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(HANSARD)

Monday, June 13, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 13, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)
[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The last time the debate was before the House, the hon. member for Davenport had five minutes left to conclude his remarks.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the phenomenal folks of Davenport for according me this great honour of bringing their voices, issues and stories to this House.

I would also like to acknowledge the former member for Davenport who served this House and the riding with great dignity and grace.

I would like to thank my family. This has been, and will continue to be, a family affair. I could not do this without my partner, my love, my wife Michelle and my children, Sam, Charlie and Lucy Rose, as well as our extended family.

Like other members of this House, in Davenport throughout the election and in fact for about a year before the writ dropped, we knocked on many doors. We hear so often that Canadians are disengaged, removed and cynical about politics, but in Davenport we found, and I imagine most of the members in this House found, the opposite to be true.

When at someone's door, the conversation we open ourselves up to is profound, and I daresay life-changing. It certainly changed mine. I would like to thank the people of Davenport. I would like to thank them for their time, patience, good humour, and their engagement at the door.

I know we interrupted people. We interrupted them a lot. They were having their dinner when we knocked on their door. They were

housecleaning or talking on the phone or feeding the baby, sometimes doing all of those things at the same time. We interrupted people when they were renovating their homes or having birthday parties. We woke their sleeping children, which is not a great vote-getting tool.

We caught people as they were rushing out to work or rushing home from work. And since so many people in Davenport are freelancers and are self-employed, independent contractors, small shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, we also interrupted them while they were working.

We knocked on doors and found a father who was sitting in the kitchen wondering when he will ever find a decent paying job again. We knocked on doors and found seniors who no one ever visits. We knocked on doors and found refugees who were fearful of unexpected knocks at the door.

There were new immigrants struggling to get a handle on life in Toronto. We found middle-aged women looking after elderly parents and young children. We found seniors who could not afford to live in the city they helped to build. We found students graduating from college or university with a debt that in my father's day would have been called a mortgage.

We found labourers who had just put in 12 hours, working outside, exposed to the elements, exposed because they have no disability insurance, no sick leave, and no extended health benefits. We found single moms who, every day, squeezed onto the Dufferin bus, who needed better and more affordable public transit but instead got rate hikes and service cuts.

We found urban workers with no workplace pension, no benefits, no job security, and no access to EI. We found middle-class families in debt, unable to afford or even find child care. We found families that could not find a decent, affordable apartment to raise their families.

We found Torontonians just barely getting by with little or nothing in the bank at the end of the month. We see banks recording billions of dollars of profit and they are recording this profit not once a decade, not once every few years but every three months.

The Budget

I was sent here to relay the voices and stories, the needs, hopes and dreams of the people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto, not to advocate on behalf of banks that have plenty of people doing that for them. I am here to tell the stories of the folks of Davenport and that is what I am going to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the member think that the Conservatives' budget protects the pension plans of workers who spent 20, 25 or 30 years working for an employer? These workers lost their pension plan after 30 years of work because their employer went bankrupt. These workers invested in their pension plans to secure their future, and they are losing their money after having worked for 30 years. Does the government not have the responsibility to protect the pensions of the workers who built this country? These people got up every single morning to go to work, and one day they wake up with nothing, even though they thought their retirement was secure. Was this budget not an opportunity for the government to protect these pension plans?

• (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, when I was knocking on doors during the election campaign, I met many seniors and one woman in particular stood out. She was an elderly woman who had immigrated here from Portugal. She had worked at the same factory for 23 years. She was a faithful, hard-working woman. She raised a family in Toronto and after 23 years the company closed up shop, and she was out of luck, with no pension. She is now working at Wal-Mart, one of the job-creation strategies of the government. She is having a very difficult time getting by.

I heartily concur with my hon. colleague here that, indeed, it is the government's responsibility to ensure that companies honour their commitment to workers, just as workers have honoured their commitment.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my friend from the opposite side to the House. I was listening to his speech carefully. He addressed some issues which are very near and dear to my heart as well. He talked about immigrants. He talked about elderly parents. He talked about seniors. He of course talked about students as well.

In this budget this government has come up with a plan which has been working. The plan is to support our seniors, our students, our doctors, and our family caregivers who take care of their ailing and infirm relatives at home. Specifically, this is the first time the Canadian government has introduced a firefighters tax credit.

Would the opposite member and his party support this budget?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his congratulations and congratulate him for his victory.

I am not sure if we are talking about the same seniors. When I am talking to seniors in Davenport, they are thinking that a less than \$2 a day increase in their pension is simply not a poverty reduction strategy. It is not going to lift a single senior out of poverty.

Across this country, our seniors, who built this country and made it the great nation it is today, a nation for which we now have the

responsibility of continuing to further that legacy, are wondering where the commitment from their government actually lies.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

At this opportunity, as this is my first speech in the new Parliament, I am pleased to thank the good voters of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for allowing me the privilege, once again, to represent their interests in the Government of Canada. I pledge to faithfully represent their interests to the best of my ability.

I congratulate the Prime Minister for the leadership role he has played in the good governance of Canada; a skill that continues to be acknowledged by thoughtful Canadians and the international community.

Allow me to take this moment to thank my family. My spouse Jamie, my daughters Chantal, Lauren, Ellyse and Amelia stood by me during the election. I thank them for their love, their support, and their patience.

I wish to thank the people who came out to my campaign during the election. I owe them a tremendous thanks from the bottom of my heart. I can assure them their generosity will be remembered.

I also wish to take this opportunity to salute the women and men of CFB Petawawa, which is located in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I gratefully acknowledge the support they have given me since I was first elected in the fall of 2000 and, most recently, in the last election.

The message I received from the military electors in every election in which I have been a candidate has been clear and short, "Keep fighting for us. We need you". I thank them for their support. I will not let them down. I have their backs.

I would also like to acknowledge the people in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke who make a living off the land, be it farming or forestry. Many of the traditional sources of employment, like the working forest, are under severe stress. Unlike, when I was first elected back in 2000, when there were only two MPs from our caucus to represent all of Ontario, today we have a large, strong and vibrant Ontario caucus. I look forward to working with my many new caucus colleagues to ensure the interests of Canadians, particularly, in rural Ontario, always have a voice.

As the MP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, a sprawling, rural riding in the upper Ottawa valley of eastern Ontario, I depend on valley residents and their common sense approach to life to guide me in Parliament. I am in good company when it comes to taking this approach. Valley wisdom was recognized by the most electorally successful Conservative premier of Ontario, Leslie Frost, when he would recount his favourite story about a judge in the village of Killaloe objecting to the pleas of a big city lawyer in his courtroom and said, "What you say may be in all them books, all right, but it ain't the Law of Killaloe."

The Budget

Too often today, with the rise of more government and the myriad of laws and regulations, which are the result of too much government, decisions lack the element of common sense Judge Dunlop in Killaloe was dispensing from his rural courtroom.

The budget that was re-introduced by our Conservative government, one that was approved by more voters than anything put forward by the opposition, is imbued with the same common sense. For example, we recognize the simple fact that companies do not pay taxes, people do. When we raise taxes on employers, they pass their costs on to the consumer. It is this common sense approach by our government that has resulted in the creation of 540,000 net new jobs since July 2009.

The best social program is a job. The law of Killaloe is about making difficult decisions on behalf of the people of Canada, without forgetting who we are, and where and how we live. I am pleased to share this story as the Prime Minister and his family joined valley residents near Killaloe for that great valley tradition: the farm pig roast for Canada Day.

The Prime Minister understands the average Canadian who works hard, pays their taxes, and plays by the rules. On May 2 the majority of voters in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke chose to elect a national, stable, majority Conservative government. We in the Conservative government believe that public policy should be driven by facts and evidence, not by ideology. Every step of the way, we will be introducing policies in this House supported by facts, evidence and common sense.

The federal budget has a number of important measures that will benefit the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Local employer Atomic Energy of Canada continues to benefit from having a Conservative government voice. The good news for the 2,700 employees at Chalk River Laboratories is the \$405 million announced in the budget.

• (1115)

The Conservative Party of Canada recognizes that, in order to be an environmental world leader, we need to focus on clean air, water, land and energy, and nuclear is the key to any national emission reduction plan. I have worked very hard to keep the Canadian Neutron Facility, the CNF, and the need for a new multi-purpose research reactor on the science agenda of our country.

In the 1990s, the former government of Jean Chrétien cut the budget of AECL by 42%. AECL then made a decision that basic nuclear research should be discontinued at Chalk River Laboratories unless it supported the commercial division of AECL. The Auditor General observed that AECL could not operate properly because the Liberal government refused to approve any business plan.

The 2006 federal election of the Conservative Party was a game changer for the good of the Chalk River Laboratories of AECL and of the entire upper Ottawa valley. The revitalization of AECL is a key component of our government's strategy for Canada to be a clean energy superpower. The latest budget allocation of \$405 million is evidence of our commitment to the environment and the need to provide dependable, economic sources of electricity for Canadian consumers.

Support for Canada's military announced in last year's budget does not change. Construction of a new Chinook helicopter hangar at CFB Petawawa is proceeding as planned, as outlined in our government's Canada first defence strategy, and the jobs that come with the needed expansion. Petawawa is experiencing record growth to provide the roads and sewer infrastructure to house the incoming soldiers and support personnel associated with the new helicopter squadron. The town of Petawawa, like all local municipalities, will benefit from the budget measure to legislate the annual \$2 billion gas tax fund expenditure from the federal government for municipal infrastructure.

Our forestry sector will benefit from the \$60 million announced in the budget to assist, innovate and tap into new opportunities abroad. Forestry has been a mainstay in the upper Ottawa valley for many generations and I am committed to working with local foresters to keep that employment base.

In addition to specific budget announcements, like AECL and the \$20 million announced over two years for the eastern Ontario development program, there are a number of specific measures that will benefit individuals. Enhancing the guaranteed income supplement, the GIS, for low income seniors, extending the eco-energy retrofit homes program and introducing the volunteer firefighters tax credit are just some of the measures in the budget that were positively received when I was on the campaign trail. What needs to happen now is for the budget to be passed and voted into law for Canadians to realize the benefits.

Canada's prosperity cannot be taken for granted. During the election campaign, I had the chance to speak to literally thousands of people. The one thing I heard again and again at people's doors is that people want government to remain focused on the economy and jobs. I know our Prime Minister will make choices that honour our shared values to govern on behalf of all Canadians.

The message I heard from voters this past election is that they want to work and they want us to work to get results and to bring people together across rural, urban, regional and provincial lines. This budget moves in that direction by responding to the needs of Canadians with proposals to help middle-class families, proposals that millions of Canadians voted for in the election, such as hiring more family doctors and nurses, making life more affordable, securing pensions and retirement security for seniors, measures that lift all seniors up. Reducing the tax burden sparks full-time job creation.

The Budget

This federal budget reaches out to families that need help with their budgets. During the election, I talked to people who have great difficulty making ends meet at the end of the month. I also spoke to individuals who have prospered in today's economy. I heard intense personal stories from people who I took into account to motivate me to work in Parliament.

People are working hard. They are working harder than ever. I have met people who are working two or three jobs to make ends meet in the absence of full-time employment. This budget is for them.

• (1120)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her re-election.

I noted that the member said that the government was basing its budget and its policies on facts, evidence, common sense and on the fact that it wishes to be an environmental world leader. However, the government continues to give billions in corporate tax cuts to the big fossil fuel industry and a mere \$8 million over several years for all of the northern and aboriginal communities in Canada. It killed the eco-energy retrofit program last year and renewed it for only one year.

Why are we not providing a security of tenure and an incentive for the small and medium Canadian businesses, which are the backbone of our economy, to help build up their businesses and to provide well-paying futuristic employment for the young people of Canada?

• (1125)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, there was mention of the eco-energy retrofit homes fund. That program was so popular that the money was exhausted before the end of the fiscal year. Yes, we are reintroducing it once again and we are hoping that people will be gearing up for the construction season so they can take advantage of this very valuable program.

Large companies as well as small companies are benefiting from Canada's budget. Decreasing taxes make us more competitive throughout the world. Large companies, as well as small companies, employ people. Every large company across the spectrum deserves to have the same tax treatment.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke said that this was a very good budget and that the \$11 billion in cuts to federal government programs and services were very much needed. In 2010, prior to the budget being tabled or even conceived of, she said that cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard were warranted. The member said that members of the marine community were far too reliant on services from the Canadian Coast Guard and that people in other parts of Canada would never dream of expecting the Canadian Coast Guard to come to their rescue should they ever be found in trouble.

Does the hon. member agree with her previous statement? Did she have any prior information back in 2010 that her government was about to make significant cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard? Or, were her statements back in 2010 simply in preparation for those cuts trying to make the case or give the illusion that the Canadian Coast Guard does not provide an essential, important service to the Maritime community, to boaters and to those who make their living from the sea? That, indeed, is the impression that is being left.

She agrees with \$11 billion in cuts. One of the very first cuts to be established was to the basic safety and security to mariners. Did the member have any information back in 2010 about those cuts? Does she agree with the closure of MRSC Coast Guard station in St. John's and in Quebec City today?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the safety of mariners is foremost and always has been, but I will give some background.

Members of the defence committee travelled to the Maritimes and visited different bases because there was an issue regarding search and rescue. What we heard over and over again was that Maritimers were suffering as a consequence of the 1993 decision by the federal government, which it campaigned on, to cut the helicopter order. When that order was cancelled, it not only cancelled the Sea King replacement, it also cancelled the search and rescue choppers as well as troop movement. For troop movement, helicopters would have been very helpful in Afghanistan and may have saved a number of lives.

However, the real crux of what we were looking at with respect to the search and rescue helicopters is that after over a billion dollars in penalties and having to pay for other contracts for which we received nothing, we ended up getting the same brand scaled down for more money. As a consequence, we do not have enough helicopters to keep going. We are looking forward to correcting that error as we go on.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I again want to thank the good folks of Cypress Hills—Grasslands for allowing me to return to the House in this session of Parliament.

It has been an interesting ride over the last 10 years. When we were first elected in 2000, we had 66 members of Parliament in our caucus. In 2004, that went to 99, in 2006 to 124, in 2008 to 143 and then we came back with 166 members of Parliament in 2011.

I want to point out that it is not an accident that things have happened this way. We have had a long-term strategy and long-term leadership by the Prime Minister. The first goal was to hold the Liberals accountable in 2004. The Canadian people did that after enduring so much through the ad scam hearings and found out just how deep the rot went in the Liberal government and in the Liberal Party. The people were glad to begin to make a change in 2004.

In 2006, we were able to come to government and early on the Prime Minister's leadership showed through once again very clearly as he moved to reduce taxes right off the bat. We had GST tax reductions. We increased the personal tax exemptions so that many people were removed from the tax roles. That is the kind of leadership that led to 2008 when we were re-elected again.

The Budget

When the worldwide downturn, the crash, took place, we were ready for that. Canadians were very protected by the government. I hate to think what would have happened had the third party now, the opposition at the time, come to power, because clearly it would have spent us completely into the ground.

We were able to come forward with stimulus spending with the programs Canadians really wanted to see and put them forward. Our economic action plan impacted every community throughout this country. I hear the members opposite even thanking us today for having done that for them. Everyone is glad to see those programs in place that have affected water treatment plants and highways in my riding. The RInC program also had a positive effect on many small communities in my riding. Those grants often were not big grants but they were grants that allowed communities to go ahead with projects they had thought were important for a long time.

Now we come to 2011 and once again I see an increase in the government caucus. I think that has happened because Canadians trust us. Canadians have seen good leadership and good management of the economy. We have trusted leadership and they wanted to see good results and were ready to see those.

We have come to Parliament to bring the throne speech forward and the budget. We are here today to talk about the budget. However, before I do that, I would like to talk on a couple of the key issues that were found in the throne speech that directly impact the budget and will directly impact the next year and subsequent years for Canadians. It is important to note that, as one of the news organizations pointed out, the Conservatives are sticking to their stay-the-course plan with no surprises in the throne speech which lays out their agenda for the coming parliamentary session.

What we told Canadians we wanted to do last year, we presented again this spring when we came back to Parliament. They know what we are about and what we want to bring forward.

In my riding there are a number of very important issues. The one issue that has been around the second longest and has been a real irritant to people in my riding has been the long gun registry. The people in my riding finally have a commitment from the government that the registry will be revoked. It is very good news for the people of Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

The firearms community has asked for a number of reasonable changes to the Firearms Act. In order to carry that out, a few things like licensing infractions, which have been so prevalent because of the way the Liberals set up the entire system, should be taken out of the Criminal Code. If that were done, people would not be charged under the Criminal Code just because they neglected to renew a licence. Certainly, it seems that we should be removing the reverse onus character of this whole legislation. It makes citizens into criminals without them actually doing anything. That would certainly help out as well. With regard to certification, it seems that if we could move the one form of certificate for gun owners, that would be a much simpler system than we have right now.

• (1130)

In terms of training, the provinces and the federal government have had different expectations and demands, and, in some places, different courses. It would certainly be good if we could put those

courses together to cover the same material to avoid duplication. We have tried to avoid that in so many other areas in this government and it would be good to do that here as well.

There are some other smaller things from the past, one being that when firearms were seized, they could be returned to wildlife organizations, for example, and then be auctioned off to raise money for wildlife projects. We would like to see a return to that as well. That change only took place in the last couple of years, so there should be nothing untoward about that.

Firearms owners are more than adequately served and prefer to deal with their local RCMP. They have done that in the past and we could move toward that as well. That is one of the things in the throne speech that is important to people in my riding.

Another important issue to my constituents is the funding of political parties. As everyone knows, political parties get their funding in a number of ways. They get it through donations; they get some of their funding from the rebates for election expenses; and they have received funding through the per-voter subsidy. Our government has committed to removing that per-voter subsidy, and that is found in this legislation. People in my riding tell me that it cannot happen too soon. They think that political parties are well taken care of and should be supported by the folks who really want to support them, not by the taxpayer.

A big issue in my riding, and probably the longest term irritant to my folks, is the Canadian Wheat Board. There is a long history to the Canadian Wheat Board, going back to 1943 when crop sales to the wheat board were made mandatory and farmers were not given any choice in the matter. When Europe needed a large supply of cheap grain, the Canadian government made a decision at the time to supply such grain to Europe and it made participation in the Canadian Wheat Board mandatory. Our farmers have been paying the cost of that ever since.

It seems there was no vote when this was imposed on farmers. There was no vote in 1998 when the Liberals changed the legislation to make it impossible for farmers to get out, and that resulted in farmers going to jail. There was no vote by farmers on whether or not they wanted their colleagues and other producers to end up in jail. The previous government was only too happy to do that.

I should note that Australia has opened up its wheat board and that grain acres are actually up there, while Canada has had a long-term decline in the amount of grain acres being seeded. Canola has passed wheat as the number one crop on the Prairies. The reason for that has to do with marketing and the ability of farmers to market their own grain.

The Budget

We are looking forward to working with the entire value chain, including the Canadian Wheat Board, to bring in an open market for western Canadian grain so that our farmers have the same opportunities, the same experiences, the same things available to them that other farmers across Canada have.

We want to work with the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board. We want to work with folks who want to see a wheat board exist in some form in western Canada, in order to give our farmers what they would like to see. However, we will certainly not have the single desk, and farmers will be free to market their own grain. By opening the market up, the Canadian grain industry, the farmers, producers and communities, are going to attract investment.

Finally, we will be encouraging innovation. Our new varieties of grain will not have to go to Montana so that I can drive down and watch it being grown across the border where Montana farmers benefit from western Canadian-developed grain. Certainly, value-added jobs will be created across Canada.

We want to work with everyone in the value chain to bring this transition. There is a huge opportunity here for the board and communities. We really want to see them move ahead.

I want to move from the throne speech to the budget speech, as time seems to be going by fairly quickly here.

I just want to touch quickly on the fact that folks in Cypress Hills—Grasslands have told me that there are many challenges. They appreciate what we have done and they want us to work on balancing the budget as quickly as possible, a commitment that we have made. They are encouraging us to move as fast as we can to get back to balanced budgets and then to move on from there. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to represent them.

I found a quote last night by Tony Blair about deficit budgeting that, “The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It's very easy to say yes”.

We certainly want to be able to say yes to Canadians, but no to spending their money in ways they do not approve.

• (1135)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise for the first time in this new Parliament. Representing the people of the Northwest Territories is always a great pleasure.

I was hoping to rise on the budget, but I also do not mind speaking on the throne speech because we have not had a debate on it yet and there are a number of serious issues with it.

I want to compliment my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands on his re-election as well, because I know he is a hardworking MP and will continue to be so.

He talked about the long gun registry. The Conservatives' plan to take out the long-gun registry will change the ability of provinces to institute their own registries.

Is the federal government considering making available to the provinces the information that is now available within the national long gun registry, if they wish to constitute their own long gun registries under their property rights acts or any other legislation

pertaining to them? Would the government be willing to turn that information available in the national gun registry over to the provinces?

• (1140)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite on his re-election as well.

The question needs to be asked of the member whether he is going to work with us to revoke the long gun registry, making it much more useful to Canadians, or is he going to oppose those changes?

Certainly the wildlife and firearms communities have been responsible in their asks to government when they have come forward and made suggestions for changes they want to see made in the future.

One of the things we are going to provide funding for, and the member would probably appreciate this, is another \$20.9 million to continue to waive the firearms licence renewal fees for all classes of firearms. We are going to continue to work with firearms owners and communities until we can revoke the long gun registry.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the remarks by the member for Cypress Hills. He claimed that the long-term irritant in his riding was the Canadian Wheat Board. We know his position, that it is to undermine the board and virtually destroy it.

However, there is also another election that takes place in boundaries similar to his own riding's. That is the election of Canadian Wheat Board directors. In the last election, the pro-single-desk-selling director won substantially. That shows there is a juxtaposition in his riding.

Based on that, is the parliamentary secretary for the Canadian Wheat Board or the government willing to hold a plebiscite so that we can see the position of farmers who are marketing grains specifically? Also, will the government be doing a cost-benefit analysis of the Canadian Wheat Board before it brings in legislation to destroy it?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it actually is very simple: We believe that farmers will support the Canadian Wheat Board with their grain if the Wheat Board is something that will work for them. That is the opportunity we would like to give them.

However, if the member opposite wants to start comparing things, is he now prepared to back our proposal and plans now that we have more seats in western Canada in the agricultural area than his party actually has in the House? Is it not time for him to give up his stubborn position and start working for western Canadian farmers, so they can have the same kind of prosperity and opportunity that farmers have across this country?

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Pontiac.

The Budget

I am proud to rise in this budget debate as the new MP for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. I am only the third person to hold this seat since its creation. My two predecessors have set a very strong record in representing my riding, they being Dr. Keith Martin and, before him, the former premier of British Columbia, Dave Barrett.

I also want to thank my partner, Teddy Pardede, who I think always supported me in my campaigns because he thought I would never win. Now he is in for a big surprise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca has the floor and I would encourage all members in the House to give him the respect he is due.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the voters of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for giving me the privilege of serving as their voice in this House. I pledge to keep their concerns front and centre in all the work I do here.

I represent a very diverse riding, stretching from Willis Point and Prospect Lake in the north, down through Royal Oak, Glanford and West Saanich to Esquimalt, which is my hometown, then west along the Strait of Juan de Fuca through View Royal, Highlands, Langford, Colwood, Metchosin, East Sooke and Sooke, and it does not end there. It stretches to Otter Point and Shirley, through Jordan River and all the way to Point Renfrew. I think I may have the most municipalities of any riding in the country.

When we get to Port Renfrew, we are a long way from downtown Victoria. This geographic reach means that my riding is economically very diverse. We start with industrial workers and government workers downtown and go through the suburbs to farming communities, and end up with logging and fishing as the main supports in Port Renfrew.

It is not as diverse a community in the multicultural sense as many other constituencies. While the percentage of new Canadians may not be large, there are significant communities of Chinese and Indo-Canadians in my riding. I am also proud to say that Esquimalt is home of an Ismaili mosque. In particular, we have a bunch of new Canadians performing very important roles in my community, the very large number of Filipinos working as caregivers and in our health care system. I want to make them welcome here today.

Where Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is most diverse is perhaps surprising to the members of this House. As a gay man, I am proud to stand in this House as a member of the largest minority in my riding, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and transsexual people.

The second-largest group in my riding is first nations. My riding is home to five first nations: the Esquimalt Nation, Songhees, Beecher Bay, Tsouke and Pacheedaht.

Perhaps even more surprising to those in eastern Canada would be that the third largest group in my riding is francophones, largely due to the presence of CFB Esquimalt.

In my riding, there are five main economic drivers, and this budget does very little to help any of those sectors and, in fact,

threatens all five of them. It threatens employment at the base and at the shipyards in my riding. It threatens employment at Victoria General Hospital. It threatens employment in post-secondary education at Royal Roads University and Camosun College. Most importantly, it threatens the new jobs that have appeared in recreation and tourism, and it does nothing to help small business in my riding.

This is a very mixed economy, driven by both public and private sectors.

I want to talk about some of the common concerns in my riding, which are shared with the rest of Canada, concerns like a shortage of family doctors, the affordability of everyday life and the prospect of a secure retirement for all.

In addition, I want to talk about some concerns that are very specific to my riding, in particular the severe lack of infrastructure and services in my riding in the face of very rapid growth in suburban areas. This has led to sprawl that threatens farm lands and wilderness areas. It has led to congestion, as families are forced farther and farther from the core in the search of affordable housing. It has led to an acute shortage of child care spaces, and here I want to tell the House a few of stories I heard during the election campaign.

I met a woman at the door who had been waiting more than a year to go back to work, because she could not find a quality child care space for her child. We not only lose the economic value of her not returning to work but that family also loses economically every day when she cannot go back to work because there is not a safe, quality child care place for her child.

I met a family in Sooke forced to drop one child in Langford, a 20-minute drive away, then to drive another 20 minutes to Esquimalt to drop the other child off before they can both then head to their jobs. So that family is spending an increasingly long period of time together in the car instead of at home where they belong.

I met a Saanich family whose child care arrangements for their three children were such a complicated patchwork that they actually had to use a spreadsheet to make sure they picked up all of their kids at the right place at the right time, because both parents have to work to afford housing in my community.

Residents in my community are also concerned about the potential cutbacks that will cause job losses at the base. They are concerned because of the enormous uncertainty for the families of those who serve in the Canadian reserves and those who work in civilian positions at the base.

The Budget

•(1145)

However, they are also concerned that the impact of those cuts may affect the ability of the Canadian Forces to do the difficult and dangerous jobs we ask them to do every day on our behalf. So far, the government has not made it clear what kinds of cuts those will be and who will pay the price of the corporate tax cuts being handed out in this budget.

People in my riding are also concerned about endangered species like wild salmon and orcas because the environment is not only essential to our future species, but also to the hundreds of jobs that exist in my riding in fishing, recreation and tourism.

How does the budget address the common concerns about which I have talked? The answer is, not at all. In my riding no family doctor is currently taking new patients. If people's family doctor retires or gets ill, where do they go? They go to the emergency room, which drives health care costs up, and there is nothing in the budget to ensure there will be more family doctors for families in my riding.

On affordable housing, there is nothing at all in the budget. Lack of affordable housing leads to homelessness and couch surfing for hundreds of people in my riding. It also leads to far too many families spending far too high a percentage of their incomes on housing. This means many families whose parents work end up at food banks. When we talk about how the recession ended, that is simply not true for most families in my riding. What do we find on their behalf in the budget? Nothing. There is nothing for child care and nothing for affordable housing.

How about infrastructure? Congestion in my riding causes lost dollars in the economy, harm to the environment and lost time for families. We need the federal government to step up to the plate with adequate funding for rapid transit and restoring E&N Rail, which both the Liberals and Conservatives have neglected so passenger service can no longer be run on this railway, which was a condition of British Columbia joining Confederation.

People in my riding are also worried about a secure retirement. Once they have paid the high costs of housing and child care, helped their kids pay the high cost of post-secondary education and helped their parents with the high cost of prescription drugs, there is very little left to put away for their own retirement. What are the Conservatives doing? They are pushing for something that very few outside Bay Street want. They are pushing for a private and voluntary retirement savings plan, where most of the increase in retirement income will be sucked up by the brokers on Bay Street rather than go into the hands of hard-working retirees. What Canadians want and need is an expanded and strengthened CPP.

On the question of jobs, what do we find in the budget? We find the wrong approach. The government is promising to cut more than 2,000 defence jobs, creating great uncertainty in my riding.

When it comes to shipbuilding, the government is playing favourites, trying to pick winners which may kill off shipyards in some parts of our country by denying a fair distribution of this important work around the country and by threatening the ability to build and maintain our own ships on all coasts in the country.

It seems to me that the Conservatives are curiously proud to have introduced the same budget they introduced in March. They are curiously proud not to have listened to Canadians during the election campaign.

I want to close by referring to a letter I received from Mrs. Pommelet's grade 4-5 class at Marigold School in my riding. In their letter, the students call on all of us in the House to do something about congestion that makes them late for their sports practices, to do something about the threatened cuts that might weaken our defences at CFB Esquimalt and to do something to protect our coastal environment against existing tanker traffic.

Even these grade 4-5 students in my riding recognize what the government does not recognize in the budget. They recognize that we are a community that needs to be addressing pressing common problems much more than huge corporate tax cuts, that tackling these common problems together will do far more for our future prosperity than the government's approach and that working together is essential for our common survival on this planet.

•(1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to welcome the hon. member, who is also from beautiful British Columbia, and I thank him for his comments. I have two questions for him. The first one is a general question, and the second is more specific.

In British Columbia, we had the opportunity to see this budget before and during the election. I think that most people in the province knew what the Conservatives would do if we had the honour to be re-elected. They were very familiar with the budget and platform, and they once again voted with confidence.

Second, the \$3,000 tax credit for firefighters was important to the people of British Columbia. People in that province wanted it. That is something in the budget that is very well known and well received by the people of British Columbia. What does the member have to say about that?

•(1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his election.

On the general question, the majority of British Columbians did not vote for the Conservative government and in my riding they did not vote for this agenda.

On the member's very specific question, I would very much like to stand in the House and support a tax credit for volunteer firefighters, but in my riding that needs to be a refundable tax credit, which this credit is not.

The Budget

During the election campaign I met with Chelsea Kuzman, the volunteer fire chief in Port Renfrew in my riding. She is not only one of the few women volunteer fire chiefs, she is also the youngest volunteer fire chief in the country, at the age of 21.

This is a community where employment is largely seasonal and if people can get work, sometimes it is only part-time for part of the year.

I would only be supporting these kinds of tax credits if those volunteer firefighters in Port Renfrew could access those tax credits by making them refundable.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to extend congratulations to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca on his election. As it happens, we are neighbours. I am very pleased to see him here on behalf of his constituents.

Has the hon. member had an opportunity to look at the Parliamentary Budget Officer's most recent report? The fact is the government has used tax credits as the largest, fastest growing component of budgetary expenditures. The effect of these sorts of tax credits, as he has rightly pointed out, do not benefit people who are not able to pay taxes. Could the member comment on whether we need more oversight of this matter?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on her victory. As she has said, we are in neighbouring ridings. One of the many municipalities in my riding is the municipality of Saanich, which I share with the hon. member. I expect to see her at many of the same community events in the future.

On the question of tax credits, as I mentioned, my problem with the Conservative approach is that these are non-refundable tax credits. There are many people in my riding who actually need help, but the fact that these are non-refundable tax credits means they are no help at all. In particular, volunteer firefighters are taking great risks with potentially great sacrifices on behalf of their community, yet the government denies them the benefit of these tax credits.

I would much rather see a fair tax system to start with, a system that would promote the creation of jobs in my riding so many more people would not have to be dependent on tax credits.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Assistant Deputy Speaker.

It is an honour for me to rise in this chamber for the first time on behalf of the people of Pontiac. First and foremost, I would like to say a big thank you to the people of my riding for their trust in me. It is with great pride that I accept the mandate to represent the interests of their families. I promise that I will do so every day in a dedicated, committed and constructive manner, along with all the members of the House, in order to achieve tangible results for my constituents.

Communities like mine did not simply choose a new member of Parliament. In the history of my riding, with only one exception, voters have elected Conservative or Liberal members since 1867. However, this year, like 4.5 million Canadians across the country and 1.5 million Quebeckers, they sent a clear message: they want

change in Ottawa. It is even more apparent that they want a Canada where the people's interests are the priority and where no one is left behind. I am extremely proud to note that the people of my riding want this positive change but, like them, I am very concerned. I am concerned because the government does not seem to have understood that 60% of the population did not vote for them.

As a result, we once again have before us the same budget that reflects the Conservatives' same old habits, that puts the profits of big business ahead of the interests of the people, that puts the interests of the most profitable banks far above those of Canadian families, that puts the interests of big polluters far ahead of environmental concerns, and that puts the interests of companies that are sending our jobs abroad far ahead of those of small Canadian businesses that create jobs in Canada.

I am concerned because there are real problems in my riding of Pontiac, which is one of the most underprivileged ridings in Quebec. These are problems that do not exist in the Bay Street boardrooms or the big boardrooms of large oil companies. These are serious, tangible problems. Among other things, we, like other areas, have lost many jobs in the forestry industry, an industry that is currently in crisis. Since 2003, we have lost almost 75,000 jobs across Canada. The forestry industry accounts for close to 12% of the manufacturing GNP in Canada. It is a cornerstone of 300 communities, a number of which are in Quebec and in my riding of Pontiac.

In its budget, the government claims that it is coming to the aid of the forestry industry, but it is not enough. The government continues to favour the big oil companies and the automotive industry with billions of dollars in tax breaks despite the fact that the forestry industry employs at least twice as many people.

If the government had wanted to help the industry, it could have easily provided at least the same level of assistance it gave to automobile manufacturers. It could have ensured that loans at reasonable rates were available to help the industry refinance its debt and adapt to new market realities, such as renewable and green technology.

In addition, I have spoken with people who used to work in the industry and they are worried about their retirement income. Some of the workers, such as those who worked at the paper mill in Masson-Angers, stand to lose as much as 40% of their pensions because foreign companies are filing for bankruptcy and the government is not protecting Canadians' pensions.

Instead of creating sustainable jobs in this industry and protecting workers' pensions, this government is choosing to put its friends' interests before everyone else's.

• (1200)

[*English*]

I have also recently had the honour of meeting with leaders of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. Much of the Pontiac is on Algonquin territory. I also take this opportunity to recognize that this very House and Parliament rests on Algonquin land. I, for one, thank the Algonquin people for their welcome.

The Budget

The Algonquins of the Pontiac are deeply worried. On Kitigan Zibi, for example, more than 60% of the people do not have access to basic water infrastructure. The water they do have is so radiated that it is not even fit for animal, let alone human consumption. In addition, some houses sit on land where radon gases are three times the allowable amount.

These serious basic problems keep them from investing sufficiently in other necessary services like education and policing.

As the Auditor General recently pointed out, these fundamental issues of survival among our first nation peoples are a blot on Canada. It is a shame that this budget does not even go far enough to begin to address these problems.

The Algonquins of the Pontiac and I truly wonder what the government is waiting for.

I have also talked to the people in the south of my riding. They are deeply worried by the announced cuts to the public service.

Having worked as a public servant for more than 10 years, I know very well what “strategic” and “operational reviews” are code words for: unacceptable workloads, more contracting out of jobs, fewer good-paying jobs and fewer opportunities for promotion, but these cuts are also bad for all Canadians. The reliance on attrition and efficiencies in the public sector to balance the budget will reduce the quality of the services provided by the public service workers as they are called upon to provide the same services to Canadians with fewer resources and less staff.

Yet, the government is moving forward with \$4 billion in cuts to public services, while it continues to be less than forthcoming as to where it thinks the fat is that it is likely to be trimming.

•(1205)

[*Translation*]

I have also spoken with seniors in my riding who cannot make ends meet, and whose income is not increasing. Yet the budget contains nothing except promises of meetings sometime in the future; there are no measures to improve our public pensions. It is unacceptable that seniors are living in poverty.

I have also spoken with people who cannot find a family doctor or who have to wait months to see a specialist. It is even harder in areas like mine, the Pontiac, in Maniwaki, Gracefield, Bouchette, Shawville and other places. Yet the government is simply proposing that we forgive a portion of student debt for doctors and nurses. There is no mention of increasing the number of doctors in areas such as the Pontiac, where thousands of people do not have access to a family doctor. Many people are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing major polluters instead of promoting a green economy and protecting the water in our lakes and rivers.

All of these reasons will keep me from voting for this budget and for the same old Conservative rhetoric.

[*English*]

However, in the near future, I trust that the Prime Minister will respect the mandate that our team brings into Parliament. I look forward to working with all members of the House on practical

solutions that will make a difference for the majority of the citizens in the Pontiac.

The good people in the Pontiac voted New Democrat for the first time and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted for a more respectful government. They voted for a perspective that does not reduce Canadians to economic units, an option which understands that there is more to being a Canadian citizen than paying taxes, that there is such thing as the good life in a country that has at its heart the principle of caring for each other. They voted for a stronger, more social Canada, with a strong place for Quebec in it; a Canada where after a productive life one can take a much deserved rest; a Canada where universal health care is a fact, not simply an empty phrase; a Canada which enables families to make ends meet, that helps create new innovative green jobs; and a Canada which leaves to our children, my children, a beautiful environment filled with diverse ecosystems because it is a good in itself and not a means.

By voting that way, they made history. The mandate they gave our party is crystal clear. I, for one, will work tirelessly and constructively with all my colleagues in the House to fulfill it.

Finally, I would like to say that I am deeply honoured to serve all the people of the Pontiac and that I am doubly honoured to serve the people of Canada, with every member of this House.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate my new colleague on his election to the House.

I took special note of some of the things said about aboriginal people here in Canada. I take a great interest in trying to help the aboriginal people of my country to move forward being that I am Métis and have some very close links to aboriginal people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan alike.

I note that in the budget \$97.2 million is afforded to different projects for aboriginal people and that follows the 2010 budget that allowed for some housing to be built on reserve and a number of other measures.

In the last Parliament we introduced some specific measures that would help aboriginal people. I am interested to know if the member is willing to support those measures? Aboriginal women have suffered greatly because they do not have the same rights as other Canadian women. The matrimonial real property act would afford the same rights to aboriginal women on reserve finally after decades of being suppressed. I am interested to hear yes or no from the member. Would he support the rights of aboriginal women if we bring that bill forward again?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and I would also like to congratulate her. I support the rights of aboriginal Canadians. Supporting aboriginal rights and supporting the budget are two very different things.

The Budget

I visited the Algonquin people in my riding. They looked at the budget. They see what is there for them and feel it is not enough. The budget does not propose enough solutions to basic problems like water. Nor does it do enough to protect the women and children of these communities or even to ensure that these communities have a police force.

Clearly, I will not be supporting this budget, but that does not mean that we cannot work together in the future on this question, which is important to us both.

• (1210)

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Pontiac on his speech and on his election.

I heard him say that 60% of the Algonquin people in his community do not have access to clean water, a basic right and a basic necessity that people the world over need to have. In a country as rich as Canada it is quite shocking that members of his community do not have this basic right.

I would like to ask my colleague what feedback he is getting from his constituents when they learn that the government is going to be giving \$15 billion a year in corporate tax cuts in the budget and yet it is also going to be chopping another \$11 billion out of our public expenditures? What kind of reaction is my colleague getting from his constituents?

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Speaker, I was talking to Chief Whiteduck just last week. He thinks it is a shame, c'est honteux, that we are giving these tax breaks to the largest and wealthiest corporations in this country when children do not even have access to water, or the water they do have is so poisoned that they cannot even give it to their pet cat.

There are also fundamental issues that this kind of government revenue could address, such as proper policing on aboriginal communities. Crime rates are high. Drug addiction is a big problem. There are a number of issues surrounding radon gas in particular communities on the Kitigan Zibi reserve and also in Barriere Lake. This is my constituents' reaction.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

As I rise to speak formally in the House for the first time since my re-election, I would like to thank the constituents of Edmonton—St. Albert for once again placing their trust in me and returning me to this honourable chamber. I look forward to serving them in my capacity of their member of Parliament.

Many thanks also go to my campaign team and hundreds of volunteers for their hundreds and hundreds of hours of hard work. Special thanks to my family and friends who continued to support me in my role as a member of Parliament.

Our government has clearly demonstrated that our economic action plan is working. If anyone needs proof of this, just last week Statistics Canada announced over 22,000 new net jobs were created in the month of May, bringing the total number of net new jobs to

560,000 since July 2009. The jobless rate is at 7.4%, the lowest it has been in more than two years. This also marks the seventh straight quarter of economic growth.

A recent forecast predicted Canada's economy will grow by 3.2% in 2011, and a further 3.1% in 2012. The future for Canada is bright and the steady job growth rate demonstrates our government is clearly on the right track.

Canadians have given our government a strong mandate to focus on building a stable economy and securing jobs. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan stays the course with a prudent, low tax plan that will continue to support the economic recovery and create more jobs.

This budget contains new measures that will have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of every Canadian. These include a new children's art tax credit and a new family caregiver tax credit, extending the popular eco-energy retrofit program to help families lower their heating and electricity bills, enhancing the GIS so that low income seniors will receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples, and enhancing or extending the programs to help businesses keep workers and providing a hiring credit for small businesses to make new hires. These measures build on our government's strong record of support for families, seniors and small businesses, a record that I believe speaks for itself.

I would also draw attention to several significant specific achievements of this government. We have cut taxes more than 120 times since forming government and increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. Thanks to our Conservative government's decisive tax relief actions, a typical family will save more than \$3,000 a year in taxes. We reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, and the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. Significantly, we have removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls altogether, and introduced pension income splitting for seniors.

I am also pleased to see our government has set out a three point plan to eliminate the deficit, a plan that is achievable and measurable. As a result, we remain on track to balance the budget by 2014-15. I am proud of the work our government has done to bring our country through the global downturn. By all accounts, we have done a remarkable job and set an example for the entire world to follow. For these reasons, I will support this budget.

However, high taxes are still a problem for Canadian taxpayers. The Fraser Institute recently declared Monday, June 6 as tax freedom day, the day on which average Canadians have paid their total tax bill for the year and at that point start working for themselves.

The Budget

In 2011, the average Canadian family will earn \$93,831 in income and pay a total of \$39,960 in taxes to all levels of government, or 42.6%. This year's tax freedom day is two days later than last year's, and ironically is due to our growing economy and Canadians' increasing incomes, which moved many of them into higher tax brackets. There is no sign that tax freedom day will arrive any sooner next year.

Over and over again I am asked, why is it so difficult for government to trim the excess when Canadians across the country have to cut back on their variable spending and make a conscious effort to stretch their hard-earned dollars to the limit. This budget optimistically predicts \$4 billion in savings, or 1.5% of total federal spending. If federal departments were able to spend \$4 billion less than expected last year without any planning or cuts, then I would suggest we could actually find additional savings within the budget's proposed \$4 billion. Canadians expect nothing less of us, and we should reward their trust by delivering common sense federal spending proposals to utilize taxpayers' moneys effectively and efficiently.

• (1215)

Last week, the Manning Institute published research indicating that a vast majority of Canadians, over two-thirds, are becoming less dependent on government. Canadians expect less of government, except in core areas such as public safety. Canadians are increasingly more reliant on themselves, their families and volunteer organizations, and becoming less reliant on government. Canadian taxpayers expect government to focus on that which it can do effectively and efficiently.

Accordingly, the government will conduct a one-year government-wide strategic and operating review as part of our three-point plan to balance the budget. Perhaps one of the first areas we should focus our attention on is the duplication of federal and provincial departments and programs.

Theoretically, it is estimated that the federal government could reduce its operating budget by \$44 billion a year and therefore eliminate the deficit by spending only in areas that fall under the federal government's exclusive jurisdiction, and I mention that theoretically. I am certainly not advocating leaving the provinces entirely to their own devices. However, one must seriously question the efficiency of parallel bureaucratic structures administering essentially the same programs. After all, there is only one taxpayer.

Some observers believe we may be facing a long-term structural deficit problem that would not be resolved by simply trimming a mere \$4 billion of so-called government fat. A study for the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies asked why we have never considered "whether government can be restructured in any significant way as to deliver essentially the same level of service to the public at a significantly reduced cost and size."

In this phase of our fiscal reality, all areas of government must fall under the microscope. A first and important step in this process is the elimination of the \$2 per vote subsidy to all political parties. Although not mentioned in budget 2011, greater savings will be realized by the imminent elimination of the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Eliminating unnecessary services and programs is easy. However, to effectively find our way back to balanced budgets, we must also seriously examine the cost of providing services deemed necessary. This examination will inevitably turn to the government's own human resources. We cannot continue to sustain a public sector whose growth outpaces every other category in size and compensation.

Between 1999 and 2009, the Canadian population increased by 11% but the federal government's civilian workforce grew by 35%, and public sector compensation grew by 59% compared to 30% in the private sector. Canada is fortunate to have an outstanding civil service. However, if balanced budgets are to be achieved, all unsustainable trends must be addressed. Perhaps we should view the predicted rise in attrition as an opportunity and not as a threat. The result would be a significantly less expensive public sector.

Based on the facts before us, some economists believe we are fast approaching a tipping point in our nation's finances. If we do not reduce government expenditures from 43% to 38% of GDP over the next decade, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund, invariably the result will be higher taxes, dangerous debt loads or both. As the experience of European countries such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal has demonstrated, this path must be avoided at all costs.

Canadians are increasingly demanding tax relief, balanced budget and smaller governments. It is always easier to borrow money when someone else will have to repay it than to cut spending. Similarly, it is always easier to say "yes" and cut a cheque than to say "no". Saying "no" takes courage and resolve.

However, on May 2, Canadians gave this government a mandate to deliver on the promises it has made. A majority government is also an opportunity to set Canada on a permanent course toward greater fiscal responsibility. The budget before this House is an important first step in this pivotal journey.

• (1220)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for his re-election. I enjoy the flights with him back and forth between Alberta and Ottawa on a regular basis.

The Budget

Health care is the number one issue in the province of Alberta. Access to universal public health care is, of course, one of those necessarily public services. Many in Edmonton, as across Canada, still lack access to a family doctor. Recently, information has been revealed, allegations made by the former head of the Alberta health authority, that privileged access to doctors and specialized medical services may be being provided by the Alberta government. That, of course, would be a potential violation of the Canada Health Act.

Has the hon. member raised these issues and concerns, raised by his constituents in Edmonton, about these allegations and about the fact that there is lack of access to family physicians? Also, has he suggested that the Minister of Health ought to look into these allegations?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Edmonton—Strathcona for her re-election to this House.

As the hon. member knows and as many members of this House know, I was a former member of the Alberta Legislature, serving Edmonton Calder from 2001-04, at about the time some of these allegations were made regarding privileged access to physicians.

I have seen no evidence that this has occurred. I certainly invite the hon. member or the hon. member of the Alberta Legislature who believes that this is the case to bring forward this evidence. At this point there are only unsubstantiated allegations.

Health care is certainly an issue for my constituents, as I am confident it is for hers. This government has given student loan relief to physicians and to nurses who are prepared to relocate to more remote parts of Canada where physicians and nurses are sadly lacking. I think that is an important first step to solving the health care crisis.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome and congratulate my colleague from Edmonton—St. Albert on his victory of May 2.

The member did talk a little bit about the operating review. It is an important point because, as we have seen in New Brunswick, we have a significant export economy, especially to the U.S. Many of our small businesses have seen a dramatic increase in the Canadian dollar. Also, with the recession, they were forced to really trim their budgets. They were forced to really look at all their expenses and to find all the efficiencies they could in order to continue to make a profit or to minimize and allow them to get over this hump.

I would just ask my hon. friend to talk a little bit about this operating review and that governments, the federal government as well the provincial governments, have a responsibility to do the exact same thing that we asked small business to do.

•(1225)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I would similarly congratulate my hon. colleague on his re-election to this House.

Canadians expect their government to operate similarly to the way households operate or the way small businesses operate. One must operate within one's means. One cannot structurally spend more than one takes in, whether it is a family with a wage earner or a business with revenue.

It is fine to incur deficits over the short-term. Certainly, given the economic downturn, we incurred some temporary stimulus funding deficits to kickstart the Canadian economy. However, that is not a long-term plan.

Canadians expect their government to act similarly to small business or families, to live within their means and to live within balanced budgets. That is the key to economic prosperity over the long-term.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege for me to rise in the House today to speak to our government's budget 2011.

[*Translation*]

Since this is my first speech in the 41st Parliament, I would like to thank the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for the support they have shown me over the past five years and for the trust they placed in me by re-electing me on May 2. It is a great honour and a great pleasure to be their member of Parliament, and I will do my very best to stand up for their interests here in the House and within the government.

[*English*]

Regarding the budget, I would like to begin by noting the tremendous support we received from Canadians for our government's low tax plan that focuses on protecting existing jobs, creating new jobs, securing Canada's recovery from the global economic recession, and improving the well-being of Canadians over the long-term.

All around us we see the signs of economic recovery, yet our country is still at risk. This is why our government has once again brought Canadians a budget that protects and creates jobs while promoting strong, sustained and balanced growth.

[*Translation*]

The recent election gave Canadians the opportunity to voice their concerns. The priorities of the residents of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell are job creation, strong economic leadership as well as financial support for seniors, farmers, families and firefighters. I am pleased that the budget addresses all of these issues. I listened carefully to the people of my riding and I am happy that the budget proposes initiatives that will address their concerns.

[*English*]

Canadians are encouraged by the economic recovery we have experienced here in Canada, and by the strategies taken by our Conservative government to reduce spending and taxes.

We made a number of promises during the election and we are keeping these promises. For example, the newest measure in the budget, the four year phase-out of the taxpayer subsidy for political parties, will save taxpayers over \$27 million per year.

We said we would cut this subsidy and we are cutting it. The winner is the taxpayer.

The Budget

[Translation]

Also, our government plans to cut the deficit by almost two-thirds by 2013. The deficit will continue to decline to just \$0.5 billion by 2015. Eliminating the deficit will allow us to continue paying down the debt and investing in the priorities of Canadians.

[English]

This will mean even lower taxes for families and a decline of our national debt by 2016.

The International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada will be one of only two group of seven countries expected to return to budget balance by 2016. We said that we would eliminate the deficit and eliminate it we will.

[Translation]

In my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, people have benefited significantly from the first phases of Canada's economic action plan. Since 2006, I have had the pleasure of announcing more than \$130 million in federal government investments to improve our infrastructure, strengthen the local economy and help community development.

• (1230)

[English]

This level of federal investment in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is unprecedented and has never been seen before. This funding has enabled us to preserve and develop our cultural heritages, and helped support our local businesses. That is only the beginning.

Budget 2011 is focused on creating jobs. That is particularly important in a rural riding such as mine. If we want people to move their families into rural areas, we must ensure that there are jobs there for them. The job creators are businesses. During the election we said that we would take measures to keep business taxes low and to stimulate job growth. That is exactly what we are doing.

In particular, there are tax measures to encourage and financially reward small businesses that create new jobs. These measures will help our economy to grow and will add jobs to the over 540,000 new jobs already created since July 2009.

[Translation]

I spoke about benefits for firefighters, seniors and families. Our budget provides for specific measures to help these important groups in our community.

In my riding, there are many volunteer firefighters. Rural communities such as the ones I represent need volunteer firefighters. These men and women have taken on the responsibility of protecting the members of our communities and even risk their lives for others. It is important to recognize that firefighters and their families make huge sacrifices.

[English]

I am very proud that our budget contains a significant tax deduction for our volunteer firefighters. Our Conservative government is the first federal government to have included such a measure in its budget. We said we would deliver strong financial support to

recognize the critical work done by our volunteer firefighters and that is what we are doing.

Like every riding across Canada, the strength of my riding rests with its families. With the rising costs of living it becomes increasingly difficult for parents to afford extracurricular activities that will help their children develop their creativity. We had already delivered a tax credit to support physical fitness among youth. However, I wanted to see a tax credit to encourage an appreciation of the arts among our youth.

[Translation]

My riding in particular has a unique culture, one based on the francophone culture, dance and traditional music, as evidenced by the large number of youth who participate in the Glengarry Highland Games every year. The arts play a unifying role in the community. The arts enrich our children's lives and prepare them to become leaders in society, a fact supported by the government through the children's arts tax credit.

[English]

The budget also provides good news for seniors. I have visited with seniors across Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, particularly during this past election. I know of their important contributions to our communities and to our country. However, these are difficult times. As I mentioned earlier, the cost of living is increasing.

[Translation]

The cost of gas, electricity and food has increased, making it difficult for seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income, to make ends meet. I am pleased that the budget provides for a substantial increase in the guaranteed income supplement. An additional \$600 per year will be paid to single seniors and \$840 to couples. This is the third increase by the Conservatives for seniors and, it should be mentioned, the largest increase in the guaranteed income supplement in the past 25 years.

Agriculture is another very important issue that affects the well-being of my riding's residents. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, I worked closely with the farmers in my riding and throughout Canada. I am very honoured that the Prime Minister has again entrusted me with this very important role, and I would like all farmers to know that I will work closely with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and my colleagues to ensure that their interests are well represented in this government.

[English]

I believe we have done excellent work over the past five years. Farmers are doing better now than they have in a very long time. This is under a Conservative government and Conservative agricultural policies.

As we move forward in 2011, I will continue to seek input from the farmers of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and across Canada on what our future agricultural priorities should be. It is clear that we have tabled a budget that is good news for Canadians and Canada.

The Budget

•(1235)

[*Translation*]

The 2011 budget was presented to Canadians in March, before the last election, and was one that they liked. We based our election campaign on this budget and Canadians evidently approved. On May 2, Canadians elected a strong, stable, majority Conservative government. I invite my colleagues opposite to support budget 2011, as Canadians have done.

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on being re-elected. He spoke very compassionately about seniors and I want to bring up the issue of Alzheimer's disease and, more broadly, dementia, which really is the most significant critical health care issue we face.

Today, some 500,000 Canadians live with some form of dementia and the terrible impact of the illness on families is profound. The current cost is \$15 billion and in 30 years we will be looking at a cost of \$153 billion. I recognize there is money for neurological disorders in the budget, but I will ask a very specific question.

Where is the national or federal strategy to cope with the rising tide of dementia and why do existing federal programs, research funding, support and income assistance pale in comparison to the enormous and rapidly escalating health, economic and social impacts of this disease?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has raised a very important point. This is something we take seriously in terms of medicare and medical services delivered throughout Canada.

As my colleague knows, health falls predominantly under the responsibility of the provinces across Canada, but we as a Conservative government have announced our solid commitment to ensure that the provinces have the resources necessary to deliver health care, including the matter of which the member spoke. She quite rightly pointed out that we have addressed neurological disorders. We also work very closely with the provinces and groups that speak to us about particular plans and strategies to address these types of conditions.

I must enunciate that we did announce that we would continue to increase federal transfers to the provinces for health care to help situations as the member mentioned.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on being re-elected for the third time in the House and for his hard work in the agricultural file. In my riding a very important sector is the agriculture community. He talked about seniors, small business, farmers, families, firefighters, and the list goes on. This is a comprehensive budget.

Would the hon. member expand a little more on the impact the budget will have on our agricultural community as we also help to expand additional markets to ensure we have a strong, stable supply of healthy foods not only nationally but around the world?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for highlighting agriculture and the importance it plays not only in my riding but many ridings across Canada.

Our farmers are the salt of the earth. They work hard, pay their taxes and there are conditions under which they can succeed. As I mentioned in my speech, farmers are doing better now than they have in a very long time and that is thanks to the hard work of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and all colleagues in Parliament.

I was happy to see in the Speech from the Throne that our government has committed to increase farmers' access to international markets. When our farmers are able to sell their products into a larger international market, that is better for farmers. We also mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that we would defend supply management, while opening international markets to our farmers.

These two initiatives, coupled with all of the programming for farmers, will ensure that our farmers succeed in the future.

•(1240)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

I will start, Mr. Speaker, by congratulating you on your election. I also want to congratulate all my colleagues, members of the House, for their election to represent Canadians.

At this time I want to acknowledge and thank my family. My father, who is no longer with us, was one of my true mentors. I am always grateful for the values and work ethic he instilled in me. I thank my mom, brothers, extended family, of course, my partner, Steve, my two wonderful children and my inspiration to run in the last election, my three beautiful grandchildren, Jacob, Jessica and Emily. It is for their sakes that I chose to make this commitment. I know we have to build the kind of Canada in which our children and grandchildren can flourish.

What an honour it is today for me to rise in the House on behalf of the people of Newton—North Delta. Above all, I want to thank my constituents for the confidence they have placed in me. I will put their priorities front and centre every day.

I also want to acknowledge Sukh Dhaliwal for his five years of service to Newton—North Delta. We have different ideas about the country we want to build, but our commitment to social service is constant.

Communities like mine did not just choose a new member of Parliament on May 2, they sent a powerful message to Ottawa. We do not have to put up with the same old ways. Change is possible, we can choose something better, and that is exactly what they did. Four and a half million Canadians from every region rallied behind our New Democrat vision for a better Canada, where families come first and no one is left behind.

The Budget

I humbly accept the mandate my constituents have given me. I accept their mandate to put families at the front of the line, ahead of the profitable banks, ahead of the big polluters and ahead of companies shipping good Canadian jobs out of the country. I accept their mandate to work constructively with all members of the House to get practical results. The challenges we highlighted in this election are very real for citizens in my community.

I have spoken with families that are being squeezed between caring for their children and caring for their elderly parents. They have seen their senior parents struggle to get by on a fixed income and have had to watch the very people who built our country struggle to meet their health care needs and other economic needs.

I have heard from students who are not only worried about the size of the debt they will have upon graduation, but are also worried that there will not be enough fair-paying jobs to help them get rid of the debt once they are employed. For example, when a young woman I met told me the size of her student debt, I was absolutely flabbergasted, and this is not a unique story. Her debt was higher than the mortgage I took out to buy my first house. That is the kind of struggle our young people face today.

I have talked with families that are seriously concerned that the pensions they have been paying into all their working lives may now be at risk due to privatization and the volatility of the stock market. We have all seen what happened south of the border.

Many of my constituents are puzzled when they see raw logs shipped out of our country, while sawmill jobs in Canada remain dormant. Whole communities are decimated. One only has to go through parts of B.C. to see this. However, this is not unique to B.C. I have seen these former well-paid mill workers now struggling to get by, the lucky ones, while working two or three part-time, low-paying jobs.

Almost all of my constituents, no matter their income, gender or ethnic background, want to see a strong, publicly funded health system in Canada. They want to see it enhanced. They do not want to see it privatized or rationed.

We have all heard about the Tim Hortons-style health care in British Columbia that forces people to be treated in a coffee shop rather than a hospital. Together, every one of us in the House must protect and improve a universal health care system, a gift from Tommy Douglas and other pioneers.

•(1245)

People question why there is a shortage of doctors, while foreign trained doctors and health care professionals are forced to drive taxicabs for a living because the government appears powerless to integrate them into our medical system. I travelled in a cab with a doctor from another country who, while there, was teaching in a hospital. He could not understand why after five years he still could not get a placement to get his credentials in Canada.

I have talked to young working families who are finding it difficult, almost impossible, to balance their cost of living, runaway gas prices, the cost of housing, the cost of child care, care for their aging parents and service their huge student debts. Most are frustrated. Many have lost hope. Almost half have become cynical of government. They see government as representing the interests of

big banks and big corporations and not representing their family interests. They cannot understand the continued tax breaks to big banks and oil companies, while they are losing jobs in those sectors.

Families in my riding cannot understand why they have to wait from 12 to 15 years to bring grandparents and parents into our country. They are worried that the government has not made those kinds of commitments to improve family reunification.

That is why the people of Newton—North Delta voted for change. I promise them that I will fight for that change every day and I will fight for their interests. I look forward to working with all members of the House on practical solutions that will make a difference in Newton—North Delta.

I trust that the Prime Minister will respect the mandate our team brings in to Parliament. Four and a half million Canadians voted New Democrat and they know exactly what they voted for. They voted to strengthen public pensions. They voted to improve public health care. They voted to help families make ends meet. They voted to grow our economy with new jobs and opportunities.

Canadians elected our most unified opposition in 31 years, 103 committed New Democrats from every region of the country, the strongest Quebec federalist result in a generation, with the largest percentage of women in Canada history, with the largest percentage of young people under 30 years of age, with representation from first nations and many of the cultural communities that make Canada so diverse and so strong. This is an official opposition that knows where it stands. Our mandate is crystal clear. We will put forward practical solutions for families. We will oppose the government when it is off-track. However, we will work together when we can get constructive results.

I am honoured to serve the people of Newton—North Delta and I am honoured to serve with every member of the House. We will each bring different skills and priorities into this place and different ideas about what our country can be, but we can all choose to work together constructively, with respect for each other and for the people who sent us here. That is how my parents taught me to move in this world. It is certainly the example I want to cite, not only for the children I have taught, but for my own children and grandchildren. I will bring my best here every day.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments. The member brought up a lot of issues that are under provincial jurisdiction, issues like tuition rates and so forth. Perhaps she might want to take them up with her provincial representatives. These are set by provincial jurisdictions.

The Budget

I heard something about the delivery of health care in British Columbia, again a provincial matter. She well knows that our government has increased the health transfers year over year, 6% per year compounded since 2006. We have also introduced new spending for things like Health Infoway and so forth. We have also provided additional funds to reduce wait times. All of these are critical things.

The NDP constantly comes out against businesses that seem to be successful in Canada. I really do not understand the attacks on Canadian industries, whether they are in the energy sector or financial sector, two particularly strong sectors in Canada that drive a much larger economy. We hear a lot about breaks being given to these corporations.

Could the hon. member indicate whether she is aware of how many billions of dollars in taxes that these companies contribute to Canada's tax system and how many jobs that these sectors provide for Canadians? Is she aware of how much in taxes that generates for the country and the contributions they make toward employment insurance and CPP? I am sure the member, having come out against these two important sectors, would be aware of those numbers.

• (1250)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely aware that education is a provincial issue. However, we all know the reason the fees are going up is that the provinces are in need of transfer funds from the federal government. It is when those transfer funds are increased that the provinces, together with the federal government, can help to keep a cap on tuition fees. Tuition fees are out of control. I have a young son who is going through university right now. I can tell members that the cost of textbooks is just horrendous. I can afford to support him but many parents cannot.

As for health care, it is exactly the same. We know that the health care accord is coming up for negotiations. However, it is also the transfer of funds from the federal government that helps to support the health care system in our provinces. We need to look at that and we need to ensure that we have systems in place that will stop the creeping of privatization into our health care system.

As far as tax breaks for corporations, the NDP's position has been very clear. We believe that we need to be competitive in our tax breaks but that the tax breaks need to go to smaller and middle-sized businesses because they are the ones that grow jobs that stay in our communities.

I have met with many people who have been laid off in the banking sector, despite the fact that we have given it billions of dollars. I ask that I be given evidence that the banking sector has grown jobs.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague to the House.

I believe that health care will be one of the defining issues of the next four years. My constituents, like those across the country, want their health care system to be there when families need it most.

We have heard from the Conservatives that they are taking action and making way on wait times but if we actually look at a 2011 study from the Canadians Institutes of Health, it shows that wait

times vary widely across provinces. If we look at cataract or knee surgeries, many patients wait longer than the recommended limit.

I wonder if the member would comment on hospital wait times?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate the member on her election.

I will tell members a bit about my riding. We have one hospital in the huge municipality of Surrey. The waiting lists are absolutely huge in that riding. Even though we have had a bit of an investment in the infrastructure, what we are finding in our hospital in Surrey is that there is a shortage of professionals. There is a shortage of doctors and nurses. My constituents wait longer than their Vancouver counterparts to get normal surgical procedures. If people need knee surgery, they can go to Vancouver and get it done in about a third of the time than the people can in Surrey. The discrepancy is huge and it needs to be addressed by improving it for everyone.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in this House and it is a great honour for me to do so on behalf of my constituents, the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval.

I first want to thank my entire team who helped me get here today, especially my spouse, Didier Sacy, who helped me a lot during my campaign. I also want to thank the voters of my riding, which had been Liberal since 1962, for the confidence they placed in me on May 2. It was difficult for some voters, but they voted for change.

The voters in my riding wanted not only a new MP, but also change. They had had enough of the old ways of governing, the decisions that did not represent their interests and values, and the growing cynicism. The voters in my riding placed their confidence in me on May 2, and I and the entire New Democratic Party must respect that.

I will start by making families a priority above the most profitable banks and the interests of polluters, but especially above companies that send our jobs overseas. Families are the future. Families will provide us with the desired population pyramid, a demographic situation that will allow us to help our seniors, offer health care to everyone and live on a healthy planet.

Families should be the first people we help and encourage, starting with our seniors, those who worked their entire lives, contributed to our economy and built the society we live in today. I have spoken with Nortel retirees, many of whom live in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. They lose sleep at night because they are worried about their income. Scandals like the one at Nortel were permitted by previous governments. We have to commit to amending federal bankruptcy legislation to ensure that pensioners and long-term disability recipients are at the top of the list of creditors when employers are placed under court protection or declare bankruptcy. Nothing in the budget suggests that the government will provide them with any help. The cost of living, the increased cost of food, housing and gas is becoming a burden for families. We absolutely must help them.

The Budget

In my riding, voters have another concern, namely, the very small place that the Conservative budget has given to the development of the green economy. During the election campaign, the Conservative candidate for Lac-Saint-Louis, a former senator and now a senator once again, promised major federal investments in a new rail line between the West Island of Montreal—Pierre Elliott Trudeau Airport—and downtown Montreal. This line would serve as a commuter train and a quick connection for visitors to our great city. It is one of the most important and popular issues for the voters in my riding and in west Montreal.

This project, which has been the subject of discussion for years, would have a very positive impact on the economy, employment, the environment and the daily lives of thousands of workers, students and travellers. However, the budget proposed by the Conservatives does not include a single penny for this project, despite the candidate's promises. The senator received a very nice gift following the election, but there are no gifts in this budget for the 500,000 residents of west Montreal who have been waiting for a long time for an effective transportation service that will help them reduce the amount of pollution they are producing and take them to downtown Montreal where most activities take place.

Many residents of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine are disappointed that Ottawa is subsidizing the major polluters instead of supporting a green economy. My constituents want assurances that their environment will be protected. They want the government to take measures to bring people together; not to divide them.

I hope I can count on the co-operation of all members of the House to adopt practical solutions that will make a real difference in the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and in Dorval. I am counting on our Prime Minister to respect the mandate that was given to him and I am counting on our team to allow us to accomplish our work in Parliament. It would not be fair if the ridings represented by Conservatives received more projects than the others. The people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval hope to receive the same favours as the rest of Canada.

On May 2, the voters of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine were among the 4.5 million Canadians who voted for change, who voted to strengthen public pension plans, improve health care, help families make ends meet and ensure that our economy offers new jobs and new opportunities. They voted for a better Canada, with fewer scandals and injustices. By voting for change, Canadians have voted in the most united official opposition in the last 31 years. We have 103 members from across the country: women, young adults and members of the cultural communities that help strengthen Canada. It is a heterogeneous official opposition that reflects the faces of Canada.

• (1255)

I am very honoured to have been chosen by the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dorval. I am also honoured to have the opportunity to work with all the members of this House. Despite a few differences, we can work together for the good of Canadians, work together constructively as we respect others and their ideas. That is how I will work. I will do my very best every day to represent my riding as well as I can.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome the hon. member who gave her first speech.

We have heard the NDP talk at length about the problems with health care and waiting lists, whether in emergency rooms or for surgery. The NDP also talked about this during the election campaign.

The hon. member says she wants to work with all the hon. members of this House on improving life for the general public. Can she tell me what tangible ideas she and her party have that will improve the health care system in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada? I do not need to tell the hon. member that health is an exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces.

The hon. member and the NDP are saying that we must help improve health care. How can the federal Parliament get involved in these matters in any tangible way when it is the provinces, Quebec in my case, that have the means—or should have the means—to ensure that health care is improved?

• (1300)

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I would also like to congratulate him on his election.

I believe that my colleague already answered this question. Federal transfers help hospitals. In my riding, one hospital serves all the constituents. The waiting lists are appalling. There is also a new expansion project for the McGill University Health Centre. Consequently, more doctors will want to work at a new centre with more advanced technology. It is a great benefit for the people of my riding.

To provide tangible assistance to the provinces, we can give them money to help doctors become specialists, to speed up the process for recognizing the foreign credentials of family doctors so they can practice sooner, and we can ensure that there are better working conditions for hospital staff. We know that there is a brain drain to the United States. This problem is caused by the fact that working conditions in Canada are not good enough. I believe that we must work with the provinces to improve working conditions. Thus, we would have more doctors and more adequate health care for everyone.

[English]

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be engaging in this debate on budget 2011. I would first like to indicate that I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Northeast.

The Budget

This budget was first introduced on March 23 in the 40th Parliament. We all know what happened at that time. The opposition parties avoided a vote on the budget by forcing an unwanted election, but it turns out it was an election that reshaped the political landscape. It proved to be politically costly for two of the three leaders. Mr. Ignatieff of course and Mr. Duceppe not only lost their own seats, but one lost official party status and the other party returned with a severely diminished caucus.

On May 2, Canadians returned to the 41st Parliament with a solid, stable, national Conservative government and an NDP official opposition. It was a surprise to some people. However, I find it interesting that in evaluating the electoral prospects the high school students apparently had it figured out before the pundits did. They selected a Conservative majority government with an NDP official opposition.

Allow me to express my congratulations to you as Assistant Deputy Speaker, to the Speaker and to the other Assistant Deputy Speaker, as well as to the Deputy Speaker on their elections and appointments.

I would also like to congratulate all of the members who returned to this House. It is an honour for them to represent the ridings that they come from.

As well, I would like to thank the electors in Nanaimo—Alberni for returning me for the fifth time to this 41st Parliament.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize my campaign manager and campaign team who worked diligently and my EDA board.

At our recent policy convention there were five resolutions from Nanaimo—Alberni brought up for discussion and two that actually passed into policy. There were very enthusiastic supporters from Nanaimo—Alberni. I thank them all for their participation in the process.

One thing that we heard from the caucus members, cabinet ministers and party activists at the convention that we took to heart is that we all have an obligation to engage our neighbours, to listen, to take the pulse of our communities and to stay in tune with what is happening in our communities. We are facing unprecedented change, not only in Canada but around the world and it will be incumbent upon all of us to ensure that we stay in tune with how these impacts are affecting our communities. I thank all of those folks who were responsible for that.

One other person I must thank is my wife of some 20 years now. These last 11 years in Parliament have been a big challenge for someone from the west coast who is travelling back and forth. We are away a lot from the island of paradise that we live on. Helen has stood by me faithfully all of the years I have been in Parliament. All members would know the level of stress that the commitment to our job can put on our families. I thank Helen for standing with me, for without her it would not have been possible.

This budget was well received on March 23. In fact, it was so well received that the finance minister thought he would introduce it again and on June 6 that is what he did.

There are many measures in the budget that we can discuss and that have been discussed today. There will be more to discuss as the debate continues.

One of the measures I want to highlight is the one involving seniors. Since coming to Parliament we have reduced the tax burden on seniors significantly. Over \$2.3 billion has been given in annual tax relief since 2006 with the various measures that we have introduced taking some 85,000 seniors off the tax rolls. That includes pension income splitting, increasing the age credit amount by \$1,000 twice for a total of \$2,000 and doubling the pension income credit to \$2,000. All of these measures together, along with increasing the guaranteed income supplement, are extremely important in lowering the tax burden on seniors.

I have heard some members say that the \$600 a year for singles and the \$840 for a married couple of the lowest income seniors amounts to nothing. I think they are remiss in not reflecting on the cumulative effect in shifting the tax burden away from seniors and doing our best to help our most vulnerable seniors.

• (1305)

There are many measures in the budget: a new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500, a new family caregiver tax credit, a volunteer firefighters tax credit and extending the eco-energy retrofit. All of these are important for our communities. All of these benefit our communities. In some sectors of the community it takes the burden off people who contribute in a big way, like our volunteers firefighters.

I want to turn the children's fitness tax credit which was introduced earlier. It is only a \$500 measure to help encourage people to engage their children in physical fitness. Many experts are concerned about the declining health of Canadians and we have to start with the children. It is a small measure, but it is a good measure. As we get to balanced budgets in the next few years, reducing that deficit year by year, we have a plan that is working. We will extend that measure, doubling it for children and extending it to adults as well.

I want to comment on that briefly. As a health professional for many years and a chiropractor for 24 years, a body man, I want to remind members that the human body has some 80 trillion to 100 trillion cells, some 200 different cell types and 25,000 miles of blood vessels. These cells do not last an entire lifetime. They are being replaced on a continual basis. There is some speculation. The exception is the nervous system, which is actually original equipment. Most of that is here for life and we had better protect it. We are replacing cells on a daily basis. Every 7 to 10 years, every bone cell is replaced.

This is relevant to the budget. Hon. members should be listening. They will enjoy this. When my wife and I are on the cycle path, when we are exercising, pushing the limits and pushing our bodies, we get a little tired sometimes. I encourage her by saying that it is tomorrow's body we are pushing for. It is today's activities that actually set the template for tomorrow's body.

The Budget

In a similar manner the nutrition, the food we eat contributes to the body we are building for tomorrow. I hope as we move forward and as we are looking for sustainable solutions to our health care challenges that there will be more emphasis on wellness initiatives, more things that encourage positive health management on a personal health level and more incentives to promote a disease prevention strategy.

There are many measures in the budget to help people. I want to remind people that a couple of years ago in 2006, we hit an economic tsunami, a worldwide economic downturn. We had to act quickly, and indeed, that is what we did. We brought in some \$60 billion in stimulus measures, outreach measures to help workers displaced, created incentives like job-sharing and a whole range of initiatives to help our communities. Part of that was the economic stimulus measures that brought jobs through some 25,000 projects across the country. On Vancouver Island many projects benefited our community. All of these projects helped to keep people employed during that difficult time.

Cumulatively, we have created over 540,000 jobs, all important, to keep people employed and keep our communities working. There was the home renovation tax credit during that phase that kept people working. In this budget we have the very popular eco-energy retrofit program extended that will encourage positive behaviour by encouraging people to invest in energy efficiencies for their homes: the windows, the doors, the insulation, the kinds of projects that keep people working in our community and contribute to energy savings in the community as well.

There is a whole range of issues that we have not addressed and I am down to my last minute, but there are positive measures for our small businesses with a hiring credit of up to \$1,000 to encourage more hiring. There is support for youth entrepreneurs of some \$20 million. We are reducing red tape. We are investing in clean energy technology and innovation and we are legislating the permanent gas tax funding for municipalities at some \$2 billion a year. That is so important to our communities, many of which have infrastructure deficits and are counting on that money to help refurbish the infrastructure in our municipalities.

For all these reasons I encourage our colleagues to stand with us and support the budget. Let us work together and keep our country strong as we move forward, keep Canada's economy the best in the world. Let us develop all the potential we can in this country as we move ahead.

• (1310)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's comments. Although normally members would expect me to viciously oppose the government's budget, I want to start in a more conciliatory tone since we are in a new session of Parliament.

Let me start by saying that the one part of the budget I was happy to see was, of course, the return of the eco-energy retrofit program for homes. That \$400 million is desperately needed in our communities. However, I have to ask the government why this program was brought back for only one year.

This program is good for homeowners, the environment, jobs and we also know that it is good for the government because for every \$1

that the government pays in incentives, families actually spend \$10 and generate twice as much in tax revenue. This program really is a win-win.

I was really surprised to see in *The Hamilton Spectator* this morning, and frankly saddened, that the member for Burlington said:

They (energy advisers) made a choice. That's their industry and career choice that they've made. Whether we have a government program that keeps them in business or not is not my call—

That is really regrettable because the question remains: Why is this program in place for just one year?

The government pulled the plug on this program in 2006. It was a program that worked well. People clamoured for it to be renewed. Now we have the money, but it is being put on a very short leash. What if there is money left over at the end of the year without programs having actually been implemented effectively? I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her conciliatory tone and I congratulate her on her re-election.

We all have an obligation to work together in the House to move ahead. There is a difference between permanent measures and those that are meant to stimulate activity. The member is aware that we are running a deficit and were severely criticized for that. When we were coming up with the economic action plan, opposition parties were annoyed that we were not operating fast enough and wanted us to spend more, but we have an obligation to balance our budget.

This year, as we are working toward a balanced budget without upsetting our economy, we are projecting a deficit of some \$32 billion. It will be down to about \$19.4 billion next year, \$9.4 billion the year after that and then moving to a small surplus in the following year.

We have an opportunity in next year's budget, if we need further stimulus, to move ahead with a program. In the meantime, we are hoping as many Canadians as possible will take advantage of it this year to keep people working and move ahead with energy efficiency in their homes. It is a well-appreciated program that is supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Home Builders' Association.

• (1315)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, a fellow classmate from the class of 2000. Some in the House say that was probably one of the strongest contingents of members of Parliament who arrived in the House for many years.

In response to the last question, he talked about the eco-energy tax deduction. Any time the government puts forward a tax deduction, it is to initiate and improve behaviour in a particular area and we have seen the outcome through the tax deduction for the retrofits.

He talked about the tax credit for sport. If we look at the participation rates in the country over the last 10 years, they are fairly gradual and we can pretty much determine that each year they grow by so much. This was introduced in 2006 and there was no discernible increase in participation rates in 2007, 2008 or 2009. It remained the same.

The one time there was a big spike was in 2003 following the gold medal performance of the women's hockey team in Salt Lake City. Does he see that sometimes targeted investments in leadership, facilities, coaching, those types of things, have even more impact than a mere tax deduction?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member acknowledging our election back in the year 2000. There are few of us left from that particular class. We all have a certain measure of camaraderie having survived a few elections to remain in the House and the challenges that represents.

I know the member is a very enthusiastic sports promoter. We put a lot of money into the Olympics. That motivated a lot of Canadians. It is great to see Canadians from coast to coast taking an interest, the young girls out playing soccer and so many sports activities. We are trying to broaden that.

I appreciate the member's comment. There is more than one way to achieve the objectives but we think they have a cumulative effect in encouraging Canadians to become physically active. I thank him for drawing that to our attention.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan to keep taxes low and to create jobs and growth. This is a budget that is truly good for all Canadians from a government that is here for all Canadians.

Before I begin, I would first like to thank my wife, Neetu, our children, Jatin, Chetan and Arisha, and, of course, our campaign team and all of those friends and constituents who supported me in my election to serve as a member of Parliament for Calgary Northeast.

It was not our choice that Canada was swept into global economic crisis but we had learned from past events. Our Conservative government acted quickly and boldly with unprecedented fiscal stimulus. Our decisive actions then is the reason for our favourable position now.

Canada has the highest employment growth among the G7 nations. In fact, Canada's employment rate is higher today than it was before the global recession began. Canada has created nearly 560,000 net new jobs since July 2009. In May 2011 alone, Canada created over 22,000 new jobs.

That is all good news but I want to caution anyone who thinks we are completely out of the woods. Despite our stimulus measures, our strong banking sector and the hard-working Canadian public, we

The Budget

must not become complacent. Global economic forces outside our control remain uncertain and we need to keep our guard up.

The budget gives more exactly where we need it the most. It supports job creation, families and communities, invests in innovation, education and training, and preserves Canada's fiscal advantage.

Our government understands that it takes a low tax environment to allow businesses to thrive. Our government is providing a temporary hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring. We are expanding the work sharing program and the targeted initiative for older workers to help keep people in the workforce.

We also understand that investing in technology not only creates jobs today but saves us money in the future. Energy costs are one of the fastest rising costs for Canadians and Canadian households. That is why our government is renewing the \$100 million investment over two years for research and development on clean energy and energy efficiency.

We are also extending the popular eco-energy home retrofit program to make our homes more energy efficient. This program also has real benefits for businesses in my riding. Lux Window and Glass is a multi-generational family-owned business in Calgary Northeast that supplies windows and doors to home builders and renovators.

The president of the company, John Petrillo, told me that in 2009, when we established the eco-energy home retrofit program, his company saw an outstanding number of customers looking to renovate. It was thanks to our 15% tax rebate. With regard to the extension of the program in this budget, Mr. Petrillo said, "The eco-energy retrofit program would help Lux Windows to keep over 120 plant employees and 10 installation crews employed".

Another business, the North West Group, located in my riding, specializes in the generation of high quality digitalized geo-spatial mapping information for clients across all sectors. Tim Crago, the vice-president, had this to say about our government's low tax plan:

Creating a competitive, low tax framework for businesses in Canada creates a highly attractive environment not just for big firms, but small and medium sized companies like the North West Group in which to invest and grow.

On this budget, Mr. Crago said:

We are also pleased to see that Budget 2011 reaffirms that the Government of Canada will be giving priority to its Digital Economy Strategy, to make Canada a leader in the creation, adoption and use of digital technologies and content.

● (1320)

However, those are not the only success stories in my riding of Calgary Northeast.

The Budget

Burhan Khan, born in Pakistan, moved to Canada in 1986, an MBA and registered public accountant in business for 20 years, running his BK accounting firm in my riding with a team of five employees, said, “This budget is a small-business friendly and great for young and eager entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and create jobs for the good of Canada. The low tax climate also gives me the flexibility to hire and train more apprentice workers, which makes me very proud as a Canadian of Pakistan origin”.

It is clear that our Conservative government has a plan and the plan is working to keep taxes low and create jobs and growth.

The government is also solidifying Canada's reputation as a great place to invest and to do business. In fact, it was under this government that Tim Hortons decided to move its corporate headquarters back to Canada to reap the benefits of our new low tax environment. Certainly Tim Hortons serves as a popular icon for all Canadians, from Calgary Northeast to Kandahar. We are glad to have it back.

We want all Canadians to enjoy a high standard of living. We are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old security. We are providing new top up benefit of \$600 annually for individual seniors and up to \$840 annually for couples. This will improve the financial security of more than 680,000 Canadian seniors, many of them from Calgary Northeast.

This Conservative government understands that more families are sacrificing to take care of their ailing loved ones inside their home. That is why we have introduced a family caregiver tax credit and an enhanced medical expense tax credit that removes the limit on eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a dependent relative.

We are also providing a new children's art tax credit to support Canadian families as they pursue the arts.

We are the first Canadian government to provide a volunteer firefighter tax credit for those who serve their communities and put themselves in harm's way.

Our government is investing in its greatest assets: its people. We are expanding eligibility for Canada student loans and grant programs for full and part-time post-secondary students. We are also helping apprentices enter into the trades by making their examination fees eligible for the tuition tax credit. We are investing in innovation, education and training to keep Canada on the leading edge.

We may not have all our wishes fulfilled in this budget but, just as families balance their budgets at the kitchen table, Canadians expect the government to balance its books.

Our government has committed to returning to surplus by 2015-16 and we are on track to achieving this, without raising taxes, without cutting funding to seniors, families or the unemployed, and without cutting transfers for health care and social services, all under a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government.

• (1325)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague is far too good a member of Parliament to actually

believe the talking points that he was sent in here to read today. The arguments are full of holes and lack any empirical evidence to back up the claims that he is making regarding, especially, the tax credits.

I would say, by way of a preface to my question, that we are in the process of doing an analysis, perhaps the first in-depth analysis, of many of the tiny incremental tax credits that the Conservatives have offered Canadians over the last two or even three budgets. We are breaking this down by quintile to see who is actually availing themselves of the tax credits being offered.

What we are finding, and it is not ready for publication yet because it is not quite finished, is that the tax credits that are targeted for the sports tax credit or the children's art and music tax credit, for instance, will probably not help many poor kids participate in sports who would not otherwise be participating or participate in music, dance, theatre or art who would not otherwise be participating. It is those who are availing themselves of it who are already participating in that program.

If we take the cumulative total of all the small incremented, badly targeted tax breaks of the past three, four or five budgets, they do not add up to the untargeted scattergun \$6 billion corporate tax cut, explain the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for touching on the issues tax credits or tax cuts.

Let us go back to our government's record. Our government's record shows that when we talked about the tax cuts we did cut the taxes. We cut the GST from 7% to 6% and then to 5%. As I mentioned in my budget speech, we may not be able to fulfill all our visions in this budget but we started addressing the issues. We started addressing the matters that concerned Canadians, whether they are credits or tax cuts. This budget is a re-introduction of the budget presented and tabled in March 2011. Canadians were told before they voted for us that this budget would be re-introduced and it was accepted by Canadians on the whole.

• (1330)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Calgary Northeast on his re-election here.

I will blend the question that I posed to the member from Nanaimo—Alberni, along with the comments made by the hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre, which is that the targeting of certain tax provisions is not making a lot of sense. Whether my three boys played hockey or took part in soccer was a decision made between my wife and I at the kitchen table. We did not sit down and say that we might save \$70 this year because the government is giving us \$70 back.

I am sure my accountant had access to those credits, but it is a loss to the treasury if there is not some kind of discernable positive change in behaviour. What we did not see was any increase in participation rates in this country because of that tax rate.

Are we targeting youth activity or are we targeting soccer moms?

The Budget

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his congratulations and wish him the same.

On the issue of taxes, I have spoken with many constituents in Calgary Northeast and I have not found one family that is not happy with the e tax credits introduced by our government. In fact, families are encouraged and now they are talking about putting their children in the arts. They want their children to go to gyms and all those things. They are fully supportive of this budget and they are fully concerned about the questions raised in this House of Commons by the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I would just like to remind all hon. members that the Chair appreciates your co-operation in the question and answer period. When there are 10-minute speeches, there are 5 minutes for questions and answers and we try to get two questions and two answers, so a bit more than a minute per person. However, in order to ensure that all hon. members have the opportunity to participate, I would ask for your co-operation at that time.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

It is a great pleasure to be back in the House. I want to thank the people of Cape Breton—Canso for expressing their confidence in me once again. The 41st Parliament will be my fifth Parliament, and it continues to be an honour and privilege to be representing them here in Ottawa.

Some members have been to my riding in the past. The rugged coastlines and landscapes are spectacular. It is a part of the world that is rich in culture. I encourage all members of the House if they have not been there yet and are still working on summer vacation plans to take a trip to Cape Breton or the northeastern shore of Nova Scotia through Guysborough and Canso. I think tickets are still available for the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. During lobster season and crab season it is a great place in Canada to visit.

I should add that one does not succeed unless there is a group of people around one who wants one to be successful. Each of us is here because there was a group of people who believed in him or her. In my case, I have had campaign workers who have put in countless hours, pounding in signs, making phone calls, writing cheques and going door to door. We are here because of them.

Then there is family support. I was fortunate to have my sister, Kim Bedeck, act as my campaign manager this time around, and she did a tremendous job. My wife, Lynn, and my three boys, Mitch, Scott and Brad, put up signs and then the sign team would fix them up as well. Everyone who is here does it with a great deal of family and other support from those who believe in them. I am fortunate and am thankful for everyone's efforts.

Much has been said about past Parliaments and the fact that, quite often, the decorum here in the House has been ultra-aggressive or very adversarial. There is a focus now and a commitment to making sure that we try to be a little less aggressive in our debate and throughout question period. It is in that spirit today that I will be making my points.

In speaking to the budget, I am going to look at some of the measures on which the government was close to making some good decisions. I will not talk about the jets. I will not talk about the jails. I will not talk about the corporate tax cuts, though I know the member for Winnipeg Centre will be disappointed about the latter. However, anyone who pays any attention at all will know that these decisions will have a huge impact on this country and the citizens of this country for years to come. I want to talk about some of the things the government was close to getting right in the budget.

The first one was the government's rollover of two provisions of the employment insurance rules, those being the best 14 weeks and working while receiving benefits. The government extended them for one year, and that is a positive thing, because it will make a difference in the lives of those people who are working in seasonal industries but who are actually not seasonal workers. Many times they work in rural or remote communities.

When this pilot project was first announced in 2005, it focused on allowing these people to stay in those communities and support the business that needed access to a workforce. That is why these measures were implemented back then. They were put in place for a period of three years as a pilot project and have been renewed since then. They have been rolled over yet again in this budget.

● (1335)

When this budget was presented back in March, many interventions were made by people who live in rural communities, who said that these provisions should be made permanent. If there were ever two pilot projects that could be justified being made permanent, it would be these two particular measures.

I applaud the government for recognizing the pilot projects for a year. However, it would have been far more beneficial had the government made them a permanent provision of the EI system going forward. It would certainly have been more beneficial for the businesses, seasonal businesses, and workers in those rural communities that were most impacted. Therefore, this was just a half measure.

The other half measure I want to talk about and commend the government for is the firefighters tax deduction. Again, we made these comments when the budget was presented the last time, in particular, that the proposed budget did not include all of the people in the community. If we were serious about recognizing volunteer firefighters, then we would have a refundable tax credit. However, this sets up a two-tier volunteer fire department: those who qualify for the tax credit and those who do not. I have 50 volunteer fire departments in my riding. Many of the volunteers are older and many work in seasonal industries. Those who do not make \$22,000, and there are a fair number of them, receive no benefit from this at all. In volunteer fire departments that pay their volunteers an honorarium, we already have a provision where the first \$1,000 of that honorarium is tax exempt. However, under this provision the volunteers would have to pick one or the other, and so there is really no net benefit for those already accessing the \$1,000 tax exemption.

The Budget

We are asking all of the volunteer firefighters to do the same job. When the whistle blows or their pager goes off, they are all expected to have the same level of training and know exactly what to do. These are the guys rushing into the fire when everyone else is rushing out. They are all going into the same burning buildings and taking the same risks. When they show up at head-on collisions with the jaws of life, they all have to know how to extricate the victims, such as a young 18-year-old splattered on the dash of a car. However, what the government is saying with this tax credit is that one of the firefighters is worth more than the other who is not making \$22,000. That is not fair.

Again, I commend the government for this first half step. We made it aware of this in the last budget discussion, and I wish the government had taken it that one step further. We only have about 100,000 volunteer firefighters. This could have included everyone.

To summarize, there are some aspects of this budget that are like a bouquet, a bouquet of thorns with a couple of roses dropped in it. Once we get into the weeds, into the detail, we see that the government, with a little more effort, could have done better for all Canadians. It could have done better in levelling the field for all Canadians.

• (1340)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always listen with great interest when my friend starts criticizing us.

I want to make sure that I heard him correctly and would like to get his permission to quote him. He actually commended the government, this from the opposition. Can I quote him and say that the Liberals have actually commended the government for the firefighters tax credit? Recognizing the fact that more than half of his caucus voted against it in the last budget, it is important for me to get his permission so that we can quote a key Liberal member of Parliament commending this government for this tax credit.

Do I have his permission?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, does he need unanimous consent for that?

Just as a point of clarity, when those members of our caucus who are still with us voted against the last provision, it was specifically because the private members' measure did not include everyone. It was a non-refundable tax credit. Therefore, it was about this group of committed volunteers, this group of firefighters, who took the same risks and did the same job but were to be treated differently. That is why the opposition was there.

Some might argue that the provision was only for the honorariums received through firefighting. Whether it was for that or for general revenues, it does not matter. It did not level the field. It was not fair to all firefighters and that is where we had a problem.

• (1345)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think the Conservatives view Canadian taxpayers the way P.T. Barnum used to view circus-goers, because there has been a bait and switch in this budget. There has been a sleight of hand. It is like pulling a sedated bunny out of some tattered old top hat and

trying to convince Canadians there is something good and new and magic about this.

In fact, the bait and switch came with a series of little rinky-dink populist tax breaks that very few people will avail themselves of, certainly not those in need, and not the 52% of children in my riding who live below the poverty line. Not a single one of them will play hockey because of the rinky-dink, little tax credits.

The really big ticket items, the really expensive items, in this budget are the billions of dollars of jets and billions of dollars of prisons and billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts. All of their little accumulative, minor tax credits pale in comparison to the one big corporate tax cut, which, frankly, will do nothing to elevate the citizens of my riding out of poverty.

Would he not agree with me there is something P.T. Barnum-like about the Conservatives with their sedated bunnies and their tattered top hats?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, we will stay away from Hugh Hefner and sedated bunnies.

The member for Winnipeg Centre, I think, hits it right on. What we have seen is not a focus on changing behaviours; what we have seen is a contrived and very deliberate political approach to try to curry favour with various segments of the population.

The tax deduction for sports registration is an obvious one. If the Conservatives want to help those who are making a decision on a financial basis whether or not to get involved in amateur sport, would that money not be better invested into programs like KidSport Canada? It is an organization that helps young Canadians get involved in entry-level programs.

Is the tax deduction for the arts not trying to curry that same political favour with a particular portion of the population? I believe it is.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a more proper thank you to the people of Ottawa—Vanier for putting their faith in me for a seventh time during the last election. I can assure them that I remain committed to their well-being and to fighting for their interests here in this House.

That said, I would like to begin my critique of the budget by talking about the regional concerns surrounding the future of the public servants in our community.

[*English*]

The government is committed to balancing the budget. That is something the government should achieve and Liberals will certainly be supportive in that objective. The question is how it will attain it.

The Budget

The government has said that it will not cut certain areas, such as transfers to the provinces and individuals. Therefore, essentially it has limited the universe in which it can effect cuts to about an \$80 billion discretionary envelope. The cuts over the next four years will not be in the order of 5%, as some people have said. In terms of absolute numbers, it will be in the order of \$1 billion in 2012-13, \$2 billion the year after and \$4 billion in each of the two succeeding years, for a total of \$13 billion. Out of an \$80 billion envelope, that represents cuts of almost 14%. Therein lies the rub.

Conservatives said during the campaign, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs repeated it ad nauseam during the campaign, that there would be no cuts to the public service and it would only be done through attrition. The average number of public servants who leave the government through attrition every year is about 10,000 and that represents a saving of about \$1 billion on the basis that none of them would be replaced, which cannot be done.

The best guesstimates are that about a third need to be replaced, otherwise the delivery of programs would be crippled. The savings from attrition at most is \$750 million a year. That is a far cry from \$4 billion. Therefore, there will be cuts and the government has acknowledged that, after the election of course.

We are looking at serious numbers. Some have hinted at as many as 80,000 public servants, 40,000 by attrition if none are replaced, which cannot be done as I have mentioned, plus another 40,000. Depending on how and where it is done, it will have an incredible impact on certain local economies, this one in particular. The national capital region will probably be the worst affected. The individuals let go will have some serious fiscal problems of their own if they are not treated properly.

There has been nothing from the government in terms of how it will approach it, except that it put the President of the Treasury Board in charge, and I will say a bit more on that in a minute. We do not know the governing principles and we do not know what kinds of packages will be offered to public servants who will be let go, so on and so forth.

Right now in this area and other parts of the country where there is a higher concentration of public servants there are serious concerns. That is all I heard about over the weekend. People are wondering and are a little concerned about what is going to happen to their futures. The government has to be very transparent with its own employees, something it has not learned how to do in the last five years. Hopefully, now that it feels more comfortable with its majority, it will treat its employees a bit better than it has in the past. We will see.

Speaking of treatment, the basic fundamentals mean the government has to be transparent with its employees and has to treat them respectfully. We still have, despite the efforts of the government at times, one of the best public services in the world and employees deserve no less than professional treatment, transparency, honesty and forthrightness. I hope the President of the Treasury Board, as he embarks on this exercise, will be guided by such principles.

I go back to the President of the Treasury Board. It is rather ironic that he would be the one asked to do this after the Auditor General's

report that was tabled in the House last week. What we have found out is appalling. Parliament has been misled by the government in terms of its expenditures and there has been a misuse of funds. An approved envelope meant for one thing was used for something else entirely. There has been an abuse of ministerial authority in determining how money is spent, without any documentary evidence whatsoever.

● (1350)

Talk about padding one's own host. The \$50 million that were to be used to improve the flow of goods and people across the borders between Canada and the United States were used 300 kilometres away in the minister's riding, at his discretion. The Conservatives have the gall to put him in charge of cutting \$11 billion over the next four years. We will have to see how that goes.

There are a few other matters that should be noted.

[*Translation*]

One of those matters is political party funding. I do not want the hon. members to worry about me personally, so I will say that it does not matter to me if the subsidies are eliminated or not. I have never received the subsidy and have never wanted to. Things are taken care of in my riding and there are no issues. But the irony runs deeper. We are facing an intellectual challenge: individuals who wish to contribute to a political party are limited to contributing \$1,100 a year, while a third party can legally sneak in, get involved in campaigns in every riding and spend \$3,000. Why the double standard?

It has not been an issue until now because the per-vote subsidy levelled the playing field. When the subsidy is eliminated, it is crucial that Parliament review political party financing legislation to ensure that fairness is a governing principle. It is not right that one person can spend \$3,000 in a riding and that another is limited to \$1,100 in political contributions. Political parties are registered by law with Elections Canada to protect the interests of the various political groups represented here in the House. Since this subsidy is being eliminated, Parliament must address the issue.

● (1355)

[*English*]

We do need greater literacy in fiscal matters in our country. On that front, the government had created a body that looked at that and made some serious recommendations. One would hope the government would follow up on those recommendations. It is important that it does.

Statements by Members

The level of individual indebtedness in our country is way too high. It brings about a risk factor that we could attenuate. Currently in some cities the housing prices are untenable and if for whatever reason, oil prices, worsening international climates or investments were to dry up, we would see a dramatic drop of up to 10%, 20% in some cases, of the value of real estate and the concomitant disaster in some personal finances because of the high level of indebtedness. We need to address that as a country and I do not see the efforts to do just that in the budget.

Those are two things to which I would hope the government would pay attention and that we would see better efforts to ensure that the financial situations of individual Canadians would be looked after.

[*Translation*]

We will be coming back to the whole issue of crime. The government's approach to this issue is completely backwards. The exact opposite is what is needed. We need to reduce crime, rather than throw people in prison for even longer periods and at increasingly exorbitant costs. We will come back to this, since an omnibus bill on crime is coming down the pipe. We will definitely be talking about this issue again.

Lastly, I would like to talk about post-budget questions. What worries me about the government's attitude is that it has said nothing about any investment in education, health care or the needs of Canadians once the budget is balanced. Instead, it talks about increasing the number of tax havens for the wealthy, when it should be doing the opposite. Therein lies the main difference between the Conservative philosophy and the Liberal philosophy. We Liberals try to strike a balance between the needs of Canadians and the need to create enough wealth to support one another.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's comments.

It strikes me as a bit odd that the member would talk about not being open with Canadians about the tough decisions that need to be made when a government is running a deficit. I remember when the member's party was in government. I do not remember members of that party going before Canadians in that election and telling them that they would have to make the very difficult decision of cutting provincial transfers for things like health care, or when they made the difficult decision to cut education transfers, driving up the cost of education for every Canadian student. They cut science and technology. I do not remember them saying that they would cut a great many things that really were not in their jurisdiction. They were responsibilities to be transferred to the provinces.

Maybe the member would like to talk about the lack of transparency of that Liberal government and why he now believes he is seated where he is.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I will let the last comment slip by. If I have learned one thing from the Conservatives, it is that defeats are not permanent.

The member should do his homework. I ran for the House for this first time in 1995 in a byelection. That was at the time of the budget. The budget, the toughest budget, that the Liberals presented at the time gave a recipe for what would come in terms of transfer cuts and in terms of our own government cuts. That is what I ran on in this city.

The member should go back and do his homework because I have been through that. It is only because we were transparent, put facts on the table and said exactly what we would do that people felt they could trust us. We did exactly what we said we would do. We cleaned up the mess—

● (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. When the House returns to this matter, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier will have three minutes remaining in questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

NIPISSING—TIMISKAMING

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and distinct privilege for me to rise in this House for the first time. I wish to congratulate you in your new role as well as the members of the House for their election successes.

I would like to express my profound appreciation to my constituents in the great riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming for the trust they have bestowed upon me. I would also like to express a heartfelt thanks to my wife Joanne, my son David and my daughter Katie for their strength and support, and to all the members of my campaign team, my sincere gratitude.

I represent a beautiful region which is truly a microcosm of Canada. It is blessed with breathtaking lakes, two of which are namesakes for the riding, Nipissing and Timiskaming. It is also known for its mighty rivers and beautiful forests. It is truly a land of productive, innovative and creative people, and I am humbled to serve them.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TERREBONNE—BLAINVILLE

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House for the first time on behalf of the people of Terrebonne—Blainville. As a new member of Parliament, I would first like to thank them for having confidence in me. I am very much looking forward to representing them here in Ottawa.

It is time to get to work to advance the priorities of the people of Terrebonne—Blainville: helping small and medium-sized businesses, helping families make ends meet and getting serious about our environment.

The people of Terrebonne—Blainville have still not recovered from the 2002 closure of GM, which cost many jobs in my riding, and there are concerns about the closure of Electrolux, which will affect 1,300 people in the Lanaudière region.

I will do everything I can to ensure that the people of Terrebonne—Blainville are heard in Parliament.

* * *

[English]

GREATER KITCHENER WATERLOO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the people of Kitchener—Waterloo for re-electing me as their member of Parliament.

I am truly honoured to continue to serve and represent this dynamic community. My riding is well-known for its innovative and entrepreneurial culture, and one of the key drivers of our success is the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber has played an important role in the development of our region, providing support for local enterprises, and fostering collaborative relationships between business owners and the wider community.

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce. I congratulate its members on this significant milestone, thank them for their service to our community, and wish them continued success in the years to come.

* * *

CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young man from the first nations Mi'kmaq community of Conne River in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Mise'l Jeddore was awarded the 2011 cultural scholarship for St. Anne's School in Conne River. Despite his young age, Mise'l is proving to be an outstanding ambassador for the aboriginal culture. As part of the drumming group for his school, Mise'l has represented the school at events as far away as Japan.

Currently, Mise'l is attending Memorial University in St. John's Newfoundland, where he continues to actively promote the Mi'kmaq culture.

I ask all members to join me in saluting this exceptional young man.

* * *

SPORTS

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize some great achievements by young Barrie athletes in the past few weeks.

The Barrie Spirit under-13 girls soccer team was in our nation's capital to compete in the Ottawa IceBreaker Soccer Tournament against a strong field of 24 teams. The girls won their first five games, outscoring the opposition 14 to 2, and faced the Ottawa Puri

Statements by Members

in the final with a winning goal after two sudden-death penalty kicks.

The Barrie Kempettes Gymnastics Club travelled to Newmarket to compete in the Shenderey Gymnastics Club's invitational meet. Our local athletes had an amazing competition, bringing home 28 medals. All Barrie gymnasts finished in the top 10 in their respective categories.

Our high school athletes competed in the OFSAA championships in Sudbury. Barrie again had an incredible showing, taking gold in many disciplines. Innisdale's senior girls' team won the school's first OFSAA banner in track and field in over 20 years.

Barrie's athletes and coaches are doing our community proud. I applaud their hard work and dedication, and congratulate them on such a strong showing.

* * *

●(1405)

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my supporters, the people of Verchères—Les Patriotes who, on May 2, expressed their will to have me represent them in the House.

I humbly accept this mandate and commit to serving them and to protecting their interests throughout my time here.

I would also like to thank my family, my friends and my husband for their daily support.

I also want to say that I am proud to be the first Tunisian woman to sit as a member of the Canadian Parliament.

On Monday the government presented its budget and there were certain positive aspects to it.

However, what is the government doing to help young graduates who are starting their professional lives with an average student debt of \$25,000? Or to help families that have a huge debt load and are being crushed by astronomical credit card interest rates? Or to help the 5 million Canadians who still do not have a family doctor and have to go to emergency? What is the government doing to meet the real needs of Canadians?

By granting subsidies to the country's privileged, the government has made its priorities clear. And those priorities are unacceptable.

* * *

[English]

SASKATOON—ROSETOWN—BIGGAR

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I join my colleagues in the 41st Parliament. We are here with a clear mandate, after a historic election, a humbling and gratifying prospect.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank the residents of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar for providing me with this great honour once again. Saskatchewan, the land of living skies, is a wonderful place to live, to work, and to raise a family, largely because of the very friendly and supportive communities found there.

I recognize that it is through their faith and the hard work of many volunteers that I have the opportunity to serve my wonderful constituency and this great country over the next four years. For this I am profoundly grateful and eager to work on their behalf.

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KOREAN WAR

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the war in Korea, the forgotten war, a war still on hold, still not resolved, the war that was never declared, but make no mistake, it was a war. Some 30,000 Canadians served under severe conditions. They gave a small, beleaguered nation the opportunity to be free. The price of this freedom was 516 who never came home, who never grew old.

The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry received an American presidential citation for its heroic accomplishments, against unbelievable odds, protecting the capital city of Seoul against possible capture in the battle of Kapyong.

Patrick O'Connor of the Royal Canadian Regiment was killed one day after penning these poignant words:

There is blood on the hills of Korea
It's the gift of freedom they love
May their names live in glory forever
And their souls in Heaven above

We must not forget.

* * *

[*Translation*]**MANICOUAGAN**

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity during my first speech in the House to acknowledge the several thousand members of the Innu and Naskapi nations who mobilized and placed their confidence in me on May 2.

Such aboriginal participation in federal politics, and Canadian politics in general, had never been seen in 500 years of shared history. The fact that my non-native constituents also opted for a culturally integrated vision of regional development and social relations lays the foundation for a new alliance between the Quebec, Coaster, Innu and Naskapi communities in the riding of Manicouagan.

Given the reality of northern development, this solidarity will be essential for giving precedence to citizens' interests, social imperatives and environmental ideals over purely commercial considerations.

Accordingly, my interventions during this Parliament will focus on preserving and enhancing the unique dynamic of my riding.

● (1410)

[*English*]**SYRIA**

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has taken a clear and principled stand in opposition to the current Syrian regime. We have implemented sanctions designed to punish those currently in power for the violence and atrocities they have perpetrated against their own citizens.

Sadly, the regime has continued its abhorrent ways this weekend, sending military forces into the town of Jisr al-Shugur, to suppress anyone who might oppose it, even peacefully. Thousands of people have fled to other parts of Syria and to neighbouring Turkey.

I would like to commend Turkey for its openness and organization in welcoming these refugees and attending to them in an orderly way. Turkey is a friend of these new refugees and a long-time ally of Canada. Syrian officials are to be soundly condemned for their actions.

Our government will continue to monitor the situation in Syria. Working with our allies, we will continue to act decisively in support of the Syrian people who are seeking greater freedoms and the most basic of human rights through peaceful means.

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[*Translation*]**NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR WEEK**

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating National Blood Donor Week from June 13 to 19.

Recognized by a bill in 2008, National Blood Donor Week is an opportunity to thank the donors and volunteers that help to ensure the health of all their fellow citizens.

It is also an opportunity to make people aware of the importance of donating blood and encourage them to do so, particularly during the summer months when donation levels are usually down.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party and the people of Beauharnois—Salaberry, I would like to thank Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec for their commitment. I encourage everyone to give blood. Let us work together to save lives because giving blood is giving of ourselves.

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[*English*]**THE BUDGET**

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March we presented the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a positive plan to keep taxes low, and support jobs and growth.

Canadians want the budget and its important economic measures passed without delay.

Later today, Parliament will vote to approve the budget in principle. We will vote on a budget that will support Canada's forestry, mining, manufacturing, agricultural and aerospace sectors; increase income support for Canada's most in need seniors; bring health care and social transfers to record highs; help attract doctors and nurses to rural areas; provide tax relief for family caregivers, volunteer firefighters; and more.

Today we will vote on a budget that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said, "will continue to support the economic recovery and help Canadian businesses prosper".

I ask the opposition, why would it vote against this budget and its positive initiatives?

Let us work together and move forward with our low tax plan and Canada's economic recovery.

* * *

[Translation]

FLOODING IN MONTRÉGIE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity here today to commend the extraordinary generosity shown by Quebecers this weekend during the cleanup, dubbed "La Grande Corvée", of the flood zone in Montérégie.

Over 3,000 volunteers worked together to ease the suffering of the men, women and children who have been enduring the wrath of nature for over 50 days now.

I would also like to congratulate the event's organizers, led by my good friend Michel Fecteau, the man behind SOS Richelieu, and his team. They did an excellent job. Bravo to you, Michel, and to your entire team.

I would remind everyone that another big cleanup is planned for June 18 and 19. For more information, please visit www.sosrichelieu.com.

Albert Jacquard once said "From now on, the solidarity needed most of all is that of everyone on earth".

The magnificent solidarity shown by the people of Quebec deserves to be applauded by all members of Parliament.

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[English]

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon is a vast riding that encompasses a number of small communities, including the Fraser Canyon community of Boston Bar. Boston Bar is home to about 800 people and has its history rooted in the gold rush.

The people of Boston Bar are now enthusiastically behind the Vancouver Canucks' rush for silver in the form of the Stanley Cup. Just to ensure that the good people of Boston Bar would not be

Statements by Members

accused of favouring the rival Boston Bruins, they have decided to temporarily change its name to Vancouver Bar for the month of June.

With game six of the Stanley Cup finals taking place tonight, I would invite all members of the House to join with me and with all Canadians to salute the community of Vancouver Bar for taking this symbolic step to cheer on Canada's team. Go Canucks go.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

VANCOUVER CANUCKS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the big night, the sixth game in Boston. This evening, after 18 years, the cup will be coming home to Canada.

On this side of the House, even Montreal Canadiens fans are behind the Canucks. This is their 40th anniversary and the NDP will be there to celebrate their 50th.

[English]

Like the Canucks, we know something about perseverance and breakthroughs.

I think of all those young boys and girls who play Canada's game for the love of it. All those early mornings and the life lessons learned. None of those kids have ever seen a Canadian team win the Stanley Cup.

That is going to change tonight. It is time for them to feel that rush of Canadian pride, like we did with the 1993 Habs or throughout the eighties with the Oilers.

So, for the kids, let us say it loud and clear. Go Canucks go.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March, we presented the next phase of the economic action plan, a plan to keep taxes low, create jobs and ensure economic growth. Rather than focusing on the economy, the opposition triggered an election, but Canadians voted for our plan to support job creation and economic growth. Canadians want this budget and these measures to be adopted without any further delay. Later today, Parliament will vote to approve the budget based on these principles.

This budget will support forestry, mining, manufacturing and agriculture, as well as the aerospace sector. It will increase support for the neediest seniors and funding for the health system. It will lower taxes for families. In short, this budget will ensure our economic stability. Let us work together and move forward with our plan for low taxes and continued economic recovery.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***LIBYA**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is involved in the conflict in Libya, and the government will ask Parliament to extend the commitment of our armed forces. As we prepare to debate and vote, the Prime Minister should answer some questions.

First, is the objective of the mission in Libya still to protect civilians, as requested by the UN resolution?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely. Our work in Libya is in accordance with the UN resolution. Our military mission has not changed. The resolution on this policy, which we will debate tomorrow, will aim to extend the mission by three and a half months.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the suffering of the Libyan people has gone on for far too long. What is needed now is a Libyan-led political transition. The international community must work to negotiate a ceasefire and to ensure the continued protection of civilians.

Considering that, can the Prime Minister tell us, will the government commit to remaining strictly within the bounds of the UN resolution and the UN mandate? Will the government commit to increasing Canada's contribution to the UN humanitarian appeal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the UN sanctioned mission in Libya to protect the vulnerable civilians is not a partisan one.

I want to say I greatly appreciate the engagement of both the New Democrats and the Liberals on this very important issue. The leader of the NDP, the NDP foreign affairs critic and others have called for greater humanitarian support to support the vulnerable people of Libya.

I want to say to them very directly that we appreciate that advice and agree with the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people would think that no one would be a fan of Gadhafi, but he has been pretty good for business.

Under the government, Canada's exports to Libya have skyrocketed and that included the sale of arms to the Gadhafi regime. Canadian owned SNC-Lavalin received a \$275 million contract to build a prison for Gadhafi.

Will the government finally take steps to ensure that Canadian investment never contributes to human rights violations abroad?

● (1420)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously this government and this House have authorized sanctions be made against the Libyan regime, a specified group of people.

I am certainly very happy to entertain any ideas or suggestions that the Leader of the Opposition has in this regard.

Obviously one of the key elements of Canada's foreign policy is to promote Canadian values, the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law abroad. We are certainly prepared to work with the Leader of the Opposition on this issue.

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*[Translation]***AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on another topic, the Auditor General has issued a damning report on the questionable use of the border infrastructure fund. The Prime Minister's defence does not hold up.

The Prime Minister is suggesting to Canadians that it is normal for a border improvement fund to be used for everything except improving borders. What planet is he living on?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we had to move expeditiously, as we did at the height of the economic downturn, to get infrastructure projects moving. These infrastructure projects had to move especially quickly.

At the end of the day, as Minister of Infrastructure, I signed off on the estimates. One of the things contained in there was a proposal recommended to me by the public service, a proposal that I accepted, to use that gateway fund to get the projects moving especially quickly to meet the tight timeframes.

The Auditor General has made some important recommendations on transparency and accountability to Parliament and this government completely agrees.

Hon. Jack Layton (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe the government is not precisely sure what the money was spent on, but let us just remind folks here in the House that even under the disguise of the G8 legacy fund some of this just does not cut it.

There is \$1.2 million for benches, bike racks and flagpoles 62 kilometres from the summit; \$1.3 million on sidewalks 85 kilometres from the summit; and \$2 million on a walkway, docking facilities, landscaping and lighting 131 kilometres away from the summit, nowhere near the border. How can the government justify these kinds of expenditures?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were three objectives of the legacy fund. The second was to spruce up an already beautiful part of our country. There were literally 2,000 journalists from around the world in addition to thousands and thousands of delegates, some staying well in excess of 100 kilometres away from the summit site itself. These were all public infrastructure projects that came in on budget. Every single dollar was accounted for on these municipal public infrastructure projects.

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AIR INDIA

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is forgetting the fourth one: to re-elect the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Oral Questions

My question is for the Minister of Public Safety.

It has now been a year since the report of Judge Major on Air India. We are now coming up to June 23, which is always a moment of enormous sadness and memory for the families of the Air India bombing.

Why is it that the Government of Canada has made no decision yet with respect to *ex gratia* payments to these families who have been waiting for so long for justice, consideration and reconciliation?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bombing of Air India Flight 182 is a stark reminder that Canada is not immune from the threat of terrorism.

One of the first acts of our government was to commission an inquiry into the Air India bombing, something that had been left long neglected by the prior Liberal government. By commissioning the Major report to investigate the failings that led to the attack in 1985, our government listened to the families of victims when no other government would.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if one listens to what Judge Major has said recently about the conduct of the government since his report was published, it is very clear that the kind of pious sanctimony coming out of the mouth of the minister just does not match the situation we are facing.

I ask the minister, why no *ex gratia* payments and why no movement on the key recommendations of Judge Major with respect to the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service? Why have you not moved on these questions?

• (1425)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why you have not moved on it, but what I can say is that we have delivered our response to that report with the Air India inquiry action plan. This action plan is a road map, a document that looks at where we were, where we are and where we need to go to help ensure that such a horrific attack does not occur again.

We thank the families of the victims who have worked and consulted on this action plan and we commit to their continued involvement and consultation through this ongoing process.

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[Translation]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans now knows that what he wants to close in St. John's and Quebec City are rescue centres for people in marine distress, and not simply call centres. In Quebec City, the French language issue is also involved. Navigation in the St. Lawrence is very difficult. If a problem arises, precise, fast and efficient answers are needed in the appropriate language. There is no room for any misunderstanding.

Will the minister leave the rescue centres where they should be in order to save lives?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consolidation of the search and rescue dispatch centres into the joint rescue coordination centres will have no negative impact on the current levels of service provided by the Coast Guard. The maritime community across Canada will still receive services in both official languages by both the Coast Guard, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and Canadian Forces aircraft from their existing locations. Mariners in distress will continue to communicate with the Maritime and traffic communication centres and the same ships and aircraft will respond as they have always done.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a legacy of deceit, pork and cynicism. It sounds like the old Liberal sponsorship scandal, but it is the editorial pages commenting on the behaviour of the new Treasury Board President.

The member has abused the public trust and he must come clean. Will he explain to the House how he managed to divert \$50 million from border infrastructure payments and put it into a private slush fund? Can he explain why the Auditor General was unable to find any evidence of oversight or documentation to explain this outrageous spending spree?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin with that question. Just about everything the member opposite said is not the case.

With respect to the G8 legacy fund, we supported 32 public infrastructure projects. Every single dollar is accounted for. To move expeditiously, the public service recommended using this fund so that we could use existing authorities to move quickly. I accepted that recommendation.

The Auditor General has suggested that we need greater transparency and greater accountability. There is no argument from me or from this government. We fully accept the great work that the Auditor General has done on this issue.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not good enough that the member is hiding behind the verbosity as a member for Ottawa West—Nepean. If he cannot stand and explain this \$50 million spending spree, then he has no business being at Treasury Board.

The government promised to do politics differently. Instead, we have the spectacle of three amigos divvying up pork barrel slush funds and he cannot stand in the House and produce any evidence or documentation that could have stopped this outrageous Muskoka gravy train.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member opposite to read the report of the Auditor General. He speaks about a committee of three people making decisions with respect to public infrastructure. In fact, that is not the case. None of the decisions with respect to the 32 projects was approved by that committee or any of the three individuals who served on it.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, when the Conservatives promised to do things differently from the Liberals, the Conservative platform said that they would “oblige public officials to create the records necessary to document their actions and decisions”. That is precisely what the former industry minister seemed to be desperately lacking with regard to the G8 spending scandal.

What changed between the time when he called for sound management of public money and 2010, when a slush fund was created to please the minister's friends in his riding?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the member opposite that in fact is not the case. There was a full and complete contribution agreement for each of the 32 public infrastructure projects that were accounted for. Each of the projects came in on budget and in each of the projects every dollar was accounted for.

The Auditor General has raised some concerns about the process in terms of the selection of public infrastructure projects. We certainly agree with her recommendations and will work to implement them in very short order.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like magic, the concept of ministerial responsibility seems to have completely disappeared from the vocabulary of all Conservative ministers, especially when the time comes to explain misspending and poor management in a given department. On the other hand, they do not hesitate to take credit for the economic recovery, even though this government shamefully dragged its feet until it risked losing power.

Canadians want to know why they should have to pay the price of cuts to services when the government cannot seem to explain its wasteful G8 spending.

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government supported more than 28,000 public infrastructure projects in every part of the country. The Auditor General, in her last report in 2010, looked at that and gave the government an A.

With respect to the 32 projects in this one fund, she has recommended two areas where she thinks it could have been done better and the government has fully accepted that advice.

All of these infrastructure projects, like resurfacing the runway of an airport, building a community centre, resurfacing a provincial highway, are all good public infrastructure projects that will benefit the people of Canada for many years to come.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the latest employment numbers show that, despite what the government is saying, the employment crisis is not over. There are still 1.4 million Canadians without work, plus hundreds of thousands working part-time because they cannot find anything better. Three out of five unemployed people will not receive any help.

Why is the minister refusing to support Canadian families that need help returning to the workforce?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we tried to do with our economic action plan. We believe that the best way to improve things for these people is to help them find work. To do that, they need to develop skills. That is why we have invested in training for 1,200 people through the economic action plan—to help them find work today and in the future. We have been successful and Friday's numbers prove that.

[English]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not good enough.

Last week the minister joked about the *Wizard of Oz*, but what is no joke is his failure to create jobs. Millions of Canadians are struggling. Hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts to profitable banks and big oil make no economic sense and create no jobs.

Instead of just leading Canadians down a yellow brick road, will the government step out from behind the curtain and tie corporate tax incentives to real job creation?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when talking about real job creation, May saw 22,000 more Canadians working. I am not too sure why the opposition thinks that may be a negative. We have 560,000 more Canadians working today than we did in July of 2009.

However, that is no reason to stop. That is no reason to hold back this budget. We need to pass the budget quickly so we can continue to create jobs for Canadians.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder our manufacturing sector has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. The government just does not get it.

Last week we saw more dismal trade numbers. In six years the government has managed to turn a \$62 billion trade surplus into a \$9 billion deficit. Every serious Canadian observer can see that this country has a trade crisis.

Oral Questions

My question for the minister is this. What is his plan for addressing Canada's serious trade imbalance?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I congratulate the member on his election and welcome him to the House.

Also, I am pleased to see that he is engaging on the trade file. As he knows, trade is absolutely critical to building our economy. It is critical to creating jobs. It is critical to our long-term prosperity as a country. I would encourage him to get on side with this government as we seek to build that long-term security for our country.

• (1435)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a return to the days when Canada was a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water, reliant on exports of raw resources for growth. Subsidies to big oil and tax cuts for the most profitable corporations have only helped drive up our dollar far beyond its real value. No wonder our exports are in real trouble.

When will the government replace its failed trade policies with targeted measures to boost exports and fix Canada's trade deficit?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to boost exports is to expand our trading relationships around the world.

Trade accounts for some 60% of our GDP. I am surprised the member does not know that. He should get onside with our government's plan to expand trading relationships, build our prosperity, create jobs and ensure that economic growth continues.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry is the cornerstone of over 300 Canadian communities, a number of which are found in my riding of Pontiac. This industry is in crisis and, since 2005, close to 90,000 jobs have been lost in this industry across Canada. The government claims to be helping this industry, but it is not doing enough.

Why does this government insist on giving everything to the oil industry when our country's forestry industry is dying?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the preceding questions, it was interesting to hear about international trade and open markets since the forestry industry's problem is clearly a matter of markets. Unfortunately, the United States construction industry has encountered major problems, which means that our Quebec and Canadian companies are not able to export as much lumber to the United States. As long as this market is not replaced by new markets, something we have been working on, it will be difficult for our companies to prosper.

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year when the then minister of industry blocked the sale of a potash corporation to BHP Billiton, he said that there was clearly a need to upgrade to update the Investment Canada Act, particularly with respect to an extremely important evaluation criteria called net benefit.

We have not heard a word for the past eight months. Foreign investors, Canadians, and I would dare say Parliament, would like to know where that clarity lies.

Will the government give us that clarity for which we have been waiting for eight months?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy and our government will continue to encourage it. That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act.

I know the House committee was studying the Investment Canada Act before the opposition called an unnecessary election. I hope that study will continue so we can look at ways to improve the act so it works in the best interests of Canadians and our economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is some urgency. We know that TMX, which includes the Toronto stock exchange and other Canadian stock exchanges, could be sold this year, either to a foreign company, the London stock exchange, or to a Canadian company, the Maple Group.

There is an urgent need for clarity in this extremely important matter. We have been waiting for eight months. We do not have time to wait for another committee to meet this fall.

We need to know what the new net benefit rules are right now.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, foreign investment is key to the growth of the Canadian economy, and our government will continue to promote it.

That being said, significant investments will continue to be reviewable under the Investment Canada Act.

I know that the House committee was studying the Investment Canada Act before the opposition provoked an unnecessary election. I hope that this study will continue in committee so that we can look at ways to improve the act so that it continues to work in the best interests of Canada and our economy.

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[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the Canada Revenue Agency giving itself top grades on service to taxpayers, an internal audit found that these grades were in fact inflated by almost 20% and fell well below acceptable standards.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives continue to pat themselves on the back, to mislead the public and hide their own incompetence. Could the minister please explain this lack of accountability to Canadian taxpayers who have the right to expect timely, respectful service?

• (1440)

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians. An important example of this is our government's creation of the taxpayers bill of rights, along with the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman.

Internal auditing does take place in order to keep the agency accountable and to ensure that services to Canadians continue to improve.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Union of Postal Employees has offered to accept the minister's request to suspend the strike as long as its contract is reinstated. Canada Post is refusing.

The strike drags on and mail delivery is reduced to three days a week. Will the minister push Canada Post to agree to reinstate the contract so we can end this strike and get everyone back to the bargaining table?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Labour, I would like to express my disappointment that the parties have so far been unable to reach an agreement and that the union has felt it necessary to continue the strikes.

Our government has been given a strong mandate on the economy. I am concerned about the effects this will have on Canadians and Canadian businesses across the country.

I urge both parties to reach a negotiated agreement as soon as possible.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we start by accepting the contract, there will be no strike.

[*Translation*]

While Canada Post management wants to save on operating costs on the backs of the workers, we find that the cuts to service to Canadians are unacceptable.

As a result of this strategy, Canadians across the country will get only three days of service a week.

Will the Minister of Labour take the necessary measures to ensure that both parties negotiate in good faith and that service will be maintained with due regard for labour rights?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I urge both parties, as I mentioned before, to reach a negotiated agreement as soon as possible. The best solution is one that the parties come up with together, by themselves.

The minister is monitoring the situation closely and will continue to provide the parties with the support and assistance required through the mediator from Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years after the government passed an attack on pay equity for women in the public service, with the help of the Liberals, it has emerged that the law is too complicated and the rules too severe to be implemented.

When will the government stop playing games with women's income and commit to treating pay equity as a right, not as a bargaining chip?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Tony Clement: It is always nice to have friends on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

In all seriousness, the hon. member should understand that in order to pass these kinds of regulations, we wish to have discussions. We want to ensure that it is a fair and objective situation, particularly with respect to recourse in terms of the system we are replacing from the original one. That means ensuring we have regulations that make sense for all the parties involved. We anticipate that we will be able to put forward those regulations by the end of this year.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the minister on his first speech in the House.

That being said, this government's position on the issue of pay equity completely abandons women in our country.

In 2011, Canadian women are still earning 71¢ for every dollar earned by a man. Even worse is that we know what to do to remedy the situation.

When will this government implement the recommendations of the 2004 pay equity task force?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, there needs to be co-operation in order to pass these kinds of regulations. I can say that by the end of 2011, it will be possible to have regulations. Under this new legislation, the employer and the bargaining agent are jointly responsible for ensuring equitable compensation when they are setting wages and not through a separate pay equity process or judicial enforcement.

•(1445)
[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, later today, Parliament will vote on approving budget 2011, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. This is a positive, forward-looking plan to keep Canada's economy growing while helping Canadian families, seniors and communities.

Indeed, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce said that the plan would support the economic recovery by helping Canadian businesses prosper, compete and create jobs.

Could the Minister of State please inform the House of the latest news on Canada's job marketing?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we heard good numbers from Stats Canada: 22,000 more jobs in May. That brings us to a total of 560,000 jobs, as I have said, since July 2009.

However, if there is one Canadian still looking for a job, that is too many. We need to move forward with this budget because there are provisions in it that will help Canadians get back to work. It is important. It is urgent.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last fall, the Canada Revenue Agency gave itself top marks for its handling of requests for tax rulings. However, an audit revealed that CRA had cooked the books, left out some requests and did not start the clock when it got the others. It is easy to score top marks when an agency makes up the rules as it goes along.

What is the minister doing to clean up and bring more transparency to her department?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, internal auditing is in place in order to keep the agency accountable and to ensure service to Canadians is constantly improving.

As a result of this internal audit, CRA has in place an action plan designed to continue to improve the ways Canadians can interact with CRA regarding their taxes and their benefits. Our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government in fact gets an "F" for failure.

Look at the issue of tax evasion. Business people allegedly even bribed employees of the Canada Revenue Agency in order to better defraud the tax system. What action was taken? Nine employees were dismissed, but still no action has been taken against the fraudsters. When will the public finally see action taken on the cases of tax fraud?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government appreciates that this is a very serious issue

Oral Questions

and we will not tolerate the types of alleged activities that are being reported. The RCMP, of course, is investigating this case and our officials are working with the RCMP. To be clear, many of these allegations date back more than a decade.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the E. coli outbreak in Germany gives Canadians even more reasons to worry about the safety of Canada's food. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food patted himself on the back for the hiring of 170 people by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, but refused to say how many were hired as inspectors.

How many of these new employees will act as inspectors and protect Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member has been paying close attention to the debate in the House on our budget. A colleague of mine mentioned that we will be voting on the budget this afternoon.

I would remind the member that in the budget there is an extra \$100 million over five years to enhance food safety. In addition, we are providing CFIA with a net increase of 733 inspection staff.

I would ask that member to stand in his place this afternoon and vote in favour of our government's budget.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually, on page 110 we see \$9 million and \$8 million, which do not quite add up to \$100 million.

The government does not get it. This is about the safety of the food that Canadians put on their families plates.

The results are in: CFIA is underfunded and we need more inspectors.

The Conservatives are failing. They brag about putting new money in the budget but they are actually taking it out.

When will the government stop playing shell games and making semantic arguments and get to the truly important work of ensuring food is safe for all Canadians?

•(1450)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to that member last week that CFIA's first priority is the safety of Canadians. We are strengthening Canada's food safety system by ensuring the largest ever budgets for CFIA, which that member and his party consistently vote against.

We are continually reviewing costs to ensure efficiency.

I will finish up with a quote from a report on OECD countries that states:

Oral Questions

Canada is one of the best-performing countries in the 2010 Food Safety Performance World Ranking study. Its overall grade was superior, earning it a place among the top-tier countries.

That is our track record.

* * *

G8 SUMMIT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's G8 report shows that \$50 million was quietly scooped from the border infrastructure fund to pay for gazebos hundreds of kilometres from the border.

Border infrastructure funds must reduce congestion and enhance security to qualify. In 2003, the fund upgraded Knight Street in Vancouver, though it is not close to the border, because it reduced congestion on a major border route.

Could the government explain how a gazebo reduces border congestion or enhances security?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken of this before but I will reiterate.

I signed off on the estimates of the department and ultimately I am accountable. I am right here in Parliament being held accountable for them.

The professional public service recommended that this fund be used as a vehicle to get quick action with respect to projects that were important as Canada was hosting the G8, and that is exactly what we did.

The Auditor General has come forward and said that she would like greater transparency and greater accountability. We completely agree and have accepted all of her recommendations.

* * *

[Translation]

TREASURY BOARD

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot say that the government leads by example. The President of the Treasury Board is demanding cuts, but cabinet offices have been going in the other direction. Since 2008, there has been a 14% increase in the budgets of ministers' offices.

What does one say to aboriginal chiefs who come to Ottawa to report that there are still houses that are not hooked up to water systems on their reserves? What does one say to low-income seniors who must settle for a \$1.60 a day increase in the guaranteed income supplement?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we ran on the principle that it is time to balance the budget. We put forward a clear plan to the people of Canada to balance the budget one year earlier than in our previous budgetary plan in 2014-15. We have a clear goal and we have a clear means to get there.

That is what the people of Canada have spoken to, that is why they elected this government and that is why we are moving with those plans.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to doling out cash or smearing its opponents, the government does it better than anyone else. However, when it comes to consultations on important issues, it mysteriously loses its marketing edge.

For the government's secretive border deal with the U.S., a so-called publication process is a four point questionnaire put on a government website.

Why is the government hiding the process and not ensuring that Canadians are consulted on one of the most important issues for our country?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to that question, the member opposite talked about spending taxpayer dollars on infrastructure projects. In fact, his riding is receiving some of the highest amounts for public infrastructure in all of Canada. That is because it deals with the perimeter and trade.

We want to ensure that we have an appropriate arrangement with the United States that will allow the auto worker in southwestern Ontario to continue to have employment so that more jobs and more opportunities are obtained through working constructively with President Obama's administration.

I would think that member would want to join us and support such an important initiative.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reason my border community is finally getting the justice it deserves is because New Democrats understand the border issue. The government does not understand the border issue. Every time it has been involved in border issues, it ends up thickening the border, costing jobs and putting us in a trade deficit. That is the reality of the government's record.

Why is the government afraid to consult Canadians with regard to how we will change our border practices? Why will it not actually listen to them? Why will we not have a proper dialogue. What is the government afraid of? It does not want to hear the truth from Canadians. They are concerned.

● (1455)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the input of members opposite. If the member opposite or his constituents have any ideas on how we can de-thicken the border, we are certainly prepared to do that.

I think there is no other government in Canadian history that has paid more attention and given greater focus to the Windsor-Detroit crossing than this government. We have come forward with a substantial plan. We are waiting for news from the people in Lansing, Michigan and the state capital as to whether they will endorse that vision and get on board with the federal government to ensure that jobs can be created on both sides of the border.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the leader of the official opposition will be travelling to Vancouver for his party's convention where the NDP will be debating a proposal, the NDP policy resolution to nationalize the auto industry, that calls upon the party to effectively campaign for the naturalization of the big three auto companies.

Would the Minister of Industry please inform this House what the Government of Canada's position is on the nationalization of the automotive industry.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on passing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We believe that calling on the government to nationalize an industry, especially one that is critical to our nation's economy, is reckless and irresponsible.

I would call upon my hon. colleagues to stand today and denounce such a position.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs a week ago about the situation of a dedicated veteran, Fabien Melanson, who is on a hunger strike in my riding of Charlottetown.

The minister said, "I have instructed my officials to follow up on this veteran's case".

Mr. Melanson has not heard from any officials at Veterans Affairs with regard to the specifics of his case and he has now gone 10 days without food.

Did the minister keep his word and instruct his officials to follow up with Mr. Melanson, yes or no?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government has apologized for what happened years ago. My two predecessors have presented apologies and I also feel sorry for what happened under the previous government.

However, corrective measures were taken. I have instructed my officials and they are closely monitoring the situation so we take care of the health of this veteran and of all veterans.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for six years, Nathalie Morin, a 27-year-old Canadian, has been held against her will by her husband in Saudi Arabia. She and her three children are prisoners in their own home, and according to Ms. Morin's mother, their rights and freedoms are violated every day.

In accordance with the motion unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly on Friday, does the federal government commit to taking the measures required to repatriate Ms. Morin and her children?

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of this case and have been in close touch with Ms. Morin on this issue. This is a complex family matter and there is no easy solution. Consular officials will continue to work with Ms. Morin and Saudi officials toward a positive resolution to the matter.

I can also advise the House that this case has been raised by ministers in their meetings with Saudi officials.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the servant of Ottawa—Orléans in this House, it is a great honour to rise today on the first day of the National Public Service Week.

[Translation]

National Public Service Week is a perfect opportunity to reflect upon the many contributions that public servants make to our society every day.

[English]

With that in mind, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board to update the House on our government's appreciation of the hard work and professionalism of our public service.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans for his timely question and dedication to his constituents.

Indeed, National Public Service Week is an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and contribution of our public servants. Due in part to their hard work across this country, Canada is emerging from the global recession as one of the world's top-performing advanced economies.

Moving forward, public service skill and expertise will be helpful in streamlining government operations and programs to ensure value for taxpayer money. We salute them. We salute all those Canadians who serve in our public service.

Routine Proceedings

•(1500)

*[Translation]***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I rose in the House to bring to light the fact that members of the Castillo Olivares family, who fled their country because of death threats, would be kicked out of Canada on June 15. Nothing has happened since I made that speech. If nothing is done, they will be deported to Mexico in two days.

Can the minister stay the removal order for one month in order to allow the children to finish the school year and the family to complete preparations for their deportation?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Privacy Act, a minister is not authorized to publicly comment on a specific case without permission from those involved. So I encourage any member who has concerns about a specific case to raise them with me in private so that I can provide them with answers.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Nathalie Morin and her three children have been held against their will for over five years now in Saudi Arabia by her husband, the children's father. Unfortunately, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is ignoring the situation. The government's responses to this matter are unacceptable. The minister claims that Saudi laws prevent him from taking any action. Given the department's failure to act, last Friday the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion calling on the federal government to bring Nathalie Morin and her children back to Canada.

Rather than holding more pointless meetings, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs exert the necessary diplomatic pressure to bring Nathalie Morin back—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the motion passed by the Government of Quebec.

Consular officials continue, as I said, to support Ms. Morin in resolving the situation. However, I would advise the House that we are bound by both Saudi law and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, under which the children cannot leave the country without the consent of both parents.

We will continue to work on this case. We do hope for a positive resolution.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE**

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's public report for 2009-10.

* * *

FAIR AND EFFICIENT CRIMINAL TRIALS ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mega-trials).

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104(1) and 114(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees of the House and if the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this report later today.

* * *

CANADA EVIDENCE ACT

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-207, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act (interpretation of numerical dates).

He said: Mr. Speaker, legal documents sometimes state the day, the month and the year, other times the year, the month and the day, and sometimes the month, the day and the year. We need to be consistent and that is why I am honoured to stand in Parliament to reintroduce my private member's bill to amend the Canada Evidence Act. This bill would amend the Canada Evidence Act to direct courts on how to interpret a numeric date that is in dispute.

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

* * *

•(1505)

*[Translation]***SUPREME COURT ACT**

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-208, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages).

He said: I would like to thank the hon. member for Gatineau who has seconded my bill.

This is not the first time I have introduced this bill in the House of Commons. As members know, I am very persistent and I tell myself that one day it will happen. This bill would ensure that future Supreme Court judges will be chosen from among candidates who understand both French and English without the help of an interpreter. I believe that everyone should be equal before the law and should have the right, without distinction, to equal protection in law in both of the country's official languages.

I call upon members from all parties, all senators and the people of Canada to support this bill so that every Canadian is treated more fairly before the Supreme Court.

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

* * *

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-209, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Sackville — Eastern Shore.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the absolute pleasure of representing one of the most historic communities in Canada, the Preston community, which, for the information of the House, is the largest indigenous black population in all of Canada. These people trace their roots all the way back to Mathieu Da Costa. They are in the geographical centre of my riding and, thus, they have asked if they can change the name of the electoral district to Sackville—Preston—Eastern Shore not only in honour of the community but also the geographical centre they are in.

I look forward to quick passage and support from all members of Parliament on this very important piece of legislation.

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

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-210, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (members who cross the floor).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Winnipeg Centre for seconding this bill.

On behalf of all of us here in the House of Commons, I would note that we are elected under a particular banner or as independents. This is not a no-tell motel where we can check in under an assumed name. This carpet between us is very expensive and wears out when people consistently cross the floor.

This particular legislation would restrict members of Parliament from crossing the floor. If members have a falling out with their party, they could easily quit, seek the nomination of the new party they wish to join and go back to their constituents and seek their consent if they wish to fly under a new banner.

That is democracy, and we are hoping for quick passage of this important legislation which, by the way, I have been trying to get through since 1999.

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

Routine Proceedings

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to this House earlier today, be concurred in. This report concerns the membership of committees of the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe we will have the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, in relation to the debate on government business number 1 regarding Canada's involvement in the NATO-led mission in Libya, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, at the conclusion of the time provided for Government Orders on Tuesday, June 14, 2011, the Speaker shall forthwith put, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the motion.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here signed by thousands of Canadians from all across Canada who call upon the House to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. In fact, they point out that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined. Yet they further point out that Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world, and they note that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry, a move that they call "corporate welfare for corporate serial killers". They also point out that Canada is blocking international efforts to curb its use.

The Budget

Therefore, these petitioners call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and institute a just transition program for any asbestos workers who may be laid off; to end all government subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad; and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the United Nations' Rotterdam Convention.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present petitions on an issue that is of grave concern to residents of British Columbia, the protection of B.C.'s waters from an oil disaster.

The petition points out that the proposed Enbridge northern gateway pipeline would carry oil from the Alberta tar sands to the coast of Kitimat. This project would bring more than 225 supertankers the size of the Empire State Building to the north coast of B.C. each year.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to acknowledge the 1972 moratorium on oil tanker traffic off B.C.'s coast and strongly urge the Government of Canada to immediately legislate the moratorium on offshore drilling and oil tanker traffic on B.C.'s coast.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 52(2), asking leave to propose an emergency debate on the closure by the Government of Canada of the marine search and rescue coordination centres in St. John's and Quebec City.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec are still in shock over the decision to reduce the ability of these marine coordinating centres to do the work that they do in saving lives.

There is a failure of the government to consider the continuing need for the centres because they provide the necessary local knowledge of the conditions, and in the case of Quebec City, as was pointed out during question period, the knowledge of the language to be able to respond immediately to requests for coordination of rescue.

They have been called call centres and dispatch centres. These are rescue coordination centres. Experienced Coast Guard officers with many years of dealing with these instances are dealing with matters of life and death.

The government is moving with undue haste with respect to these centres. I understand that notices have already gone out. The

government is moving very quickly before there can be proper consideration and debate of this issue.

We think this meets the conditions for the need of an emergency debate, to hear more information about the matters, including information that has come to light since then. And much more will come, as to the actual life-saving capacity of these centres because of the quick action and local knowledge that they have of the areas in which they serve.

This is something that is of grave importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been struggling to improve search and rescue facilities and ability. This is a backward step.

It needs an emergency debate by this House pursuant to Standing Order 52(2).

• (1515)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter before the House's attention. I do not find that it meets the requirements for an emergency debate at this time.

I will point out that we have had several days of debate on the budget and other similar items. There are two opposition days coming up before the end of this particular portion of the session, so perhaps there will be some time to raise this issue then.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier was in the process of questions and comments when question period started.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Portage—Lisgar today.

I am honoured to address the House this afternoon and wish to thank the voters of Brampton—Springdale for allowing me to represent them here in the House as part of a strong and stable Conservative majority government.

The hard-working people of Brampton—Springdale welcome the reintroduction of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, no differently than the rest of Canada. The people of Brampton were affected by the global economic downturn. The recession affected Bramptonians from all walks of life, including seniors, families, small business owners and new Canadians.

The Budget

However, under the leadership and direction of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada's economic action plan has helped Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This initiative helped create—

The Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the hon. member during his speech, but I must remind him that it is inappropriate to use proper names when referring to colleagues. He should use riding names or titles.

Mr. Parm Gill: The city of Brampton, like many other Canadian cities, was fortunate to receive direct benefits from the economic action plan. Thousands of jobs were created in the city and unemployment rates fell.

The partnership between the Government of Canada and the city of Brampton resulted in the revitalization of Chinguacousy Park, the development of Mount Pleasant Mobility Hub, and the renovation of nine recreation centres. These projects have allowed Bramptonians to witness the success of the economic action plan in their own backyards. Even with strong accolades and growing support, the global recovery remains very fragile and too many deserving Canadians are still looking for work.

The Government of Canada continues to focus on several key areas to help Canadians, their families and our economy. This low tax plan for job creation and growth will be instrumental for cities such as Brampton.

For instance, the city of Brampton has a large manufacturing base. This budget extends the accelerated capital cost allowance, which will help manufacturers make these investments in new machinery and equipment.

The riding of Brampton—Springdale is home to many small and medium-size businesses that help contribute to our local economy. These businesses will directly benefit from numerous initiatives within our new budget to retain workers and increase job opportunities

Further, this budget provides a one time credit of up to \$1,000 to encourage additional hiring, providing incentives to companies to create more job prospects. Our tradespeople and students will also benefit from the decision to extend the tax relief for skilled certification exams and doubling the in-study income exemption. This will allow more young Bramptonians to attend school, pay for tuition and receive their credentials quicker.

The budget has focused not only on businesses but has placed emphasis on our youth who are undertaking schooling that will prepare them for well-paying jobs as they progress into the future.

The city of Brampton has benefited tremendously from the gas tax fund for municipalities. Brampton has received millions of dollars from this program, which has then been invested and allocated to transit initiatives. Our budget puts into law the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns to support infrastructure priorities.

Seniors across Canada were placed in difficult positions during the recession. I have spoken with numerous groups of seniors throughout my riding who have told me that they have trouble making ends meet. Thankfully, the government's budget helps

provide the much needed tax relief that these hard-working Canadians deserve.

Eligible low income seniors living in Brampton—Springdale will receive an additional annual benefit of up to \$600 for a single senior and \$840 for couples. Low income Bramptonian seniors will be provided with assistance to ensure that they live a life of dignity not financial stress.

Families throughout Brampton—Springdale will be provided with several tax relief options. The new children's arts tax credit will allow for up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and development activities. Brampton—Springdale has a growing youth population and this tax credit will allow more families to enrol their children in activities.

These strong tax relief initiatives build on numerous actions by our government to support families since 2006, which now save a typical Brampton family on average \$3,000 a year.

The Government of Canada will provide \$20 million to promote programs that help youth resist or exit gangs. Brampton has seen a dramatic rise in gang activities and youth violence over the years. This investment will help communities like ours develop strong partnership programs that provide young Canadians alternatives to a gang lifestyle. This tremendously benefits our families and our children while promoting a safe community for everyone to enjoy.

● (1520)

Many new Canadians decide to make my riding their new home. However, many immigrants have trouble with recognition of their credentials. Fortunately, and applauded by new Canadians in Brampton—Springdale, the government will introduce a streamlined immigration system that will better respond to the needs of the labour market and will develop a common approach to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials.

Also HRSD Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada will test ways to help foreign trained workers to cover these costs, giving new Canadians brighter opportunities.

I am also very pleased to announce that the mayor of Brampton, Susan Fennell, has applauded a benefit Brampton has received through the economic action plan and is very eager to work closely with the government, which has a clear plan to tackle Canada's municipal infrastructure deficit and provide cities with the resources necessary to deliver the programs and services that residents expect.

Cities are the economic engines of our country, and as our economy continues to recover, Canada needs strong, healthy cities with quality infrastructure to create jobs to complete globally. The mayor of Brampton is thankful that our government has recognized these priorities.

The Budget

As the member of Parliament for Brampton—Springdale, I am proud to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. It directly benefits families, children, seniors, new Canadians, and businesses in my community.

I look forward to work alongside Bramptonians as a member of a government that is focused on creating jobs, relieving financial stress, and providing the assistance every hard-working Canadian deserves.

• (1525)

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on a very thought-provoking and encouraging presentation of budget 2011.

I am wondering if he could expand for us the effect that our economic action plan has had in terms of creating jobs in his riding. We know now that 580,000 jobs have been created since July 2009. Could the hon. member comment on the effects that the economic action plan and these job creation programs have had on his riding?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on her re-election.

As I mentioned in my speech, Brampton—Springdale has a huge base of small and medium-sized businesses, and as our government in the last number of years has managed to reduce the tax burden on small and medium-sized businesses, it has really helped boost our economy and create jobs at the local level.

Whenever I go around, I talk to small and medium-sized businesses. All my constituents are very thankful for the approach that the Canadian government has taken and the help that the government has provided.

This budget and the next phase of our economic action plan means a lot. I am regularly getting many phone calls and emails congratulating the government and the Minister of Finance for doing such a wonderful job in the last number of years, and especially for the budget that was presented last week.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to describe a typical family in Lac-Saint-Charles. This family has just had its fifth child, the father is unemployed and they do not have the means to send the children to private classes or schools or to sign them up for extra-curricular activities, in order to be eligible for the child tax breaks.

Could the hon. member tell us how these children will benefit from the new budget? The \$100 the government wants to add will be taxable. Even the \$100 that the government will give to families for one child will be taxable come income tax time. What will be left for our poor families?

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite on her election.

As a father of three children myself, a \$100 child tax benefit means a lot, not just for myself, but I believe for all Canadians. They all appreciate it. When I go around to speak to my constituents in my

riding, people really do appreciate it, along with the other tax initiatives the government has increased.

We all know that since 2005, an average family now saves approximately \$3,000 in taxes, along with the reduction in the GST and a number of other tax initiatives to help families make ends meet.

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by congratulating you on your election as the Speaker of this House. I also want to congratulate all members of Parliament, those who are newly elected, as well as those who have been re-elected to Parliament.

I also give a huge thanks to the people of Portage—Lisgar. It is an honour to represent them here in Ottawa and to be able to serve them in the riding. They have given me a very strong mandate. Personally, I had 76% of plurality in my riding and, therefore, thank the people of Portage—Lisgar for that support.

I also thank the volunteers because an effort like that never happens without tremendous volunteers who help me. I especially thank my official agent, Scott Beattie, who did a tremendous job in his role. I also thank my staff who has worked so hard over the last several years: Victoria Bendle, Teresa Friesen, Brittany Saunders, Laura Moran and Colleen Kyle. I thank them for all of their help and support.

Finally, I thank my family, especially my children. As all of us know, it is our families that, many times, sacrifice the most. I thank my children, Lukas, Delaney and Parker, so much for their love and support. I also must wish a happy 17th birthday to Delaney who had her birthday yesterday.

I am pleased to take a few moments to speak to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, budget 2011, a low tax plan for jobs and growth.

As we all know, during 2008, a deep recession hit all of us, with virtually no country in the world being untouched. It was a recession that had the ability to destroy countries, and certainly there are countries that are still feeling the effects and are still trying to come out from underneath the deep recession of 2008.

However, we can proudly and gratefully say that Canada became a beacon. Canada became a ray of hope and a light. The reason for that was that Canada had a government, and has a government, that refused to put politics ahead of the interests of the Canadian people. We also came out of that recession because Canadian people stood tall, stood proud, worked hard and were tenacious. Because of that, we were able to come out of the 2008 recession stronger than ever.

In 2008, our government introduced Canada's economic action plan, a plan that included spending when spending was needed to help create jobs and a plan that included restraint when that was required. The economic action plan did work and it continues to work.

In fact, as I have already mentioned, I had 540,000 jobs written down but I had to change it to 560,000 new jobs created since July 2009.

The Budget

Our housing market is stable, our dollar is strong and Canadians are hopeful for the future.

On May 2, Canadians gave this Conservative government a strong and solid mandate to move ahead with the next phase of our economic action plan, which is exactly what budget 2011 does. It is the kind of prudent fiscal management Canadians have come to expect from our Conservative government. It is a back-to-basics plan that will keep Canada's economy on track and disciplined as we work to the balance the budget by 2015.

I am so grateful for the mayors, the reeves, the farmers, the producers, the businesspeople and the mums and dads, the everyday Canadians in my riding and across the country who came out to town hall meetings and who met with me over coffee shop meetings to give me their ideas and give ideas to our government on the economic action plan.

There are so many great parts of this budget but I will highlight a few of the areas that really are benefiting and are very important to my riding.

One of those areas is agriculture. Some of the best crops in the world are produced in the riding of Portage—Lisgar. We have some of the best vegetables in the world, some of the best livestock, the best grain and the best edible beans and pulse crops. Agriculture is a very important part of my riding and, indeed, all of Canada.

Budget 2011 recognizes that to maintain the global competitiveness of the Canadian agricultural sector, we must constantly be looking for opportunities to grow, adapt and innovate. To ensure that Canadian producers remain on the cutting edge of science and technology, budget 2011 announced a two year, \$50 million agricultural innovation initiative to support knowledge creation and transfer and increased commercialization of agricultural innovations. This initiative will have a positive effect on producers across Canada and especially in my home in Manitoba.

• (1530)

The Grain Growers of Canada, which I have so much respect and gratitude for the work it does on behalf of producers, said:

...are also pleased with the announcement of a \$50 million fund for research and innovation. ... Farmers from across Canada have lobbied aggressively for the Government to invest in this area, and they have heard us.

Indeed, that is what this Conservative government does: we listen. We listen to our constituents. We listened to farmers and we have given them what they have asked for in order to have more successful businesses.

I am also very pleased that our government has indicated that we will be giving farmers choice when it comes to marketing their grain. This is an opportunity for a win-win. I believe that those in this country who support the Wheat Board can move ahead with this but there are also western farmers who want choice and they should be allowed choice. Instead of making this a political game or issue, which it has been, I encourage all sides, the Wheat Board supporters and the choice supporters, to work together. The monopoly will end but the Wheat Board does not need to end. This is something I believe in, our government believes in and western farmers support.

Another issue that I have heard a lot on from my constituents is reducing the deficit and cutting the fat from government. One of the reasons Canadians gave this Conservative government a strong mandate is because we understand that every dollar spent is a taxpayers' dollars and their dollars must be respected and used wisely. Returning to a balanced budget is the cornerstone of budget 2011. Part of the plan includes doing a strategic and operating review to cut inefficiencies and improve productivity.

I have travelled around to many businesses in my riding and businesses do this all the time, some on a daily basis. They go through their operations to see where they can become more efficient and take even the smallest step to cut waste. If we ask businesses and families to do this, our government should be doing the same thing. We should be looking for fat and waste in the system, eliminating it and finding ways to do the business of nation as efficiently and effectively as possible.

That brings me to my next point, which is our commitment to end political subsidies. They have been a huge fat in the system. I am pleased to see that our Conservative government is taking action and phasing out the per-vote subsidies for political parties. We have always been opposed to forcing taxpayers to support political parties that they may not necessarily believe in. There is no excuse for political parties not to be raising their own money instead of forcing the taxpayers to pay their bill. I may be wrong, and if I am I look forward to being proven wrong, but there seems to be an aversion by some opposition parties to get out and pound the pavement, speak to their constituents, speak to the people who support them and actually raise funds.

As a political organizer and someone who has done a lot of work talking to people who supported Conservative initiatives, even before I was elected as a member of Parliament, there is no greater satisfaction than when people come up to any one of us to say that they support what we are doing, support our policy and give us a cheque for \$25 to help along the way. That is so gratifying and we appreciate people who are so generous. However, people should not be forced to take their tax dollar and put it into a political party against their will.

I think there will come a day when the political parties that do not believe in this, the opposition, will probably thank us. It will make them become closer to their constituents and actually have to create policies that people will agree with. It is a good policy, it is good for democracy and it is good for all Canadians.

The Budget

There are so many more things that I could speak to but I see that my time is running out. We are supporting families, seniors and volunteer firefighters. I have heard so much from the firefighters across my riding, which is a huge riding of 14,000 square kilometres. We have wonderful volunteer firefighters who are professional. The kind of service that some firefighters are giving in cities, my rural people are getting from the firefighters in Portage—Lisgar. That is another fantastic initiative.

I encourage all members to support this budget. It is a good economic action plan. Let us work together for the good of all Canadians.

• (1535)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague went into a discussion on the per-vote subsidy and said that taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize parties that they do not agree with.

I think the basic principle of the per-vote subsidy is one that says that if someone voted for that particular party then that particular party will get \$1.75 a year. The voters, or the taxpayers, get the choice of who will receive the dollars from the federal government. The voters make that choice. They are given more opportunities and more reasons to vote for their particular party and engage in the process because, if they do not, then the particular party that they would support would not get the subsidy.

How is it against the democratic principle to say, “I vote, therefore the party I vote for will receive \$1.75?” To my mind, the argument that my hon. colleague has made is one that is not logical and not straightforward.

• (1540)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to explain. The hon. member is actually incorrect. The funding that goes to political parties comes out of general revenue, and that is from all the taxpayers in Canada. It does not just come out of some pot that is generated after an election.

I would encourage my hon. colleague to get out there, speak with his constituents and tell them about his policies. If they agree with him, maybe they will write him a cheque. However if they do not, they should not be forced.

Overwhelmingly, Canadians agree with this. They do not believe that taxpayers should be paying for political parties. Canadians have given us a strong mandate and we will be moving that forward.

However, my hon. colleague needs to know that it does come out of general revenue. It is not some little pot of money that is put aside just from the voters.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague a question.

The member comes from a rural community similar to mine in many respects. My constituents have never come up to me and said that they believe that they should be forced to fund my political party or any other political parties.

In fact, coming from a rural area, the things my constituents talk to me about are more support for nurses and doctors coming to rural and underserved communities, support for our volunteer firefighters

and support for our senior citizens who are having a difficult time making ends meet. These are the priorities of my constituents.

I wonder if the hon. member heard similar pleas from her constituents when she was campaigning.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, living in a rural area, rural doctors are a challenge. I am hearing overwhelming support for our initiative and for our commitment to encouraging doctors and nurses to go into underserved areas, which are certainly rural areas. We are encouraging them to do that by writing off a very good portion of their tuition.

We have no doubt that when they settle in these communities, areas in my riding like Morden, Winkler and Altona, Manitoba, wonderful communities with so much to offer, these doctors and nurses will stay. That is what our government wants to do. We do not believe in a top-down approach. We believe that when people get out and get to enjoy living in these rural communities, doctors and nurses will stay.

We are giving practical solutions that we know will work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Québec.

I am very pleased today to be finally taking the time to properly thank the voters of Honoré-Mercier and my family. I especially would like to congratulate them for their courage and explain to the members of this House what I mean by courage.

It is true that a wave of hope and enthusiasm swept across Quebec and Canada during the election. There was a true desire for change that benefited the NDP candidates, the bearers of modern, fair and effective ideas and solutions.

It is also true that this wave was created by the hard work of our leader, supporters and MPs who, in the past 50 years, have built the reputation of the NDP. This wave was fuelled the work of supporters, candidates and volunteers in the ridings, who increased their efforts during the campaign.

For me, this election has an additional meaning. The fact that I am here before you today says a great deal about the evolution of Canadian society. Although some people's right to vote is still an issue elsewhere in the world, here, many women from visible minorities were elected under the banner of the NDP.

When the voters of Honoré-Mercier put an X on their ballots beside the name of Paulina Ayala, they knew very well that they were voting for a Latin-American woman. I salute their courage; they were not afraid. That is the state of Canadian society, a society that is no longer afraid to accept differences, to choose representatives from minorities, and to share the benefits of Canadian democracy equitably.

The Budget

Fear could have been enough to stop the wave or diminish its force. Naturally, some were counting on this fear of change which, at the last minute, can paralyze the collective imagination and maintain the status quo. But fear did not grip Quebec voters. On the contrary, attempts to frighten the population led to a backlash. Voters were united in their rejection of politics that would deny the modernity of Canadian society—a society that is complex, diversified and unique and does not settle for imitating its neighbours or isolating itself from part of the world.

Therefore, I thank and congratulate the voters of Honoré-Mercier for their courage and for overcoming the intimidation, prejudice and tactics. They did their part in the election of young people, women, immigrants and aboriginal people, who will greatly enrich Canadian democracy. I am proud to have been carried here by this wave of modernity.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say hello to my dear friends, the students at Henri-Bourassa secondary school in north Montreal. They have always inspired me with their curiosity, their pertinent and sometimes incisive questions, and their ability to debate and to express their often well-informed opinions.

I was very passionate about my career as a history teacher, because it was for them, my students, whether in Chile or Canada, that I threw myself into this new calling. I taught history to young people because I wanted to help them understand that the past sheds light on the present. This will help them take control of their future and find their place in tomorrow's society. Young people are optimistic about their future. They are aware of the challenges that lie ahead regarding the environment, social equality, protecting democracy, respect for diversity and promoting distinctness. They want to help us overcome these challenges, but we have to listen to them.

I have talked about these issues many times and at great length with young people. They inspired me to be the best teacher I could be. They also inspired me to get into politics. They were among the first to believe in me. Since I often told them the importance of getting involved in society, they are the ones who said to me, "You talk to us about democracy and social involvement. We agree, and we think you should also get involved. You should go into politics." So then I went back and told them I was running. The pride I felt from having lived up to their expectations and ambitions is what kept me going during the campaign.

Young people expect us to make wise decisions on their behalf. I accept that responsibility. That is my real mission here. I would say to all my colleagues that the choices we make today will mainly affect young people, who will be quick to judge our actions.

As the first Chilean woman to be elected to the House of Commons, I feel it is my duty to remind the members of a bit of history and highlight the important ties that bind Chile and Canada.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every Canadian who supported the rebuilding of democracy in my country without the use of force or military intervention. By supporting civil organizations, Canadians allowed my people to stand up by themselves, to take democracy into their own hands, to organize themselves nationally and internationally and, finally, to reach their goal. That is how

today's Chile was built, with the pride of a job well done. If not for international support that was respectful of the people's values and goals, Chile might still be a dictatorship today.

Canada's foreign policy should be guided by this type of example as the government chooses where and how it will intervene. Supporting civil society, not using military force to intervene, will ensure success for democracy and international peace.

● (1545)

The battles that I fought in my country have shown me the true value of democracy and respect for human rights. I will do anything to protect these fundamental values for all Canadians and to remind everyone that torture is shameful, that peace is not built with weapons, and that support and assistance for civil society will allow a country to evolve.

I would like to remind the hon. members that the American continent, including the Caribbean, is made up of 51 countries. It includes more than 800 million people as well as countless cultures and languages that share a history as well as geography. This physical reality links the destinies of all the peoples who live here. A continent such as ours cannot develop only on the basis of trade and the movement of goods and services. That is a short-term view. Ideas and ambitions must also move freely. Individuals must enjoy their neighbours' respect and welcome as they move about.

Thus, people who want to contribute to the evolution of our Canadian culture ought to be welcome. Unfortunately, the reality is that temporary visa applicants are often perceived as opportunists, liars who claim to want to visit our country, but secretly plan to stay in Canada without satisfying the eligibility criteria. Canadians can travel, visit and discover, but Latin Americans have to prove their attachment to their country of origin. They have to pay for their visa application, which is often denied and never refunded.

While it is true that bureaucracy complicates the visa granting process, the primary problem is that there is a certain culture of doubt, which, for the applicants, is seen as contempt. This culture hurts people and responds to them with uncertainty and far too often with rejection. For all proud and well-meaning individuals, this experience tarnishes their image of Canada.

As soon as the government determines that the visa applicant's situation is technically less than advantageous in his country of origin, an official can decide that the visa application is misleading, a Trojan horse meant to infiltrate Canadian society and take advantage of all the benefits it has to offer.

There is the recent example of the ballet theatre troupe from Haiti, a group of artists who were applying for a visa to tour in Quebec and Canada. Not only was this a good opportunity for a cultural exchange, but this culturally-based initiative was meant to be a fundraiser for Haiti. Like many artists, the members of this troupe did not have an economic profile that was deemed satisfactory and their visas were denied. There are many examples like that one.

It is time for this to change. It is time to build relationships based on respect and trust. It is time to build one America from north to south. It is time to live up to our standards as a society based on the right of law. It is time to see the good in people, especially our neighbours.

The Budget

•(1550)

[English]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has had an interesting journey on her way to the House. Her background, in terms of what she brings to the House, is interesting.

She did talk a bit about trade. One of the things that will spur on our economic action plan is trade with other countries, fair and balanced trade deals, each of which we will bring to the House. We have set up a very aggressive trade agenda that we want to pursue over the next couple of years.

Considering that not only builds wealth for Canada, but also wealth for the countries we trade with, can we count on her support and dialogue as we go through those trade discussions?

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala: Mr. Speaker, this dialogue started a while ago and is still going on. I simply focused on Canada's attitude towards people who want to visit the country. Often, a family wants to visit a newborn and is unable to do so. Trade, for its part, is going very well. God knows that we have agreements with many countries. Canada has an extraordinary relationship with Chile. But we must strengthen this relationship in another way, in terms of people, of sharing cultures, and not strictly in terms of economics, because things are going well on that front.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank the people of Quebec City for their confidence in me. In the latest election, they rejected what the Conservatives were proposing, and they were justified in doing so. This budget, just like the identical version we saw in March, does not protect their interests. It is true that our country is facing a large and worrisome federal deficit—the largest in its history. The solution proposed by the Conservatives in the Flaherty budget is to cut billions of dollars from government programs and services. The fact that the Conservatives do not even know exactly where these cuts will be made proves that this measure lacks seriousness and transparency. By proceeding in this way, the government will surely—

[English]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I bring the attention of the House to the hon. member's use of the surname of the finance minister. I know the member is new and, as with all of us, we sometimes forget some of the small rules. I thought she might like to know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I thank the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for bringing this to the attention of the Chair. I remind all hon. members that we refer to members by their constituency or title and not by their proper name.

The hon. member for Québec.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, by proceeding in this way, the government will surely increase the burden on the taxpayers, requiring more from the provinces and particularly from the municipalities, which can already barely meet people's needs. That is not the role that the federal government should play. What we are asking the government to do is very simple, and that is to fill in the

gaps rather than making them bigger. Greater investments in community infrastructure would make it possible to both create jobs and improve the lives of Canadians. Rather than doing this, the Conservatives preferred to give \$15 billion in tax giveaways to companies that did not need them.

Why should big business and oil companies profit from the economic recession while the middle class goes deeper into debt? Is it to pay for the government's wrongdoing and mismanagement? Who does this budget really benefit? One thing is clear: it does not benefit middle-class families or the less fortunate.

How can we believe in the budget forecasts of this government when, at the first sign of the economic recession, it promised that Canada would not go into debt and, in the end, it led us into the largest deficit in the history of the country? Each time the government promises to balance the budget but instead it continues to add billions of dollars to the national debt. We have reason to be concerned about this budget, even more so when we analyze its logic.

The Prime Minister said that there would not be a recession or a deficit. He was wrong on both counts. And if he continues on the same track, as the saying goes, things come in threes. I am in favour of economic recovery but please let it be a sustainable economic recovery. In order to achieve this goal, we need a new way of thinking. We can no longer wait to create wealth before distributing it.

Sociologist Paul Bernard said that we need to redistribute wealth in order to create it. That is true. Look at where we are now, over 50 years after implementing universal public education and health care. This would not have been possible had we not made these investments.

I would like to read a quote from an article by Camil Bouchard that appeared in last Friday's edition of *Québec Science*, in which he indicated that OECD studies on this subject are clear. He said:

...it is not so much rising employment that decreases poverty. Rather, this happens when countries invest a considerable proportion of their gross domestic product in social programs or policies.

For example, although the United States and Norway have very high labour force participation rates, the U.S. invests half as much of its GDP in social programs as Norway does. The result is that poverty is five times higher in the United States than in Norway. And that is just one example.

Studies of poor children over many years show that the use of high-quality, educational daycare centres produces healthier, better educated citizens who are better integrated into their community and more active in the labour force and require fewer costly government support services. This strengthens economic productivity and increases government revenue. Given the unprecedented zeal to shrink government, this bears repeating.

I cannot ignore the \$57 million in cuts being made to maritime search and rescue centres, which will directly affect the Quebec City rescue centre. Once again, the Conservatives are on the wrong track with this strategy. By wanting to close service points and decrease administrative costs, the government will instead increase operating costs considerably, since each rescue will become more and more costly. The goal is to maximize response time in order to save lives. It is certain that not only will the government not save money with these cuts, but it will also put lives in danger.

The Budget

In addition to being responsible for this country's worst economic debt, this government is leaving us the worst social and environmental debt we have ever seen.

My question is this: who will benefit from this budget?

• (1555)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to welcome a new member to the House and we appreciate her comments.

I would warn the hon. member that we keep records of everything that is said in here, so I would suggest that she be very careful what she says in her speech. I do not see an awful lot of Liberals here today, which I should not reflect on, but in actuality in 1997 the Liberal government, under then Prime Minister Martin, had a debt in today's dollars of \$729 billion. Just to be clear, it was neither her party nor mine that ran up that kind of a debt.

When I reflect on what previous budgets have put forward, we have taken one million low-income Canadians right off the tax roll. We continue to do that by reducing taxes. That is important to my constituents and I am sure it is important to the member's constituents.

The fact is that we are providing forgiveness to doctors and nurses to go to rural communities. I would encourage the hon. member to answer the following question. Is that not a good thing for rural communities?

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I am worried. I heard a member on the other side of the House say that tax cuts equal job creation. I am not so sure about that. I do not think that creating part-time jobs—and the majority of jobs created have been part-time positions—is exactly a good solution and a good way of doing things. I doubt that and would like to make that point.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the Conservative member ask my colleague a question about the government's budgets and such. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts.

The Conservative government is willing to cut taxes for big business, including banks that are making \$20 billion in profits. Bank presidents—important people, of course—are being paid bonuses totalling \$11 billion. Would it not be better to put money into communities, into municipal and town infrastructure, and create jobs locally, instead of giving it to bank presidents and watching them laugh all the way to the bank?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. If that is where all of the cuts are made, if part-time jobs are created and if big business gets favours, jobs risk being uprooted. I also heard my colleague say that things are not going well for Electrolux. We heard that in 2010, Electrolux uprooted jobs after receiving a subsidy from the federal government. And that is what I am saying—this approach concerns me.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, speaking of the budget, I did not see where the government made any changes to employment

insurance. We are talking about poverty. Some 1.4 million children in Canada do not have enough to eat.

The government is asking us to vote for its budget, but would this not have been the appropriate place to make changes to help those in need? Are there really any practical measures to help workers who have lost their jobs? If they are not eligible for employment insurance, who suffers? Their entire family suffers.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with what my colleague is saying.

On another note, I would like to add that if the government really wanted to make cuts—since it strongly favours cuts to balance the budget—at this time, it could have chosen not to cut subsidies to political parties and instead made cuts to the Senate. The Senate costs so much more and the government could have really saved a lot of money, which is what it wanted.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly delighted to be speaking to this budget. I will be splitting my time with the member for Brant.

As this is only my second time to speak in the House since I was elected, I want to take the opportunity to thank the constituents of Vegreville—Wainwright for their tremendous show of support in this past election. There were 80% of the people from my constituency who supported me and that truly is humbling. It played a very important part in giving this side a very stable Conservative government and I am delighted to be a part of that.

I would also like to thank my many volunteers. There were over 300 volunteers who played a very active role in the election process. Many do not only work during election campaigns, but they do a lot of work month to month, year to year, to support a cause that is important to them. In my case, that is the Conservative cause and that is what they and others across the country supported, which led to this very strong majority government. I sincerely thank them for that.

I want to speak a little about agriculture and this budget. Of course, there were things in this budget dealing with agriculture. For example, there was money allocated to have consultations and develop a new growing forward 2 package to replace the current growing forward program. This would allow farmers, people in the agriculture business and those people interested across this country to help develop the next stabilization package.

The package we have has worked pretty well and will form a strong base for the second growing forward package. However, there is always room for improvement and we would get the best results if we have people who are concerned and interested in agriculture taking part in this consultation process. I encourage anyone who would like to see change to get involved in the process which starts almost immediately. I am looking forward to having some input into that process as it goes along.

The Budget

As well, budget 2011 focuses on supporting innovation as a way to make agriculture more profitable. I think that is a very wise expenditure of taxpayers' money and we have seen some excellent results in recent years. When we look at taxpayers' money that has been leveraged, often with a vast majority of the money coming from the private sector, we have seen results. This allows Canadian farmers to compete with the world very favourably.

More than that, in many cases we have seen Canadian business, farmers and others export these new ideas and products around the world. That is an important part of developing innovation. Not only are agriculture products produced more efficiently as a result of innovation, but exporting innovation around the world is something that certainly broadens agriculture in Canada.

Much of what our government will do in the area of agriculture over the next year really will not show up in this budget, but that does not mean it is any less important. In fact, if we were to look at one area of work that our government is doing that is more important to farmers than any other area, I have no doubt that would be the area of expanding trade in agriculture products around the world.

We have seen our agriculture minister, trade minister and our Prime Minister take a very hands-on and active approach to help develop new markets for our agriculture products. We have seen remarkable results from that. Unfortunately, the agreements have been signed, but the actual passing of some of these trade agreements in Parliament have been slowed down by opposition, in fact, mostly by the NDP.

• (1605)

I strongly encourage members of the NDP who care about farmers and care about agriculture to work with this government from now on and help pass these trade agreements in Parliament so the benefits can be reaped by farmers as soon as possible. That is something I am looking forward to. Nothing done by this government in the area of agriculture is more important than developing those new markets around the world.

There are far more benefits to be gained. We are looking at negotiating pretty broad agreements with the European Union, which is important. We are always looking at how we can get better access to China, to India, to other places. These bilateral agreements will continue to be important. I would argue they will become even more important in the years to come. That is an extremely important area.

There are other areas involving trade that do not only look at exporting Canadian products to other countries, but rather look at importing inputs that farmers use to grow crops, to raise livestock, all of that kind of thing. This would allow those inputs more freely into Canada so they can be less expensive and so that we can have access to brand new technology, brand new herbicides, pesticides, veterinary products here in Canada at the same time our American, European and Australian competitors have access to these products. That is another aspect of improving trade that is extremely important.

Maybe it is not talked about as much, but we saw benefits from the own use program. That program helped farmers bring in herbicides, pesticides, veterinary products from the United States, which allowed them to lower their costs of producing animals and

crops substantially. That program helped in a very real and substantial way. We have a lot of room to expand that well beyond what it is now. Part of that too is coordination. It has been worked on for many years but much is still to be done on coordinating the approval process for new pesticides, herbicides and veterinary products.

That coordination of the approval process between Canada, the United States, Europe and other like countries that have good processes in place now would mean that our farmers would get access to these products that will help them in a very real way. They will have access much sooner. I am looking forward to our government continuing to work on that.

As well, there are other things in the budget that would help farmers. They are not aimed specifically at farmers, but they would help them.

For example, our program to forgive up to \$40,000 in student loans for doctors who will practise in a rural area would help to give our farmers much better access to a family doctor closer to home. That is a huge problem we face right now. We have done a lot of work in the immigration area. The immigration minister has done some really good things to help speed up the process to get doctors into Canada. Many of those doctors do come to rural areas, but it seems all too often in a few years down the road they move off to cities. We have to try to attract some Canadian trained doctors to rural areas by helping to assist them pay off their loans. We would also pay up to \$20,000 in student loans for nurses.

In my minute remaining I want to let farmers know that now is not the time to sit back and become disengaged from the political process. Now is the ideal time to get involved with our government, with their rural MPs. We actually have most of the rural MPs in the country in our caucus. I would ask our farmers to get involved with their rural MPs to help move some of these things forward. Together we truly can do a lot that would make things better for our farmers and for agriculture. I am looking forward to that in the next four and a half years, which is the guaranteed mandate of this government.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, bad weather is often one of the main problems facing farmers. The second problem is the stress caused by bad weather. That is what we are dealing with right now in Montérégie and what we have faced in the past. Farmers in Montérégie were not able to sow their fields in time this year. These farmers have lost some of the grain that could have been used to feed animals, which translates into a huge financial loss.

Since the hon. member and the government want to do so much for farmers, can the government tell us what it plans to do to help our farmers in the Montérégie region?

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member. Her question is an important one. I have watched on television and heard about the flooding throughout Quebec and Manitoba and my heart goes out to farmers who have had their season of crops destroyed. They simply will not have crops in many areas this year.

That is why I was very pleased when the agriculture minister a couple of years ago added the agrirecovery portion to our stabilization program. That allows the provinces, farmers and municipalities to approach the federal government when they need help because of the flooding and have the government work with them on it. That has worked very well with the flooding in eastern Saskatchewan and Manitoba and in the severe drought in Alberta over the past couple of years. I am confident it will work well for the farmers in the member's riding as well.

• (1615)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear there may be an option for farmers to have a choice for the sale of grain in the future. Could my colleague from Vegreville—Wainwright further explain how this will benefit farmers in his area?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the thing about these various programs and the things our government has done in agriculture is they help farmers right across the country. I speak to farmers almost every day. When I am back in my constituency, I speak to farmers about things that are important to them and they have had an awful lot of good things to say about how this government has worked with them over the past several years.

If trade deals could be negotiated and implemented more quickly in the House, they would play an extremely important role to improve the incomes of farmers in my area. Farmers talk about it and bring it to my attention. They say how much they appreciate what the agriculture minister and trade minister have done. They say what we are doing has been working and they have asked us to do more. We will do more and we will also work on the input side to try to reduce the costs to farmers, to make their costs a little more in line with the Americans, for example, by allowing the inputs to come into Canada so they can use them a bit sooner. It makes a very real difference.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, has the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright shared some of the conversations with farmers that I have experienced?

I was surprised to hear him say that the number one priority of farmers was expanding trade opportunities. What I hear quite often from farmers is a concern that there is redundant trade. They grow produce locally in Canada and ship it by highway to the U.S. At the same time, trucks from the states bring produce from California back to our stores, while we send good, healthy, local produce to the states.

I also quite often hear from farmers that they are concerned that local food production is being continually undermined by a lack of infrastructure, slaughterhouses and canneries. In other words, there is a lack of support for local food. There is a conflict between the increased globalization of food supply and the public demand for

safe, local, healthy food and supporting family farmers in Canada. I would appreciate the member's response.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the member may be listening to people mostly in cities. I also heard a concern about moving organic and specialized products in particular into Canadian markets. On the other hand, I have heard success stories from an awful lot of people who had done the work with companies to have their products carried in stores. Quite frankly, many were successful.

However, in my area, I certainly did not hear the concerns she is expressing about opening up the world to more Canadian agriculture products. In fact, most of the constituents I have heard from are asking for that.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is the very first time I rise in the House, I, too, would like to thank the good people of Brant for returning me to the House.

When we come to this place, we are in awe of the history that has gone before us and we are charged with the duty of ensuring we lead the country forward in a fashion that would be prosperous for all Canadians.

Today I will deal with some of the economic realities, globally and locally.

The global economic reality is that Canada stands as a beacon of hope and opportunity in a world of uncertainty. Throughout the last couple of years, our banks did not fail, our finances are currently in order and our economy has grown for the last seven quarters.

Just last week we received more good news. There were 22,000 new jobs in May, which has taken us up to 560,000 new jobs since July 2009. In this context, however, we are well aware that our government is mindful of the fact that many dangers remain in the global economy and that our economic recovery in Canada is still very fragile.

We know that lower taxes on job creators, through new investments in new business and the expanding of enterprises, creates high paying full-time jobs. That is the case in my community. Corporate tax reductions will produce growth and revenue to the government. It is the simple principle of sowing abundantly and reaping abundantly. By expanding our economy with new industry and new jobs, we will have more prosperity, more people paying taxes and more revenue. We know that corporations, in reality, do not pay taxes; they pass them along to consumers.

As a small businessman myself prior to coming to Parliament and being part of a chamber of commerce and knowing a lot of people who do business, businesses have fixed costs. Those fixed costs are translated into the price of the products and services they provide. Therefore, in reality, high taxes end up on the price of goods and services that consumers pay at the end of the day.

The Budget

By implementing the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, Canada will be a business-friendly location. To illustrate the point I was previously making, if the grocer is paying 40% tax on his business, when they check out, the consumers pay that 40%. If the grocer's tax is 25%, it is Canadian families that will save and Canadian workers who will benefit.

I invite members to reconsider their position against these taxes and join us in creating what many believe will be a tsunami of investment and opportunity in Canada.

I have seen locally in my community, in the city of Brantford, the benefits of low taxes in creating jobs. A company, Brant Screen Craft, wrote to a local newspaper to explain why it decided to stay in Canada after investigating many other jurisdictions, including primarily Michigan in the United States. The vice-president of the company stated that it was the low tax plans and programs of our government, the ones we had already created, and that the company was planning for in its business plan that kept it in my community of Brantford. It helped the company locate to a new, larger facility and hire 50 new employees. This was last year. It is a story of how our low tax plan has worked and will continue to work to make our Canadian economy the most attractive destination for job creators.

There are other items in our budget that are tremendously beneficial, especially to small businesses. There is the \$1,000 hiring tax credit for a small business. In my case, a businessman who hired and employed 20 to 30 employees, \$1,000 to hire a new employee is a big item, and it will be big for many people in small business.

• (1620)

I have also heard from constituents who are business owners. They have said that the accelerated capital cost allowance is a large item for them because they need to invest in new equipment, new tooling and new machinery in order to take their business to a higher level, get more customers, have more jobs available and grow their businesses.

The work-sharing program has been significant as well. Over 48 local companies identified themselves as participants in the last round of the work-sharing program. I am not talking about a few jobs here. I am talking about thousands of jobs. Our budget extends this program so companies not only can survive, but can again get their business back on the footing it needs to grow and prosper further.

This budget deals with the ineffectiveness of having to overcome red tape in government and the things that slow people down in business, by having to add to their overhead by the policies and regulation they need to submit when they are in small business.

The children's arts tax credit, a new family caregivers tax credit, the extension of the eco-energy program and the enhancements to the GIS for support for seniors are all items in our budget that are helping families in Canada right across the country.

For a moment, I would like to talk about a personal friend who is the Brant County fire chief, Paul Boissonneault. He has strongly advocated for the volunteer firefighters' tax credit. Today, we could deliver to him and his colleagues, the brave men and women who risk their lives fighting for life and safety. We have delivered for the volunteer firefighters.

In education and training we have already invested over \$10 billion for students, including \$3 billion in transfers to the provinces for post-secondary and over \$7 billion in support for students and their families. We are moving forward with a textbook tax credit. We are moving forward to continue to build post-secondary in communities like ours, which has a satellite campus and is growing by leaps and bounds and needs help to increase the enrolment and be more open to allow more students to come.

Also, we talk in the budget about the in-study income exemption increasing to \$100 a week from \$50 a week. In effect, this will help 100,000 students. That is why the Association of Universities and Colleges endorses our budget. I will quote from its statement. It says:

This budget represents tremendous progress for the university sector: more funding for the research councils, promotion of international educational marketing, additional support for students, and a range of measures to foster innovation and research.

Through this budget, our government is preserving Canada's fiscal advantage. Today, Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 by far. In the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, we will keep Canada on track to balance the federal budget. We are delivering savings from our 2010 strategic reviews, closing tax loopholes and launching a one year government-wide strategic and operating review.

As I have said, Canada's economy is fast becoming the envy of the world and our Conservative government is focused on keeping that progress on track. Our plan has worked to help Canada emerge from the global recession and it has worked to support our local economy in my riding.

I would like to extend an invitation to entrepreneurs worldwide to call me. I will give them a personal tour of our beautiful industrial parks in Brant, where we have plenty of fully serviced land, access to utilities and transport routes and a hard-working labour force ready to go to work.

• (1625)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my new colleague for his excellent address on small businesses and their workings in Brant.

However, I would like to point out to him that I attended a breakfast here at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in March. Its economist said quite clearly that lowering corporate taxes was not the incentive that businesses use worldwide for locating in particular places. That was said very clearly.

As well, the other point I would like to make is that most of the corporate taxes paid in Canada are paid by corporations that are exploiting resources traded in world markets. Therefore, those prices are not changed by the tax rate.

The Budget

For a corporation producing oil in this country and selling it at a world market price, the corporate tax rate does not change the cost of that oil to the consumer. There is no change to that cost, because it is a world market price. In Canada, therefore, the largest sum of corporate tax breaks does not pass down to the consumer.

I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that.

• (1630)

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, basic economics and business 101 tells us that the final end cost of products and services is the fixed and variable costs that go into them, which can fluctuate. I disagree categorically with his analysis that the prices of oil and other raw materials and finished goods do not reflect those actual costs.

For some reason there is a thought in the ideology of the NDP and the socialist ideology that assumes that it is all about businesses and companies making bigger and bigger profits and putting those into the pockets of fat cat shareholders. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

If one thinks about the 80% of jobs created by small and medium size businesses, and if one thinks about all of the inputs of the farming community and small time contractors and other people in my community, nothing could be further from the truth. They have to remain competitive in the world marketplace, as all businesses do.

I would kindly ask the member to reconsider his thinking about how businesses operate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the member's comments when he talked about the small businesses in his community. I truly appreciate that.

In fact, the Liberal Party of Canada supports small businesses in many different ways, more so obviously than the Conservative Party, in the sense that the Conservative Party has put its priorities in favour of corporations. It demonstrated that in the budget with the amount of tax money it is giving to large corporations, with a smaller percentage allocated in different ways to small business in the budget.

Would the government not have been better off giving more of those tax breaks to the businesses providing 80% of the jobs in the communities the member made reference to, thereby creating more opportunities for the constituency he represents, as opposed to these large corporate tax cuts?

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, but again it is somewhat misleading in its characterization of large companies benefiting all of a sudden. The feedback from my business peers in my community has been right across the board that small, medium and large scale businesses are benefiting from our plans.

Take a look at the employment numbers. If 80% of the small and medium size businesses are creating 560,000 jobs, then that ratio implies that a smaller number of jobs are being created by the large corporations. However, we want to ensure as well that those large corporations are kept in this country, because they could quickly evaporate into other jurisdictions or parts of the world if we did not have a competitive tax rate for them as well.

The majority of the jobs I just referred to were created by small and medium size business.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Aerospace Industry; the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, Employment; the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, National Defence.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

First of all, I wish to congratulate you today on your election as Speaker of the House. It is important to note that you are the youngest Speaker in the history of Canadian politics. Thus, you are a fine representative of this new, younger Parliament.

I am honoured today to thank the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île for the trust they have placed in me. I will always listen to everyone, and I will tirelessly defend their interests each day. I promise in this House to do everything I can to help families, youth, workers and seniors, and to prove that the NDP is there for them and not for big business and the banks, as is the case with this government.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the outgoing member for my riding. She devoted 17 years to the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île, and I intend on doing the same.

We are all here for the same reasons: our passion for the people of our community and our devotion to serving the interests of our constituents. On May 2, some 4.5 million Canadians expressed their desire for change, to live in a Canada where families come first and where everyone has an equal chance, a Canada that Quebeckers can identify with and that reflects their social and progressive values.

I am extremely proud to have had the opportunity to be part of this wave of change that millions of Quebeckers and Canadians were looking for. I accept the mandate that was given to me to represent the interests of families, young people, workers and seniors, to make them a priority, and to criticize the government, which continues to give tax credits to corporations and put the interests of the oil companies ahead of the interests of Canadians. I am committed to working with all the hon. members of the House in order to achieve tangible results because I truly care about the issues affecting the people of La Pointe-de-l'Île and they are the issues we focused on during the election campaign.

The Budget

A big part of the population in my riding is aging and we must work on preventing seniors from living in poverty. We must offer them affordable housing and we must support them financially to give them a decent standard of living. The budget states that seniors living alone who get a maximum income supplement of \$2,000 will receive an additional \$600 a year. How can the government claim that a person living below the poverty line can be lifted out of destitution with just \$600 more? Again according to the budget, this credit will decrease as their income increases. When a senior living alone gets an annual income supplement of \$4,400, they can no longer benefit from the bonus the government is proposing in its 2011-12 budget. It makes no sense. Seniors need and faster and more accessible health care, because they are among the most vulnerable in our society. They also need to have peace of mind and know that they can get the medicine they need.

The budget also includes a number of tax credits, but what good is a tax credit to a person who is not employed or who does not pay tax because of a very low income?

Let us speak about families. Tax credits to promote the participation of children in physical, arts and cultural activities is a good government initiative but one that does not take into account the many people in my riding and throughout Quebec who do not appear to have the means to pay for their children to participate in such activities. How can these families benefit from a tax credit if they do not have the money to pay for their children to participate in such activities? These tax credits also do not take into account the 30% of the Montreal population who paid barely any taxes, if any at all, last year. These families will not benefit from the tax credits proposed by this government.

Families need to have access to family doctors if only to free up the system and waiting rooms. This government could help to improve the Quebec health care system by investing more money so that Quebecers could then train more workers.

This government's budget does not invest in social housing and does not take into account the reality of thousands of Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1635)

The government must understand that it is urgent to develop a plan to give families, seniors and everyone access to affordable housing so that they do not have to worry about choosing between paying their rent and feeding their children or themselves. More and more families and seniors are using food banks, which is unacceptable. The government must act now. Why is this government continuing to decrease the taxes of big businesses, oil companies and banks? As a result, billions of dollars that could have been spent on Canadians are lost. Then, the government announces billions of dollars in cuts that directly affect Canadians. That is money that could easily come from the \$100 billion in profit that the oil companies make each year.

The government is abandoning millions of unemployed workers and is not really investing in job creation. The budget does not include any plans for job creation. For example, the refinery and petrochemical industries in Quebec are in decline, which is resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs, among other things. This government prefers to export most of its crude oil to the United

States. In my riding, the result is the closure of the Shell refinery. In addition to causing the loss of thousands of jobs, this is making us dependent on other countries for our energy, since we are forced to import gasoline from them.

When it comes to the environment, the Conservative government's budget continues to cut millions of dollars from the fight against climate change and from environmental protection. Canada's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are still among the highest in the world. This government's attitude continues to separate it from the international community. In fact, in 2009, a coalition of scientists and politicians lobbied to have Canada kicked out of the Commonwealth because of its deficient environmental policies. The air quality in my riding is the worst on the island of Montreal. My constituents are worried about the environment and their health. The government must take action and must get its priorities in line with those of Quebecers and Canadians.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has approved the shipping of nuclear waste, specifically waste from nuclear reactors, on the St. Lawrence River. Such shipments could directly affect the people of my riding. The government needs to intervene to prevent the shipping of this waste and instead invest in finding solutions for disposing of the waste near where it is produced.

The government must stop justifying its deficient and non-existent policies by the fact that it now has a majority. I would remind the House that only 40% of Canadians voted for this government. It must be accountable to Canadians and act in their interests, rather than in the interests of the multinationals and banks.

• (1640)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on her election and her fabulous first speech in the House of Commons. I have to share with the House that after meeting the member, her enthusiasm cannot help but brush off on one.

I welcome all of the young members to this House, particularly for their great verve and enthusiasm.

During the period when I was elected in 2008 and during my involvement in the election, I have heard a lot of concerns from youth in my riding, where I have three university campuses. The youth have expressed great concern about the record rate of youth and student unemployment in the last summer; the imbalance in federal investment and support for one side of the economy and not for the other, that being the massive subsidies to the oil and gas sector, benefiting the economy to a certain extent in my province but raising concerns about the long-term costs and liabilities; and they expressed a lot of interest in getting into the renewable energy and energy efficiency sector.

I wonder if the member could share some of the input and thoughts she received from her constituents about youth and future employment, and about the economies of the future in terms of renewable energy and energy conservation.

The Budget

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for her question. I am very interested in the issues of education and youth unemployment. Post-secondary education rates in my riding are amongst the lowest on the island of Montreal. The problem is that the government continues to give loans and grants to students, who then find themselves with debt they cannot repay because they are not able to find work in their field. The NDP is not looking to hand out loans and grants. We want to reduce tuition fees to allow more people to study and find work in an area they love.

In terms of renewable energy, a balance needs to be struck. We need oil now, obviously, but the government is making Quebec and Canada dependent on other countries because we cannot benefit from the profits generated by our own production. We cannot reinvest that money because we must import oil from other countries. We cannot—

• (1645)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North for questions or comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments with regard to the importance of social housing.

I, for one, do look at it in terms of what the national government has done over the last few years in that whole field of national housing programs and so forth. I have found it to be wanting.

There seems to be a need to have a national housing policy. The government needs to come forward and start telling Canadians what kind of housing plans it has going into the future.

Could the hon. member elaborate on what she believes would be important to national housing? In terms of the federal government's role versus just giving money to the provinces, what role does the member believe Ottawa plays in developing the programs?

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

[*Translation*]

I will answer in French. It is important for the federal government to develop rules for urban development. We do not want social housing to become a ghetto. The government should establish social housing policies, and there should be a balance between condos and social housing. The government should invest in a plan with stricter rules for urban development and, for example, the decontamination of certain sites where social housing could be built.

In my riding, refineries have closed down. The government should decontaminate these sites and then build social housing.

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, my first speech in the House, to first greet all my constituents in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup and to thank them for the trust they placed in me in the recent election.

The splendour of the river, the beauty of the cities and towns, the majestic space of the high plateaus, a rich history, and a long tradition of citizen engagement, technical innovation by our businesses and artistic creation—recognized nationally and sometimes internationally—make my part of the country, I am convinced, one of the best places to live in the entire country and one of the best places to raise a family in North America. I will work to ensure that this is the case for another 20, 50, 100 years. That is a promise.

I must also thank every voter who supported me in the recent election because, in my riding, it was an extremely tight race. As in any situation, even the most difficult, there was an upside: the clear and undeniable demonstration that, in a democracy, every vote counts. I was deeply moved by the young voters who, in most cases, were voting for the first time and who told me that they would vote every time they had the opportunity for the rest of their lives. These accounts strengthened my faith in the future of our democracy.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife. These long weeks of campaigning and the recount would have been extremely difficult without her. Thank you, Marie-Claude.

We are pleased to see that the \$2.2 billion for harmonizing the sales tax was included in the latest budget. However, it is very disappointing that popular pressure in an election was required to make this government give Quebec what it was rightfully owed for years.

In more than 3,000 meetings and hundreds of exchanges via electronic media, my constituents shared with me their fear of a Conservative government that would, on the one hand, cut services—their services—and, on the other hand, continue to allow billions of dollars to flow from government coffers to tax havens and tax cuts for big business.

The budget just presented by this government confirms my constituents' worst fears. There is nothing, not even the hint of a plan, to stop the flow of money to tax havens. There are new tax cuts again that will mostly benefit big business. For example, the government gave \$1.1 billion to big banks in the last four quarters alone, and this will continue. Our constituents will face billions of dollars in cuts and big business will receive billions of dollars in gifts.

The multinationals have no plans to open a big banking service centre that could create hundreds of jobs in Rivière-du-Loup, Montmagny or La Pocatière. Those billions of dollars are not going to result in significant investment in the regions. So the Conservatives' slogan about “our region in power” lacks credibility and it will certainly become devoid of all meaning in the coming years.

We need to start now to address the numerous challenges that climate change and new technologies are inevitably going to force on our society. In this kind of context, a government should be morally obligated to provide a long-term vision for the future.

The Budget

In the absence of lasting solutions, and given the half measures this budget proposes, it is impossible to provide reassuring answers to youth or to parents of young children about these major challenges and thus the possibility of a prosperous future.

Let us look at some examples from my riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. A solid job-creation program that would truly allow entrepreneurs to take a chance at expanding—turning small businesses into medium-sized ones and creating employment—is something that must be done for the regions and for our entrepreneurs. This budget offers very little, only a fraction of what it would take to make a difference.

Back home, in the high plateaus, in the mountains, people are in desperate need of basic education. The only literacy support I found in the budget was a mention of a literacy program for seniors in Yellowknife. That is all. Do not get me wrong; I wish the people of Yellowknife a prosperous future. I wish them nothing but the best, but I have to wonder how a program like that will help the people of Tourville.

• (1650)

The \$60 million in assistance over one year for the forestry industry—which I would consider a symbolic amount—completely disregards the huge potential for sustainable development in this industry, which is still struggling to get back on track after the crisis. A plan to set up broadband Internet in all towns, even those in the mountains, is a priority for the immediate future in these regions—not in 4, 8 or 20 years, but now. All this budget calls for is consultations. It is time to take action.

In Rivière-du-Loup, hundreds of workers are watching their pension plan disappear, since it is not protected by the federal government if their employer goes bankrupt or is operating at a loss. Here is what the government has to offer these honest workers, who have contributed to their pension plan for decades. It is very convoluted. I quote:

...accommodations under the pension tax rules for members and retirees [whose rights are not defined, though they have some] of underfunded pension plans that are being wound up due to an employer's insolvency...

That is an indirect way of saying they will not be protecting Canadians' pensions at any time in the next four years. A tax accommodation to compensate for losing 30 years of contributions to a retirement fund is pretty weak and unacceptable. These are just a few examples of the Conservatives' lack of vision. The foundations of modern society seem to have been forgotten by the members opposite. There are two in particular I wish to underscore.

A tax credit is not a magic bullet. It does not apply to low-income people who pay little to no tax. They also have talented children who deserve to take piano lessons. Tax credits are not going to help develop those talents. Instead, hundreds of millions of dollars need to be spent on basic skills and on marketing renewable energies—not on more studies or trials—or invested in reliable rapid transit that would allow people to travel between Quebec City and Ottawa by train without it taking seven hours.

These things are not short-term losses for the treasury. They are long-term investments to make Canada a society that will still be modern in 10, 20 or 30 years. Because the members opposite are

wearing blinders when it comes to these future challenges and because of the regressive way of seeing the world that is apparent throughout this budget, it is impossible for me to support it and contribute to delaying for yet another year the ideas supported by 60% of my fellow Canadians. We must make these ideas a reality to ensure a prosperous future for our children and the children of all Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if that is the quality of MPs we now have in the House of Commons, then the House of Commons has a very bright future.

My colleague is probably aware that a food bank report that came out last year showed that 904,000 Canadians in 2010 used a food bank. If the trend continues, within three years, one million Canadians will be using a food bank. In the city of Calgary there is a food bank designed specifically for veterans. In 2005, 58 veterans used that food bank. In 2010, 204 veterans used it.

The Prime Minister said at the Conservative convention that Canada is now becoming a conservative country. Almost one million people will be using a food bank in a few years. Is that what he means by a conservative Canada? The heroes of our country, our veterans, who fought and died for this country, have to use charity in order to get their sustenance. Is that the kind of Canada the Conservatives are bringing to us?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

Once again, I am going to relate this issue to local endeavours in my riding. I must commend an organization with which I am very familiar, Moisson Kamouraska, for its efforts. Unfortunately, this organization has had to make do with a budget that has remained unchanged for years, despite the fact that more and more people are lining up to ask for food. Food and shelter are basic needs. I am not talking about extras. This situation is clearly unacceptable. It is the result of a lack of intelligent, comprehensive, worthwhile reforms, such as the indexing of pensions to a level that would ensure that seniors are able to buy a sandwich every day rather than just a coffee and an apple, which does not cut it. This lack of vision in many programs is causing more and more people to turn to food banks, which are receiving less funding. Unfortunately, the future is not bright for these people.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do want to question the member on an issue he raised a while ago in talking about seniors and how it relates to poverty, as my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore pointed out, about the food banks.

The Budget

The budget contains a \$300 million increase for the guaranteed income supplement which becomes beneficial for so many, certainly for those in rural areas where I come from, when it comes to basic food and heating costs that are rising. These are major impediments to getting out of poverty. However, the studies say that we would probably need around \$700 million or more to have a substantial impact on the seniors who are most vulnerable.

Perhaps my colleague could comment on that, particularly for the area that he represents.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the connection between poverty and seniors. Unfortunately, a large percentage of people age 55 and over in the regions are losing their jobs. They are facing significant technological changes and they need help acquiring certain skills so that they can remain in the job market. These people, who are having difficulty reintegrating into the job market, along with those whose pensions will not be indexed to a reasonable level, will find themselves in precarious situations and, yes, there will be even longer lines at the food banks. According to all the information I currently have about my riding, food banks' budgets will not be increased this year.

Allow me to digress for a moment. My predecessor, who was a colleague of the members opposite, was supposed to attend a meeting to confirm \$40,000 in funding for Moisson Kamouraska. He forgot to attend the meeting, which was scheduled to take place six months ago. Moisson Kamouraska is still waiting for the \$40,000. I hope that this is not representative of the consideration the members opposite give to the needs of food banks.

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to speak to budget 2011. I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

I am very pleased with the excellent budget put forward by our finance minister. I want to note some of the accomplishments in the budget and how it will help Canadians significantly.

Prior to the budget that was presented, initially in March and more recently again, many members of Parliament embarked upon prebudget consultations in their own ridings. I had the pleasure of doing that in Barrie. In looking back on the comments we received in our community, it is interesting to see how this budget really reflects the aspirations and concerns of Canadians.

At four different prebudget town hall meetings that I held, we managed to have consultations and submissions from a wide variety of people in the community of Barrie. We had submissions from city councillors, school board trustees, members of the Chamber of Commerce, doctors, nurses, emergency services personnel, seniors, students, business owners and the mayor of Barrie. We also had an active electronic survey and we received significant feedback through that.

Each of the participants provided insightful contributions from different aspects of our city. Many shared the same concerns as all Canadians: ensuring good jobs are available, keeping low taxes and investing in long-term growth. I heard about the need to better

support small business and local industry. I heard about retirement savings, the rising cost of energy and the challenges facing our most vulnerable seniors. I heard pleas for more doctors in underserved areas, concerns over the health of our citizens and the future of our growing city. I believe budget 2011 did an excellent job in meeting those concerns.

Initially I wanted to talk a little about infrastructure, for which this budget has a fair amount. The city of Barrie has had tremendous infrastructure needs. We have had a 6% growth rate over 10 years. The submissions made by members of the city of Barrie task force on my budget consultations were that stable infrastructure funding was important and that the gas tax revenues had been very helpful, but that it was the sense of stability, the sense of planning that was needed for municipalities.

John Brassard, a city councillor in Barrie, said how impressed he was with the funding toward municipalities and that the grant should continue. Councillor Brassard said that infrastructure was intimately linked to economic development and enables a city to compete for jobs.

Making the gas tax funding transfers to municipalities permanent is a welcome sign in budget 2011. I applaud the Minister of Finance for taking this critical initiative. Putting this into law, the permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in gas tax funding for cities and towns will allow for long-term municipal infrastructure planning and budgeting.

When I was a city councillor in Barrie for five years prior to 2005, I remember how difficult it was for municipalities and how strained they were for resources. It is pretty significant that we now see municipalities with a stable partner with the federal government helping them with their infrastructure needs.

Prior to our government first being elected in 2006, Barrie was receiving just under \$2 million a year. These transfers have steadily increased under our government and currently the transfer for Barrie is approaching \$7 million annually. That is typical for cities across Canada. They have seen a steady and consistent increase.

The passing of budget 2011 means that Barrie can count on these funds year after year to assist in meeting our local commitments and will continue to help ease the burden on property taxpayers.

The Budget

In terms of tax reductions, this budget also helps businesses and Canadians in many respects. I am pleased that our government did not follow the call from other parties in the House to roll back the series of graduated business tax reductions passed by a majority of parliamentarians in 2007. Some parties even wanted to roll back and increase the burden on business by saddling them with taxes surpassing the pre-2007 levels. These reductions were designed to keep Canada competitive with our trading partners and our government understood the strategy was working for Canadian business.

• (1705)

Sybil Goruk, the executive director of the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce, put it best when she wrote to me to voice her concerns about this alarming call for increases to corporate taxes. After she read the Bank of Canada January report, which noted that 44% of Canadian firms expected to invest more in productivity-enhancing machinery and equipment in the years ahead, Sybil wrote:

Consistency and reliability in government policy are critical factors in business decision-making. Businesses across the country have invested with the understanding that taxes would decline. A sudden change of course would constitute a broken promise to thousands of businesses and the many people they have employed based on that promise.

Our government kept its promise and I am very glad the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Barrie Chamber of Commerce recognize the importance of keeping business taxes low.

In terms of creating jobs, this budget is a victory for Canadians in that sense. Creating jobs in a community is as important as anything else. Small business plays a significant economic role in cities such as Barrie. It is the lifeblood of our economy. Business owners told me that investment in their operations would promote growth and create more jobs in the community.

All too often my community of Barrie has seen small businesses come and go, particularly in the downtown core. Rod Jackson, a former city councillor and a human resources manager, stressed that it was important the government have incentive programs for small businesses that could be implemented at all levels of government. These programs should not only help start up business, but should also help existing companies stay open.

Budget 2011 addresses many of those requests. Two examples are: extending the accelerated capital cost allowance to help manufacturers make new investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment; and enhancing programs to help businesses keep workers, like work sharing programs, the wage earner protection program and the targeted initiative for older workers.

However, the aspect of budget 2011 that will be really helpful is the hiring credit for small businesses. It is a terrific yet cost effective way of encouraging small businesses to hire workers instead of putting it off to another year.

In terms of helping young people, budget 2011 is a victory for young Canadians. Another aspect of job creation comes from young students who are making the transition from school to the workforce. In Barrie we are lucky enough to have Georgian College, along with many university partnerships with Georgian, supplying the city with well-educated graduates. Joe Rockbrune, who is a small business

owner and was on our prebudget consultations, made the point that it was critical to find that transition and that it was important for young people to have help finding the jobs that await them.

There are several things this budget does to stimulate the economy and invest in job growth. I am also happy to see the government investing \$20 million in the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. By supporting the youth entrepreneurs of today, we are helping our young people succeed and become leaders of tomorrow.

One of my favourite aspects of budget 2011 is the \$100 million set aside for brain disorders. I had the pleasure over the last year and a half of sitting on the neurological disorder subcommittee in Parliament that studied the black hole we have with brain and neurological disorders. The one thing we heard again and again was that government needed to focus on this. I will be honest when I say that there was very little hope that something would happen this soon. To see our Minister of Finance focus on that area, which rarely gets attention, is a tremendous thing.

I think of people in my riding, like Derek Walton, who, despite having ALS for eight years and being restricted to a wheelchair, skydives to raise funds for research. I think of Jeanette Elliott, who is a volunteer working non-stop for the MS Society, or Greg McGinnis, who is doing the same thing for the Parkinson Society. All of these efforts are to raise funds for research. To see the federal government invest in such a meaningful way is something very special about budget 2011 in terms of its focus on neurosciences.

I just want to add one other point that was helpful in budget 2011, and that is the comments I heard from seniors about needing more help. There are lots of low-income seniors across Canada and Barrie is no exception. I know the increase to the GIS will be welcomed. It is a very helpful part of budget 2011.

I commend my colleague, the Minister of Finance, on delivering a budget that is responsible and proactive on behalf of all Canadians. The low tax plan for jobs and growth meets many of the requests I heard from my constituents. On behalf of the people of Barrie, I thank him and his team for their hard work.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hear my hon. colleague talking about a budget that really reflects the concerns of Canadians, and I have to wonder.

The Budget

Hearing my colleague's comments, I could not help but think of a single mother I met during the election campaign who is living in poverty and who was recently diagnosed with cancer. Long before her diagnosis, this woman had to fight to have access to health care, proper treatment and affordable drugs. She still has to fight today, although one would think the opposite given her situation. One would think she should be getting the help she needs and that she deserves.

How can the member call this budget a complete success when it does not offer sufficient measures to work with the provinces to improve public health care?

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have a question on health care because I believe that this budget was a tremendous investment in, and a tremendous victory for, health care.

We saw an increase of 6% to health care transfers. Let us look at the contrast with how it used to be. The last time there was a significant recession in the 1990s, the government of the day cut health care. To see a government invest in health care despite the fragile economic recovery and to invest in such a meaningful way shows that it is a government that cares profoundly about health care.

I would add to that. It is interesting to hear this question from the NDP members, because when they were in power provincially in Ontario during the recession their response was to actually cut medical enrolment. So the doctor shortages we face in Canada, especially in Ontario, are because of that ill thought-out decision. We cannot attack health care in the middle of a recession.

Our finance minister did the opposite. He invested in health care. I think that is a wonderful thing.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for his work on the subcommittee on neurological disorders. He certainly deserves praise for that from all members of the House.

The other issue, if I may go to the health care issue just to point out something, he talked about a commitment the government is making and investments in health care. I think we had better wait until 2014 before we decide to make a decision on that. The mechanisms we are using now to invest come from 2004. Stay tuned is probably the best advice I can give on that one.

The other issue I want to talk about is municipalities. The member talked about infrastructure. One of the biggest issues coming out of rural parts of the country is just how difficult it can be to come up with that one-third commitment.

Would the hon. member consider the formula to be very difficult for some of the smaller communities? Would he suggest that the Treasury Board should consider changing some of these formulas so that it is easier for the smallest of communities to receive funding on infrastructure?

For example, there is a new waste water regulation that is going to be particularly onerous to smaller communities because they will have to come within regulation of the environment. It is going to be a devastating situation because a lot of these smaller communities just cannot afford it.

Would the hon. member consider that as a way for the Treasury Board to reconsider some of its formulas?

• (1715)

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I remember prior to the economic stimulus program that there were questions and comments saying that there would not be enough applications because municipalities could not afford the one-third.

In retrospect, one interesting thing is the fact that the challenge was not having enough applications from municipalities hoping to have an economic stimulus grant, it is that there were actually too many applications. Municipalities and towns of all sizes were excited to have a partner in the federal government. There were literally hundreds and hundreds, and thousands and thousands of applications that flowed in with regard to infrastructure.

With respect to which formula works best, whether it is one-third or different percentages, obviously all levels of government have to share the burden of infrastructure costs. I think every level of government is pressed.

I believe the federal government has been very generous in infrastructure. If we look at the period of the last few years, this is a period of record levels of infrastructure investment. The federal government is certainly doing its part.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for sharing his time with me this afternoon.

It is a great honour to return to Ottawa as the federal representative for Sarnia—Lambton. I wish to thank my constituents for expressing their faith in me to carry forward their perspectives on issues of importance across our riding. I pledge to do this with honour and integrity.

I would like to take a moment to thank several people who worked tirelessly during the election. First, my family, Bill, Will, Tina and Josh; my campaign manager, Mike Hanki, who has led me through three successful federal campaigns; my EDA members who performed various roles during the campaign: the official agent, the computer team, the sign team, all the volunteers who worked hard to make my success possible and a big thanks to my dedicated volunteers who worked so many hours on the “get out to vote” aspect of the campaign.

Also, I would like to thank the citizens of Canada, who have decided that seven years of unstable minority parliaments were not helping our country position itself on the right track to prosperity and success. I thank these Canadians for electing a stable Conservative majority government; the first majority government to lead our nation since the year 2000.

I would like to express my congratulations to all parliamentarians who have sought and gained election to Canada's House of Commons in the recent 41st election. We should never forget that our communities sent us here to represent their wishes. We have a special responsibility to the regions we represent. I look forward to serving the 41st Parliament with all the members in the House.

The Budget

I am speaking today in support of the 2011 budget document which is the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. I have full confidence in the fiscal agenda laid out for Canada in the budget. It is regretful that we have had to go through an election first in order to table this important business for our nation and in order to pass the urgent measures contained within the 2011 budget document.

However, we are now fully able to reflect the wishes of Canadians to provide a stable and prosperous economic blueprint for our nation.

With certainty, the most pressing issue for Canadians is with the continued prosperity of our nation. Strong fiscal leadership has been the prerequisite for international leaders since the great recession of 2008 and none has shown greater leadership than our own Prime Minister and finance minister.

We know that there are still very serious issues that Canada continues to confront, including a sovereign debt crisis across the eurozone and threats of increased conflict abroad. Even Mother Nature seems intent on doing all she can to make the recovery efforts of nations across the globe as difficult as possible.

With these issues in mind, Canada requires strong leadership on matters of fiscal policy. I would argue we have just that with the current team in place to lead Canada forward.

Speaking to the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, I am pleased to see several specific measures that will enhance Canadian prosperity during these difficult times. I am very pleased to also see several broad measures that I consider to be of the utmost importance moving forward for our national economy. This low-tax plan for jobs and economic growth will preserve Canada's advantage in the international economy. It contains measures to strengthen the financial security of Canadian workers, seniors, families and students, and will grant our nation the stability needed to move strongly into the future.

In Sarnia—Lambton, businesses have been hard hit by the global economic downturn. Despite the difficulties that firms faced, I know that measures brought forward by this government in our previous budgetary responses to the economic downturn helped businesses survive as best they could in the past three years. This is why I support the initiatives taken by the government in the next phase of the economic action plan to support job creation. These measures include the provision of a temporary hiring credit for small business to encourage additional hiring in this sector. Small business needs this kind of support. It is a major incubator in not just Ontario but every province and territory. Canadian entrepreneurs need this support put in place and this budget will help them.

The extension of the work-sharing program, in addition to supporting the manufacturing sector through the extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance, will have a significant impact on allowing businesses to expand during these difficult times and is supported by businesses in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton.

The same can be said for investments in the next phase of the economic action plan that will support innovation in Canada's farming, forestry, and mining communities.

● (1720)

As a member of Parliament with a strong municipal background from my years as both mayor and county warden of my community, I fully understand the importance of having long-term stable funding for infrastructure projects like road rehabilitation. This is why I strongly support the measure contained in the 2011 budget to legislate a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion to the gas tax fund to provide stable funding for Canadian municipalities. I know with certainty that this is welcomed by municipalities across Canada and I ask my colleagues in the House to support this urgently needed measure.

Beyond the measures that target job creation in the next phase of the economic action plan, it is important to note the strong support we are prepared to give to families and communities. For example, we have provided financial support to increase the guaranteed income supplement for seniors who rely on the OAS payments to get by. We know there are Canadian seniors facing financial hardships and we want to help them out.

As a long-serving member of the Standing Committee on Health, I have a strong grasp on the issue of health human resources. I know it is difficult to get new doctors and nurses to go into rural communities to serve. In order to attract more doctors and nurses to these under-serviced regions, the Government of Canada has come up with a very practical solution. It will forgive up to \$40,000 of the federal component of Canada's student loans for doctors and up to \$20,000 for nurse practitioners and nurses. This is a very good first step toward addressing the shortage of health human resources in our rural areas.

Of course, there is more that can be done for families and communities. With this in mind, the Government of Canada is providing three new creative tax credits to assist families, including the new \$2,000 family caregiver tax credit, the new children's art tax credit and a new \$3,000 volunteer firefighter tax credit for volunteer firefighters who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. In addition, the Government of Canada has committed \$870 million over two years to address climate and air quality issues, including the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program. Many people in my community called for the reintroduction of the eco-energy program.

Furthermore, I wish to speak in favour of this government's commitment to deficit reduction. The fiscal track record of this government is very strong, with billions being paid off our national debt up until the moment the global economic downturn struck our economy. During that recessionary period, the G20 world leaders determined that strong fiscal stimulus was required by member nations to ensure the global economy could bounce back. Canada tabled its own plan for stimulus, the original economic action plan that the 2011-12 budget is a continuation of.

The Budget

During the first two years of our national response to the global economic challenges facing Canada, we did indeed utilize deficit financing in order to finance urgent infrastructure projects, to assist struggling industrial sectors and overall to help stabilize our economy in the face of the largest economic downturn since the end of World War II. I would be remiss if I were not to mention that although this government developed a very reasonable stimulus response, other parties in the House were calling for hundreds of billions of dollars in spending, a level that would have been irresponsible and negligent.

Canadians have spoken during the recent election and they support the Conservative Party of Canada's plan to get our economy back on track and to end the deficit spending currently taking place. Once we get back to a balanced budget, Canada will again be in a prime position to begin paying down our national debt or to take measures that may be necessary should a double-dip recession take hold due to outside pressures associated with the global economy.

The one last measure I would like to voice my support for is the call for the creation of the common securities regulator to act across Canada. With a single securities regulator, we will not only cut back on red tape at the provincial level, but we will move toward a more balanced and internationally recognizable system of monitoring our various financial sectors in Canada. I support the finance minister's actions on this file and I call on Parliament to stand behind the government and support us on this matter.

I appreciate the time today to share these important items with hon. members. I feel it is nothing less than urgent for all parties to support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. Canadians have strongly registered their support for the new government and since we ran a platform based on this very document and won the most recent election to form a majority government, I feel it is incumbent on all MPs in the House of Commons to stand beside the Canadians they represent and support the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of talk about job creation from the government lately. But I must point out in this House that the government has announced huge job cuts within the Government of Canada. This seems to be a bit of a “not in my backyard” policy.

The government also seems to be allergic to a certain type of economic development. Take, for example, the co-operative model in Quebec. Desjardins has been a huge economic success and is a great economic model. This model has not lost its place in terms of economic development. Economic development can take different forms.

Canada seems to have become much richer as a country, but in reality, it is 20% of our richest citizens who have increased their revenues and, therefore, their wealth. I have a quote from the National Council of Welfare:

Canada has posted the strongest employment growth in the G7, but it is also one of the G7 countries in which there are the greatest income disparities among families. Poverty in a rich country is not inevitable; it is the result of bad policies.

Does the government plan on introducing a real program to eliminate poverty?

[*English*]

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member to this House and certainly look forward to working with her over the next four years.

We know that this new budget covers a wide aspect of issues. We also know, as the member across has stated, that Canada has done well in coming out of this recession, much better than other countries. We have done it because of the policies that have been put in place by this government and we will continue to do that.

The latest budget that the minister has put forward certainly covers many things that will bring great benefit to many people across a wide spectrum in this country. It involves job creation. It supports families, communities and municipalities. There is not just one thing in this budget. This is a budget that affects everyone in this country. It is a budget that has been widely supported and I would encourage the member opposite to support it as well.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member caught my ear when she made reference to this budget in that it is innovative for our farmers. The first thing that came across my mind was what the government is actually doing to the wheat farmers in the prairies of Manitoba.

The vast majority of the wheat farmers do not support the actions the government is taking regarding the Wheat Board. How is it that the government sees fit to give the impression that it is being supportive of the wheat farmer while at the same time the wheat farmer does not want to lose the Wheat Board?

Can the government not listen and at least allow for a plebiscite, so that we can hear and act firsthand on what the prairie wheat farmers actually want as opposed to the government of the day wiping the Wheat Board out without the support of the wheat farmer?

Mrs. Patricia Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. I look forward to working with him as well over the next four years.

This government believes in equality and that is one of the big issues. We believe that the western farmer deserves the same freedoms and advantages that other farmers in this country have and enjoy. That is one thing we stand up for very strongly.

There are many other things in this budget that are going toward the agriculture industry. There is \$100 million over five years for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to improve food inspection. That is very important in this day and age, particularly when we hear of the food incidents that are happening. There are many things in here that are going to help the agriculture industry, the hog industry, and the commercialization of agricultural innovation.

We do believe in equality and we will try to help the agriculture industry right across the country.

The Budget

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, and the other Speakers who have been appointed to be the pilots in the House of Commons to ensure that everyone gets fair and equitable time on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

As this is my first speech in the 41st Parliament, I would like to take the opportunity to thank a few people who worked so hard for me in the last election. First of all, I want to thank my family, especially my husband and my children, who supported me in a major way to get re-elected.

I want to thank John Feldsted, who was my campaign manager, and Kaz Malkiewicz, who was my official agent and worked so hard to ensure that the campaign was run very well.

I want to especially thank the Kildonan—St. Paul Electoral District Association. These people are dedicated and they worked very hard.

My thanks also go to the number of volunteers who came in every day to go door-to-door and who worked hard to ensure I was elected. I am pleased to say that it was a resounding victory.

Last but not least, I want to say a special thanks to the constituents of Kildonan—St. Paul, who have asked me to return to Ottawa to represent their concerns and their values.

Kildonan—St. Paul is an amazing riding. It has diverse ethnic groups. I am just so pleased to stand here in the House of Commons to speak to this budget today representing those constituents.

As the member of Parliament for Kildonan—St. Paul, there is no more important responsibility placed on me than accounting for the finances of our federal government. I have to give a special congratulations to our Prime Minister. History will tell that we have the best prime minister that this country has ever had.

I also want to congratulate our finance minister, who has done yeoman's work. He listened to Canadians and associations, and groups all across this country to produce a balanced approach in the budget, an approach that will stabilize Canada's economy, an approach that will keep people working and families in their homes. The budget addresses many of the issues that families are concerned with on a daily basis.

I have to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister for ensuring that commerce and trade, business, and public safety are well balanced. Our country is well ahead of many other countries. We have very strong leadership. The last election proved that to be true. Canadians have a stable Conservative majority government that will continue to serve the public in the next four years. This was a real vote of confidence from the people of Canada and a special thanks to the people of Canada for giving us this opportunity.

Today we live in an age of global fiscal uncertainty. However, our Conservative government has taken significant measures to ensure Canadians can prosper, provide for their families, and strengthen our economy.

On June 6, 2011, the Minister of Finance presented the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a low tax plan for jobs and growth. The budget focuses on four key priorities: first, supporting job creation; second, supporting families and communities; third, investing in innovation, education and training; and fourth, preserving Canada's fiscal advantage. This is very important to the economy and growth of our country.

During the last election, many of my constituents took the time to share with me their concerns and priorities. Among the issues raised, there was a clear and consistent theme: my constituents wanted our government to provide for Canada's seniors, who have invested their lives to build our great nation.

• (1735)

They wanted support and tax relief provided for their families. They wanted our streets to be kept safe from violent criminals. In particular, they wanted to support small businesses because, like infrastructure, they are the engines that support our economy all across this nation. As well, what continually came forward was providing support for our brave volunteer firefighters.

Having listened carefully to the presentation of the budget last week, clearly I am delighted that our Minister of Finance has carefully and thoughtfully constructed a budget that addresses the needs of my constituents in Kildonan—St. Paul and indeed addresses the needs of Canadians all across our nation.

Since 2006, our government has provided significant assistance to seniors. It has provided over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners, and removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls. However, there is more to be done in my riding and across our nation.

By enhancing the GIS, eligible low income seniors will receive an additional annual top up benefit of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples. During the last election, as I was having coffee parties and speaking to seniors groups, they were absolutely delighted with that. It was a long time coming. They were very happy that this would happen under a stable Conservative government. This represents an investment of more than \$300 million per year. This measure will further improve the fiscal security and well-being of more than 680,000 seniors across our nation.

An additional \$10 million was put into the budget for the very important new horizons for seniors program to promote volunteerism, mentorship, the social participation of seniors, and to expand awareness of elder abuse. This enhanced support will further the program's objectives by funding a greater number of projects. In my riding, this new horizons for seniors program has done much good. Seniors get together, they socialize, they learn, and they grow. It has been a catalyst for promoting many wonderful things for our seniors.

Also, an additional \$50 million will be used to extend the targeted initiative for older workers.

The Budget

Support and tax relief for families has been well-established through this budget. That is why the 15% non-refundable new children's arts tax credit of up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and development activities is something that is very beneficial to families.

Many families are in what we call the sandwich generation whereby they are taking care of elders. The 15% non-refundable new family caregiver tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types is very important, especially for relatives that they are taking care of.

There are many other things such as the enhanced medical expense tax credit; the eco-energy retrofit program, that the member from Sarnia has just talked about; and the benefits to help students. These have enhanced families to such an extent that they can balance their budgets, look forward to educating their children, and look forward to having a balanced, stable budget from the government.

We have cut taxes over 120 times since forming government. We have cut the personal income tax rate to its lowest level of 15%. We have removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of an average family. We have done many more things. We have introduced the universal child care benefit, offering families more choice in child care.

We have done many other things to build families, enhance their ability to grow their families, and to prosper in this country.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in its budget, the government talks about helping businesses and entrepreneurs, but who will truly benefit from this help? Some people are worried, and that is understandable. We need only look at the billions of dollars that have been given to the most profitable companies.

In my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard, there are many small family businesses. They are very common in my riding. I would like to know what this government plans to do for these businesses in my riding.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member to the House of Commons. It is so great to see younger and very enthusiastic MPs, as we all are.

Job creation is one of the most important things that our government has supported. The next phase of Canada's economic action plan is investing \$1 million over two years to ensure that more employers and unions benefit from Labour Canada's preventive mediation program.

Ultimately all Canadians, including those in my province of Manitoba, will benefit from fewer work stoppages and greater economic stability. That speaks to some of the concerns the member has expressed this afternoon. This has been a big issue in our country.

Our finance minister and the Prime Minister have addressed that, and it is just one of the many issues they have addressed.

• (1745)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member is a very specific one.

On several occasions the member mentioned the word “non-refundable”. She talks about tax credits for artistic programs for young people. She talks about a home caregiver tax credit, again non-refundable. She talks about a tax credit for volunteer firemen, again non-refundable.

Does she appreciate the fact that people on low income will not be able to take advantage of these because they do not have taxable income? What does the member have to say about that disparity?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House of Commons. It is always great to see new faces and faces that have been here before and will once again have dialogue.

The fact is Canadians have said, in a very strong, resounding way, that they like what is happening in our country. There has been support for low income housing. There has been support for people out of work. There has been support for our most vulnerable populations.

This balance is so important in our country. I know I do not have time to go over every one specifically, but I am sure if the member took a little time to look them up and to support our next budget, I think he would be very pleased that his riding would also be served well with this budget.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member back to the House. The residents of Kildonan—St. Paul made a wise decision because she is a very hard-working MP.

I had the opportunity just after the election to go to a meeting with some of the seniors in my riding. Several hundred people were there. They were asking if we were going to be tabling the exact budget again. I indicated that it would be pretty much the same budget tabled again.

One of the programs that the seniors benefit a lot from is the new horizons for seniors program, not only the capital assistance but also the programs to get seniors engaged in the communities.

Could the member expand a little on what that has meant to the seniors, to get them engaged in the communities?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague him back as well.

Very specifically, seniors are very appreciative of the new horizons program because they learn how to use computers and do all sorts of things, like their own tax returns. Seniors can apply for this very important initiative and work together in groups to grow their organization. It is very important.

The Budget

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I am very honoured that my constituents of Kitchener Centre have chosen me for the second time to be their voice in Ottawa. I thank them and I assure them that I will devote every ounce of my strength and every skill that I possess to represent Kitchener faithfully in the House. I also very much appreciate the support of my wife and family, my great campaign team and all the friends and neighbours who put my signs on their lawns.

I rise today in support of the budget tabled by the hon. finance minister. In all of human endeavour, there is no more complex undertaking than the preparation of a budget for the proper governance of a modern nation. It is the place where lofty ambitions collide with cold realities, the place where some compelling priorities win out over other equally compelling priorities, the place where a serious misstep can ruin, or at least injure, the legitimate financial interests of millions of citizens. Crafting a budget is a complex and challenging task.

In a parliamentary democracy it is even more difficult. We were elected as government, based upon commitments made to the Canadian people. The damage to confidence in democratic institutions is incalculable when governments renege on their commitments for anything short of catastrophic circumstances. We must be true to our word.

Yet other parties were elected because those who supported them had other priorities. Can we give due consideration to the priorities of the opposition? Can we just compromise for the sake of compromise, renege on our commitments to Canadians? To ask that question is to answer it.

What are the unshakable commitments our government made to Canadians?

First and foremost, we promised to protect the jobs on which Canadians across this country depend. As I went door to door, my constituents made plain to me, that was their chief preoccupation. Some were just getting back to work after the recession. Some were still searching for work. Young Canadians, older Canadians, all were cautious in their optimism about the economy. Canadians have a right to be cautious.

Canada led the world in job creation, and we did that with one of the lowest debt to GDP ratios. However, elsewhere around the world, circumstances are much less favoured: nuclear disaster in Japan; debt crisis across the European Union; uprisings in the Middle East; and unbelievable debt and deficits in the United States. Canada is an island of stability in an ocean of uncertainty.

As a trading nation, we are not immune from global currents. Canadians have a right to temper their optimism with caution and governments have a duty to address those concerns.

Our budget offers a small business hiring credit to encourage job creation. We are also extending the accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery for two additional years to assist manufacturers in Kitchener Centre and across this country. We are reviewing the best 14 weeks and working while on EI pilot projects for one year to give relief to Canadian families. The budget also includes \$20 million for the Canadian Youth Business Foundation support of young entrepreneurs.

Further, this budget's job creation measures support a cleaner energy economy. This includes renewed investments totalling almost \$100 million over two years in clean energy and energy efficiency research. I am especially pleased that this budget also delivers \$400 million more for the eco-energy for home retrofit program. I pressed hard for this program, which combines job creating retrofits with greenhouse gas reducing energy efficiencies.

However, our long-term economic health depends on more than just immediate job creation. It also depends on expanding our corporate revenues by lowering our corporate tax rate.

• (1750)

A simplistic view might consider that the idea of reducing the tax rate contradicts the idea of expanding the corporate tax base. In the real world, it is no contradiction. Studies have shown that lower taxes will induce corporations to book their profits in Canada, creating more revenue than we lose through lower rates.

Our long-term economic health also depends on jobs for the long term. Our investment in the multi-nation allied procurement of F-35 jets will do exactly that. Not only will companies like Héroux-Devtek in my riding get to bid on jobs building Canadian jets, but also on jobs building jets for Norway, France, Great Britain and half a dozen other allies.

This budget also plans for the future by investing in a myriad of other innovation, education and training opportunities.

Finally, our long-term economic health depends upon eliminating the deficit.

Has it ever occurred to those members who embrace socialist policies that deficit financing, borrowing to finance government programs, results in a kind of reverse Robin Hood, a Robin Hood who takes from middle-income Canadians, in taxes, to pay to those wealthy enough to lend to the government, in interest? This is not the economic justice that a government owes its citizens and it limits our future capacity to provide health and education and other necessary services.

Our budget sets out a low tax plan to return to balanced budgets. We will deliver on the 2010 round of strategic reviews. We will take action to close tax loopholes. We will launch a comprehensive strategic and operating review to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

The Budget

The budget also includes other priorities. We will lift the poorest seniors out of poverty with enhanced GIS. We will introduce new tax relief for family caregivers of infirm dependents. We will end the anti-democratic per vote state subsidy of some, but not all political parties. We will encourage children to participate in the arts. We will leverage more research into brain diseases like Alzheimer's and MS.

In short, we will match lofty ambitions against cold realities. We will pursue some compelling priorities over other priorities. We will protect the legitimate financial interests of millions of Canadians against serious government missteps.

Does that mean that dialogue and collaboration have no place in the future of 41st Parliament? Once we live up to our commitments, I hope there will be room for compromise. Providing we all respect the fundamental needs of ordinary Canadians, we can all work together in this Parliament.

Our government has proved it is willing to listen. When the current opposition leader proposed NDP priorities for the budget crafted in March, we listened. Eco-energy, GIS enhancement, incentives for rural medical recruitment, we found we could agree with those proposals and we put them in the budget.

Will the opposition pay us mutual respect? Will it compromise its demands? Will it support this sensible budget? I urge the opposition to demonstrate its desire to collaborate by supporting this budget, accepting that our government was elected based on the commitments made in the budget.

In this spirit, I want to close by quoting from the words of a great Canadian. His words express the spirit of this budget. His words speak especially to the fresh idealism of our new members of Parliament. He said:

As for you who stand today on the threshold of life, with a long horizon open before you for a long career of usefulness to your native land...I shall remind you that already many problems rise before you: problems of race division...of creed differences...of economic conflict...of national duty and national aspiration.... Let your aim and purpose, in good report or ill, in victory or defeat, be so to live, so to strive, so to serve as to do your part to raise even higher the standard of life and living...

These are the words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, our seventh prime minister. Let us heed him and join together to pass this budget, doing our part to raise even higher the standard of life and living of all Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his inspiring speech on the budget. There is no doubt that he was inspired by it, anyhow, I am sure.

However, my question for him is about low taxes. I look at this budget and at the projections for personal income tax over the period of the next six years and I see that personal income tax collection in Canada will go from \$100 billion to \$151 billion over that period of time. That will be about a 50% increase in the amount of personal income tax that will come out of the average Canadian's pocket.

There will be inflation and an increase in the workforce, but those will not add up to that much of an increase in taxation.

I would like my colleague to explain to me how he can consider this a low tax budget for Canadians when we see such a marvellous increase in the tax take.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his kind and generous comments. I have noticed him to be a gentleman in this House throughout and I am happy to thank him and encourage him in that, as I would all members.

I think my hon. colleague across the way knows very well, as all Canadians do, that if there is one thing they can count on this government to do, it is to keep personal income taxes low. That is why members will not find any increase in tax rates if they examine the budget. They will not find any reduction in personal exemptions. In fact, they will just find that we are doing more of the same with tax credits, for example, for children in the arts and for family caregivers of infirm dependants.

I would remind my friend that since 2006 our government has cut taxes 120 times, reducing the overall tax burden to its lowest level in over 50 years.

• (1800)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question. The comment starts with the Conservative convention this past weekend and the many measures asked of the government to simplify the tax code and simplify tax measures. Yet in every budget that comes by, we see tax credit after tax credit. I have a large shoebox filled with receipts that I have to keep, which makes things even more complicated. That is even besides the refundable versus non-refundable measures.

My question is on the strategic review. This is a code word for cuts. We all know that and we all know that cuts are coming. However, what is exactly is coming has to make its way through the system and by the time we see it, it will be a lot more dangerous than we first realized.

At the beginning of question period, the Prime Minister said there would be no cuts to essential services, yet one service that is very important to the east coast of this country, the search and rescue sub-centre in St. John's, is being cut.

Last night, it responded to an emergency call. What will happen with the next call?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way might be aware that in my community of the Waterloo region, we lead the world in high-tech innovation. So I want to assure him that all that that is going to happen with the change he referred to is that calls will go electronically from one place to another. All of the search and rescue equipment that exists regionally will remain and will be capable of being directed.

The Budget

Believe me, in the 21st century, as I am sure my friend knows, electronic communications make the problem he is referring to virtually negligible, particularly given the BlackBerry from the Waterloo region and the many other digital innovations out of my community of Kitchener where, by the way, Google Canada now has its head office.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to deliver my first complete speech following the recent election.

Like other members with their ridings, I would like to take one moment to thank the voters of Lac-Saint-Louis for showing their confidence in me once again by re-electing me to represent them in the House of Commons for the fourth time since 2004. It is a privilege and responsibility that all members of the House understand deeply, having been through this common experience of being chosen by one's fellow citizens, friends, neighbours and constituents to represent them in the House.

To get back to the topic at hand, the 2011 budget redux, I would point out that June 6 was an important date in tax history in Canada, tax freedom day. Every year tax freedom day occurs at a later date because of bracket creep. As incomes go up, people move into higher brackets and are paying more and more tax.

This brings me to a related point, which is the fact that individual taxpayers are carrying more and more of the tax burden in this country and corporations are carrying less and less. I would like to draw the attention of the House to an article that appeared in *Le Devoir* back in March.

• (1805)

[Translation]

The article was by H el ene Buzzetti and the headline said: "Corporate tax cuts meant that more than 50% of federal government revenues in 2010 came from individuals."

[English]

The article goes on to say that individuals are paying 50% of government revenues. Some would say that is because corporations are paying a smaller percentage as a result of the recession, which has reduced corporate profits and therefore corporate taxes. Yet if one looks at the projections for 2012-13, when the government sees a return to better economic times, even then individual taxpayers will collectively be paying 49% of the tax revenues of this country. In some ways one could say that by allowing the federal corporate tax rate to continue to drop, the federal government is really giving us a budget that increases the tax burden.

What I find interesting in the government's argument is that it likes to have it both ways. It likes to tell us that when things do not go well, it is the fault of the international economy and fact that demand south of the border is not as strong as it should be and that we therefore suffer the consequences in terms of lower employment and corporate profits. Then, on the other hand, it wants to take credit for everything good that happens. It says that if we cut corporate taxes, we will have greater employment. However, there is a contradiction there.

The fact that employment is not growing as fast as it could is because of the recession south of the border and that we are an exporting nation. Cutting the corporate tax rate will not spur companies to invest. Anyone who has taken economics 101 knows that investment responds to heightened confidence and heightened confidence is a result of heightened demand.

Therefore, as long as markets in the United States remain soft, there will not be an incentive for the corporate sector in Canada to invest. In fact, we have seen evidence of that because corporations collectively have been sitting on about \$400 billion of cash. That means they have all the money they need to invest, but they are not investing because the economic climate in the United States is not encouraging them to invest. It is not a question of there not being enough money to invest; and even if a company did not have large cash reserves, it could borrow at historically low interest rates. The reason companies are not doing that as much as they should is the situation with demand in the United States.

Another point I would like to raise in regard to corporate tax cuts is something that has not really been discussed because it is a bit technical. When the corporate tax rate is reduced in Canada, so is the dividend tax credit that individual taxpayers apply on their taxes for the dividend income they receive. That is because of the relationship between the corporate tax rate and the dividend tax credit. Therefore, if corporate tax rates are reduced, the dividend tax credit is reduced. In fact, taxes will increase for Canadians.

The other issue that is quite important to keep in mind is that when a multinational corporation pays tax in Canada, it gets a credit on its U.S. corporate income tax. If it pays less corporate tax in Canada, that credit will not be as great. So the company's lower corporate income tax paid in Canada will be offset by higher corporate income tax paid to the U.S. Treasury. That dampens any positive effect that reducing corporate income taxes could have.

An interesting point from an article in the *The Economist* in May is that when taxes on a company's profits go down, most of them are paid out in the form of dividends to shareholders. For example, there was a study done by Kristin Forbes, a former member of George W. Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, which found that for every extra dollar of foreign profits American firms brought home because of lower taxes abroad, or for whatever reason, American firms tended not to invest but to pay out from 60¢ to 92¢ more to shareholders.

• (1810)

To say that if we reduce corporate taxes all of a sudden there will be an investment boom is really not a proper conclusion to draw.

The other issue, for example, is that our corporate tax rates are much lower than those of our competitors, so there is no reason to drop them more at this time. It will not have any impact on corporate behaviour. One can look at Dell Computers, which moved out of a low corporate tax rate country to a higher corporate tax rate country. It went from Ireland to Poland where the corporate taxes were higher. That negates the argument that the government makes about attracting investment. Why did it go to Poland? It went to Poland because it was searching for a lower wage rate. What really attracts companies is not so much lower tax rates, but lower wage rates.

I think members would agree that the mission we have given ourselves as a country is not to become the lowest wage country in the hemisphere. That is not where we are headed. We are trying to produce the most innovative products and services that we can using our brain power. In other words, we want to encourage economic growth through innovation.

How do we do that? We invest in education. We make sure that all of the best minds in Canada who want to go to university can have a chance to go to university. That is what we were trying to do in our Liberal platform in the last election with our philosophy that if a student gets the grades, he or she gets to go. That is why we were offering students \$1,000 a year for every year of CEGEP and university that they complete. That would have been very valuable for students and for their families, the middle-class families that the party opposite claims to have a monopoly on representing. Those families are facing higher tuition fees. In Quebec, tuition fees will be going up \$400 to \$500 a year for the next few years. Families need some relief. We were ready to give them relief through that \$1,000 a year that we were going to give their sons and daughters to help pay for their tuition. That is what we need to do. We need to innovate. We need to encourage innovation. We encourage innovation by opening our universities to the broadest pool of minds possible.

There is another way to encourage innovation and that is to invest directly in research and development facilities. We have not encouraged basic research to the extent that we should if we want to be a leading nation in the international economy of the 21st century.

Do members know that the last Nobel Prize for Medicine Canada received was in 1923 and it went to Banting and Macleod for the discovery of insulin. That means there is something wrong. We are not innovating the way we should.

I would like to propose that we invest in something called the Canadian molecular biology laboratory, which is a concept that is being advocated by a McGill scholar and friend of mine Dr. John Bergeron, who has seen the model work in Europe. Europe has a molecular biology laboratory and it attracts the best minds from across the world to work on molecular biology science, which produces dividends in terms of drug discovery later on. That is particularly important to my constituency which houses a number of brand name pharmaceutical companies which could benefit from some spinoffs in the area of basic research and molecular biology.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to the order made on Monday, June 6, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt proceedings and to put forthwith all questions necessary to

The Budget

dispose of the amendment and the main motion now before the House.

● (1815)

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1840)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 2*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Angus
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brousseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière

The Budget

Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	McLeod	Menegakis
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	Menzies	Merrifield
Liu	MacAulay	Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Mai	Marston	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Martin	Masse	Nicholson	Norlock
Mathysen	May	O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
McCallum	McGuinty	Obhrai	Oliver
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud	Opitz	Paradis
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Payne	Penashue
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Plamondon	Poilievre
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair	Preston	Raitt
Murray	Nantel	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Nash	Nicholls	Reid	Rempel
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti	Richards	Richardson
Papillon	Patry	Rickford	Ritz
Péclet	Perreault	Saxton	Schellenberger
Pilon	Quach	Seeback	Shea
Rae	Rafferty	Shipley	Shory
Ravignat	Raynault	Smith	Sopuck
Rousseau	Saganash	Sorenson	Stanton
Sandhu	Savoie	Storseth	Strahl
Scarpaleggia	Sgro	Sweet	Tilson
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)		Toet	Toews
Sims (Newton—North Delta)		Trost	Trotter
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis	Truppe	Tweed
Stewart	Stoffer	Uppal	Valcourt
Sullivan	Thibeault	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Toone	Tremblay	Vellacott	Wallace
Trudeau	Turmel	Warawa	Warkentin
Valeriote — 131		Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
		Sky Country)	
		Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
		Williamson	Wong
		Woodworth	Yelich
		Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
		Zimmer — 167	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Bellavance	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Fortin
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

● (1850)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 3)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin

The Budget

Baird	Bateman	Aubin	Ayala
Bellavance	Benoit	Bélangier	Bennett
Bernier	Bezan	Benskin	Bevington
Blaney	Block	Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boughen	Braid	Boivin	Borg
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)	Brahmi	Brousseau
Bruinooge	Butt	Byrne	Caron
Calandra	Calkins	Casey	Cash
Cannan	Carmichael	Charlton	Chicoine
Carrie	Chisu	Chisholm	Choquette
Chong	Clarke	Chow	Christopherson
Clement	Daniel	Cleary	Coderre
Davidson	Dechert	Comartin	Côté
Del Mastro	Devolin	Crowder	Cullen
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dykstra	Fantino	Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Dewar	Dion
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty	Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Fletcher	Fortin	Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Galipeau	Gallant	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Gill	Glover	Dusseau	Easter
Goguen	Goldring	Eyking	Freeman
Goodyear	Gosal	Fry	Gameau
Gourde	Grewal	Garrison	Gesté
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn	Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Hayes	Hiebert	Godin	Goodale
Hillyer	Hoback	Gravelle	Groguhé
Hoepfner	Holder	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
James	Jean	Hassainia	Hsu
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Hughes	Hyer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent	Jacob	Julian
Kerr	Komarnicki	Kellway	Lamoureux
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	Lapointe	Larose
Lauzon	Lebel	Latendresse	Laverdière
Leef	Leitch	Layton	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Lemieux	Leung	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Lizon	Lobb	Liu	MacAulay
Lukiwski	Lunney	Mai	Marston
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Martin	Masse
Mayes	McColeman	Mathysen	May
McLeod	Menegakis	McCallum	McGuinty
Menzies	Merrifield	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nicholson	Norlock	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon	Murray	Nantel
Obhrai	Oliver	Nash	Nicholls
Opitz	Paradis	Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Payne	Penashue	Papillon	Patry
Plamondon	Poillievre	Péclét	Perreault
Preston	Rai	Pilon	Quach
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Rae	Rafferty
Reid	Rempel	Ravignat	Raynault
Richards	Richardson	Rousseau	Saganash
Rickford	Ritz	Sandhu	Savoie
Saxton	Schellenberger	Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Seeback	Shea	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Shipley	Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffer
Smith	Sopuck	Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Sorenson	Stanton	Stewart	Tremblay
Storseth	Strahl	Sullivan	Turmel
Sweet	Tilson	Toone	
Toet	Toews	Trudeau	
Trost	Trottier	Valeriote — 131	
Truppe	Tweed		
Uppal	Valcourt		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks		
Williamson	Wong		
Woodworth	Yelich		
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)		
Zimmer — 167			

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Ashton

Angus
Atamanenko

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Adjournment Proceedings

* * *

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 4

Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget, as updated on June 6, 2011, be concurred in.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Thursday, June 9, 2011, the next vote will be on Motion No. 4, under ways and means proceedings.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1855)

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I requested these adjournment proceedings because I, and the people of London, would like to hear and have on record from the government the reason funding was denied to Diamond Aircraft.

I will quote the minister of state, in his response to my question last week. The minister stated:

After a thorough review of Diamond's request, the company was advised by this government that we could not support the request.

I would appreciate a more detailed answer and I would like the minister to explain to the people of London who lost their jobs why the government was unable to find money to lend to Diamond.

For the sake of clarity, I need to be sure that the minister of state has the details regarding Diamond Aircraft. It is a leading manufacturer of small planes and has operated a factory in London, Ontario, for almost 20 years. Diamond is an important contributing member of our community.

London's manufacturing sector has been hit hard during the recession with the collapse of the auto industry. In fact, the unemployment rate in London is the highest in the region. Diamond Aircraft was one of the few manufacturing employers left and our community needs to keep these jobs.

Diamond has completed the expensive and sophisticated research and development to launch its new D-Jet, the next generation of private jets. The company already has an order for 240 D-jets valued at \$400 million; \$20 million from the private sector and a \$35

million loan guarantee from the Ontario government. All that was required to go ahead with the project was the final piece: a loan from the federal government.

The loan application process has been lengthy and thorough. The initial request goes back to January 2009. There were many meetings, discussions and applications, both formal and informal, with ministers, staff and even the Prime Minister.

Sadly, the ultimate response was no.

The government missed a real opportunity to make Canada a leader in the aerospace industry and bring more jobs to a city that is hurting from the economic downturn. This investment would have saved jobs. Diamond was compelled to lay off 213 workers from its London facility. There was also a potential for 500 new jobs that would have helped revive the manufacturing sector in London. How can the government deny the chance to create good jobs?

It is important to reiterate that the loan guarantee was not a matter of the government cutting a cheque for \$35 million. The loan disburses progressively at about \$2 million per month over the next 18 months. This would allow the government to stop and cut losses at any time if unsatisfied with the program's progress. It is a fully repayable loan. It is not based on the success of the program. No matter what, Diamond would repay the money invested.

All those factors make it clear that this was a smart investment where everyone would benefit: the Government of Canada, the people of London and the Canadian aerospace industry.

Again, I would like to ask the minister and have him explain to the people of London who lost their jobs why the government was unable to find the money to lend to Diamond Aircraft.

• (1900)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about Canada's aerospace industry and the importance this government places on this critical sector.

The aerospace industry is a cornerstone of the Canadian economy. In 2009 alone, Canada's aerospace industry recorded sales totalling over \$22 billion, ranking it among the world's top five aerospace sectors.

While the economic slowdown undoubtedly challenged Canada's important aerospace industry, the government ensured that the right tools were in place to support this vital contributor to the economies of all regions of Canada, and we continue to do so.

Investing in innovation and creating new business opportunities for Canadian aerospace firms today will ensure that Canada is well positioned to full take advantage of tomorrow's opportunities.

The Government of Canada works closely with the Canadian aerospace industry in its pursuit of innovation and enhanced competitiveness. For instance, there are many benefits provided to industry through the Government of Canada's industrial and regional benefits policy, which leverages defence procurements to provide high value opportunities for Canada's aerospace industry now and for years to come.

Thanks to the federal government's investments to rebuild the Canadian Forces, aerospace and defence contractors hold obligations to invest approximately \$20 billion in Canada. In July 2010, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to replace the existing fleet of CF-18 fighters with 65 F-35 Lightning II aircraft. The F-35 joint strike fighter program represents a unique opportunity for Canadian industry. Canada's participation positions our companies at the start of a multi-year, multi-billion dollar program where they will contribute to the development, production and sustainment of this highly advanced fifth generation fighter. Canadian companies have access to significant opportunities related to the production of the F-35, with more to come on sustainment.

In April 2007, the government created the strategic aerospace and defence initiative to support the vital research and development investments made by Canadian aerospace firms. To date, we have announced more than \$800 million of repayable investments in 23 projects. With these funds, we have leveraged an additional \$1.8 billion in research and development investments.

Five firms are already commercializing new technologies as a result of this program. It was through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative that the Government of Canada initially invested close to \$20 million in Diamond's D-Jet project. This funding was awarded to Diamond to directly support its research and development efforts for this all new aircraft.

Diamond has since approached the government with additional financial requests, including a request for an additional \$35 million loan. After a thorough review of Diamond's request by Industry Canada experts, the company was advised that the government, as the steward of taxpayer dollars, could not support the request. However, I am pleased to note that company officials have indicated that they continue to explore other financing opportunities to support Diamond's D-Jet project.

The government remains focused on what matters to Canadians, the economy. Our continued economic growth shows that Canada's economic action plan is working and that we are on the right track. Canada's economy has now grown for seven straight quarters, with over 560,000 net new jobs created since July 2009. While that is positive news, the global economic recovery remains fragile. We need to stay the course with our prudent low tax plan to protect the economy and create jobs.

• (1905)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the decision by this government has been catastrophic for the workers, the families, the community of London and the advancement of the aerospace industry in Canada. Highly qualified technicians have been forced to leave London for the United States. The people of London have a right to know the reasons this loan was denied.

Adjournment Proceedings

This government can spend \$30 billion in a blink of an eye to invest in the American aerospace industry. At the same time, it denied funding to a Canadian company while making unconvincing arguments about prudent spending.

The loan disbursement amounts are not much more than the loss of income tax revenues and the unemployment insurance costs associated with the layoffs. There was opportunity here to increase tax revenue and create more jobs. How can this government call its actions fiscally responsible?

Again, will the minister outline exactly why the funding was denied?

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, of course, I have already spoken to that question. Let me turn to the many positive investments this government has made in the city of London, thanks to the efforts of my colleagues from London West, Elgin—Middlesex—London, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and my new colleague representing London North Centre.

Our government's investments include a new cargo terminal at the London International Airport, expanded research and teaching facilities at Fanshawe College and the University of Western Ontario, important road improvements throughout the London area and new affordable housing for seniors in the London area.

Because of our investments and low tax plan to create jobs and spur growth, the future for the people of Canada and the people of London has never looked brighter. Here again, I will reiterate the fact that our plan has created over 560,000 net new jobs across Canada since July 2009.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had asked the human resources minister a question here in the House. In 2009, crab quotas were 20,000 tons or more, which gave my region a crab fishing season that lasted eight weeks. In fishing, there are all kinds of species, including crab, lobster, herring and so on. That many weeks allows plant workers to accumulate enough hours to be eligible for employment insurance. However, in 2010, on the advice of biologists, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans decided to reduce quotas to about 7,800 metric tonnes. That reduced the number of work weeks from eight to four. Since the workers had accumulated enough hours the previous year, it was not the end of the world. But this year, the biomass has increased by about 17%.

The then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans—who is now a minister—had increased the quotas to 8,700 metric tonnes, which provided just four weeks of work for the plant workers, the majority of whom are women. At the time, I had asked the minister whether she would be prepared to work with the province of New Brunswick on implementing a program to help those people. This could be through community programs or something else to help the people in these communities to be eligible for employment insurance, unless the government wants them to go on welfare.

Adjournment Proceedings

The programs that would send people from northeastern New Brunswick and the Acadian Peninsula to work in Cap-Pelé or in Bouctouche are not the answer. The government needs to realize that many of these people are single mothers. They are not interested in leaving two children behind to go work in Cap-Pelé. We need projects in the region, back home, to help people get through the crisis in the fishery. The crisis in the crab fishery comes in cycles; the quotas go up and down. Currently, the biomass is on the rise. Let us hope this will be settled in a few years.

The minister told them to turn to the province, which was receiving money from the federal government and it was up to the province to solve its problems. It is the same amount of money the province received in the two or three previous years. There is a shortfall for the province. I am again asking the minister to help the province of New Brunswick implement programs to help the plant workers, because we do not want them to go on welfare. We want them to be proud and to have work. I am asking the minister to intervene immediately.

• (1910)

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the member for Acadie—Bathurst about his concerns regarding the provisions of employment insurance benefits to fish plant workers who may be affected by the quota for snow crab this year. In particular, he notes there is danger that plant workers will not have accumulated sufficient hours to qualify for EI regular benefits.

We are accountable to employers and workers who pay the EI premiums that support the program. As the hon. member knows, EI is an insurance-based program. Employers and workers pay premiums so that employees may collect benefits if they are unable to work, are temporarily unemployed, sick, pregnant, caring for a newborn or a newly adopted child, or provide care or support to a gravely ill family member.

Under the eligibility requirements for EI, workers receive benefits only if they have contributed to the program by paying premiums in the past year and if they meet qualifying and entitlement conditions. Workers can qualify for EI regular benefits with as little as 420 hours, depending on the unemployment rate in their regions.

Of course, I sympathize with those workers who may not be able to accumulate sufficient hours to qualify for EI regular benefits. However, removal of the eligibility requirements or qualifying conditions, even for those individuals with extenuating personal circumstances, would be inconsistent with the role of the EI Act and would change the nature of the program.

Let me also point out that the EI program responds to local market changes, taking into account the difficulty of finding employment. The EI program divides the country into 58 economic regions intended to reflect areas of similar labour market conditions. The unemployment rate for each region is used to determine the number of hours a person residing in that region needs to qualify for EI and the number of weeks payable.

Through the variable entrance requirement, the number of insurable hours needed to qualify for EI benefits and the duration of benefits varies depending on the unemployment rate of the EI economic region in which the individual lives. When a region's unemployment rate rises, the entrance requirements reduce and the duration of benefits increase.

For example, in the hon. member's economic region of Restigouche—Albert, the current number of insured hours required to qualify for EI regular benefits is 420, which represents the minimum number of hours to qualify for regular benefits, providing the maximum compensation allowed under the program. Simply put, the conditions in the member's riding are the most generous of any region in the country.

The government also provides funding to provinces and territories to help people find work through continued education. The EI Act already includes provisions that allow the provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec to provide income support to workers affected by the crab quota and who wish to take long-term training.

EI claimants who have exhausted part I benefits are eligible to participate in EI part II training for up to three years and can receive income support while doing so.

Both New Brunswick and Quebec have received substantial ongoing funding within their labour market development agreements and labour market arrangements. The flexibility of this funding allows us to adjust the priorities and spending to respond to the impact of the snow crab quota.

Furthermore, the funding provided through labour market agreements to the provinces and territories have helped Canadians who are not eligible for EI benefits or are under-represented in the labour market train for better jobs.

Service Canada will work with the provincial officials to provide information and to help individuals and communities as necessary, and our government will continue to be accountable to workers, employers and Canadian taxpayers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has just said that the Conservative government is completely washing its hands of this problem. That is what the Conservatives are telling us. This crisis is happening in our region under the watch of the federal government, which was responsible for managing the fishery.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am familiar with this program and I know that employment insurance is there to help workers who have lost their jobs. However, what the parliamentary secretary is not saying is that the Liberals and the Conservatives stole \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund and were not shy about using this money to eliminate the deficit.

However, when it comes time to help the men and women who have lost their jobs because of the mismanagement of the fishery, the government is saying that there is no money allocated for that. Come on. That is why the employment insurance fund was established: to help workers who have lost their jobs and are in difficulty.

I suggest that the federal government stop washing its hands of this problem and start doing something for these people who are working and who want to live with some dignity—

• (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, our government has provided unprecedented investments in training to get Canadians back to work. Our government has invested over \$4 billion in training which has helped 1.2 million Canadians find new jobs.

We have provided significant additional funding under the targeted initiative for older workers in both New Brunswick and Quebec. New Brunswick has received \$2 million and Quebec \$13 million to help unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities.

As I stated earlier, the EI system provides the most generous conditions possible for the member's riding.

We continue to encourage further training and education as a means of increasing employment for all Canadians.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment. I wish you all the best in this endeavour.

I also want to convey my best wishes to the member for Ajax—Pickering and congratulate him on his appointment as a parliamentary secretary. He will soon learn that doing late shows is probably one of the least attractive aspects of the job, because for the next four minutes he has to tell the House why he is not answering the question that the minister only took 30 seconds to not answer. I wish him well in his responses and look forward to working with him over the course of the next few years.

I had a very simple question for the minister, which he did not answer. I asked him how much it was going to cost to close Camp Mirage and how much it was going to cost to open the Kuwait base. The minister said that my figures of \$300 million were grossly exaggerated, so I simply asked him what is the number and thus far we do not know. Hopefully in the realm of time the parliamentary secretary will actually tell us the cost of closing Camp Mirage and then opening Kuwait. It does open up a larger series of questions with respect to the government's plans for opening all of the other bases.

We read in the press that the government is proposing to open bases in Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, Singapore and South Korea. It has already concluded deals with Jamaica and Germany and is working on the deal with Kuwait. None of these things one would imagine is cheap. It is not only the cost of opening the base, but it is the cost of maintaining the base.

This also begs the question, what are we doing in all of these countries if it is for no other reason than to have refuelling stops around the world? Bases are not opened for no reason at all. It would lead one to the question of what are the government's plans with respect to opening bases all over the world?

I am looking forward to the response from the hon. parliamentary secretary. I hope that his response will be somewhat more forthcoming than the minister's response. I wonder if he could actually tell us the cost of closing Camp Mirage and opening Kuwait. In the fullness of time, could he possibly tell us how much he anticipates that the military would be spending on the opening of all of these other bases as well?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood for his interest in these matters. Our ridings are almost neighbours along the coast of Lake Ontario.

On this issue, as on many others, we have a common and shared deep interest.

The hon. member is asking for additional information on a matter that is under negotiation and that is the logistical arrangements being put in place to support the end of the Canadian Forces combat mission and the transition to a Canadian Forces training mission in Afghanistan that will last until 2014.

I am confident that the hon. member would not want the details of a negotiation still under way to be divulged to the House at a time that might adversely affect the result of those negotiations. So I am not in a position to give more detail with regard to the cost of the aspect of the mission that the member has asked about until those plans are finalized.

However, I can assure the hon. member that the closure of Camp Mirage has not had any adverse impact on our mission in Afghanistan.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Since Camp Mirage closed, the Canadian Forces have been able to pursue their combat operations and support the preparations for the new training mission. These operations are receiving a great deal of support, and this will not change.

[*English*]

They are supported through a number of locations in Canada and overseas that depend on routes through the air, on the sea and on land, and are not dependent on any single supply line.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Canadian Forces are continuously seeking, as the member well knows, new ways to be more agile, efficient, and cost effective in meeting humanitarian and other challenges requiring their involvement. In this respect, the acquisition of the C-17 transport aircraft has already made our Canadian forces more effective and responsive. The training mission to assist in NATO's training of the Afghan national security forces until 2014 will be effectively supported as well.

We are there with over 60 nations and international organizations as part of a UN-mandated NATO-led mission.

[Translation]

We are implementing a government-wide response that includes aspects related to the military, diplomacy, correctional services, development and civil defence.

[English]

This effort is delivering real results and making a positive difference to the lives of Afghan citizens across the country. Of course, it involves a level of commitment that does carry significant costs.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada has always been open and transparent about costs. We have committed to submitting reports on the cost of the mission to Canadians and to Parliament on a regular basis.

[English]

That is what we have done to this point and we will continue to do so. The costs associated with the mission close-out will be communicated when they are fully known in an appropriate fashion. In the meantime, our Canadian Forces continue work at which they excel, providing security to Afghans and supporting the development of effective and capable Afghan national security forces.

As part of prudent military logistics, planning for the transition of our combat mission to our Afghan and NATO allies is well in hand.

[Translation]

In accordance with the parliamentary motion adopted in 2008, the combat mission in Kandahar will end by the end of July 2011, and all Canadian Forces personnel will leave the Kandahar region by the end of 2011. Thus, Canada's military mission in Afghanistan will shift to a non-combat training mission.

[English]

This role is vitally important: the continuing development of well-led, well-trained, and well-equipped Afghan national security forces. That is what will help the government of Afghanistan assume increasing responsibility for Afghan security.

Hon. John McKay: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a quick read. I congratulate him on his non-answer. It was quite amusing to me to hear him say, "We are an open and transparent government, but we cannot tell you anything". Then he went on to talk about C-17s, the whole of government approach, what we are doing or not doing in Afghanistan, et cetera, none of which had anything to do with the actual simple question, which was how much this is going to cost.

I take the view that the hon. member or those he represents actually know the cost, that it is not actually a point of negotiation, and that these costs are concluded. The only point of negotiation would be the issue of whether there is some possibility that Camp Mirage could still continue to exist. Clearly that does not, so the costs have to be known, and there is no reason they cannot be communicated to the House.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the member really does test this point to its very limit in suggesting that costs were never revealed at earlier stages of this mission when his party was the government of Canada and when in fact this member for Ajax—Pickering was Canada's ambassador to Afghanistan until a negotiation had resulted in an agreement and the agreement met the criteria set by the House and the Government of Canada for an operational purpose being pursued in support of a mission in Afghanistan.

I can say in all good conscience that of all the nations contributing militarily to the mission in Afghanistan, the Government of Canada remains among the very most transparent in revealing costs in a timely manner.

● (1925)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:25 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, June 13, 2011

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget

Financial Statement of the Minister of Finance

Motion	239
Mr. Cash	239
Mr. Godin	240
Mr. Shory	240
Mrs. Gallant	240
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	242
Mr. Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte)	242
Mr. Anderson	242
Mr. Bevington	244
Mr. Easter	244
Mr. Garrison	244
Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	246
Ms. May	247
Mr. Ravignat	247
Mrs. Glover	248
Ms. Nash	249
Mr. Rathgeber	249
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	250
Mr. Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	251
Mr. Lemieux	251
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	253
Mr. Cannan	253
Ms. Sims	253
Mr. Del Mastro	254
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	255
Ms. Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	255
Mr. Bellavance	256
Mr. Lunney	256
Ms. Charlton	258
Mr. Cuzner	258
Mr. Shory	259
Mr. Martin	260
Mr. Cuzner	260
Mr. Cuzner	261
Mr. Obhrai	262
Mr. Martin	262
Mr. Bélanger	262
Mr. Del Mastro	264

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Nipissing—Timiskaming

Mr. Aspin	264
-----------------	-----

Terrebonne—Blainville

Ms. Borg	264
----------------	-----

Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Braid	265
-----------------	-----

Cultural Scholarships

Ms. Foote	265
-----------------	-----

Sports

Mr. Brown (Barrie)	265
--------------------------	-----

The Budget

Mrs. Hassainia	265
----------------------	-----

Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar

Ms. Block	265
-----------------	-----

Korean War

Mr. Goldring	266
--------------------	-----

Manicouagan

Mr. Genest-Jourdain	266
---------------------------	-----

Syria

Mr. Dechert	266
-------------------	-----

National Blood Donor Week

Ms. Quach	266
-----------------	-----

The Budget

Ms. Rempel	266
------------------	-----

Flooding in Montérégie

Mr. Coderre	267
-------------------	-----

Vancouver Canucks

Mr. Strahl	267
------------------	-----

Vancouver Canucks

Mr. Layton	267
------------------	-----

The Budget

Mrs. Glover	267
-------------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

Libya

Mr. Layton	268
------------------	-----

Mr. Baird	268
-----------------	-----

Mr. Layton	268
------------------	-----

Mr. Baird	268
-----------------	-----

Mr. Layton	268
------------------	-----

Mr. Baird	268
-----------------	-----

Auditor General's Report

Mr. Layton	268
------------------	-----

Mr. Baird	268
-----------------	-----

Mr. Layton	268
------------------	-----

Mr. Baird	268
-----------------	-----

Air India

Mr. Rae	268
---------------	-----

Mr. Toews	269
-----------------	-----

Mr. Rae	269
---------------	-----

Mr. Toews	269
-----------------	-----

Search and Rescue

Mr. Dion	269
----------------	-----

Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act	
Mr. Stoffer	277
Bill C-209. Introduction and first reading	277
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	277
Parliament of Canada Act	
Mr. Stoffer	277
Bill C-210. Introduction and first reading	277
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	277
Committees of the House	
Procedure and House Affairs	
Mr. Preston	277
Motion for concurrence	277
(Motion agreed to)	277
Business of the House	
Mr. Van Loan	277
Motion	277
(Motion agreed to)	277
Petitions	
Asbestos	
Mr. Martin	277
The Environment	
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	278
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	278
Request for Emergency Debate	
Search and Rescue	
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	278
Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	278

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of the Minister of Finance	
Motion	278
Mr. Gill	278
Ms. Hoepfner	280
Mrs. Day	280
Ms. Hoepfner	280
Mr. Bevington	282
Mr. Warkentin	282
Ms. Ayala	282
Mr. Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	284
Ms. Papillon	284
Mr. Menzies	285

Mr. Godin	285
Mr. Benoit	285
Mrs. Day	286
Mr. Wilks	287
Ms. May	287
Mr. McColeman	287
Mr. Bevington	288
Mr. Lamoureux	289
Mr. McColeman	289
Ms. Péclet	289
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	290
Mr. Lamoureux	291
Mr. Lapointe	291
Mr. Stoffer	292
Mr. Simms	292
Mr. Brown (Barrie)	293
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	294
Mr. Simms	295
Mrs. Davidson	295
Mrs. Day	297
Mr. Lamoureux	297
Mrs. Smith	298
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	299
Mr. Garneau	299
Mr. Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	299
Mr. Woodworth	300
Mr. Bevington	301
Mr. Simms	301
Mr. Scarpaleggia	302
Amendment negatived	304
Motion agreed to	306
Ways and Means	
Motion No. 4	
Mrs. Yelich	306
Motion for concurrence	306
(Motion agreed to)	306

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Aerospace Industry	
Ms. Mathysen	306
Mr. Lake	306
Employment	
Mr. Godin	307
Ms. Leitch	308
National Defence	
Mr. McKay	309
Mr. Alexander	309

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