel many people wanting to tighten up, sew up, their pockets to protect their very hard-earned dollars.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on yet another Conservative omnibus budget bill.

Like its predecessors, Bill C-60 includes a wide variety of complex measures, such as changes to the temporary foreign worker program, changes to the Investment Canada Act and the merger of DFAIT and CIDA. Each of these alone is an important issue and an important measure that deserves thorough consideration and scrutiny, both here in Ottawa and in communities across the country. People would like to understand exactly what is being proposed.

This is the Conservatives' third attempt to evade parliamentary scrutiny on their job-killing agenda by packing the bill full of unrelated measures into one big bill and trying to push it through Parliament. That is no way to show leadership in a democracy.

[*Translation*]

I rise today to speak to yet another Conservative omnibus bill. Like its predecessors, Bill C-60 includes a large variety of complex measures—from changes to the temporary foreign worker program and the Investment Canada Act to the merger of DFAIT and CIDA. These are important issues that deserve thorough consideration and scrutiny, both here in Ottawa and in our communities from coast to coast to coast.

This is the Conservatives' third attempt to evade parliamentary scrutiny on their job-killing agenda by packing dozens of unrelated measures into one bill and ramming it through Parliament.

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•(1600)

[English]

The Conservatives are trying to tell Canadians to move along because there is nothing to see in Bill C-60. In a way, they are right. It is true. There is no job creation strategy, nothing to make life more affordable and nothing to strengthen the services that Canadian families rely on.

Following the 2008 economic crisis, the Minister of Finance begrudgingly ramped up infrastructure investment. He was forced to do it by the opposition. Now he is cutting billions of dollars in infrastructure investments to communities across Canada. These cuts will cost tens of thousands of jobs in cities and communities right across this country. Cuts to services, coupled with tax hikes on thousands of products that Canadians need, will serve as a double whammy to Canadian families. These are families, certainly in my community, like communities across Canada, who are already far too stretched and struggling to make ends meet.

The Conservatives claim to be good fiscal managers—we will set aside the fact that they just lost over \$3 billion of our tax dollars—but there are other facts that speak to the contrary. The Minister of Finance missed his economic growth target for 2012 by 35%. He has presided over a record \$67 billion trade deficit, and now private sector economists are telling us that this year will be even worse.

It is clear the Conservative economic agenda is not what Canada needs. Perhaps the most ironic part of the Conservatives' reckless cutting is that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has clearly demonstrated that the cuts in budget 2013 are just not necessary for Canada to return to a structural budget surplus. In other words, all this pain is not needed.

The PBO has pointed out that what budget 2013 is really about is eliminating thousands of jobs, cutting direct program spending and weakening GDP growth. This is not what leadership looks like, and what a time for leadership to go missing in action here in Canada.

A recent article in *The Economist*, entitled “Canada's economy: On thinning ice” warns:

—consumers are showing signs of flagging. The economy is set to expand by a paltry 1.6% this year. So the authorities are casting around for another source of growth. The trouble is they cannot seem to find one.

The article in *The Economist* goes on to say:

Jim Flaherty, Canada's finance minister, has repeatedly warned of the threat household debt poses to the economy.

Yet in his budget on March 21st, [the finance minister] did little to encourage business investment or exports to take the place of consumers in supporting growth. Rather, his focus was on eliminating the federal deficit—currently at 1.4% of GDP, low compared with most G7 economies—before the next general election in 2015. His plan, which relies on spending restraint and unusually high revenue growth, is seen by many as wishful thinking.

So the Canadian consumer remains the main hope for the economy. It is an odd situation where both government and business have decided to be excessively prudent in their spending, but are hoping that consumers will not follow suit just yet.

Despite these risks to our economy, the Conservatives insist on pushing stubbornly ahead with their austerity agenda, and they are crossing their fingers that Canadians, who already have a record 167% household debt, are going to keep spending. It has become clear that the minister's timetable for deficit reduction has little to do

with external reality. A growing number of bank economists, including Craig Alexander and Don Drummond, agree that the government is fixated on eliminating the deficit ahead of the next federal election, but that it is not needed; it could wait a year.

Following a pre-budget meeting with the finance minister, BMO's chief economist, Doug Porter, told reporters, “It probably would be unwise for the federal government to step on the brake further than it already has”. In other words, there is no need for more austerity. There is growing consensus from the IMF to participants at the World Economic Forum in Davos that austerity is not the way to go. In fact, it is making problems worse.

In March, Carol Goar of the *Toronto Star* wrote of the finance minister's austerity agenda:

Since he began chopping programs and expenditures, the economy has drooped, the job market has sagged, consumers have pulled back and the corporate sector has hunkered down, sitting on its earnings. The same formula has delivered worse results in Europe.

In fact, an IMF report released in January estimated that in the European case, every dollar in government spending cuts would cost \$1.50 in lost output. This past week, the hand-picked interim Parliamentary Budget Officer, put in place by the government, confirmed that the overall impact of budget 2012, fiscal update 2012 and budget 2013, will be a loss of 67,000 jobs by 2017 and a 0.7% reduction in GDP. This is at a time when our economy is only expected to grow by 1.5% annually. In other words, the economy is barely growing at all. This is an additional significant drag on our country's economic growth.

•(1605)

[Translation]

Despite what the Conservatives claim, their plan is actually holding back the Canadian economy, instead of accelerating it. What is worse is that they have failed to outline any contingency plan to deal with slowing growth and increasingly negative fiscal indicators. Instead, they are stubbornly moving ahead with austerity measures despite warnings from economists about the consequences.

[English]

Right now, at any given time, there are more than six Canadians looking for work for every job that is available. Statistics Canada figures recently released showed that the number of vacant jobs has fallen to the lowest level since record keeping began in March 2011. Our youth unemployment rate is double the national rate. TD Economics has said that the spike in youth unemployment from the recent recession will cost our economy \$10.7 billion over the next years alone.

These are young people whose futures are on the line. They are people just starting out and trying to get a toehold in our economy. Young people should be full of optimism and willing to take chances at the beginning of their adult life. However, too often they are saddled with debt, they are saddled with very limited or no job prospects, and they are saddled with a tremendous amount of insecurity and huge costs.

Our aboriginal population is growing faster than any other group in Canada, yet this vibrant young population faces significant barriers to economic participation and development, including chronic underfunding of education at all levels.

Budget 2013 presented an important opportunity for the government to put forward real solutions. Unfortunately for Canadians, the only job creation strategy the Conservatives have is for temporary foreign workers and some parliamentary secretaries.

The Conservatives like to crow about their 900,000 net new jobs, but what kind of jobs and for whom? Too many are temporary. Too many are insecure. Too many are held by temporary foreign workers instead of Canadians.

Nearly 1.4 million Canadians are still unemployed. There are still 240,000 more young people unemployed today than before the recession. The Conservatives can clap on the other side about this situation, but it is a national tragedy that they are turning their backs on Canada's youth and all of Canada's unemployed.

At a time when families are struggling to make ends meet, hundreds of thousands of Canadians are in part-time and precarious work when they would rather have full-time permanent jobs. In fact, a recent report by the United Way in Toronto and McMaster University has shown that 50%, fully half, of the workers in the GTA and Hamilton regions are in this kind of precarious work. It means a day-to-day struggle against insecurity and uncertainty.

For those Canadians who do have employment, wages have stagnated. In fact, in the 25 years between 1981 and 2006, including one of the most prosperous periods since the 1950s, workers' wages across Canada fell sharply behind. While Canada's real GDP per capita grew by 51%, average real weekly earnings did not increase. In other words, workers are being left behind.

At the same time, the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada has doubled in the past six years and tripled in the last decade. As Gil McGowan, the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, notes:

The bottom line is that Canadians are being displaced by temporary foreign workers, wages are being suppressed and employers are being allowed to abdicate their responsibility for training Canadians.

Professor Miles Corak of the University of Ottawa agrees:

Flooding the market with workers from elsewhere year in and year out—even during a major recession—is not about an acute labour shortage. It is nothing more than a wage subsidy to low-paying firms, a subsidy that stunts the reallocation of goods, capital and labour that is the basis for efficient markets.

•(1610)

[Translation]

What is the government's response?

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Just yesterday Barrie McKenna of *The Globe and Mail* wrote: "...the federal government is now belatedly acknowledging that two of its signature workplace programs may be making the country's employment landscape worse, not better."

Belatedly, indeed. After years of mismanagement, the Conservatives are proposing to fix major flaws by giving the minister an override power when work permits and labour market opinions approved by government become political hot potatoes.

This is a Band-Aid solution that does not get to the heart of this government's mismanagement of the TFW program.

In the meantime, not only are the Conservatives failing to create jobs, but they are continuing their attacks on Canadian workers.

Bill C-60 gives the Treasury Board sweeping powers to interfere in free collective bargaining and impose employment conditions on non-union employees at crown corporations.

With an enduring jobs crisis and cash-strapped households, where do the Conservatives expect Canada's growth to come from?

[English]

In a *National Post* op ed, economist Armine Yalnizyan writes about household debt in Canada:

Yes, many goods are cheaper than they were a generation ago. But the list does not include higher education and home ownership, both of which lead to greater economic security.

For many people, these two items are increasingly out of reach.

Those costs have zoomed past most people's income growth. Increasingly, Canadians have been pursuing these two dreams with ever-growing piles of debt. You don't need to work at the Bank of Canada to know that current levels of household debt offer a precarious foundation for sustained growth.

No matter your political leanings, most people understand that endless concentration of income, wealth and power is bad for the economy. After all, businesses rely on rising purchasing power of the many, not the few, to deliver growth and profits.

In 2001, a study by the International Monetary Fund found that:

...when growth is looked at over the long term, the trade-off between efficiency and equality may not exist. In fact, equality appears to be an important ingredient in promoting and sustaining growth.

This comes at a time when inequality is rising in Canada.

Budget 2013 does nothing to address the record levels of household debt or the rise in inequality. Instead the Conservative government has remained focused on an austerity agenda that has made major cuts to the services families rely on.

Putting people to work is clearly the best way to reduce our deficit. There is no need to reinvent or to privatize public services, no need to trample on economic and labour rights, no need to sacrifice equality in the name of efficiency.

New Democrats know that investing in education and infrastructure, making life more affordable and supporting our small and medium-sized businesses in creating high-quality, high-paying jobs is the real solution to our deficit.

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Canadians are counting on us to provide leadership and to bring forward ideas and proposals that put the public interest first. New Democrats have tried to make this point time and time again. The Conservatives just do not seem to be getting it, so let me be clear: we do not want a budget that pushes aside the concerns of first nations groups and pushes stubbornly ahead without real consultation.

We do not want a budget that attempts to balance the books by downloading costs onto struggling families, provinces and municipalities.

We do not want a budget that fails to account for the long term and leaves the next generation further behind than the last.

We do not want a budget that fails to move Canada forward in a 21st century economy and leaves a huge environmental debt for our children and grandchildren.

We do not want a budget that not only ignores the concerns of Canadians but will also actually make it harder for families to make ends meet.

New Democrats will continue to stand up and hold the government accountable in the interest of all Canadians. We do not support the Conservative budget of 2013 or its implementation bills unless they are revised to address the real priorities of Canadian families and unless the government starts providing real leadership for this country.

With that, I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: that notwithstanding any order or usual practice of the House, that Bill C-60, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures, be amended by removing the following clauses: (a) clauses 136 to 154, related to the Investment Canada Act; (b) clauses 161 to 166, related to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the temporary foreign worker program; (c) clauses 174 to 199, related to the proposed department of foreign affairs, trade and development act; (d) clauses 213 to 224, related to the National Capital Act and the Department of Canadian Heritage Act; (e) clauses 228 to 232, related to the Financial Administration Act and collective bargaining between crown corporations and their employees;

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

that the clauses mentioned in section (a) of this motion do form Bill C-61; that Bill C-61 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that the clauses mentioned in section (b) of this motion do form Bill C-62; that Bill C-62 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities; that the clauses mentioned in section (c) of this motion do form Bill C-63; that Bill C-63 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE);

[*English*]

that the clauses mentioned in section (d) of this motion do compose Bill C-64, that Bill C-64 be deemed read a first time and be printed, and that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Heritage; that the clauses mentioned in section (e) of this motion do compose Bill C-65, that Bill C-65 be deemed read a first time and be printed, and that the order for the second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; that Bill C-60 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order and that Bill C-60 be reprinted as amended; and that the law clerk and the parliamentary counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

In proposing this motion, we are attempting to allow for proper study of some very complex clauses of this bill, rather than have them all merge together in one large bill for study at the finance committee. We believe that the sections that pertain to industry should be studied at the industry committee, which can invite witnesses and actually hear testimony, and similarly for the foreign affairs committee, et cetera.

That is the rationale for introducing this motion.

• (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is no consent.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all listened with interest to our colleague's comments. Before I get to a question, I want to mention something that I think she misstated.

She talked about many things in this bill that are unrelated to the budget. I do not always agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, but I know her to be extremely thorough. She mentioned in a question today in question period that everything in this bill is in fact related to items in the budget, so I would take exception to that misrepresentation.

I want to ask the member a more specific question about the forecasts by the minister widely acknowledged to be world's finest finance minister with respect to growth forecasts.

He says it is 1.6% and the IMF says it is 1.5%—close enough—for 2013, but that puts us well above the average for all advanced economies. We do not operate in a vacuum. We are about even with Japan. The only one we are behind in that group is the United States, which is clearly coming from much lower to start with. In 2014, it is the same story. We are behind only the U.S. and we are above the average in the advanced economies.

Would my hon. colleague admit that there is perhaps some context that could be put around the numbers, rather than just simply picking a number and saying that number is not good enough?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, let me clarify.

In my remarks, I did not reference whether anything in this bill had or had not been included in the budget bill, although those of us who were at the technical briefing found that in fact there are things that were not mentioned in the budget bill. What I said is that there are many things in this bill that should be studied by other committees: foreign affairs, industry, government operations. That is what I was talking about.

However, let me clarify. The Minister of Finance has been far wide of his economic projections. He has been off by 35%. Every time he says the measures he brings in are going to make things better, lo and behold, the economy slows down even further. That is the kind of economic management the government provides. If people in Canada want to see what better economic management is like, the New Democrats are ready to take office in 2015.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with what my colleague from Parkdale—High Park said about this government's fiscal incompetence.

Unless it manages to balance the budget, in 2015 we will have our eighth consecutive deficit with this government. The Conservatives only balanced the budget in 2006 and 2007 because they inherited a big surplus that we, the Liberals, left them. Before that, the last time a Conservative government balanced a budget was in 1912. These people do not know how to manage an economy.

My colleague from Parkdale—High Park said that measures were urgently needed to meet the needs of families.

What specific measures would address these needs?

I agree with her, but I would like to hear specifics.

● (1625)

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to point out that if we look at all provincial and federal budgets across the country, in fact we see that it is the New Democratic Party that has the best fiscal record and the best record of balancing budgets right across Canada. Members do not have to believe me. If they would like to do their homework, they can check the record.

I will tell members what we will not do. We will not be like the Conservative government and lose over \$3 billion of taxpayer money, as the Auditor General pointed out this week. We will not increase taxes on thousands of consumer goods that will make life more difficult for Canadians right across the country. We will not

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slow the economy, increase unemployment and throw people into precarious, uncertain jobs. That is what we will not do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague, the official opposition's finance critic, on her excellent speech that gets to the heart of our concerns about budget 2013 and Bill C-60, which we are currently examining.

A lot of figures have been thrown around. We know that the International Monetary Fund lowered its projections for Canada's economic growth to 1.5%. That is 0.3% lower than the previous projection, which is a significant amount, considering the slow economic growth we are currently experiencing.

The OECD says that in terms of economic growth among G7 countries, Canada will not only be behind Japan and the United States, but it will also be below the G7 average. The reason is simple. Budget 2013, like budget 2012, is an austerity budget. As the Parliamentary Budget Officer and most economists agree, austerity budgets do nothing to increase growth. On the contrary, they limit economic growth.

Does my colleague from Parkdale—High Park think that budget 2013 and the measures in Bill C-60 will promote or limit economic growth?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I would like to thank my colleague.

The austerity measures set out in budget 2013, like those in budget 2012, will make the economic situation worse and will slow down our economy. Instead of creating good jobs for Canadians who need them, these measures will increase unemployment and job insecurity throughout Canada.

We need the opposite of what this government is doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park is always well-researched, well-spoken and logical. I thank her for her recent topic.

I wonder if she heard my statement today at the beginning of statements by members. Mr. Stern of the London School of Economics has said that Canada is facing a huge carbon bubble with the risk that if we continue to export huge volumes of fossil fuels and do not diversify our petro-economy, at some point the bubble is going to burst, and it will cost us thousands of jobs and huge amounts of economic benefit to Canada.

Would she like to comment on that, particularly given that her leader has made very valid comments about how rushing the huge volume of oil into other countries has put our loonie and our economy at risk in other ways?

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Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's sincere passion about the environment. Clearly in the New Democratic Party we share that passion. We understand that in a 21st century economy we want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and we understand that we need to leave our environment in better shape for our children and grandchildren than the situation in which we found it.

As in many other countries around the world, priorities for Canadians need to be energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing the new technology for the kinds of energy-efficient industries that will be needed around the world. Canada needs to be a leader, not a laggard as we are now under the Conservatives.

• (1630)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the NDP economic model is Greece and, if ever implemented, Greek results would occur.

This government is a prudent government. We live within our means and we have a public policy that creates wealth. All those members say is “spend, spend, spend”, and their name should really be the “spend-DP”.

Does the member think a country can spend itself rich? I doubt it.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I find the member's comments a little surprising. I know he has a sense of humour, so perhaps he is saying that with his tongue in his cheek. I am not sure.

Again, I would encourage the member to check the record. The NDP has the best record for balanced budgets of any party in Canada.

One thing I do know is that we cannot austerity our way to prosperity. The more we cut, the more we slow the economy. In case he has not noticed, our economy is almost at a stalling point now, so the Conservatives putting their foot on the brake is not exactly what we need. We need prudent management, but we need strategic investments that create jobs.

We do not need to lose another \$3 billion that the Conservatives cannot find. They have lost \$3 billion of taxpayer money.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 Kingston and the Islands, The Environment; the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Employment Insurance; and the hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, Ethics.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are dealing with Bill C-60, the first Conservative omnibus bill following its 2013 budget. It is a bit less abusive than Bill C-38 and Bill C-45 from last year, but it is still an omnibus measure, lumping together various unrelated matters. By my count, at least 18 different government portfolios are implicated.

At the end of the day, the government will force a single vote on all of that all at once. That renders the vote so meaningless, because

it cuts across so many unrelated disciplines. Again, democracy is compromised in the process.

There are some items for sure in Bill C-60 which people could generally support: better allowances for veterans, for example; dealing with the adoption tax credit; more incentives for charitable giving; the extension of capital cost allowance; and additions to the gas tax transfer.

However, these positive things are intermingled, unfortunately, with many very negative measures, especially large tax increases that will hit and hurt middle-class Canadians in particular, and we cannot and we will not support those negative measures.

Budget 2013 is crafted to feed several false illusions. The first of those is the mythical notion that the Conservatives are the competent economic managers that they claim to be, but let us look at the facts.

When they took office in 2006, they inherited from their Liberal predecessors 10 straight years of balanced budgets, an annual surplus that was running at the rate of \$13 billion every year, lower debt, lower taxes, low and stable interest rates, a sound and solid Canada pension plan, steadily dropping employment insurance premiums, annual economic growth rates of 3% or better, the best banking system in the world, the best ever transfer payments to provinces and territories, progressive investments in child care, skills and learning, science and innovation, environmental integrity, infrastructure, trade and three and a half million net new jobs. That is what the Conservatives inherited. That is what was handed to them as a starting point in 2006.

Just as an interesting historical sidebar, before the Conservatives inherited 10 years of Liberal balanced budgets and robust surpluses, the last time a Conservative government actually balanced a budget for Canada was 101 years ago in 1912. The prime minister at the time was Robert Borden, originally a school teacher, as a matter of historical fact. He, too, inherited his surplus from a Liberal predecessor, namely Sir Wilfrid Laurier, but sadly, he managed to maintain it for only one year before dropping into deficit.

The current Conservative government has behaved in a similar manner through excessive spending and reckless budgeting. Between 2006 and 2008, they put Canada back into the red again before, not because of, the recession, which hit in the latter part of 2008, and they have not balanced the books every since.

In budget 2013, the Conservatives claim they will eliminate the deficit hocus-pocus by 2015. Is that not convenient? Just on the eve of the next federal election they are projecting a balanced budget. A close look at their financial plans provides ample reason to be just a little bit suspicious. Here are some of the fiscal tricks.

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First, they use rosy growth estimates. To puff up government revenues, the Conservatives have based their fiscal planning on optimistic projections about economic growth. They ignore the reality that in years just passed, their numbers have never ever been correct. Time and time again, their initial forecast has had to be downgraded, as both the International Monetary Fund and the Bank of Canada have just done once again in this last month.

• (1635)

Second, they use deficient reserves. To create the illusion of more financial flexibility and strength than they really have, the Conservatives have lowballed the reserves that should be in place to serve as fiscal shock absorbers for Canadians against unpleasant future economic surprises. The amounts set aside should grow in the outer years because the risk is larger in the outer years, but the Conservative government has foolishly flatlined its reserves going forward, meaning it is not protecting adequately against future risk.

Third, they use exaggerated lapses. When a government department does not use all the budget in any given year that is given to it, the excess money naturally lapses back to the central treasury. The Conservatives in their budget are counting on very large lapses over the next several years. In fact, that is worked right into their arithmetic. In other words, they are planning to make big announcements of big new spending plans but never actually investing the money.

Fourth, they use excessive optimism about catching those tax cheats. While cracking down on those who do not pay their rightful taxes is an absolute necessity, the Conservatives claim of a balanced budget depends heavily on quickly collecting billions in unpaid taxes, and that seems highly improbable at a time when they are chopping the resources needed in the revenue department to go after those tax cheaters.

Fifth, they use big program cuts. For big programs like infrastructure, the government claims to be increasing its investment, but any hypothetical increase would actually occur only years down the road, beyond the mandate of this Parliament, sometime in the latter part of this decade, conveniently well after 2015. It is a trick that is called multi-year bundling and back-end loading. When the government has nothing to announce, it rolls a bunch of years together and pretends it is going to spend money five or ten years down the road while it actually cuts in the short term. That is happening here. In reality, the build Canada infrastructure budget has been cut by \$1.5 billion this year, \$1.5 billion next year and \$1 billion in the year after that. Any hypothetical increase is only well after 2015.

Sixth, they are claiming before proving. Using all of the tricks that I have just mentioned to concoct the false notion of a balanced budget by 2015, the Conservatives will claim that they have met their fiscal objective just before they call an election and, importantly, before proof to the contrary can become available. In the normal financial cycle, the audit report on the government's books for 2015 will not get published until much later, that is well into 2016, long after any election has come and gone. So much for the Conservative illusion of fiscal and economic competence.

Their second illusion is that they really care about jobs and job training and they boast about their proposed new jobs grant. The

Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development mentions it in the House almost every day, but again it is fiction. It is spin. It is make-believe. It does not exist.

What exists are labour market agreements, and they have existed since the late 1990s. They are job training agreements between the Government of Canada and all the provinces. The latest versions of these labour market agreements were negotiated about five years ago, and they are worth now about \$2.5 billion all together. Federal money is regularly transferred every year by the Government of Canada to the provinces. The provinces use those funds to tailor job training and labour market programs and services that suit their local circumstances. The provinces are in charge of the design. That is what exists now.

The Conservative government wanted to appear to be doing something about skills and jobs in the 2013 budget. People without jobs and jobs without people is one of Canada's biggest economic problems at the present time. The government wanted to look as if it were aware of that and doing something about it.

• (1640)

However, the government was not prepared to invest any new money to try and make an actual difference in terms of job training. What it did do was create an illusion of action and the fiction it was doing something about jobs and training. What it is basically proposing to do is claw back the \$2.5 billion per year labour market money that it now sends to the provinces and renegotiate it with provincial governments. That is all. It amounts to recycling existing money. There is nothing more. There is nothing new. There is no additional federal investment.

The provinces will need to contribute more and so will the private sector. That may actually serve to reduce the extent of job training in some sectors and some provinces, because some of those other partners, the provinces or the private sector, may not be able to match the federal dollars. Even the provincial treasurer in Alberta has made the comment that he does not know whether Alberta would want to participate in that kind of initiative.

The bottom line here is that there is no new money and no additional federal investment in training. It is an illusion to try to create the impression that something new is happening when it is not. That is tragic, especially for young Canadians looking for some hope and opportunity.

Here are the numbers. More than 212,000 fewer young Canadians are working today than just before the recession began in 2008. The youth unemployment rate is a very stubborn 14.2%. That is nearly twice the rate for other Canadians. The actual number is 404,000 jobless young people. Worse still, another 171,000 have simply given up and dropped out of the labour market altogether. The government and the budget do nothing but shuffle the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. It is simply not good enough.

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Another fiction, the third one, is the government's bogus claim that it does not increase taxes. That assertion is completely false, and that is one of the key reasons we cannot support Bill C-60. It increases taxes, especially the tax burden of middle-class Canadians and all those who are working so hard to join the middle class. It happens in dozens of nefarious ways. New hidden Conservative taxes on safety deposit boxes total \$40 million a year. On certain medical services, it is \$2 million a year. New Conservative taxes on credit unions amount to \$75 million a year. It goes on.

However, there are three hidden Conservative tax hikes that hit especially hard at the middle class. They are taxes on small business dividends, taxes on payrolls and taxes on imported consumer goods.

First, the Conservative small business tax, a new tax burden on small businesses, will absorb \$550 million every year, taking it from small businesses and hurting the middle class.

The second new Conservative tax is the EI payroll tax, which will suck up \$600 million every year in higher EI premiums, again hurting the middle class. By contrast, facing a job challenge in the 1990s, a Liberal government did not increase EI payroll taxes. We in fact cut them. We cut them 12 consecutive times and we cut them by 40%. Employers and employees saved billions of dollars and 3.5 million net new jobs were generated. The Conservative government's record is the opposite of that.

Finally, the third tax increase that we object to is the new Conservative increase of tariff taxes, taxes on imports, which will take about \$333 million every year from middle-class Canadians.

• (1645)

The cost of vacuum cleaners will go up by 5%. Bicycles will go up by 4.5%. Baby carriages will go up by 3%. Plastic school supplies will go up by 3.5%. Scissors will go up by 11%. Ovens, cooking stoves and ranges will go up by 3%. For coffee makers, the cost will increase by 4%. On wigs, especially cosmetic wigs for cancer patients, the cost will go up by a whopping 15.5%. The cost of USB drives will go up by 6%. On blankets, the cost will go up by 5%. On toothbrushes, the cost will go up by 2%. On pillows, the cost will go up by 6%. On alarm clocks, the cost will go up by 6%. There are dozens and dozens of imported products.

The government's excuse for this is that it only wants to provide these higher tariffs in order to give a benefit to a lower-income country overseas. However, the reality is, when we put on these tariff increases, the country overseas does not levy the tax and does not pay the tax. The tax is levied in Canada and it is paid by Canadians. The burden is on average middle-income Canadian families. This is a self-inflicted cost burden in Canada, which is why we cannot support it.

When all of these measures I mentioned are fully implemented, as well as some other taxes that are buried in this legislation, the burden will add up to more than \$2 billion per year in new Conservative taxes that are being levied on Canadians. The largest portion of that burden will fall squarely on the backs of middle-class families.

For substantive reasons of public policy today, we will not vote for these measures. Also, because the government is trying to hide these new taxes and deny them, we cannot sanction such deceit. Liberals oppose Bill C-60.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures (Economic Action Plan 2013 Act, No. 1), because it:

A) raises taxes on middle class Canadians in order to pay for the Conservatives' wasteful spending;

B) fails to reverse the government's decision to raise tariffs on items such as baby carriages, bicycles, household water heaters, space heaters, school supplies, ovens, coffee makers, wigs for cancer patients, and blankets;

C) raises taxes on small business owners by \$2.3 billion over the next 5 years, directly hurting 750,000 Canadians and risking Canadian jobs;

D) raises taxes on credit unions by \$75 million per year, which is an attack on rural Canadians and Canada's rural economy;

E) adds GST/HST to certain healthcare services, including medical work that victims of crime need to establish their case in court;

F) fails to provide a youth employment strategy to help struggling young Canadians find work; and

G) ignores the pressing requirements of aboriginal peoples.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member for Wascana's speech, and I must say that we share the same concerns about budget 2013 and Bill C-60.

He spoke about some of the proposals in the budget, including the tax hike that the official opposition has spoken out against.

There are two measures that I would like my colleague to comment on. One of them is not included in Bill C-60, but is included in budget 2013, while the other is included in Bill C-60.

I would also like to know the third party's position on the elimination of the tax credit for additional deductions for credit unions and for caisses populaires in Quebec. This actually constitutes a tax hike since an existing tax deduction is being eliminated.

The tax credit that is not being eliminated in Bill C-60, will likely be eliminated in the next bill, since it was announced in the budget. I am talking about the elimination of the tax credit for investors—including small investors—in labour sponsored venture capital funds over a period of five years.

I would like to know the position of the third party, that is the Liberal Party, on these two measures. I would like to remind hon. members that one of these measures was announced in the budget while the other is included in Bill C-60.

Government Orders

•(1655)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I did make reference to the credit union issue during my remarks, and it is explicitly referred to in the amendment that is now before the House. Obviously, we think the tax changes with respect to credit unions are regressive. We think they are a mistake.

Credit unions have long performed an absolutely fundamental service in the financial services sector of our country. Probably the extension of credit unions is most successful in his province and mine. Quebec and Saskatchewan have a long heritage with respect to credit unions and the co-operative movement generally. We oppose the tax changes in Bill C-60 with respect to credit unions.

As for labour sponsored venture capital funds, there has long been a consensus in the House that those funds need review and revisiting. The government indicated that it was going to do something with respect to venture capital in the budget speech itself. Until we see exactly what it is proposing, how it is structured and how it is worded, I am not sure we could actually pass an opinion on the detail of what the government seeks to accomplish. There needs to be some reform, but I am not sure I am comfortable having the reform in the hands of this particular government.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's proposal. I am not sure if he read the budget and looked at what we are doing in relation to Canada's skills grants, in relation to the accelerated capital cost allowance for Canadian manufacturers and in regard to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. We are investing \$8 million in youth to make sure they receive proper advice for their start-ups and inspiration for the future. In addition, Indspire is receiving \$5 million from 2013-14 for first nation and Inuit post-secondary education.

I am not sure if he heard that or read that in the budget, but I would encourage him to do so to see exactly what this government is doing and how we are helping Canadians and not sticking up for the banks, as the Liberal Party usually does. In this particular case, it is credit unions. The reality is that we all have to pay our fair share, credit unions as well.

I am wondering if this is actually a move by the Liberals to deflect from the tremendous amount of investment in infrastructure this government has made over the past six years and the tremendous amount of infrastructure in which we are investing in the current budget. Of course, they cut \$25 billion in social transfers to the provinces. Is that what this is really all about? Is it about changing the channel from the cuts by the Liberal government in the nineties?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the positive measures the hon. gentlemen referred to in the opening of his question, such as the accelerated capital cost allowance and so forth, as I said at the opening of my speech, some things in Bill C-60 are positive. I specifically mentioned the capital cost allowance and two or three other things he referred to just now.

The problem is that amid all those things that might be considered positive are interwoven all the negative things the government is trying to bootleg in through this omnibus bill. If those positive measures the gentleman referred to were stand-alone items on which there could be clear votes, yes or no, indeed, the Liberal Party would

support a great many of them. However, they are not stand-alone measures. They are mixed in with \$2 billion worth of new Conservative tax increases on the Canadian middle class, and we will not vote for those tax increases that will burden Canadians and set back the Canadian economy.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the effort by the Conservative Party to deflect away from all of these taxes, on the eve of the budget, is quite egregious. It leaves people with the impression that the cost of helmets is going to go down and hides the fact that there are billions of dollars hidden in this budget. I thank the member for Wascana for bringing this to our attention.

I contacted a bike retailer in Guelph. He told me that if we had bikes made in Canada in the \$400-\$500 range, then he could go to the manufacturer and get those bikes and sell them, but we do not have bikes made in that price range, so we have to bring these bikes in from the very countries in which these tariffs have gone up.

I am wondering if the member for Wascana could talk to Parliament about the fact that when we do not have manufacturers in Canada to replace all those products on which there is a tax, they will come in, and we will pay higher prices.

•(1700)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly correct. The most graphic demonstration of that was the bicycle shop owner here in Ottawa whose shop was used a year ago as a prop for a Conservative photo opportunity. The Minister of Finance had something to say about small business, and he used this bicycle shop owner's store as the backdrop for his announcement. That was about a year ago.

This year, that same bicycle shop owner has discovered that he is a victim of these tariff changes in Bill C-60. In fact, the bicycles he sells to his customers will all be going up by 4.5%. Therefore, there is an added cost to him, which he will pass along to his customers, and those customers will have to pay that extra cost, or they might just drive across the border and do their bicycle shopping in the United States. Either way, small business and Canada are the net losers.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must confess, I am a little dismayed by what the hon. member for Wascana said in his speech.

After all, that member was part of the Liberal government that dumped a huge load of debt onto to provinces in the mid-1990s.

When it comes to co-operation and discussing federal policies with the provinces, any member of that Liberal government has no lessons to give. It is rather troubling.

It is so unfortunate that Canada's provinces had to pay such a high price to join the Canadian federation at the time.

How can my colleague justify what was done at the time, and who is still suffering the consequences today?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, at that time, Canada's debt ratio was in excess of 70%. In other words, the size of the federal debt was in fact 70% of Canada's entire GDP. The IMF was knocking on the door, just as they are doing today in a number of European countries. The IMF was knocking on Canada's door back in the 1990s, and it required significant action.

The changes in transfer payments made at that time were, in fact, temporary. By the time of the budget in 2002, the level of transfer payments to the provinces had been entirely restored, and they went on to all-time record levels with the changes made to equalization and the changes made to the health transfer in the budgets of 2004 and 2005. I am proud to say that I was the finance minister at that time who took those federal transfer payments to the highest level ever in history, up to that point in time.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of our Conservative government's economic action plan 2013, as implemented through Bill C-60, the economic action plan 2013 act no. 1. This is a positive plan that would continue Canada's momentum in creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Many of the measures in Bill C-60 are aimed at strengthening our economy and ensuring a prosperous future for all Canadians.

However, our government also understands that a successful society also includes the capacity to respond to the needs of all Canadians, including the most vulnerable. That is why I am proud that our government is working so hard to support the charitable sector.

Charities play an important role in our communities. It is vital that we celebrate and support this excellent work. I have to say that I am constantly impressed by the remarkable work that all charities are doing, and I would like to commend them, especially their volunteers, for their commitment to improving the lives of others and contributing to our high quality of life.

In my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo, I have witnessed the collaboration and the commitment of our charities and volunteers who are determined to make a difference in our community. This has inspired me to focus many of my efforts on supporting the charitable sector. As a member of Parliament, I have been actively engaged and involved in advocating for charities, raising awareness of the important work they do in our communities and serving as their voice in Parliament.

In 2010, I tabled a motion in the House of Commons that triggered a finance committee study that reviewed the current tax system and considered changes that could motivate increased giving. By all accounts, this was a very worthwhile exercise. It brought together charitable organizations, experts and stakeholders, and generated a very comprehensive discussion about the challenges and opportunities faced by the sector. I would like to thank the finance committee members for their excellent work, as well as the witnesses who contributed their expertise and their suggestions.

The committee's report, tabled in the House last February, proposed several recommendations aimed at creating positive change in the sector, with a focus on tax incentives, transparency, reducing red tape for charitable organizations, and, of course, increasing public awareness.

Now with Bill C-60, our government is responding to the report's recommendations with the creation of the first-time donors super credit. This innovative new measure would increase the value of the charitable donations tax credit by 25% on eligible cash donations of up to \$1,000 in any one taxation year if neither the taxpayer nor their spouse have claimed the credit since 2007.

This is a creative response to the challenge of growing the donor base in Canada, an issue that was brought forward during the committee study. The committee heard that there was a need to foster and promote a culture of giving and that tax incentives can play a role, both in increasing the number of new donors and in encouraging existing donors to give more. Studies have shown that 25% of donors provide almost 85% of all charitable donations. In other words, charities find themselves relying on a smaller number of people to make large gifts. Furthermore, the level of donations increases with age, and older Canadians tend to give more.

That is why I believe the first-time donors super credit would create new opportunities for supporting charities. It would significantly enhance the attractiveness of donating to a charity for young Canadians who are in a position to make donations for the first time, creating an immediate positive impact on the sector.

In fact, a survey recently conducted by BMO Harris Private Banking found that this initiative would go a long way toward achieving these objectives. Quoting from its press release, the survey found that nearly 70% of Canadians support the first-time donors super credit introduced in the federal budget. It goes on to say that 93% of Canadians feel the new credit would encourage more charitable giving or maintain current levels of support. Fifty per cent of young Canadians aged 18 to 34 said they would strongly consider contributing more to charities because of this new credit.

● (1705)

The charitable sector is also enthusiastic about this new initiative that will help to rejuvenate its donor base and encourage increased charitable giving. Imagine Canada, which had a proposal for a stretch tax credit, received a favourable response in the finance committee report subject to balancing the budget. It applauded the new super credit as a step in the right direction. It said in a press release, "This is a significant investment in our communities at a time of ongoing restraint". This immediate and positive reaction is very encouraging, and it shows that a small change has the potential to make a big impact.

Government Orders

I also believe that the first-time donor super credit will provide an opportunity for charities to foster effective relationships between charities and a new generation of donors. By engaging young people and demonstrating the difference that their contributions can make in our communities, we will build a core of lifelong donors and enhance the long-term sustainability of our important charitable sector. This new initiative would also help to raise awareness of the tax benefits of donating to charities, which as I mentioned earlier was one of the core recommendations of the finance committee report.

This is already happening throughout Canada's charitable sector. In fact, I have seen a number of charities that are already highlighting the new super credit in their website communications for their fundraising campaigns in an effort to engage young people and first-time donors. This includes SicksKids Foundation, Easter Seals, and a number of smaller charities that are seizing the opportunity to inform their potential donors about the tax credits to which they may be entitled. All of these efforts are aimed at the overarching goal of long-term sustainability for the charitable sector.

Our government has a strong record of taking action to support our charities, and since 2006 we have been steadily increasing the generosity of the charitable donations tax incentive. Budget 2006 introduced a complete exemption on the capital gains tax associated with the donation of publicly listed securities to public charities. It also extended the exemption of donations of ecologically sensitive land to public conservation charities. Budget 2007 extended the exemption for donations of publicly listed securities to private foundations. Budget 2010 further reformed the disbursement quota rules for charities, reducing administrative complexity to better enable charities to focus their time and resources on charitable activities.

As the member of Parliament for Kitchener—Waterloo, I have been personally focusing many of my efforts on advocating for our charities with my first private member's motion that initiated the important charity study, and more recently my private member's bill, Bill C-458, which proposes to extend the tax deadline for charitable donations.

In conclusion, I am extremely pleased that our government is taking concrete action to support and sustain charitable organizations. As a result, I encourage all members to support all the important measures in Bill C-60, including the first-time donors tax credit that will benefit charities, donors and our society as a whole.

• (1710)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the nefarious way in which the government has increased taxes is really inexcusable. It puts these tariffs on items such as bikes, school supplies, appliances, and wigs, particularly wigs for cancer patients, and it does it on things that are not manufactured in Canada. Therefore, local retailers cannot go to manufacturers in Canada and replace those items to sell to Canadians, those items that will now have this high tariff on them. In that way the tariff is going to come into Canada and trickle right down to the consumer. The government has increased taxes.

I know what the member is going to say. He is going to say there is no party in Canadian history that has decreased taxes like his

party. However, the fact is that the Conservatives give with one hand and then they took all of it away today with this budget bill. I want the member to stand and tell Canadians why they feel compelled to raise taxes on the people who can least afford it, the working and middle class. Why have they raised taxes on them now?

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, the only nefariousness seems to be coming from the member for Guelph. I might also add that he had part of his question right, that no other government in history has reduced taxes like this Conservative government.

The average Canadian family of four now pays \$3,200 less in taxes. We have reduced the GST. We have reduced hundreds of millions of dollars of tariffs. At the same time, it is important that the tax system be fair, that it be consistently applied and that individuals and companies play by the rules.

Finally, the general preferential tariff was first created in 1974. I was 10 years old. The world has changed since then. Countries like China and South Korea and Brazil are no longer developing third world countries.

• (1715)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way from Guelph did mention manufacturing. I know my colleague has a strong manufacturing base in his community, and in this budget we have support for manufacturers. The shameful thing is that the Liberals and the New Democrats say they are going to be voting against this budget, which contains so many good things for manufacturers that are the engine of our economy in Ontario.

We have seen that the Liberal provincial government has put in all kinds of policies to drive manufacturers out of Ontario, including the insane energy program that it put in.

Why does my colleague think the New Democrats and the Liberals have turned their backs on manufacturing? Why does he think they can stand in the House and say they are supportive of all these great union jobs in manufacturing, yet they are going to stand up in this House and vote against all the support our government gave for manufacturers, not only in this budget but also in our previous budget?

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct. The manufacturing sector is still a very important part of our national economy. Even for a community like mine, Kitchener-Waterloo, which is so innovation-based, the manufacturing and advanced manufacturing sectors still represent almost 25% of our local economy. Economic action plan 2013 would deliver for our manufacturers in Kitchener-Waterloo and across Canada.

Government Orders

We would extend the capital cost allowance. The Canada job grant would assist manufacturers as well. With the renewal of FedDev Ontario, which is so important for southern Ontario and communities like Kitchener-Waterloo, we would see an advanced manufacturing fund. The initiatives we would take through budget 2013 would continue to support our important manufacturing sector in south-western Ontario and across the country.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about what I think is a great budget, economic action plan 2013.

Clearly, we can see the difference between the political parties in this House. On this side of the House are the Conservatives, who stand up for the Canadian economy, which ultimately means more and better jobs for Canadians.

On the other side, they stand up for banks, Chinese manufacturers of bikes and other manufacturers from other countries. Instead of supporting local manufacturing, they stand up to support Chinese manufacturers. It seems absolutely absurd, and frankly, Canadians will punish them at the next opportunity they have.

Let us talk about the positive things in the budget that we are bringing in to promote a stronger economy and to make sure that Canadians have a far stronger and better quality of life.

First, in my part of the country, Fort McMurray—Athabasca, we have problems filling jobs. We cannot find enough people to do the jobs we have. It does not matter whether it is in a car wash sector, a Tim Hortons or even lawyers or doctors; we cannot find enough people to fill the jobs, and we have the highest household income in the country. That is right: \$185,000 is the average household income in my city of Fort McMurray.

One of the things I really like is the Canada job grant. This is to help align individual skills with high-demand jobs. It is a \$15,000 amount in a tripartite fashion, with the provinces, the federal government and employers working together to find people to fill the jobs. What could be more important than that? This is a very positive initiative. It makes sure we do not just give a handout but a hand up, and we do so in a way whereby every level of government is working together with employers to do exactly that.

Another thing I really like is directing the gas tax fund payments to build a job-creating infrastructure throughout Canada. This is very important. When we came to office, as I am sure we heard from many people and as we have seen in the streets of our country, we had a \$123 billion deficit in infrastructure. It takes time to catch up, so in our budget we brought in one of the largest infrastructure investments in Canada's history, \$33 billion.

We heard clearly from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and right across the country that these were great initiatives for ensuring that Canada's quality of life continued to be the greatest in the world by ensuring that potholes were filled, by ensuring we had new roads and less congestion on our roadways, by ensuring we had water and waste water infrastructure. We are doing exactly that in this budget. We are doing so in collaboration with other parties: with the provinces, with the territories, with municipalities and now with employers.

We are also amending the temporary foreign workers program. On one side we cannot get enough employees in Fort McMurray for many of the jobs there, especially in the service sector. Those people in the service sector make a better quality of life for the people in the higher-paying jobs with that \$185,000 average household income. However, clearly everybody in the House would agree that there has been some form of misuse of the program. That cannot be put up with. Clearly, our Prime Minister has laid out a plan, a strategy, to ensure that employers cannot do that any more.

There is always a need for tweaks. There is always a need for some changes in legislation to make sure that it would be unacceptable for people, companies or employers to take advantage of the system to the detriment of the Canadian economy and Canadians as a whole.

In this particular case, I have heard from union and non-union members throughout my constituency that they clearly want some changes to the temporary foreign worker program. We are here for Canadians, and Canadians should have first crack at any job they want, no matter what part of the country they are from.

We have also extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for two years to create new investments for Canadian manufacturers. This means that companies will buy equipment, and we hope it will be Canadian equipment. Somebody will then need to make sure the equipment works, so we will have to train people. Those will be Canadian jobs. Then employers will have to make sure they have people to operate the machinery.

• (1720)

This is a kick-start to employers to encourage them to go out and buy new machinery. It is a tax advantage for them, in that it defers tax a bit, and it is clearly a financial advantage for them to do so.

All the way down the assembly line of that manufacturing company will be Canadians working for Canadian output. That is an advantage for all Canadian manufacturers. It is an advantage for southwestern Ontario, for Quebec and for other places where the manufacturing sector has been hit. This Conservative government stands up for, and will continue to stand up for, the manufacturing sector in this country.

We are also doing some other interesting things. We are providing \$165 million in support for Genome Canada. I know this is a very popular thing in some parts of the country and not so popular in others, because those areas do not know what the company does. This company makes sure that Canadians are on the forefront of research and development. In whatever field, Genome Canada is going to be the first in the world. We heard clearly in the finance committee that Genome Canada is at the forefront of the field, and this government will continue to support that to ensure Canadians have the best jobs through research and development.

Government Orders

We are also worried about youth. Although we have a low unemployment rate, we have a high youth unemployment rate. Compared to the rest of the world, though, it is very low, and we are going to work on youth because we need to fill those jobs. We are going to invest \$8 million in the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to provide advice for young entrepreneurs.

As the father of three children in their twenties, I know it is difficult for them to find jobs in some areas, especially in the lower service sector. This will provide advice for people who want to start up new businesses, for people who want to start on an opportunity that they would not have otherwise or would not know how to fulfill. This government sees today's youth as tomorrow's future. We are going to concentrate on the future of Canada through youth, through quality of life and through a strong economy.

We are also providing \$5 million in 2013-14 to Inspire, which supports scholarships and bursaries for first nation and Inuit post-secondary education. This program is important in all parts of Canada, but it is especially important for our economy. That is because we have heard in the finance committee that there is a clear correlation between success in aboriginal communities and the resource sector.

That is right. The resource sector is usually found in remote places in northern Canada. Aboriginal communities are usually in the same places. Here is an opportunity to make sure that those people who are the captains of industry are people from those communities, and they should be. Not only should they have first crack at a job, but they should be the people leading this country in that particular area of development.

In the oil sands in Fort McMurray, aboriginal communities are, for the most part, highly successful. They have integrated very well with the industry to create successful aboriginal stories and successful community stories. Fort McKay would be a perfect example. I would suggest it is one of the best success stories in the country as far as aboriginal communities are concerned.

We are also renovating the Investment Canada Act to further clarify foreign state investments in Canada and national security reviews. I have heard that clearly from constituents too. They are concerned about foreign investment. They are concerned about Chinese investment and other countries investing in the oil sands, for instance, or in key industries such as uranium or potash. Canadians want those industries to be owned by Canadians, to be run by Canadians and to have Canadian employees. Canadians are worried about that. They trust us to make sure we do what is best for them.

I do not have a lot of time left, but I want to talk briefly about something that is near and dear to me.

Our government has set record levels on infrastructure investment in this country. I mentioned \$33 billion, but that amount is actually \$45 billion over that period of time. That is the highest investment by any Canadian government in our history.

People might ask what this does for them. The answer is that it employs them. As well, it makes sure that they have more and better highways and better bridges, and other infrastructure such as social infrastructure. It gives them a better quality of life.

Some of those things include \$32.2 billion in the community improvement fund, which will provide stable funding for community infrastructure projects. We have heard from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and from mayors and provinces right across the country that they need to have stable, predictable, long-term funding so they know where they are going to spend money in the future. They need to know when they are going to get it, just as any business does. If we just tell them that every year they are going to get a certain amount and it is a surprise to them, how can they do any long-term planning? It is impossible.

This government is going to make a variety of other infrastructure investments to build on our economic action plan. We are going to make sure we place Canadians first, for Canadians, for the Canadian economy and for the future of Canada.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoulu, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Fort McMurray—Athabasca for his speech.

Yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Finance, my colleague was forced to acknowledge before experts from the parliamentary budget office that the 900,000 jobs that were supposedly created by this government—at least, that is what it claims—were created naturally and had absolutely nothing to do with his government's measures.

However, I would like to bring the discussion around to another subject—namely, the \$600 billion accumulated by and tied up in Canadian businesses. That works out to \$25,000 per Canadian family, money that is not creating jobs or increasing the competitiveness of businesses.

Why is there not a single measure in Bill C-60 to encourage, if not force businesses to invest some of their cash assets?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I find that troubling. The PBO did correct that particular statement that the individual brought forward, and indicated clearly that those jobs would not have naturally occurred without the government investing in Canada. It just simply makes sense.

I would like to talk about a few other things that have happened that I am very proud of as well. They include an investment of \$1.25 billion for affordable housing that we are bringing forward in this budget. In fact, in the homeless partnership strategy of \$600 million, the investment there is to help people move from the streets to shelters, with jobs or with mental health treatment.

Those are things the government is doing. We are making sure that Canadians are going to do better, no matter whether they are on the streets and have health or mental issues that we need to resolve, or whether they need jobs somewhere else in the country. We are going to make sure, no matter where they are from, they are treated fairly and equally. Canadians are the number one priority of government.

Government Orders

● (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Should he wish it, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca will have three minutes remaining for questions and comments when the House next returns to debate on the question.

NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-60, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 21, 2013 and other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of the proceedings at the said stage.

I would like to give the House the courtesy of knowing that I intend to propose that four further days of debate be allotted, which would mean a total of five days of debate for second reading of this very important bill to create jobs and economic growth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I am sure the House appreciates the notice by the hon. government House leader.

* * *

STRENGTHENING MILITARY JUSTICE IN THE DEFENCE OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-15, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-15.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

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

*(Division No. 671)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Angus
Ashfield
Aspin
Aubin
Baird
Bellavance
Benskin
Bernier
Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe
Block

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Armstrong
Ashton
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bateman
Benoit
Bergen
Bevington
Blanchette
Blaney
Boivin

Boughen
Boutin-Sweet
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chong
Chow
Clarke
Clement
Côté
Crowder
Daniel
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Del Mastro
Dewar
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Fortin
Galipeau
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Godin
Gosal
Gravelle
Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hoback
Jacob
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kellway
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Larose
Lauzon
Lebel
Leef
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mai
Masse
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Mourani
Nash
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Paradis
Payne
Perreault
Plamondon
Preston
Rafferty
Rankin
Ravignat
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Sagamash
Saxton
Scott
Boulerice
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Charlton
Chisu
Choquette
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Crockatt
Cullen
Davidson
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dechert
Devolin
Dionne Labelle
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseault
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher
Freeman
Gallant
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goguen
Gourde
Grewal
Harper
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Holder
James
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapointe
Latendresse
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Lemieux
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Marston
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Nantel
Nicholls
Norlock
O'Connor
Opitz
Papillon
Patry
Péclet
Pilon
Poilievre
Quach
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rempel
Rickford
Rousseau
Sandhu
Schellenberger
Seeback

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 672)

YEAS

Members

- Adams
- Aglukkaq
- Albrecht
- Allen (Welland)
- Allison
- Ambrose
- Anderson
- Armstrong
- Ashton
- Atamanenko
- Ayala
- Bateman
- Benskin
- Bernier
- Bezan
- Blanchette-Lamothe
- Block
- Boughen
- Boutin-Sweet
- Breitkreuz
- Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
- Bruinooge
- Calandra
- Cannan
- Caron
- Cash
- Chicoine
- Chong
- Chow
- Clarke
- Clement
- Côté
- Crowder
- Daniel
- Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
- Day
- Del Mastro
- Dewar
- Donnelly
- Dubé
- Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
- Fantino
- Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
- Flaherty
- Freeman
- Gallant
- Genest
- Giguère
- Glover
- Goguen
- Gourde
- Grewal
- Harper
- Harris (St. John's East)
- Hawn
- Hiebert
- Holder
- James
- Julian
- Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
- Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
- Kerr
- Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
- Lapointe
- Latendresse
- Laverdière
- LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
- Lemieux
- Liu
- Lobb
- Lunney
- MacKenzie
- Marston
- Mayes
- McLeod
- Menzies
- Michaud
- Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)

- Sellah
- Shipley
- Sims (Newton—North Delta)
- Smith
- Sorenson
- Stewart
- Strahl
- Sweet
- Tilson
- Toews
- Tremblay
- Trottier
- Turnel
- Uppal
- Van Loan
- Wallace
- Watson
- Sky Country)
- Weston (Saint John)
- Williamson
- Woodworth
- Young (Oakville)
- Zimmer— 245

- Shea
- Shory
- Sitsabaiesan
- Sopuck
- Stanton
- Storseth
- Sullivan
- Thibeault
- Toet
- Toone
- Trost
- Truppe
- Tweed
- Valcourt
- Vellacott
- Warkentin
- Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
- Wilks
- Wong
- Yelich
- Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

- Andrews
- Bennett
- Casey
- Cuzner
- Easter
- Foote
- Garneau
- Hsu
- Karygiannis
- MacAulay
- McCallum
- McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
- Pacetti
- Regan
- Sgro
- St-Denis

- Bélanger
- Byrne
- Coderre
- Duncan (Etobicoke North)
- Eyking
- Fry
- Goodale
- Hyer
- LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
- May
- McGuinty
- Murray
- Rae
- Scarpaleggia
- Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
- Valeriote— 32

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-394, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (criminal organization recruitment), be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-394, under private members' business.

● (1815)

[English]

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

- Ablonczy
- Adler
- Albas
- Alexander
- Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
- Ambler
- Anders
- Angus
- Ashfield
- Aspin
- Aubin
- Baird
- Benoit
- Bergen
- Bevington
- Blanchette
- Blaney
- Boivin
- Boulerice
- Braid
- Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
- Brown (Barrie)
- Butt
- Calkins
- Carmichael
- Carrie
- Charlton
- Chisu
- Choquette
- Christopherson
- Cleary
- Comartin
- Crockatt
- Cullen
- Davidson
- Davies (Vancouver East)
- Dechert
- Devolin
- Dionne Labelle
- Dreeshen
- Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
- Dusseauit
- Fast
- Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
- Fletcher
- Galipeau
- Garrison
- Genest-Jourdain
- Gill
- Godin
- Gosal
- Gravelle
- Groguhé
- Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
- Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
- Hayes
- Hoback
- Jacob
- Jean
- Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
- Kellway
- Kent
- Komarnicki
- Lake
- Larose
- Lauzon
- Lebel
- Leaf
- Leung
- Lizon
- Lukiwski
- MacKay (Central Nova)
- Mai
- Masse
- McColeman
- Menegakis
- Merrifield
- Miller

Private Members' Business

Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Papillon	Paradis
Payne	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Poillievre	Preston
Quach	Rafferty
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Stewart
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 240

NAYS

Members

Andrews	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Byrne	Casey
Coderre	Cuzner
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Fry
Garneau	Goodale
Hsu	Hyer
Karygiannis	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
MacAulay	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Murray
Pacetti	Patry
Plamondon	Rae
Regan	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
St-Denis	Valeriote — 36

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

● (1820)

The Speaker: It being 6:20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

LANGUAGE SKILLS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-419, An Act respecting language skills, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

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

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today and speak about my bill at third reading. Right from the beginning, this bill has had incredible support from all the parties, which makes me especially proud.

I would like to start right away by extending my thanks and gratitude to some hon. members who, with their support and wise counsel, helped make Bill C-419 a real success.

First, I would like to thank the member for Ottawa—Orléans for his contribution to the final version of the bill. His enthusiasm for protecting language rights is probably already well known across all the French-speaking communities in Ontario. I extend my sincere thanks to him. As he himself kindly said to me in committee,

[*Member spoke in Russian, as follows:*]

Bolshoi spasibo.

[*Translation*]

My thanks also go to the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, who all contributed in a caring, intelligent and visionary manner to this bill. The member for Winnipeg South Centre, the member for Durham, the member for Pickering—Scarborough East and the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore gave their clear support and full consideration to the bill.

The member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville also expressed his strong support during his remarks on this subject. It is always reassuring when a great intellectual of his calibre unequivocally supports one's proposals. I truly appreciate that and thank him for it.

Several other government members have believed in Bill C-419 from the beginning, and I would like to remind them that their timely support did not go unnoticed. Without their good will, this bill would have died a long time ago.

Private Members' Business

Naturally, I would also like to thank the many NDP members who contributed to my bill. One person in particular deserves to be mentioned. I would like not only to thank the member for Acadie—Bathurst, but also to give him a big hug and let him know that I will be forever grateful. I can take a breather now, but his battle wages on, and I wish him all the success he deserves.

I feel fortunate to be celebrating the second anniversary of my May 2011 election to Parliament during the first hour of the third reading of my bill. Never could I have dreamed of coming so far so fast. I am very proud of that and of having been able to work so productively with all parties in the House of Commons.

The fact that Bill C-419 has reached third reading proves to Canadians that we know how to work together. Even though our political visions can be poles apart, we fully agree on certain points.

I can claim victory today because all parties collaborated for the purpose of protecting the rights of Canadians in minority language communities. What we are doing today strengthens the very foundation this country is built on. Many of us here in Canada's Parliament, along with thousands—millions, even—of Canadians, sincerely love this country's two official languages. I am one of those Canadians. My love for English in no way diminishes my attachment to my own language. Divisiveness has never arisen because of language itself, but because of political constructs relating to it.

More and more, I have come to realize that political divisions are often unhealthy. Not only are they ridiculously artificial, but they can also prevent people from thinking honestly about the problems we are facing. Today we have a rare opportunity to celebrate together. We have stepped away from the scourge of adversarial politics, and that is a good thing.

Bill C-419 has emerged from committee significantly abbreviated. Though it is now a relatively short and simple bill, it originally contained a number of different elements related to one central issue.

This core element, the list of the 10 officers of Parliament, was supported by four other elements: a preamble, an explanation of the language requirements for the 10 positions, the flexibility to allow the Governor in Council to add more positions to the list and, finally, clarification on acting positions.

These five separate elements were discussed, and only one of them remained unchanged: the list of the 10 positions in question. Fortunately, this is the most important element. Had this element been altered, it would have changed the very nature of the bill. The fact that it remained unchanged is a victory because everyone found the compromise acceptable.

I would like to explain the changes made and the reasons for them. First, the original version of Bill C-419 contained a preamble. The purpose of this preamble was to better define what is meant by an officer of Parliament. Since this category is not clearly set out in the act, we thought it would be appropriate to include a specific definition of this term. In so doing, we wanted to prevent any future doubt.

Here is the definition of an officer of Parliament that was contained in the preamble of the original version of the bill: officers

of Parliament are persons appointed with the approval by resolution of the Senate, the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament.

This clarification eliminated any legislative hesitation regarding the nature of the positions set out in the new law. Throughout my speech, I emphasized that this preamble was included by way of explanation and as a preventive measure.

• (1825)

Except that, in the end, it was not retained. This decision does not pose a problem, but it does weaken the bill. I am certain that some people do not like this grey area which has been purposely created. The decision was made not to use a clear definition of what an officer of Parliament is or is not.

In general, there was agreement that, although this category is not clearly defined, it is specific enough to not cause any harm. Thus, the preamble was deleted.

The second element on which we could not agree was a phrase in the main clause of Bill C-419. In attempting to state what we meant by a clear understanding of both official languages, we believed that it would suffice to say that the candidate must be able to understand English and French without the assistance of an interpreter.

Although the preamble and a legislative detail that we deemed to be important were eliminated, in this case the government suddenly wanted to give a definition that was as broad as possible.

First, we heard that, if we applied the letter of the law, the use of an interpreter by the incumbent of any of the 10 positions would be strictly prohibited in any circumstance.

That is obviously not the case. Requiring the incumbent to be bilingual at the time of his or her appointment does not at all mean that the person can never use the services of an interpreter. I defended the notion that it would be obvious whether or not the incumbent was bilingual from the very first words they spoke in both languages. After all, either you understand a language or you do not. You cannot get by for very long.

However, the issue of an interpreter was too unpopular. To eliminate any merit it may have had, the principal meaning of interpreter was expanded to include sign language interpreters. First of all, we did not want to hinder the candidacy of individuals with hearing loss. Only afterwards, I was accused of trying to exclude the candidacy of people who are completely deaf.

That was obviously not the objective of those six words. The reason I used that turn of phrase was mainly because it is found in the Official Languages Act in reference to the appointment of superior court justices:

Every federal court, other than the Supreme Court of Canada, has the duty to ensure that...(c) if both English and French are the languages chosen by the parties for proceedings conducted before it in any particular case, every judge or other officer who hears those proceedings is able to understand both languages without the assistance of an interpreter.

Private Members' Business

However, the member for Ottawa—Orléans was able to propose a compromise that was acceptable to everyone. He suggested that we introduce the concept of clear understanding to replace the idea of understanding without the aid of an interpreter. I would like to thank him for this wise addition, without which we would not have moved forward. There is no more mention of interpreters.

The first version of Bill C-419 would have given the Governor in Council the ability to add positions to the list in the future, as needed.

With that clause, we were hoping to make it easier for future governments to amend the law and rectify a language skills problem.

For example, it is easy to imagine that if a new officer of Parliament position were created, the government would want to add it to the list. The way the bill has been amended, Parliament alone can make that addition, not the Governor in Council. That provision was taken out.

Legislators will therefore be required to introduce a bill to add a position to the list. The NDP had no issues with allowing the Governor in Council to add positions to our list, as needed.

Lastly, we felt it was necessary to specify that those appointed to one of the 10 offices listed in Bill C-419 on an interim basis must also meet the requirements.

It could happen that a candidate appointed to a position on an interim basis could end up being permanently appointed to fulfill those duties. Requiring interim appointees to be bilingual would encourage the government to seek out qualified candidates from the start.

We were told that lack of available candidates and the urgency of the situation required extraordinary measures and, in such cases, for the common good, a unilingual person could do a fine job in the interim position.

I maintained that among 33 million people, there should be enough talented candidates who meet the language requirements of institutional bilingualism. I was accused of speculating and of not having studies to back up my blind faith in the bilingualism of elite Canadians.

I am disappointed that the clause regarding interim appointments was taken out. It weakens the bill slightly and opens the door to future problems. However, despite my reluctance, I am confident that even in the most extreme cases—although it may not be explicitly required in the bill—future governments will make every effort possible to comply with the language skill requirements, even for interim positions.

Overall, I am satisfied with the final result, even though all the satellite provisions were removed from the bill. The most controversial points of Bill C-419 were debated fairly, but were eliminated for reasons that could be described as short-sightedness. The essence of Bill C-419 remains intact: the list of the 10 officer of Parliament positions that must henceforth be bilingual to comply with the law.

● (1830)

On that point, I never for a moment doubted the good will of everyone who worked on my bill. Parliament is accountable to all Canadians, regardless of their language background, and respect for institutional bilingualism remains one of the fundamental agreements that exists between all Canadians for the future.

Adding this list of 10 positions to the legislation will only strengthen our union. We just added another building block to the structure of our agreement. I was pleased to see how solicitous the members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages were in order to come to an agreement.

As a final point, I would like to look ahead to our shared future. What will the Parliament of Canada look like in 2113? That depends on Canadians and on the direction they would like to take. The ground beneath our feet makes up the second-largest country in the world, one that is blessed not only with abundant natural resources, but also tremendous human potential. Our bilingualism is one of those assets. It enables us to be at the forefront of several cultural movements at once. We must not waste our cultural treasures.

If I had just one wish for 2113, it would be that Canada's aboriginal peoples come and join us in the House with the concentrated strength of a cultural and linguistic renaissance. I truly hope that 100 years from now, the languages that emerged from this country's land are more vibrant than ever and are heard in this Parliament every day, in what will truly be a Parliament for all Canadians.

That is why I will conclude by thanking the House in Huron, the language of my riding.

[Member spoke in Huron as follows:]

Tia:wenk.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her work and ask her whether she believes that Bill C-419 restricts the constitutional rights of officers of Parliament. Whether she does or does not, can she explain why?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière for asking a good question that was raised several times during the second hour of debate and in committee.

I believe that it absolutely does not. It does not restrict any officer of Parliament's freedom to speak one language or the other in Parliament, which is one of our constitutional rights. All we are asking is that they have the ability to do so. If officers of Parliament decide to speak only English or only French in the House, that is fine. They have that right. All we are asking is that they have the ability to understand and express themselves in both languages.

I do not think that this restricts constitutional rights at all. At any rate, I believe that the member himself does not agree with this criticism of my bill.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague and neighbour to comment on the message that this bill sends to young Canadians who might be considering enrolling in immersion schools in the future.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages and who was a big supporter of my bill when it was studied in committee. I thank him for his work on this bill and for his question.

This bill sends a very good message to all those young people who work very hard to learn a second language. Being able to speak more than one language is a great skill to have in life. I speak three languages, and I cannot believe the doors that has opened for me. That is the message this bill sends. We are saying that it is very important for them to speak both languages if they want to hold this country's highest offices.

I recently had the opportunity to share that point of view. I visited a school in my riding and spoke to 11- and 12-year-olds in English immersion. It was amazing to be able to explain to them that what they are doing is very important and that speaking English would really help them. For example, if they want to become an officer of Parliament, this is the kind of job that will require English.

It is an excellent message to encourage our young people to learn as many languages as possible.

• (1835)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on her success. We are about to pass a very important bill.

This is not about blame, but I simply want to point out that when the bill was introduced, the Minister of Official Languages originally said that the government would not support it. I am happy to see that he has changed his mind, and I congratulate my colleague for getting the support of all the parties in the House.

I would like her to explain this turn of events and how she helped make this happen.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his question.

When we asked the Minister of Official Languages the same question, his response was that the bill was neither useful nor necessary. I think the events that followed the appointment of the unilingual Auditor General showed that the legislation was flawed in that respect. As long as there is no clear direction or law for this type of situation, we have no guarantee or assurance that the law will be observed.

As a result, most members of the House understood the usefulness of a piece of legislation that makes it absolutely clear that bilingualism must be mandatory for people appointed to those positions. I am very pleased to have been able to meet with members from all parties to convince them of the merits of this bill.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide the

government's response to Bill C-419 on language skills. We signalled our intention to support the intent and the core objective of this bill. However, when this bill was studied in committee, some technical issues needed to be addressed to strengthen it as the legislative foundation for linguistic duality among the 10 positions listed in the bill.

Our approach is a practical one that demonstrates both our agreement with the spirit of the legislation and our desire to make it an effective legal foundation for something we all believe in.

Linguistic duality is one of the pillars of Canadian history, culture and democracy, and this government is determined to strengthen it in our public institutions. We believe that the individuals occupying the 10 positions listed in the bill should be proficient in both of Canada's official languages. However, there were a number of technical issues with this bill that needed to be examined more closely in committee before it could be implemented.

If the first version had been passed, persons whose appointments required the approval of the House of Commons or both chambers would have had to understand English and French without the aid of an interpreter and be able to express themselves clearly in both languages at the time of their appointment. In addition, the bill provided the Governor in Council with the ability to add officers to this list. It also provided that in the case of an incumbent's absence or incapacity, the person appointed in the interim would also have to meet these requirements.

We would rather give the language skills requirement a stronger legal foundation. Let me list the reasons for the amendments that were made to the bill when it was being studied by the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

First, the preamble indicated that the bill is grounded on the principle that the 10 officers of Parliament identified therein need to communicate directly with parliamentarians in both official languages. We believe this did not take into account the constitutional right of all Canadians, including the officers listed in Bill C-419, to speak in the official language of their choice in Parliament.

Our second objection is that the bill, to be meaningful, should also specify the type of language skills required, which it did not do with sufficient clarity in its original form. This requirement, as it is currently proposed in the bill, does not distinguish between written and oral expression.

With the amendments adopted at committee, it is now more clearly laid out that candidates must understand and speak both official languages at the time of their appointment. Without specifying the type of language skills required, it would have been difficult to evaluate whether or not a candidate meets this requirement.

Third, we believe that due to the constraints the bill imposes on the selection process of senior officials, the ability to add to the list of officers should lie with Parliament rather than the Governor in Council.

Private Members' Business

Our fourth concern is that the language skills requirements would also apply to interim appointees. This could hamper the government's ability to make timely and effective interim appointments to ensure the continuity of an institution's operations.

In addition, this requirement could create a de facto language skills requirement for those people occupying other senior positions within the 10 organizations listed in the bill.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages has successfully mitigated the risks associated with these issues. We believe that the bill now has a stronger basis for the introduction of these requirements for the 10 positions listed in the bill. We are committed to promoting linguistic duality in Canada and strengthening the use of our two official languages.

We understand that linguistic duality is at the heart of our identity as a nation, and it contributes to our historical and cultural wealth. It empowers official language minority communities across the country and contributes to Canada's economic vitality. It strengthens the resilience of our federation through the provision of services in both official languages.

Indeed, linguistic duality permeates all fields of our society, and is a social, cultural and economic asset for Canadians not only at home, but also abroad. Bilingualism, for example, opens Canada to la Francophonie.

• (1840)

Through this international organization, Canada can help promote democratic institutions, human rights, the rule of law, peace and human security.

At the same time, we benefit from the political, cultural, scientific and other contributions made by other members. In fact, this government's long-standing commitment to bilingualism was shown in 2008 by the Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality 2008-2013: Acting for the Future. The roadmap laid out the path to build on Canada's linguistic duality for the future with an unprecedented government-wide investment of \$1.1 billion over five years.

Clearly, as we reaffirmed in the 2011 Speech from the Throne, "Canada's two official languages are an integral part of our history and give us a unique advantage in the world". The government has not wavered from that. That is why it recently announced the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018: Education, Immigration, Communities. This new roadmap unites the efforts of about 15 departments and agencies of the Government of Canada, as well as those of our partners, to take action in these three key areas.

By recognizing that the individuals occupying the 10 positions listed in Bill C-419 should be proficient in both official languages, we are acting on our beliefs and strengthening Canada's linguistic duality for the future. Our position is consistent with the spirit of the original bill, and we want to ensure that the introduction of these language requirements has a solid basis in law.

As for appointments to the 10 positions listed in the bill, there are many relevant considerations in addition to language skills to be taken into account. These include formal education, practical experience, abilities, personal suitability, knowledge and expertise.

We will continue to consider all the criteria that allow us to appoint the most suitable candidate.

We look forward to working with the members of this House to pass this landmark legislation, which will be good for Canada and all Canadians.

• (1845)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about this bill. It seems that everyone supports it, even though the government unfortunately made some amendments to it. It is quite obvious that officers of Parliament must be bilingual. In an ideal world, we would not need a law for this. However, it seems that the Conservatives need such a law because they recently appointed a unilingual Auditor General. We therefore need a law to remind the government of its responsibilities. That law will be Bill C-419. I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for sponsoring it.

In committee, the Conservatives used their majority to make useless amendments to the bill. On behalf of his Liberal colleagues, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville voted against each of these amendments, which served to eliminate the preamble and two of the four clauses from the original bill.

Despite these amendments, we still support Bill C-419 since the most important element of the bill remained intact. The most important thing is that officers of Parliament be bilingual when they are appointed.

[*English*]

It is essential that the Auditor General of Canada be bilingual when he or she gets the job. The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada must also be bilingual. The Commissioner of Official Languages, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Information Commissioner of Canada, the Senate Ethics Officer, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada, and the President of the Public Service Commission of Canada—all must be bilingual on the day that they are hired.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' amendments weakened the bilingualism requirement. However, the requirement set out in the amended version of the bill is still meaningful. It states that anyone who is appointed to these positions "must, at the time of his or her appointment, be able to speak and understand clearly both official languages".

The Conservatives also did away with clause 3, which stated: "The Governor in Council may, by order, add offices to the list established in section 2." That is unfortunate because, if they believed in bilingualism, they would have made it easier to expand the list. It would have been nice if the government had been able to take the initiative to add new positions to the list of those with a bilingualism requirement. However, at least we can rest assured that the government will not be able to remove any positions from the list without parliamentary approval.

Private Members' Business

The government side also removed clause 4, which pertained to interim appointments to the positions covered by Bill C-419. This clause read: "In the event of the absence or incapacity of the incumbent of any of the offices listed in section 2 or vacancy in any of these offices, the person appointed in the interim must meet the requirements set out in section 2."

That clause was removed, undermining the clarity of the bill but, fortunately, not changing the fundamentals. Once Bill C-419 becomes law in Canada, all newly appointed officers of Parliament will have to be bilingual, whether the position is occupied by a permanent or an interim appointee.

Interim appointees will be subject to the same requirements as permanent ones. They will have to deliver the goods and fulfill all requirements of the position as set out in the law.

If the law states that bilingualism is a skill inherent to the job, that skill will always be mandatory. It cannot be optional. If the government were to make a bad decision to appoint a unilingual interim officer, it would be breaking the law and would be subject to legal action.

The Conservatives also cut the preamble to Bill C-419. They refused to say why. All they said was that the preamble was not necessary. It is not necessary, but it is useful. A preamble makes the legislator's intentions clear. In this case, the main problem with cutting the preamble is that now, nowhere does it say that the bill is about officers of Parliament.

This is what the fourth whereas said:

● (1850)

[*English*]

And whereas persons appointed with the approval by resolution of the Senate, the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament must be able to communicate with members of those Houses in both official languages;

[*Translation*]

Now that the fourth whereas is gone, nowhere in the bill does it say that the 10 positions subject to bilingualism under Bill C-419 are given to "individuals appointed with the approval by resolution of the Senate, the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament".

Since both the preamble and the fourth whereas are gone, positions not appointed by Parliament can be subject to Bill C-419.

In committee, my colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, suggested adding the CEO of CBC and the president of the CRTC to the list in the bill. These two officials are not appointed by Parliament, but who would object to the notion that they should have to be bilingual? The Conservatives, apparently.

My NDP colleagues voted in favour of the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville's amendment, and I thank them for that. However, the Conservatives scuttled it. Let us keep that in mind in the future. Since there is no longer a preamble, there is nothing standing in the way of adding more government-appointed positions to Bill C-419 in the future.

Let me get back to the important thing, which is that, by law, officers of Parliament must meet the following criteria.

[*English*]

First, they should have the ability to study matters in both official languages. This is the only way to ensure fair and credible investigations and decisions.

Second, they should be able to communicate with parliamentarians who are, in many cases, unilingual. One cannot provide satisfactory service to Parliament if one can speak to some of its members only through an interpreter.

Third, they should be able not only to communicate with all Canadians, but also to listen to them and follow what they are saying. The role of officers of Parliament is not only to be competent public servants, they must also be competent communicators. They must communicate the conclusions of their research with accuracy and subtlety in both languages.

We must state and demonstrate to young Canadians that some positions with national responsibilities in this country require a mastery of both official languages. We should honour the bilingual character of our Parliament, of our country and of our future by supporting Bill C-419.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for the vision she conveyed through Bill C-419. She identified a flaw in our laws with respect to the importance of Canada's linguistic duality, and she came up with a bill to address the issue.

I would also like to thank the government for supporting this bill, despite dissecting it a bit. Nonetheless, what the bill clearly states is that officers of the Parliament of Canada are required to be bilingual at the time of their appointment. That is very clear and important.

● (1855)

[*English*]

This private member's bill was born out of a diplomatic miscalculation on the government's part by engaging a unilingual Auditor General.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Ferguson in my second week of my immersion class in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. He was starting his class. I found him to be a very nice gentleman and he has proven to be a very capable gentleman. The issue is that to serve Parliament and the Canadian public, he needs to be able to speak French and to understand it as a second language. Despite his honest attempts to do so, he is not yet at that point. This is an issue, because the government should have engaged someone at the very beginning who was able to communicate in both official languages as an agent of Parliament.

When I say both official languages, it is not a choice and it should not be a choice. Canada's character as a bilingual country was set many years ago. Many people and grassroots organizations go to great lengths to try not only to promote their language and their culture, but, in many cases, to make it survive.

Private Members' Business

We have various organizations in the Acadian community and the Franco-Canadian community that work on a daily basis trying to promote and show the importance of their culture and their language outside Quebec.

[*Translation*]

It is really difficult. At the Standing Committee on Official Languages, we often hear about the challenges facing organizations when it comes to financial support and the types of programs that are available. In western Canada, we see how important immersion schools are, but not enough teachers go to teach French there.

[*English*]

It is very important for the survival of French across Canada. We, as leaders in our country, have to set an example. We, as leaders in our country, in particular the government, have to set the example that both official languages are important.

It is not simply a question of the “coolness” of being able to speak two languages. It is important to the search for jobs in this country. It is important to the preservation of both our cultures, the anglophone community in Quebec and the francophone community outside Quebec. We have to be leaders by setting examples. Hiring a unilingual parliamentary agent does not send the right message.

I asked my colleague a little while earlier about the importance of our young people learning a second language. Again, it is not about the “coolness” of speaking two languages. It is about their future. It is about those young lawyers, accountants and business people who might one day hope to share their talents with this place as an auditor general, a privacy commissioner or as a higher-up in the government hierarchy. It is important to send the message that they should start learning that second language now; in other words, if they are francophone, learning English, if they are anglophone, learning French. They should study in both official languages so that as they grow and excel in their career, they are open to those opportunities to serve Canadians in both official languages.

When Bill C-419 went in it was a strong bill. It was very well thought out. Unfortunately, as I alluded to earlier, there was a bit of dissection going on, and in many cases it was hard to understand why. This bill set out to create clarity in the hiring of 10 specific agents of Parliament.

In article 2, the need to understand both official languages without the aid of an interpreter or an interpretation device was again, to be diplomatic, misconstrued as not being able to get counsel on the meaning of a word.

As an actor I spent two years at Stratford performing Shakespeare, and also did so outside of Stratford. I adore the English language. Every now and then I have to pick up a dictionary or ask somebody the meaning of a word. That is not what the intention of article 2 was. It was to make sure that when these agents of Parliament are not in a room that has simultaneous interpretation, they have the ability to go out among the members of the public and listen to their concerns in both official languages.

Article 3, which allowed for the Governor in Council to add to or adjust the list in particular ways, was simply meant as a means of expediting the creation of a new position for an agent of Parliament.

The importance of article 4, to have the interim individual able to continue the work of the agent of Parliament while looking for a permanent replacement, is paramount because it prevents that work from coming to a halt.

In conclusion, I would like to again congratulate my hon. colleague for her work. I applaud the government for supporting this bill. It is an important bill. We hope that the importance of hiring a government agent who is bilingual at the time of his or her hiring is clear.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-419, An Act respecting language skills, which was introduced by my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

This bill would require anyone appointed to the office of the 10 main officers of Parliament to understand French and English and to be able to communicate in both official languages at the time they take the job.

The positions in question are the following: the Auditor General of Canada, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada, the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, the Senate Ethics Officer, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner and the President of the Public Service Commission.

These positions are very important and the people who hold these offices interact regularly with parliamentarians. They do an excellent job. They keep us apprised of what is going on. For example, the Auditor General just released his latest report and we learned a lot of things.

That is why I think it is very important for these officers of Parliament to be able to communicate in both official languages.

On occasion, the general public also has to interact with these people. As we saw with the allegations of electoral fraud, I think it is important for a member of the public to be able to speak with the Chief Electoral Officer in either official language in order to discuss the problems and to make a complaint.

I think it goes without saying that anyone appointed to the positions I mentioned will have a lot of experience, will have worked in the field and will have had training. They will probably have a few degrees. This is not a job you get right out of university.

That being said, the reason I wanted to point this out is that, when a person progresses in his career, no matter what that career may be, and things are going well and he thinks that he might want to aspire to another position, it is logical to think that, at some point, he might have the opportunity to be appointed Auditor General.

If that person knows that the position requires him to be bilingual, then he has more than enough time, from the beginning of his career, to say that he is going to learn French or English right away, depending on which language he is less familiar with.

Private Members' Business

It is completely reasonable to think along those lines. If a person knows he needs to be bilingual in order to reach his future career goals, he will do his best to learn the other language. Often, the people appointed to these positions are from the public service. They have already worked in various capacities and have therefore had access to courses in the other official language. I think that that is an important point to make.

I would like to come back to the work done in committee. At report stage, a Liberal amendment was rejected and four Conservative amendments were accepted. I am sorry to see that the preamble was done away with.

The preamble reiterated the fact that the Constitution recognizes that English and French are the official languages of Canada; that English and French have equal rights and privileges as to their use in Parliament; that parliamentarians use both official languages during parliamentary debates and proceedings; and that persons appointed with the approval by resolution of the Senate, the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament must be able to communicate with parliamentarians in both official languages.

I think that it is unfortunate that the preamble was removed. I think that all parliamentarians should be proud to stand and say that, in Canada, we are lucky to live in a unique country with two official languages and two linguistic communities that live together and that have learned to value each other.

Yes, there is sometimes conflict between the two communities, but Canada is an example of a country where two communities that are fairly different in terms of language and culture are able to live together and to be proud of who they are. Still, the Conservatives decided to remove this preamble. The preamble would have given us the chance to reiterate how proud we are of our country. I find it really sad that it was removed.

• (1905)

I believe that the Conservative Party is wasting an opportunity to stand up and proudly say that Canadians are proud of our language skills and proud to speak French and English, that we are proud of who we are and that it is important to put that in a bill.

In deciding to have bilingual officers of Parliament, we are taking a step in the right direction to show that, in Canada, we speak two languages and to give the reasons why we pass these types of bills. We are proud of our two communities, which are equal before the law. Instead, they decided to eliminate the preamble.

With regard to clause 2, which was amended, we originally asked that the incumbent understand English and French without the aid of an interpreter. It was decided that “without the aid of an interpreter” would be deleted. I find that unfortunate.

Members will recall that the Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, said the following, which is taken from the Official Languages Act, and I found it to be appropriate.

If you say that people can use an interpreter, that indicates that the person does not have sufficient proficiency in the other official language.

I believe that it was important to keep these words to indicate what is meant by “understanding of the other official language”. If someone does not need an interpreter, it clearly shows that they are

proficient in the other official language. That provides a criterion for determining whether or not the person has sufficient knowledge of the other official language. I am disappointed that the Conservatives decided to delete this clause.

It is also unfortunate that they deleted clause 3, whereby the Governor in Council could, by order, add offices to the list established in section 2. It would have been possible to add offices without necessarily having to go through the entire legislative process with a new bill to amend a bill about to be passed. The government might realize, for example, that some offices should have been on the list, or a new office could be created. No one knows what the future needs of the country may be. It is possible that other officer of Parliament positions may be created; they could have been automatically included in the bill and the law. I find it unfortunate that we are not giving ourselves some flexibility. There was no need to eliminate this clause.

Clause 4 stated that, in the event of the absence or incapacity of the incumbent of any of the offices listed in section 2 or vacancy in any of these offices, the person appointed in the interim must meet the requirements set out in section 2. In other words, the person must be bilingual even in an interim position. I regret that this clause was also deleted.

I know that Canada has an abundance of competent people with outstanding skills. I also know that there are bilingual candidates for all positions. It is not true that there are not enough; we can find them. We could have applied the same requirement to interim positions, if only out of respect for Canada's official language communities.

It is simply too bad that the requirement was deleted and that it was decided—even before the situation occurred—that it would be impossible and that we needed some flexibility. I know that Canada has a lot of competent people. Every time we conduct studies in committee, we see the expertise of Canadians. Many people have the skills and can give us the right information. This is really about not being willing and refusing to look for bilingual people. That is just too bad.

It is important to remember that a number of people supported our bill in its entirety before it was amended. For instance, Marie-France Kenny, President of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, and Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada, supported it. They all said good things about the bill.

I am clearly pleased to support my colleague's bill, but, honestly, I would have much rather not seen it amended. I think the clauses that were deleted made the bill better and it is unfortunate that they were removed.

It is also unfortunate that the Conservatives missed the chance to keep the preamble and to reiterate how much they believe in a bilingual Canada and the importance of two equal French-speaking and English-speaking communities in our country.

I am proud of this country. I used to wear the flag on my shoulder when I was in the military.

Adjournment Proceedings

●(1910)

I am very proud of what Canada stands for and I am always happy to say how proud I am of our country.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the remarkable work done by my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent in getting this bill through by bringing together all members from all parties of the House. This member often works in a non-partisan way. She is very open, very patient and she does excellent groundwork. She brings people together. She takes the time to explain things to people, but she also takes the time to listen to every concern. She is extremely present. She has shed some light on bilingualism, on the quality and the importance of bilingualism within our institution. She proves her own bilingualism every day.

I could also point out the excellent work done by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, who has been fighting for years to achieve bilingualism everywhere, in every aspect of his work. In fact, is working on Bill C-208, which would require Supreme Court judges to be bilingual. It has been a very long haul, but he is very passionate about it. He is doing a great job. That member is the official opposition critic for official languages.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the important committee work done by the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber, our deputy critic for official languages. He gave a very passionate speech in both official languages. He is a credit to Bill C-419, which has to do with language skills.

I am very proud to rise in the House to support this important bill. There is a minority anglophone community in my riding. It is my duty as their representative to improve my knowledge and use of English. This back and forth is very enriching and allows me to take my knowledge and abilities much further.

This bill promotes both languages, but it goes even further and promotes both cultures. It requires a number of officers of Parliament to acknowledge that richness, to acknowledge the subtleties of each culture and to allow people to stand tall, no matter which language they use.

The 10 positions listed in the bill include the Auditor General of Canada, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada. The commissioner appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. However, it is somewhat unfortunate that the Conservatives did not follow his recommendations.

He asked that the preamble be kept because it was useful. It seemed useful to us as well. This is rather unfortunate because it contained elements that were key to clarifying the importance of bilingualism. It explained why officers need to be able to speak and understand both French and English. I would like to read the preamble for you.

Whereas the Constitution provides that English and French are the official languages of Canada;

That is from the Constitution, which recognizes that both languages are equivalent and equal and recognizes two peoples. The preamble goes on to say:

Whereas English and French have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of Parliament;

Whereas members of the Senate and the House of Commons have the right to use English or French during parliamentary debates and proceedings;

And whereas persons appointed with the approval by resolution of the Senate, the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament must be able to communicate with members of those Houses in both official languages;

These ideas are no longer officially part of Bill C-419 because the Conservatives did not want them there despite the recommendation of Canada's Commissioner of Official Languages.

The commissioner also recommended that interim appointments also be granted to officers competent in both languages. That was cut as well.

●(1915)

I would like to continue with the list of positions subject to this legislation: the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, the Senate Ethics Officer, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner and the President of the Public Service Commission.

Back when I was a new MP, I had the opportunity to ask the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner some questions, and I was very happy that he could answer me in my mother tongue, given that many nuances of the English language escaped me. I was very relieved that he could help me.

In closing, I am very happy to support the bill sponsored by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who is doing an excellent job.

I hope that all members of the House will support this bill so that it can be made law, enabling us to promote Canada's two languages, French and English, fairly and equally.

●(1920)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have four minutes to finish her speech, if she wishes, when debate resumes.

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to speak and to ask two questions of the government.

Adjournment Proceedings

The first is about liability for accidents at offshore drilling installations and at nuclear power plants. The liability limits, in the case of an accident at an offshore drilling operation, are only \$30 million in the Atlantic and \$40 million in the Arctic. I think the government members would agree with me that these liability limits are too low. These are caps on the amount a company is liable for in the case of an accident.

The Conservatives have hinted that legislation may be forthcoming to increase these limits. Let me just give a simple illustration of why these limits need to be increased. The current limit is \$40 million in the Arctic. The cost of the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico was \$40 billion. That is 1,000 times more than the current liability limit.

I know that the Conservatives have hinted that some legislation may be forthcoming. When is that legislation forthcoming? Could it not have been introduced in Bill C-60, which has a number of pieces that did not appear in the budget?

The second place liability limits need to be increased is at nuclear power plants. Currently the liability cap is only \$75 million. I know that when we had a minority Conservative government, legislation to increase the liability limits on accidents at nuclear power plants from \$75 million to something like \$650 million or more was introduced three different times. All three bills died for one reason or another, whether it was an early election, prorogation or simply that the bill was not advanced by the government. However, now that we have a majority Conservative government, and have for two years, I do not understand why the government has not introduced stand-alone legislation that could be examined carefully and debated.

Why could the Conservatives not simply reintroduce legislation they were willing to introduce in a minority government? I challenge the government to explain why it has not done so. I think people will ask whether the Conservatives, which now have a majority government, really wanted to increase the liability limits when they were in a minority government. That is my other question.

In response to my initial question in question period, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, speaking for the government, said, "the foundation for our liability regime is the polluter pay principle". That is something that perhaps all members of the House could agree on.

Now that the current government is spending a lot of time going to the United States to lobby the government there to approve the Keystone XL pipeline and to claim that Canada is strong on environmental protection, would the government extend the polluter pay principle, and would it apply it to other things that damage the natural environment? They are lobbying the United States government and claim to be protecting the natural environment and caring about climate change.

• (1925)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for asking about financial liabilities regarding Canada's regulatory regimes for nuclear operations and offshore oil and gas activities.

The health and safety of Canadians and protecting our environment are the government's top priorities. We recognize that accidents can happen anywhere, regardless of our laws and safety measures.

We are also very confident in our safeguards. We have strong environmental laws and standards, and a robust safety regime for offshore exploration and drilling. Oil and gas rigs used in the Canadian offshore industry, as well as the equipment and training required to operate them, must all meet strict regulatory standards that are among the highest in the world.

The National Energy Board evaluates each drilling application in the northern offshore for compliance with federal regulations. On the east coast, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board have similar responsibilities. Drilling cannot occur unless the responsible board is fully satisfied that the drilling plans are safe for workers and the environment. It is important for everyone to understand that when it comes to offshore activities, decisions are made with great care and only after much scrutiny.

We have been working closely with the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia to identify gaps in the current legislation on cost recovery in the offshore. The accord acts are the cornerstone for all oil and gas activity offshore. They provide the legal authority for the boards to regulate oil and gas activity on behalf of the provinces.

Canada's liability regime is founded on the polluter pays principle. As noted in the recent report by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the responsibility rests with operators to immediately take all reasonable measures to clean up a spill and prevent further damage.

Clearly our government recognizes the value of financial assurances as an important tool for protecting the environment and taxpayers. We are taking action to address the commissioner's recommendations, and work is under way to increase the liabilities required of industry.

Our government also intends to modernize the Nuclear Liability Act and increase the operator liability limit to an amount in keeping with international standards. Proposals will be brought forward for updating the legislation in the coming weeks and months.

Our government is fully confident that the offshore boards will continue to provide comprehensive oversight of oil and gas operators. We will continue working with the National Energy Board, the offshore boards, and the provinces and territories to ensure our regulatory regime remains one of the strongest in the world.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I will restate my question. I know my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, does not need his notes to answer this question.

Why has the government, in its two years of majority, not been willing to reintroduce the legislation that it introduced three times when it was a minority government to increase the liability caps on nuclear power plants?

My second question is on whether the government is willing to apply the polluter pay principle. I think we will all agree it is very good that the foundation of our country's liability regime be the polluter pay principle. Is the government willing to apply this when it comes to climate change and greenhouse gases?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleague listens to the answer.

It is no exaggeration to say that the offshore oil and gas sector has transformed the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thanks to the royalties and other revenues generated by this industry, Newfoundland and Labrador has become a "have" province and an economic force in our federation for the first time in history.

One of the reasons for its remarkable success is Canada's robust regulatory regime for offshore oil and gas activities. Our regime helps to ensure the highest level of safety, protection of the environment and management of our petroleum resources.

Our government takes sustainable development of Canada's natural resources very seriously. That is why offshore oil and gas activities must meet tough standards that are among the highest in the world.

Canadian regulators will not allow any drilling to start until they are convinced that the environment and the safety of workers will be protected. In the event of a spill, the polluter pay principle is the foundation of our liability regime.

• (1930)

ETHICS

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not here tonight to talk about the abuses of the partisan and patronage dumping ground also known as the Senate. The abuses that have happened are well known, the improper expenses of Senators Duffy, Wallin, Harb and other senators in the past who abused their position. These are the facts, and I am not here to address that.

What I would like to discuss are the arguments that members and people use in defence of the relevance of the Senate. Often, members will refer to the work that Senate committees do and the reports that come out of those committees as a useful use of the Senate.

If members recall, a few years ago the Canadian dollar reached parity with the U.S. dollar. People wondered, if our dollar was worth the same, why we still paid more than American consumers did south of the border. The Senate finance committee had a look at the issue and studied it quite extensively. It wanted to get to the bottom of this question, and it came up with a report called, "The Canada-USA Price Gap".

Senator Smith participated in this. He lives in the same town as I do, even though he is the senator for Saurel and Vaudreuil-Soulanges is quite far away from there.

I am sure that most Canadians have not heard of this report, but I looked at it with interest. Basically, the Senate looked into the Canada-U.S.A price gap and found some interesting recommendations. It found that higher tariffs were responsible for the price difference, and I will cite from the report. It states:

The officials from the Department of Finance said that, although there are some examples of differences in tariff rates between Canada and the United States that could contribute to price discrepancies for certain products, most tariffs rates are low.

This would seem to confirm the government's present position, although later on it says:

Almost all the other witnesses who appeared before the Committee disagreed with the opinion expressed by the officials from the Department of Finance, according to which tariff differences between Canada and the United States are not a major factor contributing to prices discrepancies between the two countries.

Who disagreed with the department officials? Well, the Retail Council of Canada, Canadian Tire Corporation Ltd., Reebok-CCM Hockey, the Canadian apparel Industry and representatives from Deloitte and Touche, which members may recognize as the firm that did the audit on the Senate and its abuse of expenses.

Basically, the Senate committee told the government that its recommendation was to lower tariffs on products to help Canadian consumers and to bring prices on both sides of the border closer to each other.

What did the government do? It looked at the report and raised tariffs. It did not even listen to the Senate committee. Therefore, all the work that was done to produce this report, all the senators who put hours in and the witnesses who appeared before the committee, resulted in a completely useless report because the government did not take its recommendations. We can multiply this a hundred times where members of the House have not paid attention to the work the Senate has done.

Therefore, I think it is quite clear. Other countries have abolished their upper House when they did not see the relevance of it, and they have been fine. Other countries have Houses that are truly representative. However, our Senate is neither, and it must be abolished.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was trying to follow where the member was going with his question. His original question was basically about Senate expenses, so I would like to let him know that our government has committed to ensuring all expenses are appropriate, that the rules governing the expenses are appropriate and that the Senate will report back to taxpayers, and it has done so.

As far as the rest of his comments go, I would like to state that since I have been in the House, I have actually come to respect the Senate much more in seeing the work that it has been doing as very valuable. It is always nice to have the checks and balances.

Regardless of what the member just said, the government actually does take into account many of the Senate reports that are reported and given to the Canadian people as information. We certainly do rely on its expertise.

Adjournment Proceedings

I hope my colleague has some type of follow-up, but this was not meant to be a debate on abolishing the Senate.

• (1935)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, I came here to debate the relevance of the Senate in light of the expense abuse. I wanted to highlight that the abuse of expenses was not the only problem with the Senate, that there were other problems involved with it, and that was its relevance.

This is not an old report. It came out in February 2013, one month before the budget.

Why did the government not take the recommendations of the Senate report and lower tariffs so prices could come in line and Canadian consumers could be spared? What the government has prepared is a policy that encourages cross-border shopping. Merchants and salespeople in my area want to promote the Canadian economy, not the U.S. economy.

Why did the government not take the Senate recommendations into account? The report was done a month ago. The member has not addressed the issue at all. He says that he takes Senate recommendations into account, but it appears his government has not done so.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely do take Senate recommendations into account.

It is interesting to listen to my colleague. When this government has put forward recommendations to modify and modernize the Senate, each and every time the NDP has stood and voted against them.

We are certainly in favour of modernizing the upper house. It is a variant part of our parliamentary system. I would be happy to discuss it at another time with my colleague.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

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 7:38 p.m.)

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