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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, May 31, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 31, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2019, NO. 1

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

● (1005)

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 57 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-97. Motions Nos. 1 to 57 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 57 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 1
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 30.
Motion No. 2
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 31.
Motion No. 3
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 32.
Motion No. 4
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 33.
Motion No. 5
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 34.
Motion No. 6
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 35.
Motion No. 7
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 36.
Motion No. 8
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 37.
Motion No. 9
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 38.
Motion No. 10
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 39.
Motion No. 11
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 40.
Motion No. 12
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 41.
Motion No. 13
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 42.
Motion No. 14
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 43.
Motion No. 15
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 44.
Motion No. 16
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 57.
Motion No. 17
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 58.

[*English*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 18
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 198.
Motion No. 19
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 199.
Motion No. 20
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 200.
Motion No. 21
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 201.
Motion No. 22
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 202.
Motion No. 23
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 203.
Motion No. 24
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 204.
Motion No. 25
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 205.
Motion No. 26
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 206.
Motion No. 27
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 207.
Motion No. 28
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 208.
Motion No. 29
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 209.
Motion No. 30
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 210.
Motion No. 31
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 211.
Motion No. 32
That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 212.

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 213.

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 270.

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 271.

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 272.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 273.

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 274.

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 275.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 276.

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 277.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 278.

Motion No. 43

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 279.

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 301.

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 302.

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 303.

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 304.

Motion No. 48

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 305.

Motion No. 49

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 306.

Motion No. 50

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 307.

Motion No. 51

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 308.

● (1010)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) seconded by the member for Joliette, moved:

Motion No. 52

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 308.1.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 53

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 309.

Motion No. 54

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 310.

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development) moved:

Motion No. 55

That Bill C-97, in Clause 313, be amended by

(a) replacing the section 13 that is set out in it with the following:

13 There is to be a Federal Housing Advocate whose mandate is to

(a) monitor the implementation of the housing policy and assess its impact on persons who are members of vulnerable groups, persons with lived experience of housing need and persons with lived experience of homelessness;

(b) monitor progress in meeting the goals and timelines—and in achieving the desired outcomes—set out in the National Housing Strategy;

(c) analyze and conduct research, as the Advocate sees fit, on systemic housing issues, including barriers faced by persons referred to in paragraph (a);

(d) initiate studies, as the Advocate sees fit, into economic, institutional or industry conditions—respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction—that affect the housing system;

(e) consult with persons referred to in paragraph (a) and civil society organizations with respect to systemic housing issues;

(f) receive submissions with respect to systemic housing issues;

(g) provide advice to the Minister;

(h) submit a report to the Minister on the Advocate's findings and any recommendations to take measures respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction, to further the housing policy, including the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, and the National Housing Strategy; and

(i) participate in the work of the National Housing Council as an ex officio member.

13.1 (1) The Federal Housing Advocate may conduct a review of any systemic housing issue that is raised in a submission received under paragraph 13(f).

(2) The Federal Housing Advocate may request that the National Housing Council establish a review panel to hold a hearing to review any systemic housing issue within the jurisdiction of Parliament that is raised in a submission received under paragraph 13(f).

(3) The Federal Housing Advocate must inform the person or group that presented the submission whether or not any action will be taken under subsection (1) or (2).

(4) If the Federal Housing Advocate conducts a review of the systemic housing issue, he or she must, at the conclusion of the review, provide the Minister and the person or group that presented the submission with a report setting out the Advocate's opinion on the issue and any recommendation to take measures — respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction — to further the housing policy, including the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, or the National Housing Strategy.

13.2 (1) If the Federal Housing Advocate, at any time, identifies a systemic housing issue that is within the jurisdiction of Parliament and that is not the subject of a submission, he or she may request that the National Housing Council establish a review panel to hold a hearing to review the issue.

(2) The Federal Housing Advocate must provide a review panel with a summary of the information that formed the Advocate's basis for identifying the systemic housing issue.

(b) adding, after the section 16 that is set out in it, the following:

Review Panels

16.1 The National Housing Council must establish a review panel if requested to do so by the Federal Housing Advocate.

16.2 (1) A review panel is to consist of three members of the National Housing Council, other than ex officio members, to be appointed by the National Housing Council.

(2) In appointing members to a review panel, the National Housing Council is to take into consideration the importance of representation on the review panel of

(a) persons who are members of vulnerable groups;

(b) persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness; and

(c) persons who have expertise in human rights.

16.3 A review panel must

(a) hold a hearing to review the systemic housing issue in respect of which it was established;

(b) hold the hearing in a manner that offers the public, particularly members of communities that are affected by the issue and groups that have expertise in human rights and housing, an opportunity to participate;

(c) prepare a report that sets out the panel's opinion on the issue and any recommendation to take measures—respecting matters over which Parliament has jurisdiction—to address the issue; and

(d) submit the report to the Minister.

16.4 The Federal Housing Advocate is entitled to make representations and present proposals for recommendations to a review panel and may, for the purpose of doing so, work with communities that are affected by the issue that is before the review panel and with experts.

(c) adding, after the section 17 that is set out in it, the following:

17.1 The Minister must respond to each report provided by the Federal Housing Advocate under paragraph 13(h) and subsection 13.1(4) within 120 days after the day on which it is received.

17.2 (1) The Minister must respond to a report submitted by a review panel under paragraph 16.3(d) within 120 days after the day on which it is received.

(2) The Minister must cause the response to be laid before each House of Parliament on any of the first 30 days after the day on which it is provided to the review panel or, if either House is not sitting on the last day of that period, on any of the first 15 days on which that House of Parliament is sitting.

● (1020)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) seconded by the member for Joliette, moved:

Motion No. 56

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 334.

Motion No. 57

That Bill C-97 be amended by deleting Clause 335.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me no pleasure to rise in the House today and begin my remarks only hours after the terrible news of our flatlined economic growth in Canada. For the second quarter in a row, Canada's annualized growth has been 0.4%. On a quarter over quarter basis, it is 0.1%.

To put this into perspective, U.S. economic growth in the most recent quarter was 3.2%. Canada's economic growth in the same period was 0.4%. Our economic growth is now declining on a per capita basis. That is to say, our economy is growing more slowly than our population. The result is that more people are sharing in a smaller pie. That means per person, Canadians are now falling behind.

It just became known that Canada suffered the biggest decline in its ranking for competitiveness on the world stage. This should not surprise us. As the government has become more and more costly, the productive sectors of our economy are bearing a bigger and bigger burden.

The problem in the Liberal mindset is that the Liberals as politicians do not realize that whatever they add to the economy, they must first subtract.

Let us start with the deficit.

The government is taking about $20 billion a year out of the economy through government borrowing, and $20 billion of borrowed money does not come out of thin year. It is often a fallacy of thinking that politicians add to economic activity when they borrow cash out of the economy by simply throwing it back into the economy where they got it from.

In reality what they do when they borrow that money out of the economy is subtract it from otherwise productive investments that individuals and businesses would have made in the open and private sector economy, but instead were able to earn interest on by lending to the government. This is called the crowding out effect. It is nothing new. It is well known and it is based on general reasoning.

If we accept that government is able to fashion cash out of thin air, and it is not, then we must also accept that the money the government borrows out of the economy subtracts from economic growth. For the government members, who I see are in a haze of bewilderment at the poor economic numbers with which they are just now becoming acquainted, I will explain to them why their deficits are failing to generate economic growth.

The reason is that the Liberals are subtracting before they are adding. They are taking away before they are giving back. The transaction that happens when one takes away only to give back engenders a whole series of inefficiencies, where instead of dollars being allocated by consumers and investors, they are allocated by incompetent politicians. That is the nature of government directed economics.

Then there is taxation. The government has raised taxes on workers and businesses since taking office.

Let us start with workers. The average Canadian middle-class family is paying $800 more in income tax than it was before the government took office. That is in addition to the increase in fuel taxes through the carbon tax and payroll taxes through increased CPP premiums. All of those tax increases compound to squeeze the average Canadian family's ability to buy and invest in the private and productive economy.

● (1025)

Businesses are also facing increased costs. The government has increased taxes on small family businesses, and four different tax increases come to mind.

First, there are new tax penalties for family-owned businesses that share the work and earnings of their companies with family members.

Second, there are new penalties for small businesses that save within their companies. They risk losing their small business tax deduction if they have more than $50,000 a year in investment income. Naturally, this penalty causes small business owners to withdraw their investments for fear that they will be punished for earning too much return on those investments.

Third, Canada pension plan premiums have gone up, which increase the cost to the entrepreneur of hiring and employing workers. As a result, businesses have already made it clear that they are going to have to either lay people off or cut wages to compensate for the increased governmental taxation costs.

Finally, the carbon tax has made it more expensive for small businesses to operate. Heat, transportation and the functioning of factories all become more expensive as the price of fuels go up. Our farmers face new costs for all the off-farm transportation energy costs they consume. Those costs are not exempt from the carbon tax and therefore our farmers pay more.

All these costs compound on the backs of entrepreneurs and workers and are part of the reason our economy is grinding to a halt.

The government believes that it can tax and borrow its way to prosperity. Churchill examined the logic of that when he compared those who believed they could tax and borrow to prosperity to a man who believed he could fly if he got inside a bucket and pulled up as hard as possible on the handle to lift himself into the sky. What government forgets is that as much as it pulls up on the handle, it is pressing down twice as hard with its feet. In other words, the downward pressure is much more powerful than the upward pull, and that is what we are witnessing today.

The government will try, along with help from Liberal-minded commentators, to suggest that the fact our economy is no longer growing is not the Prime Minister's fault; it is part of a global phenomenon. Unfortunately, that does not bear out with the facts. Right next door, in the United States, the growth is 3.2%, a spectacular growth rate. The Americans are our biggest trading partner, responsible for 75% of our exports. If import and export are combined, the United States is equal to about 40% of our GDP. We have a $2-trillion economy and an $800-billion trading relationship with the U.S.

Therefore, the biggest global influence on economic growth in Canada is from the U.S., and that economy is growing. In fact, its economy is roaring strong.

In other words, it is not possible for the Prime Minister to externalize his failures by blaming some global phenomenon. That global phenomenon does not seem to have affected our neighbours south of the border. In fact, the global economy over the last three years has been exceptionally strong, recovering for the first time since the great global recession of 2008-09. It is Canada that is falling behind the global trend with the appalling numbers we see today.

How do we get back on track? The answer is to get government off the backs and out of the way of Canadian workers and entrepreneurs; to lower the tax burden to make work pay so workers keep more of what they earn; to remove tax increases on small businesses that are the engine of our economy; and to clear the way for large multi-billion dollar energy resource projects to go ahead, financed by the private sector, without the obstruction of government.

That is the vision of the Conservative leader. He believes we should get the government out of the way so workers and entrepreneurs can invest, grow and get ahead. It has been done before and it can be done again. That is the Conservative plan. Now let us make it happen.

● (1030)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, Canadians have created over one million jobs; over one million families have a safe and affordable roof over their heads; 825,000 Canadians are no longer going to bed hungry at night; child poverty rates have been cut by 40%; and taxes have been lowered on the middle class and increased on the 1%. Our plan is clearly working, because Canadians are working.

Why did my hon. colleague vote against every single measure we put forward to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is because the difference made them worse off. Here are the facts. The average family is paying $800 more in tax; that is middle-class folks. It is true; I will be fair. The wealthiest Canadians are paying less than ever. The wealthiest 1% paid $4.6 billion less in income tax in the year after the government took office.

Members across the way yelled out "fake news". I find it interesting that they would accuse the Canada Revenue Agency of fake news, because it is CRA that reported a $4.6-billion decline in the tax receipts from the wealthiest 1% in the first year after the government took office. They can deny their own governmental statistics if they want, but the rest of us will trust the data as it reads.

The reality is that the rich and well-connected are benefiting from handouts by government, but working-class Canadians have had flatline wages, our economy has ground to a halt and our deficit is out of control. Canadians want a change, and they will get one.

● (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did not limit his remarks to the report stage and proposed amendments, so neither will I.

The Conservative leader was recently asked multiple times what he was planning to cut to balance the budget. The Conservatives brought in austerity programs, determined to balance the budget at any price, no matter how much it cost taxpayers.

While the Conservative leader has now backed away from his promise to balance the budget, my colleague, the member for Carleton, keeps asking the government when the budget will be balanced. I should have checked exactly how many times he has asked the question, but I imagine it must be hundreds.

Now I have a question for my colleague. When will his leader balance the budget, if he has the good fortune and privilege of becoming prime minister? Is it the same answer, or are they going to revert to Conservative austerity, as they often promise and as we saw under Stephen Harper?

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it will happen in about half a decade. We will have our platform out well before the election, with a precise timeline to phase out the deficit. That is an easy question.

How are we going to do it? We are going to cancel future spending increases that the Liberal government has promised that are unsustainable and have no source of funds.

The member across the way does not offer an alternative to that. What he offers is massive short-term deficits, which will, in the long run, subtract from what the government is able to do for its citizens through services and programs. The member's approach to economics has been tried. It has been tried in Venezuela, Greece and to lesser degrees in countries like France, and the result is massive unemployment, massive debt, declining wages, shortages for the basic necessities of life, and massive increases in poverty. The member might claim, as Churchill put it, that the "inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings [but] the inherent virtue of Socialism is the equal sharing of miseries."

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised that he did not mention the track records of the successive provincial NDP governments running the provinces with the best financial performance in the country. The Department of Finance releases these data—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, apparently some of my colleagues are not well acquainted with the Standing Orders of the House of Commons and keep breaking the rules. Nevertheless, I will repeat what I was saying.

The Department of Finance releases provincial fiscal performance data. It is important to note that New Democratic provincial governments have the best fiscal performance in Canada, so I do not think my Conservative colleague is in any position to be giving me lessons on that subject, nor are my Liberal colleagues, to be sure.

Let's return to the the matter before us, the report stage study of Bill C-97. We began by reading the many motions in amendment at report stage. Members may have noticed that I presented a few, so I would like to take this opportunity to talk about those amendments.

Today we have no choice but to oppose Bill C-97 and call for the deletion of some totally unacceptable parts that have no business being in there and were harshly criticized by witnesses at the Standing Committee on Finance, which held numerous meetings about this and spent many hours on it. The fact is, some of the bill's clauses are no good and must be taken out.

Three sections the NDP wants to remove have to do with privatizing the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, whose agents are doing an excellent job of keeping passengers safe in airports and on planes across the country. The government wants to privatize this agency, a Crown corporation, in the hope of improving the services, but, given what we heard in committee, this is not the right course of action. It would be better to fund the agency and give it all the tools it needs. All revenues from airline tickets should return to the agency in full so that it can do its work properly and address the very real concerns of Canada's airports and airlines, which are at times frustrated by the agency's work—and rightly so.

That is why we need to move forward with these changes but, above all, provide this agency with resources. Privatization is never the solution, as the witnesses said. We therefore need to remove this part of the bill today to prevent this privatization. There is no doubt that this is the beginning of a federal effort to privatize air transportation and airports.

Since it took office, the government has been saying that it does not intend to privatize airports. In the beginning, the Liberals said that they were looking into the issue and were open to ideas, but they seemed to have ruled out the possibility of privatization. However, we now have proof that the government is moving forward on privatization, starting with the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

Another amendment that we are proposing concerns the Hazardous Products Act. The Canadian Labour Congress has sounded the alarm in this regard, because these changes will relax the rules regarding the information available to workers about the hazardous products that they have to use every day as part of their jobs. The government kowtowed to the hazardous chemicals industry and decided to relax these rules, thereby endangering the safety of workers.

The Canadian Labour Congress was very clear in that regard, saying that the government should not move forward on this and that those rules should actually be strengthened to ensure workers across the country have access to the ingredient labels of the products they come in contact with. That would allow them to respond in the short term, in case of an accident, and in the long term, since these products could have health implications that may not be detected for years.

That is why it is important to have strict regulations to keep the list of ingredients of these products for as long as possible, so that we can properly respond to any potential health problems that may affect workers.

There is nothing surprising about the other change that we are proposing, which my colleague from Vancouver East mentioned many times. It has to do with the government's callous changes to refugee protection in Canada.

● (1040)

The government is pleased to have the support of one Faith Goldy. In fact, she supported the Liberals' bill that would make these changes. The Liberals criticized the Conservative leader because he was seen with her, but they are only to happy to get her approval. She applauded the government for its changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act because it closes the door on refugees. With this bill, the government is creating two classes of refugees: those who entered through regular channels and those who entered irregularly. It is creating two parallel systems, which it says will do exactly the same thing. That raises questions.

The government tried to calm the waters in committee. It made amendments to this part of the bill to appease witnesses, who unanimously stated that it was a bad idea and that the government should simply withdraw this part of the bill. However, that is not enough, and only shows the amateurism of the Liberals on this issue. The government is catering to the extreme right in Canada with this measure but, in reality, what it will do is put in place a costly and useless process for doing what is already being done at the Immigration and Refugee Board.

The department was even forced to admit that there would now be a process, known as a pre-removal risk assessment, for people who entered irregularly. The government is creating this type of hearing for refugees even though the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada already exists. The government and the department were forced to admit that there would indeed be two nearly identical processes for two types of refugees.

The government is therefore creating two classes of refugees: those who are entitled to the full process, with all the rights associated with it, such as the right to natural justice, and those who are subject to an inferior process and who will have fewer rights. This will be an expedited process that will will not always grant a hearing to asylum seekers, who have the right to be heard by an impartial person. The pre-removal risk assessment is very much a part of the immigration department and cannot be compared to the work of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, which is a quasi-judicial entity respected around the world.

The government is deciding to turn a blind eye. Instead of giving the board the resources it needs to do its job, the government is creating a parallel process. It was completely indifferent to what numerous experts said in committee. There were lawyers and representatives from international refugee protection organizations, among others. There was even a refugee, who crossed the border irregularly and lost the use of his hands in the extreme cold in Manitoba. He said that under the new rules in this bill, he would have been sent back to Ghana, where his life was in danger. This is the Liberal approach, which puts refugees in danger and sends them back to their countries of origin, as one witness pointed out. The government really missed the mark in many respects with Bill C-97.

This concludes my remarks on the report stage study of the bill, the committee's work, the testimony that was heard and the reasons I must oppose the bill today. At the very least, the most problematic parts of the bill should be taken out. We hope the government will see reason, because this is its last chance to remove the contentious provisions from this bill. I hope I have the support of all my colleagues to at least fix this awful bill.

● (1045)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on our growth of foreign direct investment into Canada, which The Globe and Mail reported last week has increased by an impressive 60%, from $32.2 billion to $51.3 billion. This happened while capital flows into developed economies elsewhere dropped by 40%, and it is 11% ahead of our 10-year average, due to a marginal effective tax rate of 13.8%, almost five full points below that of the U.S.A. and the lowest in the Group of Seven. We get to this point by trading with other nations, something the NDP has been clearly against.

Could the member comment on how important it is to develop trade to increase the revenue into our country, so that we can pay for social programs such as the ones he outlined in his speech today?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where my colleague got his information. He claims that the NDP is against free trade deals, but we actually supported certain free trade agreements, even during the last Parliament. I invite him to look into it.

The NDP supports free trade agreements that benefit Canadian workers, the Canadian economy and major Canadian industries. Signing deals that jeopardize entire sectors, like the dairy sector and all the supply-managed sectors, is a bad idea.

If my colleague cannot understand that, I do not know how he sees these issues. Supply-managed farmers in Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships are livid, because this is the third time that the government has sacrificed their sector and family farms to cater to the needs of Donald Trump and the Prime Minister, who is anxious to sign a deal with the U.S. and Mexico at all costs.

The only thing the government is doing is bowing down before the Americans, agreeing to all their demands and sacrificing major economic sectors like agriculture. Canadian farmers are furious with this government, and they will make that clear in October.

● (1050)

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my community over the last three and a half years, 1,432 families have been able to find a safe and affordable place to live as a direct result of our government's investments. The unemployment rate has been cut by nearly 50% in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha. Thousands of families with children are better off because of the Canada child benefit.

Our government has been investing in Canadians because we know our plan works. The NDP in the previous election maintained the Conservative line to balance the budget at all costs. That plan would not have worked.

Could my hon. colleague tell me if this year the NDP is going to change its position and invest back in Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that my colleague asked me that question. It gives me an opportunity to explain things all over again to my Liberal colleague, who keeps repeating those lines ad nauseam like some kind of mantra.

During the last election campaign, the Liberal Party forgot to pay attention to the revenue side of the ledger, which is a pretty important part of a fiscal framework. Apparently the minister is forgetting to consider the fiscal framework part of a campaign platform.

We had the courage to say that the wealthiest Canadians must pay their fair share because that enables the government to support important social programs and invest in Canadians. My colleague does not want to do the politically courageous thing. She does not want to generate revenue by making Canadians pay their fair share and fighting tax havens. She does not want to reinvest that money in Canadians.

Our fiscal framework was sound. It included additional revenue sources to finance numerous initiatives such as child care and pharmacare. My colleague is so blinded by the expenditures column that she is forgetting to take the revenue column into account.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I will let the hon. member know that there will only be about five minutes before we will need to interrupt her for other proceedings, but then she will have the remainder of her time when the House gets back to debate on the question.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, knowing that we have very little time left, I want to say it is unfortunate that deletions are necessary at this point. I want to again put on the record the deep unhappiness of many of us seeing, in Bill C-97, the use of an omnibus budget bill to bring in provisions such as the ones I am seeking to delete through this motion today.

I will sketch out that although I did submit a number of amendments, they were similar to some submitted by the New Democratic Party. I strongly support my amendments and those of the New Democratic Party that attempt to remove from this omnibus budget bill fundamental changes to how we treat immigrants and refugees.

The right of a refugee to come to Canada is enshrined in our international obligations. There has been so much said that constitutes misunderstanding about the nature of refugees. The language started cropping up under the previous government that people who showed up here with just the clothes on their backs were somehow "jumping the queue". I remember having debates on this point with the current premier of Alberta when he was Minister of Immigration.

I used to do work in refugee and immigration law in Halifax. My clientele were such that I might have been described as specializing in ship-jumpers. In those days, the U.S.S.R. still existed. Young sailors from Soviet bloc countries would get to Halifax, literally walk off the ship and somehow find our law office.

Nowadays, as in those days, everyone is assessed. If they claim to be refugees, they have to prove they have a legitimate fear of returning to their country. We can be critical of how long it takes for people to be assessed, but we cannot assert there is something wrong with people who come to this country and claim to be refugees. They have a right to be assessed fairly and to know what their situation is.

With respect to some of my ship-jumpers, I note parenthetically that I was so happy when, about a year ago, I got a call in my office from one of the young men I had helped. He had raised his family in Ontario and started his own business. He had done extremely well for himself. He wondered if I still remembered him. Well, I remembered Nicola. I am so thrilled that within a week of jumping ship, he had a job washing dishes in Halifax. He was provided housing. It was not great housing, but it was enough for him to find his feet.

The idea now is that we turn people away because of the safe third country agreement, which did not exist at the time. The idea that the United States is still a safe third country for many refugees does not hold water. It does not make sense to stop people who are coming to Canada with just the clothes on their backs. Most of the people who come across the New York-Quebec border have been women with children. People do not know this; people do not necessarily see in the news who is coming here looking for our help.

There are people who really need our help. We have seen children die in detention is U.S. holding camps. We have seen an attitude of the U.S. president that is the opposite of the words on the Statue of Liberty, to send forward "the homeless" and "Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.... I lift my lamp". In contrast, "I will build a...wall" is what the current president says. He does not want the "wretched refuse of your teeming shore", although these words on the Statue of Liberty are not exactly perfect for refugees.

Setting that aside, the spirit of these words makes clear that this country, our best friend and neighbour, used to be a welcoming place. The U.S. is a country of refugees and immigrants, as are we in Canada, being on indigenous territory. We are a country of immigrants.

We should not sneak restrictive provisions into an omnibus budget bill, claiming there is a loophole, but should instead get rid of them and the safe third country agreement. We should be saying that we no longer regard the U.S. as a safe country. We should not have a safe country agreement with a country that is capable of rejecting people for all manner of reasons.

As my time is almost up, I want to turn to the second package of amendments I submitted. They were were not shared by any other party or MP. They come from my personal experience. I will return to this whenever we come back to debate on Bill C-97.

Provisions that I think others may have missed, in clauses 334 and 335, relate to the Parks Canada Agency.

● (1055)

When I worked in Environment Canada in the 1980s, there was no Parks Canada Agency. It was a branch of Environment Canada, like any other branch of Environment Canada and it was treated as part of the department.

The Parks Canada civil service of the day was sold the idea that it would be better off as an agency. One of the main reasons used was that it would be able to keep money that would otherwise lapse. If it were an agency, the argument was that it could hang on to more of its budget and could build more forward planning.

I do not think the Parks Canada Agency was a good idea. It has not served the interest of making it easier or more integrated in how we treat Parks Canada and its ecological integrity. After all these years, the rationale for making it an agency will disappear if we do not pass my amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands will have four minutes remaining for her speech and then the usual five minutes for questions and comments following that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1100)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on what is called Standing Order 31, and Standing Order 31, as we all know, is also known as members' statements. The topic of my member's statement today is members' statements.

We had a very interesting discussion yesterday at PROC on procedures and House affairs. The theme of the discussion related to question period and to a package of amendments and changes, prepared by members from a number of parties, that we hope will be considered by the House before it adjourns.

One of the things that grabbed our attention yesterday was the question of control of members' statements by party whips. This 60-second message, now down to 10 seconds, is the moment for members to say what is on their minds and what is happening in their constituencies. We need to end the practice of leaving the allocation of these statements to party whips.

* * *

AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to congratulate my constituent, Ms. Louise Leclair-Bélanger, on having achieved Canada's highest honour for teachers and early childhood educators, the Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence.

Ms. Leclair-Bélanger excels in the art of customizing her teaching for each student by mobilizing the options offered by new technologies and using her talent to recognize her students' strengths and weaknesses.

There is no greater investment a society can make than in learning. Every day, teachers nurture a culture of curiosity in Canada, empowering our youth to shape our future. Our government is proud to celebrate Canada's outstanding educators, who are inspiring Canadian children to reach their fullest potential and to succeed in the jobs of today and tomorrow. I congratulate Louise.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CHICOUTIMI—LE FJORD

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, major economic projects are under way in our wonderful region.

In that regard, I would like to once again remind the House that my riding produces the greenest aluminum in the world. We are able to do that because we are a proud, innovative and welcoming people.

It is a process. If we did not have Alcan in the beginning and Rio Tinto now, there would be no certified sustainable aluminum today. The use of Elysis' technology will eliminate greenhouse gases from the aluminum production process. Without Alcan, that technology would not exist.

Blackrock Metals will soon begin work in its processing plant. Arianne Phosphate Inc. received the necessary authorizations and has succeeded in securing funding. Énergie Saguenay is currently examining the impact of a liquid natural gas plant in Saguenay.

All of these projects have begun a process to provide the planet with resources it needs and will continue to need in the coming decades. These projects will be powered by hydro electricity. As a result of these projects, our region is already in a good position to provide other resources that are the greenest in the world.

I am convinced that, at the end of this process, we will develop other technology like Elysis'.

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THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF KITIGAN ZIBI TRADITIONAL POWWOW

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow at noon, the Kitigan Zibi community near Maniwaki will launch its annual powwow to the sound of beating drums.

[*English*]

The 30th annual Kitigan Zibi Traditional Pow Wow brings to Algonquin territory a time for celebration, reunion, healing and spiritual growth. It is where one will truly hear and see all the different types of dancing, singing and languages that make up first nation communities across Turtle Island.

I attend the powwow every year with my family so that I can meet up with friends and absorb more teachings about the Algonquin traditions. This year is going to be particularly special, since we have achieved a nationally significant milestone for reconciliation between Canada and Kitigan Zibi. We signed an historic memorandum of understanding on reconciliation, which includes a global settlement offer with over $116 million in compensation. With this deal, the Algonquin of Kitigan Zibi can invest to protect their endangered language and create new businesses and jobs that help develop our regional economy.

Improving this relationship between our government and the Algonquin of Kitigan Zibi is a top priority for me as an MP, and I love doing my work at the powwow.

* * *

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the years come and go, but we continue to see a lack of action on the part of the government.

Yesterday, we learned that the Canada Revenue Agency once again signed a secret agreement with wealthy Canadians to avoid prosecution for tax evasion. Once again, the rich get away with a slap on the wrist and a warning not to do it again.

Yet, three years ago, the Minister of National Revenue told us to our faces that there was no amnesty, that there had never been an amnesty, that the agency would never offer an amnesty. In the KPMG affair, she publicly stated, "The agency will definitely exhaust all judicial avenues."

She also stated that KPMG's clients could face criminal charges and that there would be no amnesty agreement.

Today, the minister is once again putting her incompetence on full display by casting blame on everyone but herself. Today, she is saying that she will look into the matter to resolve the problem. That is ridiculous. The minister has had four years to fix our two-tiered tax system, but her record is clear: no convictions, no arrests, no money recovered in cases of tax evasion abroad.

The minister just lost the little credibility she had. She only has herself to blame for all of this.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to share our government's great achievements. The poverty reduction strategy has lifted more than 800,000 Canadians out of poverty. This is attributed to our government's Canada child benefit, the guaranteed income supplement and the tax cuts for the middle class and SMEs.

My constituents of Brampton Centre are more than happy with these policies. Over 12,000 children and their families in my riding are being assisted by the Canada child benefit. However, we are not done. We have put a price on pollution, and that provides revenue, which leaves more money in the pockets of Canadians.

Our plan is working. Since 2015, Canadians have added over a million jobs to our national economy, and unemployment is at a 40-year historic low. These are results all Canadians should be proud of.

* * *

YORK—SIMCOE

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a lifelong resident, I can say with confidence that York—Simcoe is the place to be this summer. The fun kicks off this weekend, June 1 to 3, with Mount Albert Sports Day, with attractions for everyone to enjoy. On June 21, the Chippewas of Georgina Island will be putting on a parade and fireworks display over beautiful Lake Simcoe, the jewel of our community, for National Indigenous Peoples Day. On July 1, I will be putting on my first Canada Day pancake breakfast as MP for York—Simcoe. All residents are invited to come out and enjoy free pancakes, bacon and more as we celebrate 152 years of our great country together.

Thousands will come out from August 8 to 11 for the 164th Sutton Fair & Horse Show, which will offer rides, demolition derbies, tractor pulls and more. From August 16 to 17, Canada's greatest carrot festival will take place in Bradford, in celebration of the hard work of our farmers in the Holland Marsh.

With so much to do, I encourage all Canadians to make their way to York—Simcoe this summer.

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APHASIA

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what follows is the opening to a typical aphasia program: checking in. This morning I am at a 10, because I get to recognize my new friends, Mary, Ben, Ron, Tanya, Mavis, Wes, Ted and Anna, in this House.

Today is Friday, May 31, 2019. This week's theme is Aphasia Awareness Month. Aphasia is a language disorder that affects the ability to communicate. It is most often caused by strokes that occur in areas of the brain that control speech and language. Aphasia does not affect intelligence. Stroke survivors remain mentally alert, even though their speech may be jumbled, fragmented or hard to understand. Fewer than 5% of Canadians know about aphasia and the challenges that those living with aphasia face.

On Saturday, June 22, Halton-Peel Community Aphasia Programs will be hosting its third annual aphasia walk at E.C. Drury School in Milton at 10 a.m.

Words that my friends with aphasia use to describe themselves: vivacious, organized, helpful, punctual, happy, loving and Canadian.

* * *

WILLIAM ASSAD

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, surrounded by his family, William Assad passed away peacefully at the grand age of 91.

Service was bred deep in William's bones. Although a student at Bishop's University, he left his studies to return home to Buckingham to help with the family business when his father was sick. Once his father recovered, he decided to open his own business, at 21 years of age, and eventually became the owner of The West Québec Post, the English-language newspaper in my riding. The West Québec Post covers the Outaouais and is a staple of my community.

William was known for his prodigious work ethic, his abiding interest in politics, a deep love for his community and his zest for life. His death leaves a huge hole in my community, and he is thoroughly missed.

Rest in peace, William.

● (1110)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister pretends that he has a plan for climate change, but we know that his carbon tax will not lower emissions. It is just another cash grab to fund his reckless spending. No matter how often or how loudly the Liberals repeat it, the Prime Minister is not fooling Canadians. The carbon tax will not allow Canada to meet its emissions reduction targets under the Paris accord. His own government's figures have confirmed it.

The Prime Minister has given large industrial polluters a special deal that will exempt them from his tax, while making Canadian families and small businesses pay more to drive to work, heat their homes and put food on the table.

This spring, Conservatives will present Canadians with a real environmental plan that will lower global emissions without making Canadians pay more. We know that he has a tax plan, but where is the Prime Minister's environmental climate plan?

* * *

ITALIAN FALLEN WORKERS

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will mark the beginning of Italian Heritage Month in Canada, and I am honoured to pay tribute to the thousands of Italian fallen workers on whose backs this country was built.

Last week, two community leaders in my riding, Marino Toppan and Paola Breda, presented *Land of Triumph and Tragedy: Voices of the Italian Fallen Workers*. This book catalogues the challenging history of the thousands of Italian fallen workers who gave their lives building this country, a story immortalized on the Italian Fallen Workers Memorial, which resides in the gardens of Villa Colombo in my riding. On each column, the names of each fallen worker are etched. It is a source of great pride.

I encourage members to read this book to learn more about the Italian fallen workers and to understand and appreciate the sacrifices made by these individuals.

I am a proud member of the Italian Canadian community. My grandparents came here to build a better life for my parents, me, my daughters, and hopefully, one day theirs. Their hard work, their dedication and sacrifice, like every other immigrant family's, is a source of great pride. It paved the path for the more than one and a half million Italian Canadians who live in this country.

[*Member spoke in Italian*]

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[*Translation*]

THE SOLIDARITY BLITZ IN GATINEAU

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow and Sunday, June 1 and 2, Gatineau will be holding The Solidarity Blitz.

Gatineau has been hit hard by the spring floods, and we thank the volunteers who built dikes, provided transportation, and prepared and delivered meals.

Our neighbours need us once again. This is a call-out to the people of Gatineau and the national capital region. Visit www.gatineau.ca to sign up to participate in The Solidarity Blitz tomorrow and Sunday.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims to have a plan for climate change, but his plan is just a tax in disguise and his government's own numbers prove it.

Environment and Climate Change Canada admits that the carbon tax will have no discernible impact on achieving the Paris targets without increasing it six- to 15-fold, which the Liberals refuse to admit.

We know that the Liberals' plan is not about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is about increasing Canadians' tax burden. The biggest polluters will pay only 8% of the bill, thanks to the exemptions being given by their Liberal friends, while families and SMEs will have to foot the other 92% of the bill.

The middle and working classes will have to pay more to go to work, heat their home, and put food on the table.

However, there is an alternative. Over the coming weeks, the Conservatives will present a real plan for the environment that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions on our planet without making Canadians pay more.

We know that the Prime Minister has a plan for taxes and not for the environment.

* * *

[*English*]

YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak about an incredibly inspiring person from my riding.

Ryan Benoit is a young entrepreneur from Sudbury who has lived with cerebral palsy his entire life. Because of his condition, he was unable to participate in sports growing up, but this never curbed his passion for athletics.

While a student at Laurentian University studying sports administration, he created his own clothing brand, The Positive Inception, where he was able to combine his love of sports and fashion. Through this line of apparel, Ryan aims to send a message of positivity to everyone from all walks of life. He hopes to inspire people to reach for their dreams, no matter how big or out of reach they may seem. He said, “The world is infinite, and anyone can do anything they put their mind to. Life is full of endless opportunities”.

Recently, Ryan won the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ryan's determination to change things and his message of possibility and inclusion are what make him and his story so inspiring not just for Sudbury, but for all of Canada.

I thank Ryan.

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OTTERBURN PARK AND RICHELIEU

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two municipalities in my riding are celebrating milestone anniversaries this year. The Town of Otterburn Park is celebrating its 50th and the City of Richelieu its 150th.

Let me begin with a few words about Richelieu, a municipality on the banks of the Richelieu River. The present-day city is an amalgamation of Richelieu and the municipality of Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours. I would like to congratulate the mayor, Jacques Ladouceur, the parish president, Clément de Laat, and the festival patrons, actor-composers Viviane Audet and Robin-Joël Cool.

Otterburn Park celebrated its 150th birthday in 2005, but this year is the 50th anniversary of the town's becoming an independent entity. I would like to congratulate the mayor, Denis Parent, on the town's fresh new image in honour of this anniversary and on all the planned festivities.

I am proud to highlight these important anniversaries and to have participated. Sadly, I missed a golden opportunity at the Richelieu celebration to hear Mayor Ladouceur himself sing before a full house.

Congratulations to all, enjoy the festivities, and long live both municipalities.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has no plan for climate change. This very government's figures have confirmed that it will not be meeting its Paris accord targets. That is because it does not have a climate change plan; it has a tax plan, and Canadians know it.

While large industrial polluters have received a special deal, families and small businesses are paying more. At a time when most Canadians are within $200 of not being able to pay their bills at the end of the month, the Prime Minister is hiking the cost of living. Canadians are paying more to put gas in their tanks to drive to work. They are paying more to heat their homes. They are paying more to put food on the table.

I am excited, because this spring Canadians will be presented with a real plan that will lower global emissions. Conservatives have a plan, a real plan. The Liberals have totally failed on this plan.

[*Translation*]

WORLD MILK DAY

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, farmers from across the country and around the world will celebrate World Milk Day.

In Quebec, more than 5,000 farms with an average of 70 cows produce over three billion litres of milk a year. Our dairy farmers ensure that our regions and rural communities remain strong and practise sound land management.

As a former dairy farmer, I know the pride and passion our producers feel for their farms, the products they provide to Canadians and the supply management system, which ensures prosperity.

We are the party that implemented supply management. We are the party that will continue to defend and protect it so that Canadians can enjoy milk that was produced here in Canada. Unlike the Conservatives, we are 100% united when it comes to defending supply management. I encourage all Canadians to raise a glass of milk to our dairy producers and their outstanding work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a healthy democracy relies on an independent press, free from political interference. That independence is now in jeopardy, thanks to this government's half-billion-dollar media bailout. The Canadian Association of Journalists has expressed concerns with the process that would muzzle members of the advisory panel, keep Canadians in the dark about who gets rejected for funding and allow the minister the power to overrule the panel anyway.

When will the Liberals realize how much damage they are doing to the trust and independence of our free press by trying to stack the deck in their own favour?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Conservatives are playing a dangerous game. They are attacking the media. They are attacking the independence of journalists. I have been very clear since day one that everything will be transparent.

Instead of attacking professional journalists, the Conservatives should be there to support them, because they are part of our democracy. They are a pillar of our democracy. That is why the program is in place, to respect the independence and freedom of the press.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, respected Globe and Mail columnist John Ibbitson said today that not only is the $600-million subsidy a bad idea, but that “Unifor shouldn't be [on the panel] representing journalists while also campaigning against a political party.” He went on to say that the “government bailout undermines confidence in the impartiality of journalists. Unifor's attacks on Conservatives do the same.”

When will the Liberals finally realize the damage they are doing to the media by keeping Unifor on this panel, and just kick it off the panel?

● (1120)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we do not want only CEOs around the table. We need the workers and the journalists. We want francophones, anglophones and members from the ethnic media. We want everybody to be represented, because this is something extremely important. In the last year, thousands of jobs have been lost. Many, many dailies have closed their doors.

We have to act, and we acted in a way that respects the independence and freedom of the press. The Conservatives should stop attacking the press. They should stop attacking our journalists and saying that they are fossils.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Unifor boss Jerry Dias said this week, "Am I coming out against [the Conservatives]? You're damn right I am." When asked if he was going to tone down his anti-Conservative campaign, now that his union is on the government's independent media panel, he said, "I'm probably going to make it worse. [The Leader of the Opposition] is really irritating me the last few days."

Unifor has declared war on Conservatives and has become friends with benefits for the Liberals. Why do the Liberals not do the right thing and kick it off this panel?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to decide who should be on the panel. They decided that the workers should not be there and that the journalists should not be represented. The Leader of the Opposition, this week, went as far as to say that he is going to tell CBC how to cover a story; he is going to tell CBC how to write a story, which questions to ask and whose questions should not be asked.

We are against that. Why? We respect the independence and freedom of the press, and the Conservatives should do the same.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all have a duty to protect our democracy.

Canadians can still count on an independent media in the country they call home. With all the upheaval in digital media and the non-disclosure agreements that have traditional media stakeholders concerned, how will the Liberal government protect the integrity of the upcoming election?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will do so by ensuring that we have a strong and independent free press. That is exactly how we are going to do it. That is exactly what the Conservatives do not want. We want a strong press that asks tough questions. Sometimes, we may not feel like answering all of those questions, but we do it because that is our duty. Similarly, it is the duty of journalists to ask those tough questions. The Conservatives basically want to do away with all that.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we thought we had seen it all with this Liberal government, but using taxpayers' money yet again, this time to stack the deck in its favour in the upcoming election, is totally unacceptable.

With just a couple months left before the election, Canadians are concerned to see that the Liberals are trying to control how subsidies are granted to our traditional media. Should they be concerned about how fair, clear, impartial and equitable the electoral process will be?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a fascinating conspiracy theory. It is impressive to hear.

Ultimately, the Conservatives are attacking one of the foundations of our democracy. They are attacking the media. A free and independent press is one of the pillars of democracy and that is what they are attacking.

We are implementing a program that respects the independence and freedom of the press, unlike the Conservatives and their attacks. They are saying that journalists can be bought. That is what he is saying. He is saying that journalists can be bought and his colleague called them fossils.

We take exception to that.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a good place to live, with its natural beauty, diversified economy and vibrant communities.

Climate change threatens everything we hold dear. There are forest fires out west and floods in Ottawa and Quebec. The Liberals are missing in action when it comes to addressing climate change.

The NDP will take action. Our plan clearly charts the way forward to ensure that people and the environment both win.

My question is very simple. Why did the Liberals let the major polluters off the hook, and why did they not seize the opportunity to protect our environment?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see the NDP now announce that it wants to do what we are already doing to fight climate change, but in a way that will decimate jobs and hurt employees.

We have already seen their flip-flop on LNG Canada, the largest investment in Canada's history that created 10,000 jobs and has the support of British Columbia, a province that is working very hard to fight climate change.

On the other side, the Conservative Party wants unlimited pipelines and tankers, too. It does not want regulations—

● (1125)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr Speaker, the Liberals are not even on track to meet the Paris Agreement targets.

The Liberals are bulldozing ahead with the adoption of NAFTA, showing blatant disregard for Parliament. Instead of striving to secure better conditions for workers, improve environmental protections or protect our agricultural sectors, the Liberal government is bowing down before Donald Trump. Canadians want the Liberals to negotiate trade agreements with measures that are genuinely progressive.

Why are the Liberals throwing away a unique opportunity to make trade fairer once and for all?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP needs to understand that reopening this agreement would be like opening Pandora's box.

We have an agreement that preserves over two billion dollars' worth of trade daily. At best, the NDP is naive. At worst, it is playing political games by suggesting that Canadians would benefit from reopening this agreement.

If the NDP wants to follow Donald Trump's example and withdraw from NAFTA, it should have the guts to say so.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nobody is advocating that the deal be reopened. Anyone with eyes can see it never closed. Congress is trying to change the deal. The president is declaring a trade war on one of the countries involved, Mexico. This is a live deal.

Why does the government want to tie its hands and put its head in the sand, instead of waiting for an opportunity to improve the deal for Canadian workers and for the environment? That is the real question. I suspect it is because the government is listening to the same drug companies that want to fight pharmacare in this country and that are going to make money off this deal.

Why is the government more concerned with defending the interests of corporate tycoons than the interests of Canadian workers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are so many misunderstandings in that question. It is hard to know where to start.

The Mexican president said today, speaking for Mexico, that Mexico intends to move ahead with its ratification process.

As I just said, the NDP is naive at best, and playing political games at worst, to suggest that Canadians would benefit from reopening this deal. If the NDP wants to take a page out of Donald Trump's playbook and withdraw from NAFTA, it should have the courage to tell Canadians that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only one who is naive is somebody who thinks that this deal is closed, because there is clearly a lot of action on the deal. I just wish that the Liberals were in as big a rush to do something about climate change as they are to ratify this deal.

They still have Stephen Harper's targets. Their carbon tax gives the steepest discounts to the biggest polluters. They are wasting billions of dollars buying old pipelines to pay out international investors, instead of investing in what they ought to be investing in, like a program to help Canadians retrofit their homes, saving money on their monthly bills and reducing their carbon footprint.

Why is it that the Liberal government once again is more interested in defending corporate profits than standing up for Canadians?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we always stand up for Canadians. I was very proud to see in the NAFTA that for the first time ever, there was an environment chapter in the body of the agreement.

We have been taking serious action on climate change. The NDP came out with its plan, which adopts some of our ideas but in a way that would destroy jobs and hurt workers and families. The New Democrats have already flip-flopped on an LNG project that creates 10,000 jobs in B.C., saying they do not want it to go ahead, in the face of the B.C. NDP government, which is committed to this project and committed to climate action.

We need to take climate action, we need to grow our economy and we need to ensure a sustainable future. That is exactly what we are doing.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if NAFTA 2.0 is a good deal for Canada, what does the Prime Minister consider a bad deal?

Canadians know this is a worse deal and that it also compromises our sovereignty. Canada now has to ask permission from the U.S. to negotiate a new trade deal and we have to report to the U.S. when we change our monetary policy.

The Prime Minister has paid too high a price. With this bill, he will have free rein to give more away. Will he admit that he has failed Canadians?

● (1130)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how soon they forget. Let me remind my Conservative colleagues how urgently they and Stephen Harper urged Canada to capitulate. In October 2017, Stephen Harper wrote in a memo, “It does not matter whether current American proposals are worse than what we have now.”

When it comes to our retaliatory tariffs, which achieved a full lift, the Conservatives urged us, Doug Ford lectured us, on how we needed to drop them. Canadians should be—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government could not hang on to what we had before, and we are not out of the woods yet.

The full lifting of U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs is pure fiction. The Prime Minister's new NAFTA deal allows the U.S. to re-implement punishing tariffs any time Trump feels an unfair market surge.

The Prime Minister is desperate for us to believe he got a good deal, but can he tell us one thing that is better in this new NAFTA?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty rich to hear the Conservatives talk about steel and aluminum tariffs.

The Conservatives were on the record and were absolutely wrong in the approach they advocated. Doug Ford's government publicly called for Canada to drop its retaliation. Had we done that, just imagine how devastating the result would have been.

Members on that side of the House agreed with that wrong-headed and, frankly, weak approach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite ironic to see the Prime Minister celebrating NAFTA 0.5, which showed Canadians just how willing he is to give in to all of Donald Trump's demands.

It would be like negotiating for a new car and then being happy when it is delivered without tires. No Canadian prime minister would have ever accepted such interference in international trade from the Americans.

The Prime Minister missed a golden opportunity to negotiate a good agreement for Canadians, and he was consistently third at the table. Why?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind my Conservative colleagues that they, along with Mr. Harper, urged Canada to capitulate. In an October 25, 2017 memo, Mr. Harper wrote that it did not matter that current American proposals are worse than what we have now.

The Conservatives openly and publicly called on us to eliminate our countermeasures.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister gave Donald Trump the keys to our economy. That is what she did.

Donald Trump will now be the one who decides the future of our steel and aluminum industries. Our dairy industry was sacrificed on the altar of Liberal incompetence. Donald Trump will have the right to set our domestic tariffs. Donald Trump set a limit on our exports. What is worse, American milk will continue to receive large subsidies to compete against Canadian milk.

Why are the Prime Minister and the minister claiming victory on behalf of Donald Trump instead of admitting that they accepted a bargain-basement agreement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have said several times that we should drop our demands, sign a new agreement and capitulate. That is what happened and those are the facts.

Canadians can be happy that we did not follow the Conservatives' example. I think this is a bit embarrassing for the Conservatives.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the U.S. Vice President was magnanimous when he said the Liberals drove a hard bargain. It reminded me of a winner at Wimbledon praising the loser after beating the person in straight sets. There were no wins for Canada, only losses sector by sector. It was a take it or leave it from the U.S. from the beginning.

How do we know? Section 55 of the bill confirms that. The Liberal government has already agreed to change the bill after we vote and debate it here. If Donald Trump asked the Liberals to do something, they would say, “How high, sir?” Why did the minister cave?

● (1135)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the member for Durham asked that question because it allows me to clarify a misunderstanding on his part of that part of the bill.

That is a part of the bill that updates the name of NAFTA in the Food and Drugs Act. It does not give any special powers to cabinet and it does not allow for the agreement to be changed.

The member for Durham is entirely mistaken. He clearly has not read the agreement.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have read the Liberals' NAFTA 0.5, and I will give a review for the minister.

Canada lost on agriculture, lost on resources, lost on softwood, lost on auto, lost on biologic drugs, lost on data transfer, lost on de minimis, lost on visas, lost on buy American. The Liberals even lost on the progressive agenda. How could the Liberal government say zero out of 10 is a win?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already pointed out how the member made a simple mistake in his previous question. Let me give some objective, impartial evidence on how good the new deal is.

The International Trade Commission, which is a U.S. body not likely to put its thumb on the scale in Canada's favour, reported that as a result of the new deal, U.S. exports to Canada would increase by $19.1 billion and Canadian exports would increase to the U.S. by $19.1 billion. That is a win-win.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are shocked to discover that the Canada Revenue Agency just signed a secret agreement with wealthy Canadians to avoid prosecution for tax evasion.

Clients of KPMG were caught using offshore schemes to avoid detection by Canadian tax authorities, costing the public purse tens of millions of dollars.

Why are the Liberals letting rich Canadians, who are cheating our tax system, off the hook with secret deals? Who do they think they are, SNC-Lavalin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to fighting tax fraud and tax evasion. To ensure the integrity of our tax system, the agency's out-of-court settlement process takes place entirely at arm's length.

We know that settlements can be used appropriately in certain situations, but we are concerned about the resulting lack of transparency.

The Minister of National Revenue has the matter in hand.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he does not understand that the lack of transparency is coming from his own government. The Minister of National Revenue is in charge of the CRA. It is ridiculous.

We learned that wealthy Canadians were still signing secret agreements with the CRA. The parliamentary secretary should shed light on that.

Over the past four years, the Liberals had the opportunity to repair our two-tiered tax system, but now we see that the government simply does not have the political courage to act.

How is it that wealthy taxpayers are still able to get away with not being charged after all the talk from the Minister of National Revenue?

No one gets scared any more when the minister says that the net is tightening. The net is wide open and the hon. member is doing nothing about it.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want my colleague opposite to know that the net is tightening. We have done a lot of work.

We know that settlements can be used appropriately in certain situations, but we are concerned about the resulting lack of transparency, as the minister said to the House. That is why the minister gave the CRA clear instructions to rework the process to ensure greater transparency about why the settlements are reached. I would note that the agency's out-of-court settlement process takes place entirely at arm's length.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has failed on trade.

I recently spoke with a senior in Milverton who is concerned about increases to the cost of her medication under the renegotiated NAFTA. I speak with farmers who are frustrated about losing market share with nothing in return. I speak with manufacturers that are concerned that the Liberals have left them vulnerable to further arbitrary tariffs.

Why did the Prime Minister give in to Donald Trump's demands?

● (1140)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only people who wanted us to give in to Donald Trump's demands were the Conservatives. The advice from Stephen Harper for Canada to capitulate is well known and well documented. So are the urgent calls from the Conservatives, both in the House and in the province of Ontario, for Canada to drop its retaliation.

That retaliation on steel and aluminum tariffs was Canada's strongest trade action since the Second World War. That was central to our success in getting these tariffs lifted.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Senate Liberal leader admitted that the Prime Minister did not even try to negotiate an end to the softwood lumber dispute in the failed renegotiations of NAFTA. He had other priorities.

Mill closures are being seen in my riding and throughout our province. In 2016, the Prime Minister stood and said he would have a deal within 100 days. He also told Canadians that he was seized with finding an end to the softwood dispute, yet now we know he had other priorities.

Why did the Prime Minister not take this once-in-a-generation opportunity and to put an end to the softwood lumber dispute once and for all?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very seized with the softwood lumber issue. I have raised it repeatedly with Ambassador Lighthizer, and the Prime Minister raised it with the Vice President yesterday.

Having said that, one of the reasons we were so adamant about not accepting a terrible quota deal for steel and aluminum was because we did not want to follow the wretched Conservative example of accepting quotas for our softwood lumber industry. We learned from the mistakes of the Conservatives. I wish they could learn from their mistakes too.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government introduced the new NAFTA implementation bill. The Liberal government sacrificed dairy producers without knowing what the impact on our dairy industry would be. Now they have another stressful situation to deal with. The Liberals want to sign a new agreement even though they have not yet compensated producers for the two previous agreements.

Why did the government fail producers in my region?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of softwood lumber, I would emphasize the importance of industry leaders. The member talked about softwood lumber. I want to emphasize how important leadership on the part of softwood lumber industry leaders is. There was a lot of consultation with steel industry leaders, and the softwood lumber industry leaders recommended not making the same mistakes the Conservatives made. We listened to them.

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is opposed to Canadian energy.

The Prime Minister said that he wanted to shut the oil sands down. The Liberals' no more pipelines bill, Bill C-69, will be devastating to any future development. They promised to build the Trans Mountain expansion immediately, but there are still no shovels in the ground. Now they are threatening a war on plastics.

Well, half the jobs in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton depend on Canadian energy, pipelines and plastics. Why are the Liberals attacking the hard-working people of Sarnia—Lambton?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that Conservatives have no respect for courts and no concern for our constitutional duty to consult with indigenous communities. The Conservative have continued to put politics ahead of the process.

Canadians are depending on us to get this process right, to meet our duty to consult and to respond to what we have heard from indigenous groups. With advice from federal representative, Justice Iacobucci, we communicated to indigenous communities that a decision on TMX could be made by June 18. Our goal is to make sur the process is right to help all Canadians across Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this spring, I met with traumatized Tibetan youth recently escaped from Tibet where they had faced suppression of their Tibetan language, increased mass surveillance, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and torture. While China has committed to the UN to better protect religious freedom and to respect rights, there is no evidence of change. Tibetans continue to protest and self-immolate. The U.S. ambassador visited Tibet, raised concerns about religious freedom and called on China to recommence the dialogue on a middle way agreement.

Will the government follow suit and encourage China to pursue the dialogue with the envoys of the Dalai Lama?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her hard work on this issue and the question asked earlier this week by the NDP on this important issue.

We are deeply concerned about the human rights situation in China, including restrictions on the freedom of Tibetans. In fact, my parliamentary secretary raised these concerns with Chinese legislators while in China last week. We call on the Government of China to respect the human rights of Tibetans and to engage in a substantive and meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

● (1145)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for four years now, the Minister of Public Safety has been ignoring decisions handed down by various courts ruling that excessive use of solitary confinement is unconstitutional.

Yesterday, the family of Ashley Smith spoke out against the government's broken promises and the fact that it is invoking their daughter's name to justify its failure to act. Bill C-83 will do nothing to fix this appalling situation.

Will the government abandon the bill, comply with the court rulings and, above all, apologize to the family of Ashley Smith?

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his concern and his hard work at committee.

Ashley Smith's death was a tragedy and we continue to extend our condolences to her family. We are working hard to prevent what happened to Ashley Smith from happening to anyone else. The new system we are putting in place will provide programs, mental health care and daily social interaction with inmates who need to be separated from the general population for safety reasons. We have backed that up with a $448-million investment, and unlike the current system, there will be new oversight mechanisms and regular reviews will be enshrined in law.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National AccessAbility Week is a week when we celebrate Canadians with disabilities and raise awareness of the need for greater accessibility and inclusion. For millions of Canadians, barriers to access and inclusion still exist. We know that society benefits when all Canadians are included and have access to their workplaces and communities.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility tell the House how our government is addressing and reducing barriers to inclusion for all Canadians?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Science and Sport and to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility (Accessibility), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that all Canadians deserve to have the same opportunities and chances at success. Bill C-81, the accessible Canada act, was passed with unanimous consent this week. Once it receives royal assent, it will allows us to transition from a system where Canadians with disabilities have to fight for every basic access, to a new system that systematically identifies and prevents barriers from the start. This legislation reflects the work and commitment of those in the disability community who, for years, have been tireless advocates of an accessible Canada. This success is theirs.

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FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): How is this for March madness, Mr. Speaker? In one month, the Liberal government ran a $15-billion deficit. Now this year, the year the budget was going to balance itself, there is another $20-billion deficit. There will be no balanced budget until the year 2040, and that assumes no additional spending. The reality is this. The only way to pay for all of this out-of-control spending is crippling tax increases on Canadians.

Why will the Liberal Party not be honest before the election about the real cost in tax hikes that would come after the election?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad the member opposite was able to take off his tinfoil hat to come into the House today, because he does not actually understand the real results in our economy.

Let us talk about our real results. A typical Canadian family is $2,000 better off, and as a result of our policies Canadians have created over a million new jobs. Let us not talk about the Conservatives' plan for the economy. They have already flip-flopped. When it comes to the Leader of the Opposition, it is cut first and think later.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): They do not even have to think, Mr. Speaker. They know exactly what they do every time: run up massive deficits before an election and then massive tax increases after the election. The Liberals hope that Canadians will not know about that until after the next election, when Liberals will no longer need their votes but still need their money.

However, the mathematical reality is this. The only way to fund their out-of-control spending is through large and growing tax increases on the middle class. Why are the Liberals not honest enough to admit that now?

● (1150)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons on admitting the truth to Canadians when the Conservatives constantly flip-flop on their policies and mislead Canadians in the House and in the public domain.

The reality is the fact that we lowered taxes on the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. As a result, we have lifted 300,000 children and 825,000 Canadians overall out of poverty.

What did the Conservatives want to do? They want to give boutique tax credits to their wealthy friends that will not grow the economy.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Well, we heard it now, Mr. Speaker. Soccer moms or hockey dads are too rich for the Liberals, and the Liberals want to make them poorer.

We have heard it again. Someone who takes the bus and uses the transit tax credit is too rich, and the Liberal plan is to make that person poorer.

So far, the Liberals have succeeded. They have raised taxes by $800 on the average Canadian family and they will do much more if they are re-elected.

Here is a specific question. How much more will the Liberals add to the price of gas once their carbon tax is fully and finally implemented?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about what we have done for Canadians.

Families are $2,000 better off. We have raised 300,000 children out of poverty. We have created one million jobs with Canadians. There has been a 60% increase in foreign direct investment this year. At the same time, we are taking ambitious climate action.

Unfortunately, the Conservative Party does not understand that we need to take action on climate change and that we can do it in a way that makes life affordable and creates good jobs. They have a policy that is right out of the 1950s when it comes to the economy and no plan for the environment.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know what the Liberal policy looks like. They have said they admire the carbon tax in British Columbia; they only want it to be higher. When the Prime Minister was asked about the $1.60 a litre gas price in that province, he said “this is exactly what we want.” It is exactly what Canadians will get if the Liberals are re-elected, an increase in the carbon tax, as promised, by 250%.

I have a simple question. If the Liberals are not afraid of the truth, why do they not admit it? How much will gas prices go up once the carbon tax is fully and finally implemented?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been absolutely transparent about what we are doing in acting on climate change.

I am wondering whether the member opposite cashed his climate action incentive rebate, because 93% of Canadians who were entitled to it did so. We have put a price on pollution. Eighty per cent of families are getting more money.

Let us talk about the Conservative plan for the environment: more pipelines, more tankers and no rules to protect the environment. The Conservatives do not have a plan for the environment. They do not have a plan for the economy.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, throughout many generations Canada has earned a reputation as a good actor in the world, yet this recent garbage scandal with the Philippines and Malaysia has exposed the fact that Canadian companies have been dumping our worst waste into the backyards of the poorest countries of the world. That is not being a good neighbour. Let us say that we will stop, like the E.U. has committed to doing.

Will the government now commit to working with us to end the practice of dumping Canadian waste into the backyards of the world's poorest countries?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that the garbage is coming back from the Philippines. We agree that it is unacceptable. In 2015, under the Harper government, a private company brought over waste to the Philippines. We have changed our rules so that it will not happen again.

The bigger piece is that we need to take action to tackle plastic pollution. We are going to be announcing our plan shortly. We know we have too much plastic pollution, and we need to keep that value in the economy. That is exactly what we are going to be doing.

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[*Translation*]

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Beauharnois company Terrassements MRD Inc. has been waiting for the results of the labour market impact assessment it requested since December 2018. The usual turnaround time is 102 days according to Service Canada, but it has taken 160 days in the case of Terrassements MRD Inc.

The company has lost $150,000 in contracts so far, and it is barely staying afloat. Temporary foreign workers should already be on site, but they are still waiting for customs clearance.

To ensure Terrassements MRD Inc. can remain in business, could the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness speak to the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure that workers are allowed through the border by tomorrow, Saturday?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the increase in the number of jobs created in this country, the million new jobs, has put additional pressures on the workforce. We have seen an almost 50% increase in the demand for temporary foreign workers in the province of Quebec. We have put additional resources on the ground, as far as agents who are dealing with these cases are concerned. We hope to resolve the backlog shortly.

* * *

● (1155)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our allies have all moved forward in caring for their veterans injured by mefloquine, but our Prime Minister has ignored their research, their recognition of the damage done and their support for their injured soldiers.

This week, the Royal Canadian Legion announced a grant for Dr. Remington Nevin and the Quinism Foundation to study mefloquine toxicity within Canada's veteran population.

Why, then, are the Liberals on committee showing such disrespect for our legion and our veterans by trying to defame Dr. Nevin's expertise and research?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her interest in this file.

The well-being of veterans and Canadians is our top priority. Ninety-six percent of applications of post-traumatic stress disorder are approved, and we are working to provide veterans with the mental health support they need as quickly as possible.

The opposition had 10 years to provide that support and work on the mefloquine and mental health files, as veterans wanted.

Instead, they spent their time in office slashing services and balancing the budget while veterans suffered.

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[*English*]

PRIVACY

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not two weeks ago, at the committee of the whole, the Minister of National Defence stated that journalists' questions to the government would never again be farmed out to private corporations like Irving, which promptly and repeatedly threaten to sue the journalist.

The Minister of Public Services and Procurement admitted that it never should have happened in the first place, but it has happened again, this time to The Globe and Mail.

Could the Minister of National Defence tell us why he misled the House, or should I just skip the middle man and direct the question right to Irving?

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we strive to be open and transparent so that Canadians know we are making responsible investments.

Information on individual transactions that are eligible, as with IRBs, is commercially sensitive. We must receive consent from the contractor. In order to provide the reporter with the most fulsome answer to the question, we spoke with the company. The departmental officials followed all appropriate steps respecting the privacy of all individuals.

Threatening the source or the reporter is not the way we do media relations.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day, across rural Canada, people live in fear that their lives and their property are in danger.

That is why Conservatives passed a motion to combat the scourge of rural crime, but the Liberals chose to ignore it and offered nothing in response. Home invasions are rising, property theft is common, people are scared, and yet the Liberals cannot be bothered to take any meaningful action.

When will the Liberals start taking rural communities and victims seriously?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned any time part of the Canadian public feels unsafe.

We have committed to ensuring that the RCMP members have the resources and support they need. There is a new RCMP crime reduction strategy in Alberta that has led to a 25% reduction in reported property crimes between July 2017 and July 2018. We have increased, across the board, $700 million in funding to the RCMP, and the Conservatives cut $500 million.

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LABOUR

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, businesses and constituents in our riding have been very concerned about the status of collective bargaining at the Port of Vancouver. Just yesterday, I received an email from the owner of a small business in Fleetwood—Port Kells who has two containers on the way into port full of products that his customers need to get very quickly. Everyone on the coast knows how important this port is for our economy, our business, our farmers and all the workers right across Canada.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour please update this House on the status of those negotiations?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Fleetwood—Port Kells, who has been a strong advocate and has quite often mentioned his concern around this issue of the negotiations. We believe, as a government, that a resolution is best found when labour and business sit, and when times need it, government assists.

I am really happy that our minister made the trip to Vancouver to encourage both groups to come to a resolution. We are really happy that a tentative agreement is now in place. I want to thank those who have given so much. From our labour department, Peter Simpson, who we call—

● (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network proposal will help increase eastern Ontario's access to cellphone service and capable Internet. It will give residents and businesses in rural Ontario access to the digital market and help them remain competitive.

These Liberals refuse to announce funding for this project, while the Ontario government has already announced $71 million in funding. This project has received support from both sides of the aisle, with six Liberal members of Parliament already signing on.

When will the Prime Minister finally support rural Ontarians and fund this project?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made tremendous progress in delivering infrastructure across the country and has approved 4,800 projects to date. That is four times more than under the last Conservative government. Indeed, we have been patiently waiting for the Ford government in Ontario to get its act together to prioritize projects, which it failed to do in a timely and collaborative way, even after we extended deadlines. We welcome its long overdue interest in Ontario and infrastructure, and in particular, in rural infrastructure, when it comes to ensuring digital access, because we know that every Canadian, including rural Canadians in his riding, are entitled to it. Under this government, we will deliver.

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SENIORS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know that when governments try to use austerity measures, they target the vulnerable. As we have seen in Ontario, the austerity measures have been particularly harsh for families and seniors. The previous Conservative government tried the same on seniors. They pushed thousands of seniors into poverty by raising the age of eligibility for old age security from 65 to 67.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors advise on our government's approach to seniors?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving the lives of seniors, and that is why we have reduced the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from 67 to 65, keeping 100,000 seniors out of poverty. We increased the GIS for Canada's most vulnerable seniors by almost $1,000 per year. We are investing in housing for seniors. We are investing in home care and palliative care. We are investing in income security for seniors.

We believe that seniors deserve respect after a lifetime of hard work, and we will never stop working to provide Canadian seniors with the benefits they deserve.

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AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the important work of the Auditor General's office is being jeopardized by the Prime Minister, who has refused to provide the funding needed to hold the federal government accountable for its activities and its handling of taxpayer money. The Liberal government does not want its incompetence brought to light by the Auditor General. This has resulted in the cancellation of critical audits, including on Arctic sovereignty and cybersecurity.

Will the Liberal government show that it actually cares about being accountable to Canadians and fully fund the Auditor General?

Hon. Joyce Murray (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the member opposite has just asked that question, when his government cut the Auditor General's budget by 10% and never built it back. Our government built that budget back, because we are committed to supporting the important and ongoing work of the Auditor General.

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[*Translation*]

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the same thing happens every year. Summer comes and farmers do not get the temporary foreign workers they need because Ottawa is unable to process the applications in time. The answer is always the same. We are told that there is a very high volume of applications and that our call is very important.

Are they not aware that there is a labour shortage? The number of applications will continue to rise, and crops will not wait until the workers arrive to start growing.

The parliamentary secretary told us that there are more resources, but we are not seeing a difference. A permanent solution is needed.

What will the government do today to make sure that these workers arrive in Canada on time this summer and next?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to remind the hon. member that, yes, the Conservatives did cut temporary foreign workers, those who were working in the processing sector, and changed the rules to make it more difficult. The sector told us at the time that the Tories pushed the whole House back just to tighten the clothesline.

We are putting in additional resources. We have more bodies on the ground, and we will see a change. We will see an improvement in that service.

* * *

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the Irvings were controlling the Maritimes, but it is becoming increasingly obvious that their company is also exerting more and more control over the federal government.

First of all, the Irvings took pretty much all of the money that was available to help combat the spruce budworm. Then, they got their hands on most of the shipbuilding strategy's $100 billion. Meanwhile, Davie, the Quebec shipbuilding industry, is being passed over for Coast Guard contracts in favour of the Irvings.

Why is the government working on behalf of the Irvings instead of Canadians?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Harper Conservatives, we opened up the shipbuilding process. We gave Davie some very lucrative contracts, including an icebreaker refit and several vessel repairs.

Now, we are looking to involve a third shipyard and give it the opportunity to participate in this historic shipbuilding strategy. It is thanks to the Liberal Party of Canada and this government that Davie has been benefiting from other shipbuilding opportunities.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was just getting started.

Having had 600 lobbying meetings since the Liberals came to power in 2015, the Irvings are clearly part of the family, which has paid off. They were given a golden ticket, which lets them pass off their Alberta french fry factories as technological benefits for the shipbuilding industry. When journalists have pointed questions about their business, the government warns the Irvings so they can then threaten them.

As usual, the government is manoeuvring to kill Davie and Quebec's shipbuilding industry, Irving's main rival.

My question is simple: when will there be an inquiry? When will a special parliamentary committee—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our policy on industrial and regional benefits is our main tool for capitalizing on defence procurement to benefit Canadians. When we examine eligible transactions under this policy, we ensure that the technological level is equal to or greater than that of the project and that there are applications in Canadian industries.

As the firm stated, it did not get credit for its entire investment of $425 million in the facilities at Cavendish Farms. It said that it received approximately $40 million as a credit for meeting its obligations with respect to industrial and regional benefits under the contract for its Atlantic ships. Questions concerning this investment could—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Nunavut.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous Services. I have been proud to fight for the funding announced last fall for an addictions and trauma treatment centre for Nunavut. However, there are no youth-specific facilities in Nunavut. Our youth face long delays and often have to leave the territory for mental health treatment, if they are lucky.

"Our Minds Matter", a report issued by Nunavut's children and youth representative, states that our youth have rightly judged the current system to be inadequate and failing to meet their needs.

Will the minister listen to the voices of our youth and give them access to the mental health services and supports they need and have a right to in their own territory?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that we work in partnership with the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated to respond to the mental health needs of Inuit in the territory. We know that the national Inuit suicide prevention strategy is crucial to addressing that issue. That is why, in budget 2019, we will invest $50 million over 10 years to support it.

We will continue to work with partners, including the hon. member, to respond to the mental health needs of Inuit in the territory.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising from question period. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change had commented on the growth in foreign direct investment. I would like to table a report from the OECD, which shows that under the government, it has been negative $166 billion in direct investment since the Liberals came to power.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Edmonton West have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1210)

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on many occasions throughout the past couple of months, many people have commented on the level of decorum in question period. I do not want to add to that, but I want to talk about the level of decorum during Statements by Members, which precedes the most popular spot of the day in the House of Commons.

First, I will show a level of decorum and apologize to the opposition whip if my intervention is interfering with his random yelling.

During Statements by Members, we have one minute to discuss issues that we feel are important to our riding or certain individuals within our riding. Lately, I have noticed that some members are openly talking back and forth with each other in conversations, yelling and laughing. It may not be important to other members in the House, but it is important for the member who is giving the statement and for those who are either in the gallery or at home. Even if this is not important to other members, it certainly is important to someone.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Coast of Bays —Central—Notre Dame. It is certainly a good reminder.

Members will know that from time to time the Chair does need to intervene when members are talking in the House when another member is recognized. Members will know that is against the Standing Orders, and we will do our best to police that. At the same time, it does require the participation of all hon. members to ensure that when members are recognized, they have the floor and other members should hold their comments until such time as they have the floor.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2016-17 annual report of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HATE PROPAGANDA

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, the Prime Minister gave a speech in the House in which he said that "the days of spewing hatred and inciting violence...are over.... We owe it to our kids, and we owe it to ourselves."

Last July, I met with Ben Manion who wanted to talk to me about hate crimes and, in particular, white nationalist groups. Ben wanted a better Canada. I talked to Ben about presenting a petition, which I was very happy to sponsor, and would like to present that today. Ben is here with us to watch. It talks about the rise of white nationalist groups to meet, recruit and share hate propaganda.

The petitioners call for a number of provisions, including in the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act and to empower law enforcement, to allow the government to take action in dealing with these horrible white nationalist and hate groups.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from the ridings of Kootenay—Columbia, South Okanagan—West Kootenay, London—Fanshawe, Waterloo, London West, Regina—Wascana, Regina—Qu'Appelle and Regina—Lewvan.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to respect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayer money studying a ban on guns that are already banned.

SURF GUARD SERVICES

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table a petition today, e-petition 2134, that was signed by 829 constituents from coastal British Columbia.

The petitioners call on the government to reinstate the surf guard tower and surf guard services and extend the duration of the surf guard program to accommodate the growing number of emergencies as well as visitors at Long Beach in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. They cite the amount of emergencies taking place at Long Beach in Pacific Rim National Park, including two fatalities: Nijin John died and Ann Wittenberg died in an incident on May 20, 2018. A rescue took place on March 26.

Never mind that there are over a million visitors to Pacific Rim National Park, there have been no surf guard services and tower at Long Beach since the Conservative cuts in 2012.

● (1215)

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present an e-petition that I received from many Canadians.

The petitioners call on the government to recognize physical fitness as a form of treatment for physical injury and mental health issues. They request that the government provide funding for gym memberships, personal training and physiotherapy to individuals suffering from mental illness or chronic life-altering disease or illness.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a huge number of petitions today from right across Canada.

The petitioners indicate that a CBC documentary revealed that ultrasounds were being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so expectant parents could choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child was a girl.

An Environics poll found that 92% of Canadians believed sex-selected pregnancy terminations should be illegal. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Association of Radiologists strongly oppose the non-medical use of fetal ultrasounds. Over 200 million girls are missing worldwide and this "gendercide" has created a global gender imbalance crisis, resulting in violence and human trafficking of girls. The three deadliest words in the world are, "It's a girl".

The petitioners therefore call upon Canada's Parliament to support legislation that would make sex selection illegal.

LINE WORKERS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table a petition, calling on a day to recognize the hard work of line workers across the country. They are often the first to respond to disasters, when they strike, whether they are floods or ice storms. They work long hours and in unsafe conditions to ensure people can get power restored to their homes and get their lives back on track. It takes a lot of good training and a high measure of dedication to the work they do, putting themselves in harm's way to help Canadians in difficult circumstances.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2019, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise on the traditional territory that the Algonquin people have called home for generations upon generations to speak on Bill C-97, the budget implementation act, 2019, No. 1, and specifically about the amendments our government is putting forward for the national housing strategy act. We are enshrining into law the right to housing as a human right and requiring every future federal government to develop and maintain a national housing strategy and to be accountable to Canadians.

Since we formed government in 2015, we have stayed focused on a plan to grow the middle class and support those working hard to join it. That plan is working.

One million jobs have been created over the past three and a half years. Middle-class Canadians are paying lower taxes. The Canada child benefit has cut the child poverty rate in the country by 40%, and 825,000 Canadians are no longer living in poverty. More than one million families have a safe and affordable roof over their heads because of the investments our government has made in housing. That is 1,432 more families in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha with that safe and affordable roof over their heads, we are just getting started.

In November 2017, we announced Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, a 10-year plan, with $40 billion invested, to give more Canadians a place to call home.

The national housing strategy is built around the fact that housing is a human right. The strategy is grounded in the principles of inclusion, accountability, participation and non-discrimination. It will contribute to helping Canada meet its sustainable development goals by 2030, and affirms the commitment we made 40 years ago when we ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In budget 2019, we took our commitment to housing even further. We are investing an additional $10 billion in the rental construction financing initiative, which will help people who rely on rental and social housing to find more housing opportunities. We have introduced the first-time homebuyer incentive, which will help more Canadians achieve the dream of owning a home.

Thanks to these and other investments, the national housing strategy is now a 10-year, $55-billion plan, and we are seeing the fruits of our commitment in new and renewed housing units across the country.

Next year, the Canada housing benefit will come into effect. This is an additional $2,500 a year for low-income Canadians. It is a portable fund that will follow them wherever they choose to live to ensure they have greater access to affordable housing.

Our government's investments in housing are already at unprecedented levels. However, that is not the only reason the national housing strategy act represents such a historic step in giving more Canadians a place to call home. What makes the national housing strategy act truly transformational for Canadians is that it recognizes the human rights-based approach to housing that underlies the national housing strategy and enshrines it into law.

During the committee stage of Bill C-97, our government put forward significant amendments to recognize that the right to adequate housing was a fundamental human right, affirmed in international law. We recognize that housing is critical not just to the well-being of all Canadians, but to building sustainable, inclusive communities. We have ensured that Canada's first-ever national housing strategy is not also the last, by requiring that every future federal government develop and maintain a national housing strategy that takes into account the key principle of housing as a human right.

Today is a historic day for housing in Canada because we are introducing amendments to the national housing strategy act that will further entrench and protect the commitments we have already made. These amendments would ensure greater accountability and they would give vulnerable Canadians a greater voice in housing decisions that affect them.

The national housing strategy act also calls for the creation of a federal housing advocate, supported by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Thanks to today's amendments, we are enhancing the advocate's role in identifying and researching systemic housing challenges. The advocate will report to the minister responsible for housing on these issues. Its recommendations will be tabled in Parliament, and the minister and the government will be required to respond.

The federal housing advocate will be able to consult with vulnerable Canadians, people with lived experience and experts to better understand the impact of housing need and homelessness.

● (1220)

The national housing strategy act would create a national housing council supported by CMHC, which will act as a focal point for housing policy discussions on the national housing strategy and will advise the minister on how to improve housing outcomes. With today's amendments, we are empowering the national housing council with even more freedom to support the federal housing advocate and to report on the findings to the minister responsible.

Today's amendments detail how the minister and the government will be required to report back to the House and to Canadians on the recommendations they receive. Simply stating that housing is a human right means nothing unless there are robust accountability and reporting mechanisms in place. With these amendments, we are doing precisely that.

These changes, to say nothing of the national housing strategy itself, came about as a result of cross-Canada consultations with thousands of people from all walks of life. Their stories, their experiences and their challenges, along with their expertise, provided us with a fuller understanding of the state of housing in Canada today.

While I am proud to say that our investments have made a significant impact on giving more Canadians a place to call home, we recognize there is much more work to do. It is thanks to the community of stakeholders, of people with lived experience, those in housing need and experts, that we are able to take the historic steps we are taking today.

I have to take this opportunity to thank my constituents in Peterborough—Kawartha for their contributions to the housing strategy development process, the minister responsible for this file and, of course, the member for Spadina—Fort York, who is forever a champion for safe, affordable housing in Canada.

Today's amendments fulfill one of Canada's key international commitments. We are a signatory to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As such, we have a responsibility to meet one of the covenant's core commitments: to progressively realize the right to adequate housing as part of an adequate standard of living for our citizens.

Today's amendments also take us further in fulfilling our promise to Canadians. When we were elected in 2015, we pledged to give more Canadians a place to call home. We promised to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities. With the national housing strategy, and now with the national housing strategy act, we are fulfilling those promises.

No other federal government has taken such a comprehensive, long-term approach to housing policy. Never before has a rights-based approach to housing been part of housing policy in this country. These are major milestones that will improve the lives of Canadians, now and for generations to come.

Personally speaking, when my family first moved to Peterborough, we did not have a place to call home. We lived in a shelter provided by the YWCA. We benefited from social housing soon after. It was having that access to safe, secure housing that allowed my family and me to put our lives back together and to feel like we have a place we can call home, and a community in which we belong.

On behalf of my family and so many millions of Canadians who have been transformed by access to housing services and by housing workers in this country, I would like to thank those who have come before us, those who have contributed to the national housing strategy and the national housing strategy act, the team that has developed this really smart approach to lifting Canadians out of poverty and creating a stronger middle class and, of course, every single member of the House who will rise in support of this transformational bill.

● (1225)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously everyone in the House and all Canadians want all Canadians to be living in safe and secure housing. I have some questions on some of the finance issues.

The minister commented that the Liberals have invested $10 billion in housing so far, and $55 billion over 10 years. I asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer if he is able to locate this money, either spent or in the budget. His answer is no. Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer, is now with the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, which wrote a report called "How Stable is the Foundation of the National Housing Strategy?" It stated that they have been able to find only $1.5 billion spent, not $10 billion, and over the next 10 years they can locate only $5.1 billion in the fiscal framework. The report goes on to say that the NHS looks simply like a "glossy document" that is accompanied by announcements and that "unfortunately, for now, the NHS is virtually nowhere to be seen in the federal fiscal framework."

I ask, where is the money? Where is the $55 billion over 10 years that Kevin Page and the current Parliamentary Budget Officer say is nowhere to be found?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his commitment to adequate housing in Canada. I would like to correct some of the numbers he shared.

Since taking office, we have invested more than $7 billion in housing from coast to coast to coast. It is thanks to those investments that we have helped build more than 25,000 new housing units. We have repaired, renewed and renovated more than 165,000 additional housing units. That means that, in total, our investments have led to more than one million Canadians having a place to call home. This is much more than what my colleague suggested.

In my home town in Peterborough—Kawartha, where the vacancy rate for rental housing is 1.1%, over the past three and a half years 1,432 families have been able to find a safe and affordable roof over their heads. As Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, an indigenous leader and a great woman in my community, said, housing is "more than just having a roof over your head"; it is a place to keep a family together. Our housing strategy is beginning to do just that.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the question my colleague asked earlier, even though she refrained from calling the figures rhetorical, unlike her colleague from the Toronto area, who characterized all of the government's figures as rhetorical without really being able to indicate which of the figures were real.

That said, I am interested in the half-baked manner in which this bill was presented and moved through the parliamentary process. The initial version made absolutely no sense and had absolutely no purpose because it did not even recognize housing as a fundamental human right. This was fixed during the study in committee, which recognized this right. There were other mistakes, including the fact that the housing advocate has no mandate or power. This was just fixed at report stage. The government is proposing amendments.

My question is about where the process went so wrong that they twice had to make a series of amendments to fix such a terrible first version of the bill. What happened during the consultations? Did they not listen to experts' recommendations? Did they just realize what people have been saying for months?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague can appreciate that having a government that listens to Canadians, that listens to evidence, experts and people with lived experience, is a refreshing change from what we had during Mr. Harper's era of governance in this country.

I am sure my colleague can appreciate that having a government that is willing to listen to colleagues in the House, across both sides, to help ensure we do the best we can by the people who sent us here is a good thing. I am sure he can appreciate that when we work together on making important policy decisions and significant investments be the best they can possibly be, the people who sent us here and their children and grandchildren will be better off.

I would like to thank those who contributed to this process. I would like to assure my hon. colleague that the $55-billion investment that we are putting forward is now enshrined in law with the right accountability measures and with a focus on human rights, to ensure that every future federal government is held to account and hears directly from Canadians what the needs and opportunities are to secure housing for everyone.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to speak on the budget.

I am not going to talk about the government's betrayal of Canadians with its promise to balance the budget this year. In March alone, we saw a $15-billion deficit. I am not going to talk about how there is next to nothing to support the people in Alberta in this budget, or how this transparent government is actually hiding stuff.

In fact, in the budget, the government is hiding billions of dollars of tax increases in an opaque line called "[net] impact of non-announced measures". It is $5.7 billion. Perhaps the government is saying that it is not tax increases but program cuts. However, seeing how the government has a definite love affair with spending, I can only assume it is tax increases.

We have actually asked the finance department what is in the $5.7 billion, in the net impact of non-announced measures. The department says it cannot answer; it is a secret. I have to ask the government why it is hiding this information from us.

I also want to respond to the comments of one of the government members earlier, bragging about the great increase in foreign investment in Canada. I just happened to be looking at an OECD report that actually shows that the net outflow of the country, since the Liberal government came to power, is $166 billion. At the same time, the net inflow into Trump's America is actually around the $500-billion mark. We can see the actions of the Liberal government.

Instead of talking about these items, I am going to read into the record some comments from my constituents in Edmonton West. These are real voices of real Canadians. These are not the voices of special interest groups that the Liberals are in such thrall of, such as Unifor, which the government is putting on the media bailout advisory board, or Leadnow or the Tides Foundation.

I am going to talk about real Canadians, not the special interest groups that control the government, such as SNC-Lavalin or Bombardier. Of course, we all remember the millions of taxpayers' dollars given to Bombardier in a handout in order for it to give bonuses to its executives. I am not going to read into the record comments on the budget from other Liberal puppet masters, such as Irving.

I want to talk about the voices of real Canadians. Their voices should be heard. I was out door-knocking recently and ran into a gentleman holding his brand new granddaughter, who was about three weeks old. He was a pipefitter. He had been employed his entire life working on pipelines. He had been laid off a while ago, and his EI had run out. He was left with nothing.

We have a government that cannot seem to make a simple decision on TMX. This is a government that killed the energy east pipeline by putting rules and regulations on Canadian and Alberta oil that we do not put on Venezuela oil or Saudi Arabia oil. The government stopped energy east because it wants to start measuring downstream and upstream emissions, and at the same time it is subsidizing jet-makers and carmakers.

This is the same government that recently gave $14 million to the wealthy owners of Loblaws. To put it in perspective, the government gave a $14-million grant to the second-wealthiest person in Canada. It was not the 1% of 1% of 1% of 1%. It gave a $14-million grant to someone who is wealthier than 37,599,098 other Canadians. The government prioritized this over helping out people in Alberta.

I met recently with someone in my constituency office, a lady named Catherine. She and her husband, and their family, used to have a thriving trucking business. Due to Liberal actions and what has been going on with trying to phase out our oil sands and our energy industry, as the Prime Minister said, their company has been driven out of business. They have lost their house. Their family has broken down. The husband has left.

These are real people and real issues that we need to hear about, not just wealthy people like Weston or the other people who are very cuddly with the Liberal Party.

I want to read into the record some of the comments I have received. Pat says, "As a senior I am worse than I was a year ago. Prices have gone up due to the carbon tax…nothing has been done for our oil situation and jobs in the West."

Margaret says, "Worse off. Higher food prices, higher cost of utilities, carbon tax, too much tax taken off senior's income."

● (1235)

Someone by the name of J. says, “Much worse off than compared to 2017. Carbon tax is killing the Alberta economy and many businesses are closed. No pipeline being approved by the Liberals is devastating.”

It is not just energy east that the Liberals killed off. They also killed off the northern gateway. That was actually killed off by a cabinet order, a cabinet at the time that included two members from the Liberal Party of Alberta at the table, as well as the member for Calgary Centre, who is famous for saying he was going to bang on his desk for pipelines. However, tumbleweeds and crickets could be heard when they killed it off, rather than that member in the House. Edmonton's own member for Edmonton Mill Woods, supposedly the senior Liberal minister representing Alberta, was nowhere to be seen on the energy file while pipelines were killed off and Albertans have continued to suffer.

There are people who, with all of the added taxes, are worse off than a year ago. Elected officials need to lead us in a fiscally better direction and not get into bed with business to benefit themselves or only one section of the country. I have to ask why is the government constantly subsidizing carbon-producing companies while at the same time trying to drive out energy business?

Louise says, “All we have done is paid more and more taxes, losing money bit by bit.... Get the pipeline going to create jobs.” Amy says, “Worse, no question. The cost of everything has gone up and salaries have stayed the same. We are financially struggling to make ends meet. I am now a stay at home mom that works part time evenings and weekends because childcare is not affordable. This means we get no time together as a family. The government thinks we make too much money so we do not qualify for anything beyond $80/month CTB. Something has to give.”

These are the people who the government says are too well off, so that it had to take away the bus credit, too well off so that it had to take away the child tax credit, too wealthy so that it had to take away the arts credit and so well off that the mum has to work part time to keep things going. Under the Liberal government they are too well off.

At the same time, the government is giving $475 million in taxpayers' money to subsidize wealthy people to buy electric cars. For $45,000, if someone were to take a four-year loan at typical 5% to 6% interest rates, with tax, they would pay about $1,000 a month for that brand new Nissan Leaf or other electric vehicles. That is fine. If someone is wealthy enough to afford $1,000 a month for an electric car, the government will give them $5,000 cash.

However, with Elaine, who has to go back to work part time to help out her family, the government says she is making too much money. It wants her to go back to work, and it will take away the benefits she had, such as having her kids in a sports program or perhaps taking piano lessons. That is the priority of the government.

The Liberals spent a million dollars to send out politically motivated postcards to advise people about a carbon tax rebate they would get in Ontario; a million dollars. We asked if it was on recycled paper. No, it was not, although it was a postcard with environmental information. Is it recycled? No, it does not use recycled paper. Were carbon offsets used for the production or for the delivery? No, they were not, yet the Liberal government will spend a million dollars to send these out.

I want to talk about a charity that is dear to my heart in West Edmonton called the Elves Special Needs Society, which looks after the most severely disabled adults, young people and children in Edmonton. They are dear to my heart. I spend a lot of time with them. It is a wonderful organization. They have to pay the carbon tax on their facility. They look after about 200 adults. They have to pay the carbon tax. They do not get a rebate or any help from the government. A year ago, they had to go to the food bank to beg for adult diapers for their clients there, and yet somehow the government has a million dollars to spend on postcards for a rebate.

The government somehow $14 million it could give to Galen Weston, the second-wealthiest of 37 million Canadians. We have money for him, but for the most disadvantaged Canadians, the government is saying they should go to the food bank to get adult diapers to help out. It is disgraceful.

I am going to go on.

● (1240)

Loretta says, “Personally I am worse off and my husband is yet to see the impact of changes that the Liberal government has made for income, small business issues, and generally the stability of Canada.”

“Things are worse off than a year ago”, says Mark, because “Wages are not only staying the same but in some instances, depending on the industry, some people are taking a cut in wages anywhere from 10-40%. Have our leaders pay full taxes on their earnings and then take a pay cut like the rest of us.”

The parliamentary budget office stated last year that fully 40% of the average wage increase in Canada was solely from Ontario and Alberta raising their minimum wages. If we take away those, actual wages have dropped below the rate of inflation, and yet the Liberal government is so busy patting itself on the bank it is throwing its arms out.

Al says, “I feel we are worse off, as the old age pension has not increased for years. Utilities go up, gas goes up, food goes up, pensions don’t go up.” That seems to be the goal of the government, push everything up.

Albertans, and in fact all Canadians, are not getting ahead. They are not even staying even. They are falling behind and the government does not seem to care one whit about it.

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to much of the content the member has put on the record, a few thoughts have come across my mind.

The Conservative government, for example, spent close to $1 billion, that is, hundreds of millions of dollars, on advertising. I argued back then that it was absolutely irresponsible.

The member opposite will identify an area. He will mention $1 million here or $1 million there. I could easily pick and choose. I could mention the $1 million plane ride for a chauffeured car to go to another country that the previous government spent because Stephen Harper did not want to use a vehicle belonging to that country. He wanted his own car flown overseas.

There are numerous examples that one could give of Conservative spending. They misspent hundreds of millions of dollars.

My question is very specific. The Conservative Party has voted against tax cuts for Canada's middle class. Could the member opposite explain how he and his party can justify voting against tax breaks for Canada's middle class? That is exactly what they did.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: That is an amusing story, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps, once it is printed in Hansard, we could put it in the fictionary of Chapters.

Data shows that the average middle-class Canadian spends about $800 to $2,000 a year more.

I want to get back to spending priorities. The government has put aside $594 million for the partisan media slush fund to help rig the next election. Do members know what was actually put aside in the Liberal budget for the dementia strategy? The Liberals put aside $50 million.

To support veterans transition post-service, the government put $136 million in its budget, but it has put aside $600 million to bail out its friends at Unifor.

The Liberals have put more money aside to subsidize wealthy people buying electric cars and the media buyout than for fresh water and ending the boil water advisory on first nations reserves. How is that responsible government? It is not. Canadians see that and will make sure that the Liberal government feels it in October of this year.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing we have not talked enough about is tax havens and tax loopholes for the rich. That is not being dealt with in this budget.

CEOs are still getting the CEO tax loophole. They are paying less taxes than everyday Canadians who have worked hard to earn their money and pay their fair share of taxes, whereas CEOs who have had a big win are getting a deal wherein they can pay less taxes. One would think that if people receive a big win, they would pay their fair share and would be happy to support the Canadian economy, the very economy that helped them get the big win.

Eighty-eight per cent of the CEO stock option loophole goes to the 1%. That has not flowed to everyday Canadians. Regular business people do not benefit when only 12% of that CEO stock option loophole is in the hands of the other 99%.

I would argue that the CEO stock option loophole be closed and that the $1 billion should be injected back into the Canadian economy so it can do really important things, some of the things the member talked about, like ensuring that veterans get the services they deserve.

Does the member support closing the stock option loophole whereby 88% of its benefits go to the 1%? Does he agree that executives should be paying their fair share to the Canadian economy like every other working person in this nation?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Vancouver Island brings up a great point, and I agree that the government has misdirected priorities.

We have put in an Order Paper question on this. We have repeatedly heard the Minister of National Revenue say that the Liberals have hired so many people and invested half a billion dollars to crack down on overseas tax cheats. We asked who they are focusing on, and they have admitted that the majority of the new hires are going after small Canadian businesses. At committee, we asked her about this because we had a pharmacist say that the CRA was going after them for accepting a $50 gift card. The minister admitted that they are directing CRA.

We have seen the government try to push through tax increases on McDonald's workers who get a free hamburger as a duty meal. My own son, when he was working at a department store, would have to pay added tax on his two-dollar staff discount for a bag of chips. The government's priorities are so backward that only a complete change of government is going to address it.

● (1250)

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-97, the budget implementation act, 2019, No. 1.

Canada's economy is one of the fastest growing in the G7. Since 2015, Canadians have created more than one million new jobs, with our lowest unemployment rate in 40 years. Our government is making sure that all Canadians feel the benefits of a growing economy through budget 2019, and it will continue to help middle-class Canadians get ahead.

I would like to highlight what budget 2019 means to my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. The new Canada training benefit will help constituents in my riding gain the training and skills to be successful in their careers. With this new benefit, working Canadians will get four weeks for training every four years, up to $1,000 to help pay for the training, income support to help with everyday expenses, and the security of knowing that they will have a job to come back to when the training is done. To support this new training benefit, we have relieved small employers with EI premiums by introducing an EI small business premium rebate. The Canada training benefit will help my constituents get the skills they need to find and keep good jobs or to get retraining to help secure work for years to come.

Our government has also made big investments to support students and youth in my riding who attend Kwantlen Polytechnic University or other universities across Canada. We have doubled the number of jobs created through the Canada summer jobs program, increased Canada student grants, launched the Canada Service Corps and made huge investments in the youth employment strategy.

This summer, in Cloverdale—Langley City, the Canada summer jobs program has allocated $616,519 in funding and has approved 154 jobs so that our youth can gain meaningful, paid work experience. Helping more youth get work experience through the Canada summer jobs program is just one way this government is helping to grow and support the middle class and people working hard to join it.

Through budget 2019, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development launched Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy. The strategy sets new poverty reduction targets and establishes the federal government as a full partner in the fight against poverty. Our poverty reduction strategy also builds on the progress we have made together so far.

One of the very first things we did after being elected in 2015 was introduce the Canada child benefit, which has lifted more than half a million Canadians, including more than 300,000 children, out of poverty. The Canada child benefit has allocated nearly $7.4 million per month to 24,440 children living in Cloverdale—Langley City.

We also, as a government, immediately reversed the previous government's disastrous changes to the guaranteed income supplement and old age security. We restored the age of eligibility from 67 to 65 and made benefits for seniors more generous, which is helping lift another 100,000 seniors out of poverty every year, including many in my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. Further, through new horizons for seniors, five organizations in my riding have received over $80,000 in funding, including, among others, the Lower Fraser Valley Aboriginal Society and the Royal Canadian Legion. This is what real change looks like.

We also know that no Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescriptions and putting food on the table. With budget 2019, our government is taking the next steps toward the implementation of a national pharmacare program by creating a Canadian drug agency to negotiate better drug prices on behalf of all Canadians, putting in place a national strategy for rare disease drugs to help Canadians access the life-saving drugs they need and creating a national formulary to provide consistency across the country. It is critically important that we get this right and do what is best and equitable for employers, employees and all Canadians.

To combat climate change, we are making zero emission vehicles more accessible for Canadians by providing a $5,000 federal incentive. In B.C., this can be combined with the provincial $5,000 credit and the $3,000 or $6,000 Scrap-It program incentive, depending on certain criteria.

We are also building infrastructure support for electric vehicles and zero emission vehicles and are encouraging new investments and innovation in zero emission vehicle manufacturing here in Canada. By investing in the future of transportation now, we are positioning Canada's automotive sector to grow, supporting clean jobs and growth and protecting the future for our children and grandchildren.

Our government knows that if we do not have a plan for the environment, we do not have a plan for the economy or for the future, and that is why we put a price on pollution in jurisdictions without one. We are making zero emission vehicles more affordable and are investing in clean technology and public transportation.

My beautiful province of British Columbia has had a price on pollution for over 10 years. Contrary to the narrative offered by the Conservatives, we have led Canada in economic growth and have reduced our emissions over the last decade.

● (1255)

Our government also knows the importance of investing in infrastructure. It not only creates good middle-class jobs for today but also strong local economies people can rely on for years to come. By helping to reduce traffic, keeping our families safe and addressing the challenges of climate change, our investments in infrastructure are setting our communities up for success.

Budget 2019 gives a one-time transfer of $2.2 billion through the federal gas tax fund to address short-term priorities in municipalities and first nation communities. In my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City, approximately $2 million has been secured for TransLink to cure congestion and improve transit options through the gas tax transfer.

Over the past four years, we have also secured federal funding of $4.46 million for the phase two expansion of the Surrey museum and $1.9 million to upgrade the Cloverdale Athletic Park multi-sport facility and field house. Better infrastructure, with improved public transit, more affordable housing and new community facilities, makes Cloverdale—Langley City a great place to start a business and raise a family.

We believe that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Since taking office in 2015, we have made the most investments in housing in Canadian history. Our government launched Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, a once-in-a-generation $40-billion investment to fight homelessness and improve access to affordable housing across the country. By building, renewing and repairing housing in Canada, we are not just investing in our communities but are investing in people. We will keep working hard to make sure that Canadians have safe and affordable housing that meets their needs in communities where their families can thrive.

Budget 2019 also proposes to further increase compliance actions in the real estate sector by providing $50 million over five years and $10 million ongoing to create a real estate task force that would focus initially on the greater Toronto and greater Vancouver areas. This would benefit housing affordability in my area of Cloverdale—Langley City.

I would also like to speak about division 24 of part 4 of this act, which states:

> Division 24 of Part 4 amends the Parks Canada Agency Act to provide that, starting on April 1, 2021, any balance of money appropriated to the Parks Canada Agency that is not spent by the Agency in the fiscal year in which it was appropriated lapses at the end of that fiscal year.

Having spent over 32 years working in Parks Canada prior to politics, this clause initially caused me some concern. We heard another member raise that concern in the House today. However, after speaking with the acting CEO of the Parks Canada Agency, I was reassured that this would help the agency deal with certain aspects of its operations, including asset recapitalization, and would have no impact on revenue and new park establishment, which are very important to the Parks Canada Agency. Our government knows and understands that we must always work hard to preserve the natural spaces we enjoy.

Finally, we know that building a better Canada must include advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples. That is why budget 2019 includes important new measures that would help advance self-determination and improve the quality of life for first nations, Inuit, and Métis nations people.

Budget 2019 would help create a better future for indigenous people by improving access to clean drinking water and health services, funding distinctions-based post-secondary education, supporting indigenous languages and promoting entrepreneurship and business in indigenous communities. Our government will continue to advance the important work of reconciliation for a better future for indigenous people and for all Canadians.

I am proud to support this bill, knowing how my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City would benefit from the measures contained in Bill C-97.

● (1300)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, there is a crisis with our salmon in British Columbia. In Port Alberni, where I live, we had the fortune of having the member for Burnaby North—Seymour come to our riding when he was the parliamentary secretary for Fisheries and Oceans. On August 10, 2017, the Alberni Valley News quoted the member, who said:

> For so long, communities have had a lot of good projects like the group here (West Coast Aquatic) that they've wanted to get done but we haven't had the financial ability to move forward on it because the federal government has been somewhat absent.

At the time, he was touting the coastal restoration fund the government had committed $75 million for. West Coast Aquatic received nothing. Since then, we have been waiting for support for restoration for our salmon, especially when it comes to our sockeye, which is very important to the Somass River. The government has deferred, saying that the application process was oversubscribed, even though we have learned that the money has not been rolling out.

The government has now announced its new B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund. What happens? West Coast Aquatic applies for funding and is denied. It still has not received any money. We are almost four years in. Salmon is the most important piece of the economy. I am hoping that this member and the government can answer, because people at home are waiting and wondering what is going on.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy on environmental issues in our beautiful province of British Columbia.

Our government has made significant investments in environmental protections. Although we want to see the money rolling out as fast as possible, sometimes new programs need to be designed. Those are being worked on. We will be seeing money to continue to support and restore the fishery on the west coast.

The west coast fishery is an important part of our identity as British Columbians. We need to continue working to make sure that it is there for the long term so that it can be used by indigenous people living in our province, by British Columbians and other Canadians and by those who travel internationally to enjoy our fisheries. We need to make sure that the investments are there to sustain that fishery for the long term.

That is what our government is working on, doing so in ways that previous governments have not.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard quite often from the Conservatives that balancing the budget is an important thing. We saw their attempts to do that back in 2015 by cutting drastically and limiting the opportunities for Canada to grow and expand.

At the same time, there is another way. It is called growing the economy by investing in the economy. I wonder if the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City could talk about what he has witnessed at home in terms of the investments the government is making to grow the economy, by, for instance, making transportation and trade better.

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. There are so many investments our government has made to help grow the economy. We are seeing it right in our home communities in Surrey and Langley, south of the Fraser River.

We recently made an announcement with the Province of B.C. We are investing a significant amount, hundreds of millions of dollars, in the trade corridor. On the Trans Canada Highway, there are many significant pinch points, and it is a main thoroughfare for getting goods to and from the Port of Vancouver. Billions of dollars in goods flow through it.

In working with the province, the federal government announced over $220 million to expand that particular trade corridor. That will help move our citizens as they live their lives, going to and from work and other activities in the Lower Mainland. It will also help move freight, which is an important part of jobs in the Lower Mainland.

We are doing other things as well. We are working on transit investments. Our government has committed over $650 million for the expansion of the SkyTrain service, which will create jobs. The train will go to my colleague's riding and will eventually continue, hopefully sooner rather than later, into my riding of Cloverdale, with the new terminus at Langley City.

Many investments are being made, and they are helping to grow the economy and create the jobs we need in our communities in Surrey and Langley City.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate today and it is important that we raise some issues with the statistics the government is using and the rhetoric coming out of it.

When I go back to my constituency outside of Edmonton, Alberta, I knock on doors and talk to people at their homes or their businesses. They tell me how they feel about the economy and how it has impacted their personal lives. It does not match up with rhetoric coming out of the government.

Recent reports say that many families in Canada are $200 away from insolvency, from paying their bills at the end of the month. That is the reality in my constituency. People in my constituency are making the choice this month between paying their car payment or heating their homes. Many people have already lost their homes. Because of the downturn in the energy sector and because the government has failed to get pipelines built to new markets so we can get an equitable and fair price for our excellent energy resources, families are suffering.

When I knock on doors, I see the many for sale signs. In one cul-de-sac, four out of eight houses are up for sale and they have been up for sale for months. People keep cutting the prices and they are losing money. They do not have jobs and no one is buying their houses. The reality the government talks about is not the reality we see in our communities, especially in Alberta.

The government talks about one million new jobs. I look at the immigration statistics. It is wonderful that our country is bringing in so many great permanent residents and new Canadians who can contribute to our economy. However, we are bringing in on average more than 250,000 people every year, people who we need for our economy. We have brought in 250,000 people every year for the last four years and that is one million people. Those people need jobs. This is not even counting the Canadians who are turning age 18 every year who also need jobs. When we talk about one million new jobs, over one million new Canadians need jobs. We need the government to be more robust in job creation. One million jobs is just the baseline level that we need to sustain our economy.

When we are talking about GDP per capita, we actually are seeing it go down because the Liberals are not creating enough jobs, and they are not high-paying jobs. More and more people work their whole lives, people like my grandmother who still works as a nurse at the age of 71 and she is proud and happy to work. However, the baby boomer generation is beginning to retire. We see a demographic shift in the country, which immigration is doing a lot to help, which shows that the number of working-age people to retired people is shrinking.

When we have that combined with a government that is running bigger and bigger deficits, with no plan to deal with the shrinking workforce, we are headed to an economic disaster. The government promised it would run sustainable deficits, that there would be deficits of no more than $10 billion a year and in four years, it would bring a balanced budget. We are in year four. The report today from Finance Canada states that the government spent $15 billion in the month of March alone, March madness. How is this sustainable government spending?

We are facing at least a $15 billion deficit this year, and that is far beyond what the government promised to do and certainly not anywhere close to getting a balanced budget. When we have numbers like these, how will we be prepared for the economy of the future? Our workers are increasingly getting older and we do not see the kind of productivity gains that we need in order to sustain ourselves going into the future.

● (1305)

We can look at places like Calgary. Now this is not the federal government's responsibility, but property taxes have gone up for business owners by 99% in the last four years. That is because the entire energy sector in Alberta has been decimated. Therefore, the government, at the city level, needs to increase taxes, and it is doing that. It is not cutting spending. More businesses are shutting down. We are seeing small retail businesses in Edmonton and in Calgary having to shut down because they cannot sustain their operations.

The federal government is not looking at the holistic picture of our economy. It is not looking at where our provincial or municipal governments are. It does not see that taxes are going up at provincial and municipal levels. Instead, it has decided to pile on its own layer of taxes.

We have new carbon taxes. We have new taxes on small business owners, on their passive income, on their savings. We have a significant increase in payroll taxes. We are seeing an increase in the amount of money that workers and employers need to pay into CPP. This is having a stunting effect on wage growth in the country.

We can look at our neighbour to the south. Usually when the economy of the United States is doing well, which it is now, it is over 3% annualized growth, we can expect the Canadian economy to pick up in a similar way. However, our economy is at an annualized growth of 0.4%. It is pathetic. It is barely above inflation.

Canadians are unable keep up. Their wage growth is not keeping up with the increased costs of living, and not just from inflation but from the Liberal government's increased taxes.

I was door knocking last Saturday in my constituency and I met a family. The first thing the parents asked me was why the Liberal government got rid of income splitting for families. They wanted to know why it got rid of the children's arts and fitness tax credits? That paid for their daughter to go to dance.

The government talks about the Canada child benefit. The Canada child benefit is an important program. It builds upon the universal child care benefit that our previous Conservative government created. However, when the Liberals talked about how they increased money to families, they did not talk about where the money came from. It came from gutting the children's fitness and arts tax credits. It came from getting rid of family income splitting. It came from lowering the amount of money families could save through the TFSA, from $10,000 to $5,000.

The Liberals are increasing taxes on families on the one hand by getting rid of tax credits that middle-class families and lower-income families were using and then giving them money through an increased government program. It is not increased benefits; it is increasing benefits and increasing taxes. It is just a shell game.

Now I want to talk about the so-called tax increase on the wealthiest 1%. The misconception and the falsehood behind that argument is that it is not a tax on the wealthiest 1%,; it is a tax on the 1% of highest earners. There is a huge difference when we are talking about the 1% of highest earners and the 1% of the wealthy. Today, as we have seen, KPMG just made a deal with CRA so the true wealthiest 1% of the country got a huge tax deal from the CRA.

When we see what the government's actions are on the wealthiest 1%, it is when the CRA makes deals with KPMG for the actual 1%. People who have intergenerational wealth built up through generations, really pay very little income tax, because they do not need to work.

What families are we talking about when it comes to the highest 1% of income earners? We are talking about recent medical graduates, dental graduates, lawyers, people who go hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt to get the skills our society needs, skills that are highly valued in our society and that pay well. These people are often getting out of school with hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt, especially if they went to the United States for school. They come back to Canada, work for a few years, get to that high income level and the government tells them they are wealthiest 1%, that they need to pay more income taxes.

Instead of targeting those people, we should be trying to bring them back to Canada and encouraging them to stay and practise here. We should be going after the actual wealthiest 1%, the people who hide their money offshore, the people get deals from the CRA. That is the wealthiest 1%; that is the wealthiest 1% the government will never touch because it is focused on playing class warfare politics with Canadians.

Then we are talking about—

● (1310)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott Simms): I just wanted to let the member know his time was coming up. He has about 10 seconds left, if he would like to finish.

● (1315)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I just realized we have a new Speaker in the Chair today. I must say that the Chair has never looked so good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott Simms): Thank you for the support. There has been no coup; I can assure members of that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member Burnaby North—Seymour.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my friend opposite's speech. He was talking a lot about deficits and debt, so I did some quick googling to make sure my numbers were right.

The previous Conservative government rang up over 150 billion dollars' worth of debt. The previous Conservative government before that rang up 330 billion dollars' worth of debt. If we add that up, it is $490 billion from just the last two Conservative prime ministers.

Canada has been around for 152 years, and the last two Conservative prime ministers account for 72% of the total debt. Why would we think they would do any differently in 2019?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the context of these things. In the 1980s, when the Brian Mulroney government was in power, that government was handed a stagnant economy, with inflation and interest rates in the double digits. It was left a huge mess by the previous prime minister. Therefore, the Brian Mulroney government took tangible actions to get our fiscal house in order. Who benefited from that? Well, it was the Chrétien government that benefited from it. We did the hard work and then they just cut and cut and gave it to the provinces to deal with, and they took no responsibility. That is not a responsible way of doing things.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear the hon. member bring up the issue of income splitting, because that is something the previous Conservative government put forward prior to the last election. It is interesting to note that an analysis done on income splitting of the type the Conservatives were advocating said that for the primary beneficiaries, 98% of the benefits would go to families with a single wage earner earning over $150,000 a year. Guess where most of those folks are? They are in Alberta. It seems there has been quite an Alberta-centric vision in the Conservative Party for quite some time. Members would remember the "energy superpower". Heck, remember last week when the Leader of the Opposition was again promoting Alberta oil from coast to coast to coast.

However, the key question I have for the hon. member across the way is this. Like the other Conservative measures, are we going to go back to the future? Is his party going to put forward the notion of income splitting for all families in Canada again?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I will never apologize for standing up for my constituents, the people of Alberta, not now and not ever.

It is ironic that the member brought up the fact that 98% of the families that would benefit were making $150,000 or more, when it was the current government's own so-called middle class tax cut that benefited people making $90,000 and over. Those were the people who benefited the most.

Our previous government took into account that an unlimited tax splitting tax scheme would have a disproportionate effect on wealthier people compared with less wealthy people. Therefore, we put in a maximum of $5,000 that families could benefit from income splitting.

If the member is against income splitting, I hope the Liberals would answer if they are going to take away income splitting for pensioners and seniors.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am curious if my hon. colleague truly understands how the unemployment rate system works. He talked about immigration as if only new Canadians were getting jobs. Can he understand the fact that the unemployment rate has increased and that he does not fully understand how this system works, which is consistent with the Conservatives' lack of understanding of how the economy works? When he makes references to statistics in the House, he simply has zero comprehension of them.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I do not appreciate the member gaslighting people in the chamber in regard to what I had previously stated.

I never said it was only immigrants who are getting jobs. I strongly support immigration, but I am saying that if we bring in one million people, if they are only providing one million new jobs, then that is only enough to provide for those people. We have many people coming of age in this country who also need jobs and need to be covered as well.

I did not see the member when I was speaking, and so I am not sure if she understood exactly what I was saying. Clearly, that is the case.

● (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member that members are not permitted to reference either the absence or presence of members in the House.

NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 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 proceedings at the respective stages of the said bill.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

BILL C-98—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-98, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Government Business No. 29, I wish to give notice that at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate not be further adjourned. Hopefully, the opposition will agree that it is an important motion to bring to a vote and we will be able to find a way forward, but if that is not the case, that is the reason that I am, unfortunately, having to give notice today.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2019, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see a steady hand back in the chair. I was concerned about the previous speaker who was sitting there, but order has been restored in the House. That is is the most controversial thing I may say in my speech, but I call it as I see it.

When I decided to run for politics, I had been working with a local organization for six years and was chair of that organization. It is called Quest Community Health Centre in St. Catharines and it provides primary health care to those who would not otherwise have access to it. It may seem that in a universal system of health care, everyone should be able to access primary care. We all have a health card in our pocket and we can get that level of treatment, but it was a surprise to me that it did not happen. Many people fell through the cracks and their primary source of treatment was the hospital, which is more expensive, less effective and leads to sicker people.

It gave me an opportunity over those six years to meet the clients at Quest Community Health Centre, those who had economic challenges, those who were homeless and living on the street, and those who had addictions, mental health or concurrent disorders. We talked a lot about the social determinants of health, meaning all of the factors in our lives that have an impact on our health. It is not just a matter of going to the hospital or seeing a doctor, because there are a lot of economic and socioeconomic factors that play into health.

One of the factors at the centre of all of our health is housing. Canadians across the country say that we need to do better on health, but we have to look at the socioeconomic factors around that. As I said, housing is one of those significant factors in that where we live within our community can almost determine what our life expectancy is. Those who are living in the urban centre of St. Catharines have a lower life expectancy than those living a mere 10 minutes away, where my family lives. That is shocking.

When we take the idea of housing as being at the centre of health care, we can apply it to so much more. We should be looking at housing as a centre of the debate on mental health, as a centre of the debates on poverty and the opioid crisis and the criminal justice system. There are no simple answers to any of these problems we are facing, but one of the easiest things we can do is to provide housing. This is what I brought forward.

In Niagara and this is true across southern Ontario, the wait lists for housing are staggering. It can take more than 10 years to find a single apartment through the Niagara region housing system. We should be shocked by this. We can say there is no cost to the taxpayer, but the costs of homelessness are huge. For all of the other issues I talked about, if we do not provide housing, the downstream costs are enormous.

It was exciting for me to go with that point through the election campaign, and I know my Conservative friends are very excited to hear about it, especially the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: It is disappointing that the member from Aurora is laughing at an issue of homelessness when this is a serious discussion.

We went door to door and said that housing is at crisis levels in our community.

● (1325)

It did not get there overnight. It was governments of all political stripes, federal, provincial, municipal, that abandoned their responsibilities under housing. They did not do enough, and that has led us to the housing crisis we now face. People are waiting a decade to find affordable housing. The vacancy rate in St. Catharines has fallen below 2%, which makes it a crisis level.

I was excited last week to go to a new development at 527 Carlton Street in St. Catharines. It is the first affordable housing development built in St. Catharines by Niagara Regional Housing since the 1970s. It is almost criminal that we have ignored a crisis like this for so long. Through the national housing strategy, the federal government contributed $7 million to this project.

It was wonderful to meet with the residents, many of whom have been waiting a long time. Many of them had been living in substandard housing. It was wonderful to talk to them and see smiles on their faces. It is wonderful to know that government can help.

We hear a lot about cuts. We have to cut. Government is spending too much. We have to cut, cut, cut. This is what government spending looks like: being able to look at constituents who are smiling because they now have a place to call home. This is fundamental.

The amendments we made at committee stage on the national housing strategy recognize the importance of housing to the well-being of all people in Canada. They reflect the key principles of a human rights approach to housing that requires a national housing strategy to focus on improving housing outcomes for those in greatest need.

The national housing strategy act would establish a national housing council, with diverse representation, including people with lived experience of housing need or homelessness, to provide advice to the minister responsible for housing.

The amendments we are bringing at report stage on the national housing strategy would further entrench the commitment already made on the accountability of the proposed federal housing advocate, ensure greater accountability, enhance the advocate's role in researching systemic housing challenges, and empower the national housing council and give it more freedom to report to the housing advocate and to report findings to the minister.

If we are going to address this housing crisis, we need all levels of government to come together. I am proud to work with my mayor, Mayor Walter Sendzik, and our city council. They are passionate about the housing strategy. I hope our provincial government steps up, but I am worried that it will not.

As I only have a couple of minutes left, I would like to touch on the issue of infrastructure, which is important to all of our communities. Our communities are all facing infrastructure deficits from money that was not spent. At the end of the day, if there are infrastructure deficits and there is no help from the federal government, it ultimately means higher property taxes and higher water bills.

My worry at home is a project that happens every few years. I am talking about the Canada Summer Games. Niagara won the bid. The federal government stands ready to commit and to build, but the provincial government is absent. It refuses to come forward for Niagara to develop sports infrastructure.

When it came to Red Deer, Alberta, which hosted the last games, it got $80 million when two Conservative governments worked together. I still hold out hope that the Ford government is listening and cares about Niagara and wants to see this project move forward.

● (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for St. Catharines will have five minutes for questions and comments when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

ENERGY COSTS

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC) moved:

> That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) recognize that heating a home during Canadian winters is not a luxury, but a necessity as basic as food and shelter; (b) recognize that basic groceries, used residential housing, and residential rental accommodation, are already zero-rated or exempt from GST under the Excise Tax Act; (c) recognize that low-income Canadians are disproportionately affected by energy costs with 21% of Canadian households spending more than 10% of their income on energy; (d) take the necessary steps to remove the GST from home energy bills; and (e) repeal the Carbon tax.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Edmonton West.

Today, I am honoured to move my Motion No. 230 on the GST on residential energy costs. This motion is part of our commitment to make life more affordable for Canadians.

I will take it step by step. First, when we become financially self-sufficient in life, we quickly learn to differentiate between what we need, the essentials, and what we want, the luxuries. If we ask the average person what they need, they will say food and housing. It is simple, without food we die and and without housing we freeze. While we have made progress in the past 350 years in terms of the energy efficiency of our homes and the sources of energy we use to heat them, there is no getting around the fact that the climate we live in obliges us to heat our homes in winter.

The housing authority in Quebec recommends that the inside temperature of a home in winter be at least 21°C. That temperature was determined because seniors and young children are especially vulnerable to health problems at temperatures below 21°C.

In Ontario, labour standards allow workers to leave their place of employment without reprisal if the employer is unable to ensure a temperature above 18°C.

We can have the warmest wool sweater and the most air-tight windows, and we can wear all the layers we want, but the fact remains that we have to heat our homes in winter.

What role will the federal government play in all this? Canada is a compassionate country. Our social security system ensures that the most vulnerable have protections. Canadians accept that taxes are a necessary evil and that everyone must pay their fair share. However, in some cases, we expect the government not to go after the most vulnerable or those having a tough time.

That is why we have a basic personal exemption for people earning less than $12,000 a year that makes them tax exempt. We realize that, with this amount, they really have very little discretionary money left to meet their basic needs, such as rent and groceries.

This brings me to the following point.

With respect to the GST, the Government of Canada collects a consumption tax on goods and services across Canada. It once stood at 7%, and I am proud to belong to the Conservative Party, which reduced it to 6% and then to 5%.

However, the Excise Tax Act, which authorizes the government to collect the GST, generally draws a distinction between necessities and luxuries. The parliamentarians who crafted that bill previously established that basic groceries would be zero-rated because they are a necessity, whereas restaurant meals would be subject to GST because they are considered to be a luxury or frill.

That means GST is not charged on meat, pasta, fruits and vegetables bought at the grocery store. However, it would apply to a steak, risotto or Caesar salad served in a restaurant.

With regard to housing, the purchase of used residential housing is exempt from GST, as is the monthly rent for residential accommodation. The government rightfully recognizes that housing is a GST-exempt necessity, whereas a hotel stay, which is considered a luxury, would be subject to GST.

Unfortunately, the government is still charging GST on energy bills, whether the energy source is hydroelectricity, natural gas or wood, the primary purpose of which is to heat homes in winter.

I repeat, heating a home in the winter is not a luxury, it is a necessity. This last winter was so cold that the government generated record revenue from the GST on energy bills.

● (1335)

Hydro-Québec reported sales in excess of $4.6 billion this winter, which is $307 million more than last year. God knows this winter was particularly difficult.

Of course, the Government of Canada got its 5% cut thanks to the GST. Honestly, the government should be ashamed of profiting from people's misery in winter and not trying to do anything about that.

The tax is anything but progressive. It hits lower-income people harder because heating is a significant portion of their monthly budget. That brings me to the third part of my motion.

In a March 18, 2018, article, CBC News reported that 21% of Canadian households experience energy poverty. According to a study by Maryam Rezaei, a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia, that means 2.8 million households spend more than 10% of their income on energy. That is particularly true in Ontario, where electricity is very expensive.

Unfortunately, those same poor people will have to pay more because of the Liberals' carbon tax, and they will have to continue paying GST on hydro bills, which ran as high as $500, $600 or more during the two coldest months of winter. I know that for a fact because that was the case in my own house. It ended up being very expensive because of the winter we had.

In regions like mine, where incomes are sometimes well below the average in large Canadian cities, the energy poverty phenomenon is only getting worse. The government then has a choice to make: it can continue to tax the most vulnerable and take advantage of them to pay down the deficit that it created, or it can find a way to give customers a GST credit on their hydro and home heating costs. Right now, customers are suffering and struggling with bills that are increasing and will keep increasing because of the Liberal government's choices. This is the government's last chance to do something about that.

If the government does not take action, it will have to explain why to Canadians during the next election campaign, because we intend to make this a campaign issue. Our leader has already announced that the content of this motion will be part of our platform in the upcoming election. I have already talked to some people in my riding about it, and this is something they are already looking forward to.

The Leader of the Opposition made a promise in this regard in Mississauga on March 6. A Conservative government led by our leader will eliminate the GST on home heating and energy bills, which will save households nearly $107 a year.

I want to emphasize that this should not be a partisan issue. It should not matter if people are on the left or the right, because this issue brings us all together no matter which end of the spectrum we are on. In 2008, former Nova Scotia MP Peter Stoffer introduced Bill C-203, and the former NDP leader, Jack Layton, made a similar promise in 2010 leading up to the 2011 election campaign.

I sincerely hope the NDP will support this motion. The NDP might accuse us of stealing their ideas, but that only proves this is not a partisan issue. It is a fairness issue that Conservatives and New Democrats alike can agree on as a way to improve Canadians' quality of life. Our leader has often said that his philosophy is about putting people before the State. That is what we believe.

Unlike the NDP and other opposition parties, the Conservative Party is the only viable alternative to the current Liberal government.

Quebec's Union des consommateurs supports the proposal to remove the GST from home energy bills and even wants the Government of Quebec to do likewise with the QST. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation also called our plan a step in the right direction.

We are also calling on the government to eliminate its ill-conceived carbon tax, which will have no measurable effect on our greenhouse gas emissions but will raise costs for Canadian consumers from coast to coast.

The carbon tax will cause price increases for heating oil, natural gas and all goods produced, imported, manufactured or delivered in Canada. On top of that, the GST is charged on the retail price, which means that the government will have its hands in our pockets twice: once for the sales tax and a second time for the carbon tax. This is a tax on a tax. It is clear what will happen if we do not adopt this motion.

● (1340)

We have a realistic plan, and I thank the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who took the initiative in recent weeks to conduct a cost estimate of the removal of GST from residential energy use. He determined that this attainable objective would save Canadians an average of $117 a year and would cost the government around $1.3 billion or $1.5 billion. The figures in the studies are close. I said “would cost” because I do not agree with the presumption that this money belongs to the government, when in reality it belongs to taxpayers.

I was particularly disappointed yesterday when the Department of Finance spokesperson accused us of wanting to spend billions of dollars on a policy that would help only wealthy Canadians with the biggest homes. Talk about arrogant. This is absolutely unbelievable, especially coming from a government that is making families and small businesses cover 92% of the carbon tax and granting exemptions to major polluters, which will pay just 8% of this tax.

The government is currently running a deficit of $19 billion, and not because it is not taxing Canadians enough. Figures from the Government of Canada's annual financial report for fiscal year 2017-18 show that revenues actually increased by $20.1 billion last year, and they are projected to reach a record $339 billion in 2020-21.

The deficits are entirely due to the Liberals' overspending, period. They are quite simply bad with money, and if they are not willing to support this motion and find a way to stop collecting this $1.5 billion a year from Canadians who are just trying to keep their homes warm, and who already collectively paid the government an extra $20 billion last year, we would be ready to debate this issue thoroughly in the next Parliament, when a Conservative government will be sitting on the benches to your right, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, heating is not a luxury. It is a necessity. As elected officials, we are here to ensure that the government meets the needs of families, not the other way around.

Since this may be my last chance to speak in the House before the next election and the 43rd Parliament, which I hope will be led by a Conservative majority government, I would like to say a few words in tribute to my mother, Suzanne Boulanger-Généreux, who left us on March 26 for a journey to a destination known to her alone.

Having had the privilege of being raised by her, as well as the joy, pleasure and humility of being at her side with my brothers and sisters during her last days on earth, I can say that she stayed true to herself to the very end. She was smart, curious, loving, easygoing, staunchly open-minded, humble and welcoming. I could stand here all day listing her good qualities. She taught us the meaning of freedom, respect, altruism and the quest for work-life balance.

Mother, on behalf of your children, my sisters and brothers—Monique, Andrée, Marie, Luc, Pierre, Nicole, Hélène—and myself, your 19 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and three others on the way, Godspeed. You will be in our hearts forever. We will love you always.

● (1345)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I particularly appreciated the last part, where he paid tribute to his mother in such a touching way. I offer him my condolences and thank him for his words.

I would like to ask my colleague a few questions. First, does he believe that pollution should be free?

My second question is about the second part of his motion and its benefit to Canadians. It is obvious that the wealthy will benefit most from this motion. Removing the GST from home heating bills will obviously help those with large homes. As for those living in seniors' residences, where the cost of heating is included in the rent, they will not benefit at all.

In his opinion, is this fair?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, when the Harper Conservatives were in office, we lowered the GST from 7% to 6% and then from 6% to 5%.

If I understand my colleague's reasoning correctly, we never should have done that because it supposedly only benefited the rich.

The reality is that everyone pays taxes. We will not start introducing legislation that would force only those who earn $150,000 or more to pay taxes on home heating. Everyone has a home, everyone has housing costs, and everyone has to pay taxes.

I do not know where my colleague lives, but people who live in apartment buildings in big cities and in rural communities in particular have to pay GST on heating because heating a home is expensive.

I will give my own home as an example. My two children have now moved out and they have their own families and their own homes, but my home heating costs have not gone down. They have increased by about $500 in the past 10 years and there are only two of us living there.

These costs are clearly continuing to increase for everyone, and everyone should be entitled to this exemption.

● (1350)

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to offer my condolences to the hon. member for the loss of his mother.

I want to take this opportunity and a bit of indulgence to offer my daughter a happy birthday, as she is turning 30 today. She is being presented at court by the Law Society of British Columbia, so she is becoming a lawyer today. I am very proud of that.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. I have a small community association in my riding called the Hudson Bay Park/Mayfair/Kelsey Woodlawn Community Association that has talked to me about the heating and energy they need to use their ice rink in my community. Although I heard the member's comments that we cannot look at taxes as progressive or regressive, would he not entertain the fact that there are some individuals and organizations who, with their lower incomes, deserve some kind of tax break, whereas those making $150,000 could pay more? We all benefit from a tax system that allows us to have medicare and post-secondary education.

If I could hear his comments on that, I would be more open to some of the things he is talking about, such as removing the GST on heating fuel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I wish her daughter a happy birthday and congratulate her on her law degree.

I really appreciate my colleague's question. If I understand correctly, her riding is located in northern Canada. Canada is a northern country and it is in our northernmost regions where the cost of home heating is the highest since winter lasts even longer there.

A GST exemption on home heating would be particularly beneficial for the people in her riding, where heating costs are even higher than they are in southern Ontario or near the American border, for example.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to debate a motion bought forward by the member opposite. The motion highlights the very different visions we have for Canada's future and the future our children and grandchildren.

The motion before us today, which calls to repeal the federal price on carbon pollution and remove the GST on home energy purchases, would seem to suggest that pollution has no cost and that it is free. It would also undermine a key feature of the GST that allows it to function effectively and fairly. The motion would undermine a vital part of Canada's plan to act on the real and serious threat posed by climate change.

It was wisely said by the late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan that “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.” Certainly, people are entitled to their opinion that the Earth is flat, that the moon is made of cheese or that pollution has no cost. However, at the end of the day, we defer to science. We look at the facts and we look at the evidence. That is the basis of our government's policies. We base them on the evidence before us.

The fact is that manmade climate change is real. It is causing more frequent and devastatingly extreme weather events and it is making it harder for people to live today. That is the global scientific consensus on this.

Moreover, the costs associated with climate change are growing every year, with higher costs for health care, emergency services, structural repairs, insurance premiums and food as a result of climate change. All told, climate change is expected to cost Canada's economy $5 billion annually by 2020. The facts do not stop there.

We know that climate change is real and manmade, but we also know how to make fast and meaningful change. Canadians cannot wait. We need action now. The expert consensus, based on evidence and supported by Nobel Prize-winning economists is clear. The most effective and economically sound way to address the consequences of climate change is to put a price on carbon pollution, which is the primary driver of manmade climate change. That is precisely what our government has done.

Despite the efforts of the opposition and their allies, it is no longer free to pollute anywhere in Canada. This is an approach based on science, based on years of building a co-ordinated, international approach to stopping climate change before it is too late; based on respecting the autonomy of provinces and territories to choose a system that works best for them and meets a certain standard; and based on ensuring that every dollar directly collected under the federal system will be returned to the province or territory it came from, either to the provincial government in jurisdictions that have requested the federal system or by giving the bulk of the direct proceeds of the price on pollution directly to individuals and families in the form of climate action incentive payments. This is money that ensures middle-class Canadians are not carrying the brunt of pollution pricing.

As the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer noted, most households will get back more money in climate action incentive payments than they would pay in increased costs from the carbon pollution pricing system.

For Canadian businesses, carbon pollution pricing delivers economic benefits as well. It encourages Canadians and businesses to innovate and to invest in clean technologies and in long-term growth opportunities that will position Canada for success in a cleaner and greener global economy.

This presents significant opportunities for Canadian companies to tap into the global market for low-carbon goods and services, which is currently estimated to be worth over $5.8 trillion. In provinces that have not take action to meet the Canada-wide federal standards for reducing carbon pollution, our government will provide a portion of the proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system to support small and medium-sized businesses.

These outcomes are not just fair for Canadians. They are good for the environment, they are good for our future and they are good for the economy.

● (1355)

By undermining these outcomes, Motion No. 230 would be bad for the environment, bad for our future and bad for the economy.

Canadians understand that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand and that their quality of life today and economic success tomorrow rests on the commitments to protect our natural legacy and preserve our environment for future generations.

That is why the government has made significant investments to protect Canada's air, water and natural areas for our children and grandchildren and to create a world-leading clean economy.

To combat climate change, in budget 2017, the government increased financing support for Canada's clean technology sector by making available more equity finance, working capital and project finance to promising clean technology firms. In total, almost $1.4 billion in new financing was made available through the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada to help Canadian clean technology firms grow and expand.

If that is not enough reason to oppose the motion, it is also bad from a tax policy perspective.

As we know, the GST is a value-added tax that is applied to the purchase of goods and services in Canada. Applying the GST to as broad a base as reasonably possible is important in allowing its rate to remain low. Removing the GST from home energy purchases, as proposed in the motion, would erode the broad tax base that provides for a simple and efficient GST and would allow the GST to be set at a low rate. Removing the tax on home energy would favour wealthier Canadians and would provide no relief to those living in apartments, nursing homes or rental houses, where energy costs are included in the rent.

Our government does want to help families with the cost of heating their homes, but this is not the right way to do so. Instead, we are starting by helping those who need it the most, providing tax relief from the GST to low and modest-income Canadians through the GST credit. The GST credit provides more than $4.5 billion in annual assistance to help offset the sales tax burden of low and modest-income families and individuals.

Budget 2019 also includes measures to help make more homes energy efficient, reducing heating costs overall and helping us down a path to a greener Canada.

Finally, I would like to point out that not only did the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal recently rule that the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act was constitutionally valid, but it prefaced its ruling by saying that climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions was "one of the great existential issues of our time". While Motion No. 230 would have the government turn its back on this threat, Canadians know we cannot and we must not.

We will move forward with our a plan, which is based on facts and evidence. I ask the House to vote against the motion.

● (1400)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Motion No. 230 from my Conservative Party colleague. I am pleased to have the opportunity to share my opinion.

As my colleague said in his speech, he took this measure from the NDP's policy book. He even said that a number of NDP members and our party's leader spoke about the idea of lowering heating costs for Canadians. That said, our new plan is even more ambitious. Our idea of lowering heating costs for Canadians has evolved, so much so that our leader recently announced an even more ambitious measure than the one proposed by my colleague. The measure would lower heating costs at the source, which is the real solution to the problem we are debating today.

Of course heating is essential in Canada with our climate. It is a basic need just like housing. The recently unveiled NDP plan is very clear. We were just talking about it this morning, when we were unveiling our broader plan for the environment and climate change. Our plan would renovate all Canadian homes by 2050 to make them more energy efficient. This solution would allow Canadian homes to save $900 a year. My colleague's proposal, which consists in removing the GST from home energy bills, would save Canadians only $117 a year on average, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

This week, Habitat for Humanity in partnership with Université de Sherbrooke and engineers, announced that they would develop a house using new technologies that would cost on average $8 a month to heat. That is the type of solution we need to be looking at instead of a half measure that simply removes the GST from home energy bills. The Conservatives should have chosen that solution instead of coming up with a half measure and hoping that would solve all our problems. We have to address the problem at the source. Homes have to be more energy efficient. The less energy we need to heat our homes, the more we save. We think that is the best approach.

I know several members and leaders of APCHQ-Estrie back home in Sherbrooke. They told me that they were pretty disappointed when the previous Conservative government cancelled the eco-energy retrofit program, a program that offered savings to Canadians that make energy efficient retrofits. The Conservative government decided to cut that program between 2011 and 2015 in its attempt to balance the budget at all costs.

The Conservatives speak out of both sides of their mouths. Today they are complaining that the cost of heating is too high, but when they had a chance to fix the problem, they went in the opposite direction and cut a program that helped people renovate their home and make it more energy efficient, which reduced their energy bill at the source, not just when they got their bill. This encourages people to be more environmentally conscious.

● (1405)

I would to remind members that buildings, which must be heated and air conditioned, are the third largest source of greenhouse gases. They represent 25% of energy-related emissions. Of the current stock of buildings, 70% will still be in use in 2050. Thus, to reduce current and future emissions, one of the most important steps we can take is to make our housing stock more energy efficient.

There is another aspect of this motion that is disappointing. When I started reading it, it was familiar and was something the NDP had talked about already, up to the last paragraph, paragraph (e). Once again, the Conservatives are trotting out the carbon tax bogeyman. They seem to be fixated on this. They talk about it every day in the House. They mentioned it at the very end of this motion, and it seems like a poison pill to prevent the NDP from supporting it.

As the member said in his speech, these are measures that we presented in the past, but they added the provision to repeal the carbon tax. It would seem that my colleague has managed to ensure that he will not have the support of our party on this issue. In the spirit of co-operation, he should have stuck to the issue of the GST.

That was a little disappointing, so I am going to propose a slight amendment to the motion that will reveal my colleague's true intentions. I am going to propose removing the part about the carbon tax. He can mull that over for the few minutes we have left. We will see if his desire to advance his cause by collaborating with other parties is genuine or if he is just trying to score political points.

Regardless, I think his main intention, gaining traction for his idea, is good. In general, his intentions here are good, but I want to point out that the real solution is reducing at-source energy costs. By merely lowering the final bill after calculating energy consumption, we are not encouraging households to reduce consumption because we are not reducing costs at the source. That means the more energy one consumes, the bigger the discount at the end of the year. Some of my colleagues have already talked about this. The bigger one's house, the more energy it takes to heat, the more it costs and the bigger the annual savings. It is contradictory, in a way. We should be encouraging people to consume less energy, not more.

I am going to propose an amendment that will reveal my colleague's true intentions and show us whether his mindset is one of collaboration or confrontation. I propose that the motion be amended by deleting the words "(e) repeal the Carbon tax".

● (1410)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that, pursuant to Standing Order 93(3), no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to a motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Mr. Bernard Généreux: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton West.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 230. I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, for the motion. I know my colleague is a very committed to his constituents. On this side of the House, he is famous for his annual tour throughout his riding, when he puts tens of thousands of kilometres on his van, his bike and even his canoe, getting out to know his constituents. I am very happy that he has brought this motion forward, representing the desires of his constituents to live more affordable lives and save money on essentials.

I would also like to recognize that this motion was also put forward in a private member's bill by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle a short while ago. Again, the intent was to provide more affordable lives and lifestyles for Canadians. Roy Rogers is famous for saying he never met a man he did not like. The current government is the same, in that it never met a tax it did not like, and its desire to keep taxing home energy seems to be part of that.

Home heating is a necessity; it is not a luxury. I have had the pleasure of living across the country, from Victoria to St. John's and a lot of places in between. Even in Victoria, where I have lived three separate times, I have seen severe winters. In the winter of 1996, I was living in Newfoundland, where winter is year round. In 2001, the year of the big snow, there was 22 feet of snow in Newfoundland. I remember shovelling my driveway after a snowstorm in June, but never in my life had I seen as much snow overnight as I did in Victoria in 1996. We got about three feet of snow overnight. A lot of houses in Victoria are not set up like houses in the rest of the country to deal with cold, so the heating is on non-stop when it turns cold, which, in Victoria, is usually at about 15°C.

The fact is that Canada is a winter country. I have lived in Fort McMurray, in Edmonton three times, in Toronto a couple of times, as well as Ottawa and St. John's.

An hon. member: Winnipeg.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I have not lived in Winnipeg, though my family is from Winnipeg. I have lived in Huntsville, Scarborough and Lake Louise and I have seen the effects of winter. As I said, heating our homes is a necessity and not a luxury.

I will note that in Edmonton, not this winter but the winter before, there was a record 176 consecutive days when the temperature dropped below 0°C and we had to heat our homes. Putting GST on top of home heating punishes Canadians. I would also note that on the last day of those 176 days, even as the temperature dropped below zero, I opened my front door and there was a spider hanging there, so my nightmares continue even in the winter.

Essentials are not taxed in this country. Groceries are not taxed, medical supplies are not taxed, sanitary products are not taxed, so home energy should be no exception. We asked the people of Ontario after years of provincial Liberal governments what it is like paying the GST on catastrophically high energy bills. People are getting punished.

Alberta has a carbon tax, which thankfully was just repealed by new premier Jason Kenney. Albertans were paying more in carbon tax than for energy, and then they were paying GST on the energy, as well as on the carbon tax. It puts a lie to the Liberal line that the carbon tax would be revenue neutral. In B.C. and Alberta alone, there was over a quarter of a billion dollars collected in GST alone. The PBO report, which Liberals like to reference so much, neglects to mention that there is GST on their imposed carbon tax, which goes straight into the coffers of the government.

I want to applaud my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove, who is fighting cancer right now. I want to let him know that we are thinking of him and that he is my prayers every night. He put through a private member's bill to remove the GST on the carbon tax, not to allow a tax on a tax.

● (1415)

What happened? Well, people on this side voted to eliminate the GST to help everyday Canadians, but of course, our Liberal colleagues voted against it, because again, there is never a tax they do not like.

Every dollar saved under this motion would be a dollar in the pockets of Canadians. I want to go over how much people would save on this. By 2022, people living in Newfoundland would be saving $151 a year; in P.E.I., $155; in Nova Scotia, $135; in New Brunswick, $142; in Quebec, $93; in Ontario, $116; in Manitoba, $95; in Saskatoon, $127; in Alberta, $121; and in British Columbia, $92. Therefore, the average Canadian would save over $100.

Why is this important? We heard recently in a report that 50% of Canadians are only $200 a month away from insolvency. They are just $200 away from not being able to pay their bills for food or whatever. That $200 is not very much, and so every little bit, every extra dollar in Canadians' pockets, is going to help them.

What would be covered under this rebate? All home energy, including electricity, natural gas, heating oil, propane, wood pellets, other heating sources for primary residences, would be exempt from the GST, and the CRA would get the utilities to rebate directly.

Earlier in my speech, I spoke about putting an Order Paper question to the government asking how much taxpayers' money it actually wasted sending out postcards. The Liberals submitted that it was $1 million. However, we just found out today that the total was actually $3.5 million the government wasted on postcards to send out to Canadians to let them know that they were going to get a GST rebate.

We heard a Liberal member earlier stand up and say that he is against the motion, that it is not good for the economy and that we need every penny we can get. Under this member's plan, we could have helped 31,000 families, or we could send out a postcard and waste $3.5 million, and that is a priority for the government. It had a chance to help 31,000 families or send a partisan, politically driven post card. What did they choose? They chose the partisan, politically driven postcard instead of helping 31,000 families. Every action the Liberals take has an effect on Canadians. They could have helped 31,000 Canadian families and chose not to.

I will go back to some of the comments from my constituents who are having difficult times right now in Edmonton and why it is important that we push this through to save them the GST on their home heating.

I got a note from Karen, who said, “I'm a senior with a fixed income and everything going up, it gets tighter every year.” Do members not think she would like to have the GST off her home heating? Maybe she could be one of those 31,000 families we could have helped instead of sending a postcard in the mail.

Bruce writes, “A lot worse off! I am 62 years old. I was forced into early retirement.... I take money out of my RRSP and Canada Revenue hammers me with taxes”. At 62, it is difficult to get back into the workforce, especially in Alberta after the government punished it with a tax on its energy industry. Do members not think we could help that person by rebating his GST on his home heating in Edmonton, when we have winter, God bless us, six or seven months a year?

Another said that he is worse off with higher taxes, including the carbon tax, and that there are fewer opportunities at work. Do members not think that we could help him with this instead of standing here and virtue signalling on a carbon tax? Of course not.

We have Sam, who says that he is worse off as prices are going up and up, and he is on a fixed income.

I would like to help seniors in our riding. We put through a motion on helping to protect them from fraud. They are on fixed incomes. Again, these are people we could help every single day across the entire country by taking the GST off home heating.

Conservatives support it. Canadians support it. I hope the government will get in line and support it as well.

● (1420)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat interesting listening to the Conservatives. We have heard them, not only today but in previous weeks and months, talk about the tax on tax, as if Stephen Harper never did it. One would think the Conservative Party never had a tax on tax.

Every week, Canadians from coast to coast to coast were paying a tax on a tax that Stephen Harper was very supportive of. When people put gas in their vehicle, there is a provincial and federal levy, and then there is the GST. My understanding is that the GST is a tax that is applied onto a tax. Yet, the Conservative Party is so offended by taxes on taxes, as if it has never happened before.

Why did Stephen Harper not deal with the tax on tax? What happened then to the oomph of the Conservative Party today, saying that a tax on a tax is bad? The Conservative Party is probably the one that came up with the idea of a tax on a tax. It was actually the Progressive Conservative Party in Alberta that first came up with the idea of a price on pollution in North America. That is the reality of it.

The Conservatives are really good at opposition, and I have said this before: I hope we keep them in opposition for many years. However, we really need to reflect on some of the speeches that Conservatives give in the House. They are truly amazing. We hear all about the balanced budget stuff. Conservatives try to give the impression that the Conservative Party is good at managing budgets. Seriously.

Stephen Harper took a multi-billion dollar surplus and turned it into a multi-billion dollar deficit even before there was a recession. That is the honest to God truth. That is the reality. Stephen Harper had deficit after deficit, and I would have to say it was for eight or nine years. He accumulated over $150 billion in deficits, and yet Conservatives try to give us advice on deficits.

By the way, as we know, the current leader just flip-flopped on his deficit projections. Now a Conservative government would take five years to get rid of the deficit. I can appreciate that, if we take a look at what Liberals have been able to do in the last little while because of many of the budgetary measures we have taken. We have seen the generation of over a million new jobs in Canada in the last three and a half years, because of some of the changes we have made.

The Conservative Party wants to ask about this tax or that tax, but what did it really do when it mattered the most to most Canadians?

The most substantial tax break given in many years by the House of Commons was in Bill C-2. We call it the middle-class tax break, the tax cut for Canada's middle class. Millions of families benefited all across Canada. Hundreds of millions of dollars were given to Canadians, to the middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it.

What did the Conservative Party do? The Conservatives voted against it. It is hard to believe that when it comes right down to voting, a Conservative Party that preaches about giving tax breaks voted against our tax cut. In fairness, the Conservatives also voted against a tax increase on Canada's wealthiest 1%, which is consistent with many of the different types of boutique tax credits the Conservatives like to come up with.

I would suggest that the Conservative Party and those deep thinkers within it, and here I am talking about people like Doug Ford and Jason Kenney, the potential leadership contenders in the next go-around, need to sit down with Stephen Harper and the current leader and start revisiting the types of issues they have to try to overcome between now and the next election.

● (1425)

When I go door-knocking and speak to residents of Winnipeg North, I am always happy to share with them the reality of the Conservative Party, and I must say that it can be very discouraging at times.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There are way too many conversations going on. There is one member of Parliament who is recognized and has the floor, and we are going to go back to him. He has about five minutes remaining in his time. I would ask the House to listen to what the member has to say and then we will see where we go from there.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that interjection. It was getting a little loud on the other side.

It is not that often that I agree with the New Democrats, but I agree with the previous speaker that this motion is really and truly more about spin and politics than about trying to develop good government policy. People should not be surprised by that, because this is the type of opposition that we have witnessed over the last three and a half years. “Don't let the facts spoil a good speech” is one of the mottos that come from the other side. The Conservative spin is truly amazing at times. It is almost as if they ignore the past, ignore all the things they have done and just wipe the slate clean. They are prepared to say anything at all that Doug Ford wants them to say.

The amount of influence that Stephen Harper and Doug Ford have today over the Conservative Party of Canada is amazing. I guess we have to throw in Jason Kenney too. I want to be fair to the Conservative Party. I am talking about those three particular individuals. I am sure the member opposite can appreciate that this is the reality of today. Those are the individuals who are now trying to come up with ideas for what is going to be the Conservative plan on the environment.

Recently, the premiers of Alberta and Ontario both said no to a price on pollution, and that is what the federal Conservative Party is saying. I suspect that the leaders of those three jurisdictions, the federal Conservative leader, Mr. Ford and Mr. Kenney, and possibly Mr. Harper, are sitting around a kitchen table trying to figure out what sort of plan they could have on the environment. The good news is that Conservatives said it would be before the end of June. Canadians have been waiting now for well over a year, which is when the Conservatives first talked about it. There are many individuals anxiously awaiting the Conservative policy on the environment.

Right from the very beginning, this government participated at the conference in Paris and brought those results back to Canada. There was a consensus built among many different stakeholders, and they all agreed that it was time for a price on pollution. Only the Conservative Party seemed to be violently reacting against having a price on pollution. All the Conservatives said was “Trust us, we will come up with some other plan.” Days turned into weeks, then into months, and now we are going well past a year, and the Conservatives have demonstrated one thing to date: that they do not have a plan.

Now a member moves a motion that we completely abandon the price on pollution. There are many provincial jurisdictions that already have a price on pollution. A national plan means that all regions of the country have to pay a price on pollution. This is something that many jurisdictions already have in Canada. Why would members not support something that is already in place in a majority of our provinces and territories today? The climate change incentive is providing a financial benefit for most of our constituents.

● (1430)

As the time has run out for the day, I wish everyone a wonderful and productive weekend.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

It being 2:32 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:32 p.m.)

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