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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Prayers

* * *

[*Translation*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPORT FOR GRANDPARENTS ACT

•(1005)
[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to Bill C-51, an act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act.

The committee has done its work on this, and I am pleased to report that it has been reported back to the House unamended. We look forward to the House accepting this report.

* * *

CONFLICT MINERALS ACT

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-486, An Act respecting corporate practices relating to the extraction, processing, purchase, trade and use of conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce a bill entitled, an act respecting corporate practices relating to the extraction, processing, purchase, trade and use of conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

The conflict minerals that end up in many products, such as our cellphones and game consoles, are responsible for funding and fuelling a war that has killed more than five million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The war in the Congo is the deadliest conflict since World War II. Rape is widely used as a strategy and a weapon of war.

The bill ensures that minerals used in Canadian products will not benefit armed groups engaged in atrocities. We developed the bill in consultation with industry and civil society. I urge all members to support the bill in Parliament. Let us make Canada a leader in ending rape and war in the Congo.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-487, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Income Tax Act (support for grandparents).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard for supporting my bill.

[*English*]

Today, I am happy to introduce my bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Income Tax Act to support grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

The 2011 census indicated there are over 75,000 children in Canada being raised by grandparents. These families are called skipped generation households. This is a dramatic increase of over 50% in just 20 years. In fact the figure of 75,000 children in these families is probably the tip of the iceberg, knowing that many of these arrangements are informal.

The main issue here is financial assistance for the grandparents who step up during a family crisis to take care of children. Most grandparents who raise a grandchild with no parents present are ineligible for the child care expenses deduction because they do not work or have a partner with no income. My bill will remove these barriers. My bill will also permit grandparents to receive employment insurance benefits for parental leave to take care of grandchildren under the age of five.

In some of these households, there are mental health issues, drug issues or other social issues. Thanks to organizations such as CANGRANDS, which is here today, these grandparents have stepped up to prevent their grandchildren from being placed into care and are frequently already struggling to make ends meet on limited incomes. The least we can do is recognize this and afford them the same benefits biological parents would receive.

Routine Proceedings

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

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NATIONAL HOCKEY DAY ACT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-488, An Act respecting a National Hockey Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time that I have brought this bill to the House. I am very grateful that my bill is being seconded by my wonderful colleague, the NDP critic for sport, the member for Chambly—Borduas, a great advocate for sport and for our winter national sport, hockey.

The intention of the bill is to recognize the role that hockey plays in our communities. It is a game played by all ages and by all sexes. It is important for the government to recognize this winter sport and encourage the engagement of everyone, including new Canadians, to encourage new Canadians to get out on local rinks, to flood their backyards and get to know their neighbours by inviting children over.

Hockey has played a major role in Canadian identity historically and into the future. The intention of the bill is not to put focus on those professional hockey players that people like to fight over, it is quite the reverse. It is to encourage people to get out and watch their kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews or their neighbour's kids and cheer them on. Everyone participates.

The intention is to declare the third Friday in February national hockey day. Regrettably as a backbencher I cannot say that this will be a statutory holiday, but I am sure that the government would love to adopt the bill and make it so.

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

* * *

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS**SEX SELECTION**

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am the father of three sons and one daughter, and the grandfather of two charming girls.

Today, it is in honour of my granddaughters that I am tabling a petition signed by people in Orleans and elsewhere in eastern Ontario to protect female fetuses that would otherwise be aborted simply to prevent a girl from being born. I am tabling this petition pursuant to Standing Order 36.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling a petition that was sent to me by a Saint-Basile-le-Grand resident concerning this government's botched and unacceptable employment insurance reform. She works in the academic community at a Montreal university. There has been very little discussion about that particular community in the context of this reform, but people in the academic environment, teachers, staff, and so on, will be greatly affected by it.

It is my pleasure to table this petition that she signed and circulated among her colleagues in Montreal and on Montreal's south shore. This highlights just how much Quebecers have mobilized against this reform, as have many other Canadians. I am very proud to table this petition in the hopes that the government will acknowledge it and cancel this unacceptable reform.

[*English*]

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

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

I am still receiving petitions from Canadians who are hoping that the government will reverse the decision to close the unique world-renowned Experimental Lakes Area. These petitioners are from Winnipeg.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents in the Vancouver area. Given the sensitivity of the coastlines of British Columbia and particularly the navigational hazards of the British Columbian coast, the petitioners say the movement of oil tankers will make spills inevitable. Therefore they call for a permanent ban.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, last are petitions from residents of the Toronto area highlighting the human rights abuses in the People's Republic of China. Petitioners call on the government to act to protect, in particular, practitioners of Falun Gong and Falun Dafa, and I am sure that extends to other minority groups within China.

[*Translation*]

EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition signed by men and women of Pierrefonds who want to bring our attention to the fact that trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation are serious crimes that we must fight vigorously. They are asking the House to support Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons).

* * *

[*English*]

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.

PRIVILEGE

S. O. 31

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. It is an honour to come before you regarding the right of a member of Parliament to introduce an S. O. 31.

Our policy manual, O'Brien and Bosc, at page 60 states the classic definition of "parliamentary privilege". It says:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions....

What are those functions? What are those responsibilities? They are found on page 212 of O'Brien and Bosc, where it states:

Members sit in the House of Commons to serve as representatives of the people who have elected them to...office.

It also states:

The member of parliament represents his constituency through service in the House of Commons.

That is our ultimate responsibility, as members of Parliament, each having the great honour to represent our communities. I am honoured to represent the community of Langley.

It goes on, in O'Brien and Bosc, to say:

—the privilege of freedom of speech is secured to Members not for their personal benefit, but to enable them to discharge their functions of representing their constituents....

It says it there again, the importance of having that privilege, freedom of speech, to represent constituencies.

On page 62 of O'Brien and Bosc, it says, "Privilege essentially belongs to the House", to yourself, Mr. Speaker. It belongs to the House "as a whole; individual Members can only claim privilege insofar as any denial of their rights, or threat made to them, would impede the [functions] of the House". Therefore, it clearly says that we each have responsibilities and we have privileges and rights to ensure that we fulfill the responsibility of representing our constituencies.

It also goes on, at page 82 of O'Brien and Bosc, to state:

Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members, either by an outside person or body, or by a Member of the House, is referred to as a "breach of privilege"....

Last Thursday, it was my turn to present an S. O. 31. I was ready and prepared to introduce the S. O. 31.

Some would ask what an S. O. 31 is. In the Standing Orders, clause 31 states:

A Member may be recognized, under the provisions of Standing Order 30(5), to make a statement for not more than one minute. The Speaker may order a Member to resume his or her seat if, in the opinion of the Speaker, improper use is made of this Standing Order.

It refers to Standing Order 30(5). That Standing Order states the days and the times that S. O. 31s can be made. However, back to S. O. 31, it is clear that each member in the House of Commons has the right, the privilege, of presenting an S. O. 31, on a rotational basis that gives each member in the House equal opportunity to represent their constituents.

Privilege

That has been managed by yourself, Mr. Speaker, for those who are independent members of this Parliament. For those who are members of an official party, as I am a member of the Conservative Party, in an organized way, we, the Liberal Party and the NDP provide you with a list of those who will be making S. O. 31s. However, what has to be guaranteed is that each member of the House has the equal opportunity to make an S. O. 31.

● (1015)

If at any time that right and privilege to make an S. O. 31 on an equal basis in this House is removed, I believe I have lost my privilege of equal right that I have in this House. I was scheduled on March 20 from 2:00 to 2:15 to make an S. O. 31. Fifteen minutes prior to that time, I was notified that my turn to present the S. O. 31 had been removed. The reason I was given was that the topic was not approved. However, there is no reason why an S. O. 31 should be removed.

The only person who can remove that is you, Mr. Speaker, according to S. O. 31. The authority to remove an S. O. 31 from any member of this House is solely in your hands, and the guiding force is under S. O. 31. Again, it states:

A Member may be recognized, under the provisions of Standing Order 30(5), to make a statement for not more than one minute.

So we cannot go over one minute. It could be less.

Then it states:

The Speaker may order a Member to resume his or her seat if, in the opinion of the Speaker, improper use is made of this Standing Order.

Therefore, it is only in your authority, Mr. Speaker, to ask a member to return to his seat if you feel that the S. O. 31 being made is not in order.

I believe that my privilege as a member to present an S. O. 31 was infringed upon by the actions that happened on March 20. This is my earliest opportunity to present my question of privilege to you, today. I believe it is not an issue specifically for me. I have experienced the removal of my right and my privilege, but it is a question as to how this House operates. The question for you is: Should every member have that equal right? Yes, it is clear that every member does. Therefore, how is it being managed? Is it being managed in a way that members could have that right removed? Yes, I have experienced that and others have experienced that too.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to rule the matter *prima facie*, a question of privilege. I also reserve the right to speak again to respond to comments that may be coming from others.

Parliament is based on rules, responsibilities and privileges. Each of us has that responsibility to represent our communities, the people who elected us. We need to have those rights ensured that we have the opportunity to properly represent our communities.

I look forward to your comments, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to bring this to the attention of the House.

Privilege

• (1020)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the point of privilege by the member for Langley. He claims that his rights and privileges as a parliamentarian have been breached with regard to his desire to deliver a member's statement on March 20, 2013.

The practice of the House, as it developed over time, is clear with respect to the delivery of members' statements by members of recognized parties. Page 423 of O'Brien and Bosc states very clearly:

The opportunity to speak during Statements by Members is allocated to private Members of all parties. In according Members the opportunity to participate in this period, the Chair is guided by lists provided by the Whips of the various parties and attempts to recognize those Members supporting the government and those Members in opposition on an equitable basis. While Ministers are not permitted to use this period to address the House, Parliamentary Secretaries may.

Let me repeat that *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says clearly in this regard, "the Chair is guided by lists provided by the Whips of the various parties".

Mr. Speaker, as you know, while each party manages the process from a different perspective, the bottom line is that each party makes these decisions. The practice for many years in the House is for the Speaker to follow the guidance provided by the parties on which members to call on any given day. The member for Langley is essentially calling on you to inquire into the question of how such lists are prepared by the parties in the House. Essentially, you are being invited to become involved in adjudicating the internal affairs of party caucuses and their management. Under any reasonable and generous interpretation of your powers, it is not for the Speaker to assume such a novel and expansive power.

The management of caucus affairs, from voting whip lines on bills to assignment of committee responsibility, to preparation of lists for the members making statements, is done differently in all parties. However, what these have in common is that these decisions are made within parties. Put simply, this is a team activity and your role is referee. It is not your job as referee to tell the coach or manager which player to put on to play at any given time. That is a question for each team to decide.

In closing, I submit there is no case for a member's privilege being denied in this matter as the rules, as clearly outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, were respected.

I ask you to rule accordingly.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to go through the process that has been well laid out by the member for Langley, but I want to say that I too feel that my rights have been infringed on by members of the party because I am not allowed to speak on certain topics in S. O. 31s. I have had S. O. 31s removed, and I have been told that if I have one on a certain topic, I simply will not be given an S. O. 31. I believe this is infringing on my right as an MP to freedom of speech and to represent my constituents freely.

The government whip has pointed out that the procedure has evolved and the parties have been given control of these lists. I do not think I would object to that, as long as they do not infringe on the rights of individual members, but that is what has been happening. I

have had my rights taken away when it comes to representing my constituents on certain topics, and I just do not think that is appropriate. Already, as you know, independents are given S. O. 31s, so it is not only recognized parties that have S. O. 31s.

In considering this issue, I ask you to consider that and to consider the possibility that members from all parties may be handled in some way as independents if they feel their rights are being infringed upon or overridden in some way by the leaderships of their parties.

• (1025)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest and would like to reserve the right to go through my friend from Langley's comments as well as those of the chief government whip, to understand fully.

There are two central questions that have been put to the House today: the difference between the Standing Orders, the actual rules that guide this House, and the conventions that have evolved over time when it comes to the initial statements that happen prior to question period; and who it is that controls these lists and whether there is an infringement of a member's privilege if a topic is taboo and not permitted to be spoken about or if particular members are then taken off that list by the party whips, who have a difficult job at the best of the times within each of our caucuses.

It seems on the surface that the challenge that exists right now may be entirely an internal one. The chief government whip used the analogy of a coach of a hockey team deciding which players go onto the ice and if it is the purview of the referee to make some opinions or interjections as to who is playing.

While I likely disagree with my friend from Langley's position on the issue we are talking about, we are also talking more fundamentally about the rights of members to stand and make their case if they have a mandate that they believe comes from the constituents who elected them here. That is a very near and dear right and one that we should be concerned with as a House.

As I said, the official opposition would like the right to reserve future comments. Quite soon, we will take a look at what everyone's interjections have been.

It is difficult for you, Mr. Speaker, if you do not have a specific Standing Order to guide you explicitly as to your ability to intervene with how the parties have put forward members for these statements. It would require the will and support of the parties in the House to allow you to begin such an intervention on those lists. If the member for Langley and others seek to change the Standing Orders of this place, that might be an avenue as well. However, as it sits right now, the distinction between a Standing Order, a set rule, and a convention that has grown over time is an important distinction to make when you are making a ruling as to whether this is a *prima facie* case of privilege.

The Budget

Again I offer some very strong interest in this discussion, because when members come to this place there is an expectation that they are able to speak to the issues. On the surface, though, it seems that there is an internal Conservative caucus conversation here. I know that Speakers in the past have been loath to intervene on such internal conversations because it is very difficult as a Speaker to come out on any kind of a side that would be deemed the winning side in such a conversation.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Langley, as well as the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright. As a specific case, may I say this is one of the most important points of privilege I have heard in the brief two years, almost, that I have been serving here? It cuts to the core of what is wrong with parliamentary democracy that the hon. government House leader could put before you a sports metaphor that we are here as teams, as brands or colours, and we are all to take instructions from our team boss.

We are not here as teams. The principle of Westminster parliamentary democracy is that we are here as representatives of our constituencies and our constituents. We are merely incidentally members of political parties. Political parties do not exist in our Constitution. They are not an essential part of our democracy. They have grown to be seen to be the most interesting thing going on, and we have grown to see politics as some sort of sport. However, democracy is not a sport. We are not playing on teams, and each individual member has individual rights, and the members for Langley and Vegreville—Wainwright feel their rights have been infringed.

I would add that I rose on a point of order to you some many months ago on the question of S.O. 31s and the fact that they were increasingly being used for purposes that, while not against our Standing Orders as they are written, are against the spirit of Standing Orders as described by former Speaker Madam Justice Sauvé, who pointed out that they should typically speak to matters of local concern in our constituencies and should not be used as a place for attacks on others, specifically ad hominem personal attacks.

At the time you said you might comment on that later. Perhaps this point of privilege might give you a chance to further elucidate when it is inappropriate for the approved S.O. 31s from the Conservative war room to be very vicious attacks and the ones that members wish to make about the concerns of their own constituents to be censored and prevented from being presented in this place.

• (1030)

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on this because I feel that some people want to have their cake and eat it too. We have heard talk about being treated like independents, even though we are in a party. It is true that parties are not part of our Constitution, but we do have the right of association and we willingly choose to be part of a party. However, we have seen people choose to leave parties in Parliament.

There has been no privilege taken away. Any member can give his S. O. 31 if he wants to, but if he wants to be part of the so-called team, he has to be willing to submit to the rules and the agreements of that team. Members are never forced to vote how they are told to vote or speak on any subject they want to speak on; they are told that if they want to be part of the team, they must work with the team.

Therefore, I agree with some of the comments that this is not a decision to be made by the Speaker.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hearing some of the comments from some of the members, I thought I should remind members that what is being recommended to you is not necessarily a novel system. As the member from Alberta just suggested, it might be something that might not exist within the party context. If we look at the original Westminster system in the United Kingdom, it continues to operate within a set of guidelines that allows members of all parties to speak on matters like this in an organized fashion through the Speaker.

Therefore, I do not think we are talking about anything that is unique or novel. In fact, there are a number of Westminster systems that would accommodate what the member has risen on a question of privilege today to talk about.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Langley for raising this question, and the members who have intervened today. I have heard that the opposition House leader would like to come back and make further comments. I am sure other members may be interested in this point as well. I will, of course, wait to hear those and I look forward to those further points.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 25 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government and of the amendment.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with the member for Trois-Rivières.

The budget tabled last week by the government raises a number of concerns for the future prosperity and sustainability of the economies of my riding of Edmonton—Strathcona, the city of Edmonton, the province of Alberta and Canada. It most certainly raises questions about how well the Conservative government has listened to Canadians about their future prospects. In sum, the economic action plan 2013 is rife with promises and a display of now defunct programs, but short on long-term vision, timely delivery of needed supports and missed opportunities.

The province I come from has a long history of leadership in energy. It is not just in energy resource extraction, but also in innovation and consultation in new energy ideas. The Alberta clean air strategic alliance has a long record of multi-stakeholder consultation and consensus in decision-making on cleaner energy standards. The concept of sound decision-making through consultation and consensus is one that is apparently foreign to the Conservative government.

The Budget

Alberta industry and the public alike have long called for a dialogue on a cleaner energy strategy for the province of Alberta and for the country. Recently the premier of Alberta called on the federal government to endorse this concept. The concept of a more sustainable energy future has been endorsed by other well-known centre of right leaders, including Preston Manning and the late Peter Lougheed. However, on the so-called jobs, growth and, in very small print, long-term prosperity economic action plan, there is no mention in the budget and no dollars for action on a Canadian clean energy strategy. This is despite the fact that we still have in place, as far as I am aware, a Canada-U.S. clean energy dialogue.

Of note, the term “long-term” appears to have been added to the title in small print as a mere afterthought. The budget certainly seems to have given short shrift to a longer-term sustainable economy. There is no commitment or dollars for consultation with the public or the diverse energy sectors, let alone energy consumers, on a Canadian energy strategy. All of this is despite calls by a number of premiers, including Alberta's, despite calls by major energy sectors, including oil and gas, energy efficiency and renewable power sectors, and despite calls by existing and potential major economic players, including first nations.

Sound decision-making on allocation of taxpayers' money for energy projects requires consultation and a cogent plan. This budget also fails in recognizing the potential for substantial cost savings and job creation from investment in energy efficiency, and cost savings to families, business and to government. In fact, the Conservative government appears to have completely disregarded the potential for reducing its massive deficit simply by reducing its own energy use instead of cutting jobs.

By way of example, this budget allocates no dollars whatsoever to the return of the extremely popular ecoENERGY home retrofit program. It was brought back in 2011 for one year only. It was very popular, oversubscribed and then unceremoniously cut.

Here is what one of my constituents, a property manager, wrote to me. Mr. Tarek Merhej, vice-president of KARST Property Management, said:

I read your comments this morning in the *Edmonton Journal* relating to the ecoEnergy Program where you mentioned: “There's not even the return of the eco-energy retrofit program that helped homeowners make their houses more energy efficient and it is a sector where Alberta has shown leadership.”

And I couldn't agree more. I was one of the many people I'm sure who were too late to take advantage of this program. I had selected my builder on large principle by the fact that their houses were Energuide engineered and rated but unfortunately by the time I had received my possession date, the program had expired.

I have shared this disappointment with many and I simply wanted to thank you for speaking up as you do and demonstrating, as you put it so well, that “this budget shows a lack of understanding of Canadians' priorities.”

Energy retrofits, whether for homes, businesses or government facilities have huge potential for creating well-paying jobs. The Energy Services Association of Canada shows a tenfold increase in jobs per billion dollars spent between coal fire power and building retrofit. The Alberta Federation of Labour study forecasted 6,500 to 14,000 new jobs in just a two-year period from this sector. It also suggested that a good bridge in jobs between boom and bust years in the energy economy would be energy retrofitting.

●(1035)

It also reduces energy costs for homes, businesses and government. Approximately 15% of household costs are for heating. We have been told in committee that energy efficiency for commercial buildings can reduce energy consumption costs by 50%. It would also reduce pollution and carbon. BOMA, an association that works on buildings to increase their energy efficiency, reports that buildings contribute 20% to 30% of greenhouse gases in this country.

It would be good for business. Realtors and building owners advise that energy efficient buildings are in the highest demand for leasing. It would trigger private investment where governments adopt supportive policies or infuse matching supplementary grants.

Who has testified to this? The Energy Services Association of Canada, the Building Owners and Managers Association of Canada, or BOMA, and the Real Property Association of Canada, are hardly environmental radicals. All have testified in a current study before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on significant potential job creation and cost savings, for the federal government alone, through expanded energy efficiency.

Let me share a few of the examples that they have shared on projected savings. Before the Centre for Inland Waters was retrofitted, 50% of its operating budget was spent on energy and water, \$1.5 million a year. Post the retrofit, it is projected to save \$9.1 million. Due to an energy retrofit for CFB Halifax, it is achieving a guaranteed \$1.4 million a year in savings. Place du Portage is being guaranteed an annual savings in energy bills of over \$450,000.

A total of \$43 million per year is projected from energy bills from the overall current federal retrofit program, and it could be more if a long-term strategy and commitment to seeking reduced energy costs for the 40,000 buildings that are owned or leased by the government was approached. That is hardly small potatoes.

The Budget

Energy retrofits and energy efficient equipment manufacturing are important sectors in my constituency and deserve policy measures to support and foster their growth. Yet, there are no prospects for similar savings for homeowners or small businesses because this budget provides zero support for them.

The government, with great fanfare, announced its removal of tariffs on hockey equipment. Yet based on the estimated cost by Ottawa's Valiquette's sports, a one time purchase of hockey equipment for a child in midget or minor hockey costs about \$1,000. The removal of the tariff would reduce that by about \$180. Of course, that is a saving for those families who could afford to buy the equipment in the first place.

If support had been provided instead, or in addition, frankly, for home energy retrofit for an average middle-class home, that same value or more in savings could be gained each year, not as a one-off.

What about skills training that was talked a great about by the government? Indicative of the government's lack of comprehension of the global shift to investment in clean energy and energy efficiency, very little recognition is evidenced in this budget for the potential job market if targeted assistance were provided for skills training in this sector.

Few small firms can afford to pitch in the requisite \$5,000 to match federal-provincial support. There is terrific potential for small energy audit and retrofit enterprises, including student jobs, and including for aboriginal communities and technical graduates or apprentices, but can they afford a start-up of \$5,000? Then again, apparently neither the provinces nor territories have been consulted on the matching grant scheme anyway. Who has been consulted on the skills training or job creation priorities? The big question is, has the energy efficiency sector even been consulted?

With regard to the accelerated capital cost write-off, it is an excellent initiative if parallel measures are instituted to actually trigger the purchase and deployment of the equipment toward cleaner energy production or pollution abatement. Regrettably, the budget is limited in developing clean energy technologies, and we see no new measures to actually trigger the uptake of this equipment. Sadly, the budget allocates a mere \$1 million this year for sustainable development technology. More is proposed for the future, but we will wait to see how the government pays down its deficit.

Sadly, in the budget, the key word for education is "commercialization". There is no support for pure research. There is no backing off on firing scientists or shutting down of the renowned Experimental Lakes project, despite substantiated results in cleaner waterways arising from their research.

Infrastructure is the same story. Some money is coming forward, but not enough to actually address the rising infrastructure deficit. In sum, the budget is more about politics and short-term interests than a road map for long-term sustainable prosperity for all Canadians.

● (1040)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona on a well-presented speech. She happens to be the very best MP in Alberta, bar none.

My question for the best MP in Alberta concerns the tax hike that apparently does not exist in the budget. The Conservatives have repeatedly said that there is no tax hike, but they have failed to tell Canadians that they will be paying taxes on parking at hospitals. That is a tax hike to me.

As we know, health care is expensive. Could you explain why the Conservatives are now going to tax Canadians who park at hospitals? Could you also tell me why the Conservatives are not telling Canadians about this tax hike?

● (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: I cannot, but perhaps the member for Edmonton—Strathcona could. I would remind all members to please direct their comments to the Chair, not to individual members of the House.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I will be sure to direct my response to the hon. member through you.

The member for Nickel Belt represents northern Ontario very well. I am sure his constituents are proud.

It is of course a reprehensible measure. I am one of those typical Canadians who has had to visit many family members in the hospital. Both of my sisters were hospitalized, and my father was in long-term palliative care. It is stressful enough for families to drive to the hospital each morning and try to cheer up a family member without having to worry about paying for parking. It is also the case at the cancer clinic in Edmonton. I have been through this stressful situation.

Surely to heavens when we are contributing to infrastructure, the government could think of some way to subsidize or help out those individuals who simply cannot afford to pay. The government should be working with the provinces and municipalities to come up with some mechanism to make it more affordable for those who are simply trying to visit seniors or sick family members. The government should not be just bragging about the tariffs it is going to take off but should also be revealing the fees and tariffs that it is now going to impose.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Alberta. She is perhaps the best MP from Alberta that we currently have. I will not dispute that. Why should I?

It is disappointing that the government did not choose the opportunity presented by the budget to restore funding for the Experimental Lakes Area. I want to commend my colleague for mentioning that.

I would like to read an email that I received from a Conservative, no less, which says "The ELA facility is world-renowned and scientifically irreplaceable. It is worth saving. When did we as Conservatives stop trying to do the right thing?"

The Budget

I find it amazing. I know there is support from all across the country for what is an extremely good use of money, something that provides a good return on investment, which I am sure the Conservatives will understand.

I am wondering if my colleague could comment on the poor decision to not restore funding for the ELA.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I wanted to mention in my speech was a category of Canadian infrastructure that is missing and unrecognized, and that is our natural heritage.

The best way to bring down the costs of providing safe drinking water or even clean water for industrial processes is to protect our natural waterways. The Experimental Lakes project, which was run fantastically for 40 years and received international acclaim, was exactly that mechanism. Field work could be done in a contained area to test the impacts of coal-fired mercury emissions, acid rain and phosphates in detergents. Determinations and recommendations were made to government, which in turn would regulate and trigger investment in cleaner technologies to make life more affordable for us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by rereading the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park, because my comments relate directly to it.

The amendment is very simple:

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

"this House not approve the budgetary policy of this government as it:

During this Christian Holy Week, I have a litany of reasons why we should oppose this bill.

In some ways, politics is like many major religions. There are important, imperative moments throughout the year that should be a source of hope and renewal.

The tabling of the budget should have been such a source of motivation. Thus, Canadians could have regained hope in a government that listens to them and acts on behalf of all Canadians, leaving no one behind.

However, the reality is quite different. It is clear that what we have before us is a pre-election budget, albeit two years early, that is about satisfying a Conservative base and certain ridings that the governing party believes it can win over in 2015.

Where is the Prime Minister who promised to be the Prime Minister of all Canadians?

How can anyone believe in the purported economic competence of the Conservatives, when the Minister of Finance missed his economic growth targets by 35% for 2012? He is responsible for a \$67 billion trade deficit.

While private sector economists are telling us that this year could be even worse, the minister is still saying that the deficit will be eliminated by 2015. It does not take a rocket scientist to understand that someone, somewhere will have to pay the price and that this budget therefore has to be an austerity budget. It would be nice if the

burden of that objective rested on everyone's shoulders equitably. That is not what the Conservatives have in mind.

In the next few minutes, knowing that my colleagues from across Canada will be defending their part of the country, I will try to illustrate how Quebec is more of a victim here, rather than a respected partner in Canada's economic development. Why was Quebec bludgeoned so brutally in the most recent federal budget?

Let us begin with infrastructure. Last week, a reporter asked me what my first impression of the budget was. I summed up my thoughts by saying that this budget was from Mr.—I cannot name the minister here, but I gave his name—the magician. Everyone knows that this magician is able to dazzle his audience at first, but upon closer inspection, it quickly becomes obvious that his tricks are all smoke and mirrors.

For example, I would like to talk about the Conservatives' proposals with regard to infrastructure. Given that the main stakeholders, such as the UMQ and the FQM, have said that it will take \$123 billion to update Canada's infrastructure, we expected the budget to contain stable, recurrent, predictable, long-term funding. The Minister of Finance's response was a 10-year plan. That is not really long term. Everyone would have preferred a 20-year plan, but that is not the biggest concern we have about this.

Our Merlin the magician is trying to distract us with smoke and mirrors while he transforms a seven-year plan that was already announced into a 10-year plan. As a result, a program worth approximately \$30 billion over seven years has become one worth \$47 billion over 10 years. The allocation of funding is not at all balanced over the 10 years since the government is allocating very little funding in the first few years and large amounts later on without bothering to index those amounts, thereby ensuring that the subsidies lose their value year after year.

In short, we will have to deal not only with increased infrastructure costs, but also with a foreseeable reduction of approximately \$4.7 billion in federal investments over the next four years. The budget is full of this type of doublespeak and counterproductive measures.

The fight against tax evasion is another good example. Everyone agrees that the fight against tax evasion is worthwhile. Right away, this issue garnered the support of all members of all parties in the House.

Can someone then explain to me how the Conservatives can step up the fight against tax evasion and decrease the resources available to those responsible for leading that fight in the same breath? It must be magic.

The Budget

• (1050)

Savings and job creation are yet another great part of the budget tabled by the minister. It seems that talking out of both sides of its mouth has also become a hallmark of the governing party. After raising the retirement age from 65 to 67 and asking workers to properly prepare themselves, the government is eliminating one of the biggest savings incentives for Quebecers, namely the supplementary tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. Not only is this reducing workers' ability to generate part of their own pensions, it is also a direct attack on one of the most significant job-creation tools in Quebec. After such an attack, I hope that the Conservatives will have the decency to stop shoving their jobs, growth and prosperity propaganda down our throats, because their measures are having the exact opposite effect.

I would like to move on to job training. I hesitate to say that it is the icing on the cake. Every single page of the budget is harmful to Quebec, so every chapter seems like the icing on the cake.

The government is clearly interfering with a provincial jurisdiction. Every time the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities responds to a question, he tries to say that we are always confused about areas of jurisdiction, but that the Conservatives respect the division of powers. I have long wondered how it is possible that he has not reminded the cabinet that job training falls under provincial jurisdiction.

The government is taking back \$300 million of the \$500 million managed by the provinces so that it can put the maple leaf on a cheque. In return, it is asking the provinces to find new funding. In the same breath, it is saying that it is not cutting transfer payments to the provinces. What is wrong with this picture? On top of all that, the government is asking private business to contribute as much as 33% so that the program will work.

The job training system in Quebec has proven its worth and already involves all the stakeholders. My question is: why reinvent the wheel when it already works just fine? Unless our Merlin the magician's real, hidden objective is in fact to recover money for the public purse. The partners will be unable to cover the cost of this new program. The idea of using private enterprise in this way could also have some major surprises in store for us.

Let me give an example. What would happen to a welder trained in a company, using some of the company's funds, if the company had to shut down for some reason? What recognized skills will the worker have? Where will he get his competency cards? What diploma will enable him to do similar work for another employer? These are all questions that remain unanswered.

With respect to the co-operative system, Quebec certainly fosters the co-operative movement. Thus, it is no surprise that Quebec is once again being attacked with the elimination of the tax credit for co-operatives.

The government has also performed magic in the VIA Rail file. The budget allocates \$54 million in 2013-14 to support VIA Rail operations. We could think that we might be joining the 21st century at last and that this acknowledges the importance of developing rail transportation in a country where the train quite often drives our regions' economic development, for example in the tourism industry.

We would have to have a very short memory, though, if we cannot recall that this investment comes after VIA Rail's budget was cut by \$287 million in the main estimates. Once again, this is another trick in an effort to hide the lack of vision of the Conservatives, who had promised to give power to the regions.

The budget renews the P3 Canada fund that forces provinces and municipalities to use public-private partnerships for projects of \$100 million or more. No one from the government side has yet explained to me why the P3 solution is better suited to the taxpayers' ability to pay when Canada has the best borrowing capacity on the markets.

We could also talk about the securities regulator and everything this budget does not do. For example, there is nothing about the infamous employment insurance reform. There is not one line about changes to old age security. There is nothing for households with a debt ratio in excess of 167%. There are no incentives for Canadian corporations to reinvest the \$600 billion in dead money. There is nothing to close the 30% gap in funding for first nations' education.

• (1055)

I will close by saying that there are a few elements of this budget that we approve of, but it is simply not worth supporting. Our vote applies to the entire budget and, therefore, I will let the House guess how I will be voting.

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about infrastructure. The budget presents the largest and longest investment in the history of the federal government on infrastructure: \$32 billion over 10 years for a community improvement fund; \$14 billion for a new building Canada fund; \$1.2 billion for a new private-public partnership fund; \$6 billion under the current infrastructure programs; \$7 billion for first nations; hundreds of millions of dollars for specific projects in Quebec such as the bridges in Montreal.

The member is going to vote against all of it. How can he go back to his constituents and say he is voting against Quebec?

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my eminent colleague for listing off those figures. The important thing to take out of that never-ending list is how much of that money is essentially a reannouncement. I know that is not really a word, but it was the best I could come up with. The government is reannouncing the same investments and is keeping mum—almost completely silent—on new money that would help meet the needs of municipalities and provincial and territorial governments across the country. This is all being done without any consultation with the provinces or the stakeholders.

I will certainly return to my riding with my head held high to explain to my constituents that Merlin the magician has given us a smoke-and-mirrors budget.

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to highlight what I believe is a huge mistake the government is making: the government should have allocated the necessary resources to be able to save the Experimental Lakes Area. This is a project that is currently going to be decommissioned. It has first class scientific studies taking place, and they have been taking place since 1968 to protect our fresh waters. It has contributed to all sorts of benefits worldwide. It is a relatively small amount of dollars that would have been necessary. In fact, if the same dollars used to decommission it were used to allow it to continue, it would be able to continue for many years in the future.

Would the member agree that decommissioning of the Experimental Lakes Area is not only socially but economically the wrong thing to do and that within the budget money should have been allocated to ensure that the ELA would have been able to continue on as it has since 1968?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague and I would even say that this is one of the best examples of all of the scientific expertise we will be losing, expertise that we could be sharing with the world. Something else Canada has been losing over the years is its reputation as a major partner in international institutions. We have become just a shadow of our former selves since the Conservative government was elected, as a minority or majority government. The choices this government is making are based on an ideology that may have brought the party to power this time, but as Canadians find out more about that ideology, the majority of them are rejecting it.

I assure my colleagues that in two years, we will give all Canadians an NDP government and make things right by showing this government the door and giving it a taste of its EI reform.

[English]

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak about budget 2013. I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

A lot has been said by members on both sides of the House about this budget. Let me weigh in with what I think is important for my constituents in Etobicoke—Lakeshore, across the great city of Toronto and the GTA, and across Canada, in fact. It is a good budget in the sense that it brings balance to what we have to spend money on, tax measures and thinking to the future in terms of our long-term prosperity.

This budget touches on issues of connecting Canadians with available jobs and looking at the skills gaps. Representatives of businesses and manufacturing industries in Etobicoke—Lakeshore talk over and over again about the challenges they have of finding skilled people in Canada and sometimes having to go overseas to find people to fill the jobs. It really would be of benefit to our Canadian economy if we could match people, help them develop the skills and get them working right away in some of the important sectors of the economy like manufacturing in Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Another important feature and one of the reasons I support this budget is the new long-term infrastructure plan. It is really important. If we look at the infrastructure deficit that was created in this country and what was spent on infrastructure between 1993 and 2006, we see it was less than \$1 billion a year in transfers to municipalities and provinces. We are looking at a long-term plan so provinces and municipalities can lock in on developing the infrastructure they need to keep people and goods and services moving and keep our economy going.

A third important element is the new investments in world-class research and innovation. It is one thing to do pure research, but an important aspect in the budget is commercialization, looking at the D in the R and D and how to take great ideas and scientific research and make it into something commercially viable and, therefore, sustainable for the long term.

A fourth cornerstone of this budget is around the new measures to support communities and families. We have been doing a lot of things since 2006, which I attribute to our finance minister. This is his eighth budget and he has figured out the mix of things over the last seven years to make sure we are supporting families in a sensible, sustainable and affordable kind of way.

Fifth, there are measures to specifically help the private sector grow and succeed in this global marketplace. As we know, the world is very competitive. Even small and medium-sized businesses now have to compete worldwide, and Canadian enterprises are rising to that challenge. They are doing what they need to do to be successful. We are seeing that in the numbers.

I would say the most important part of the budget is the plan to return to a balanced budget. It is absolutely critical. I will say one thing. There is only one party in the House that is proposing a balanced budget. On the one hand, the official opposition is talking about spending increases in the order of \$56 billion a year, with no plan to raise the funds, whether it is through taxes or otherwise. In its proposal, it is looking at putting Canada in a deep fiscal hole for generations. The other part of it is that not only would it create a deep fiscal hole, but my children, their children and everybody's children would be paying for it, and that kind of intergenerational debt transfer is just not right.

On the other hand, members of the third party do not have a plan at all. I will forgive them as they do not have a leader in place now, but everything they say suggests that they are speaking out of both sides of their mouths. We are the only party in the House that really has any plan whatsoever to restore Canada to fiscal balance.

I will provide a bit of context in the time I have. It has been said many times before that we are on a strong economic track. We have created 950,000 net new jobs since the depth of the recession in July 2009 and that is something to be very proud of. It is not the government that created those jobs but the Canadian economy.

The Budget

I should mention also that, for the fifth straight year, the World Economic Forum ranked Canada's banking sector the soundest in the world. That is partly because of strong measures we put in place as part of our culture as Canadians. We are proud of our banks. In the city of Toronto a lot of people work in banks, are very proud to work for the banks, and that provides the financial underpinning for our strong economy. Reflected in that is the AAA credit rating that our government has. That was awarded by Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's.

• (1105)

I also want to highlight the debt that the federal government has as well as that of provincial and municipal governments. If we look at the total net government debt across all levels of government, we see Canada leads the G7. However, it is important to make the distinction between net government debt and total debt. Our federal government pension plans, like the CPP and the Quebec pension plan, have significant financial assets that underpin them. Many countries in the world do not have that solid underpinning. For that reason, we lead the G7 when it comes to net debt to GDP ratio by far.

I want to talk about job creation, and 950,000 net new jobs is a lot of jobs. That means a lot of Canadians are back at work. In some parts of the country, they cannot fill all the jobs that are out there for lack of people with the right skills. However, some of the criticism from the opposition is that these are part-time jobs, which is simply not true. The information we have is that 91% of those jobs are full-time jobs and 79% are in the private sector. Over and above that, 68% of those jobs are in high-wage industries.

To get back to the plan for a balanced budget, when the recession hit we made a deliberate decision to run a temporary deficit. By the way, that was a decision that was supported by all parties in this House. However, as I mentioned, our net debt to GDP ratio is currently 35.8%, but in comparison, Germany is next at 58.4% and the G7 average is around 80%. Therefore, we are in strong fiscal shape compared to the rest of the G7, but we are not going to rest on our laurels. We are going to keep moving forward because that is the right thing to do, which is why we have made a commitment to return to a balanced budget.

Between 2006 and 2009, before the recession hit, the Conservative government paid down \$37 billion in debt, which positioned us well. Obviously, we could not predict every aspect of the global economic downturn that happened with the fall of financial institutions around the world, but we are in a strong fiscal position and we want to become even stronger.

I should mention that we reduced the deficits and debt without increasing taxes. Opposition members talk about grandiose spending plans that they cannot afford, but hidden behind that message is the intention to increase taxes, whether with carbon taxes, a hike in the GST or personal income taxes. That is the only way the opposition could afford to pay for its program, short of passing the bill to the next generation.

However, since 2006, we have cut taxes more than 150 times. We have reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in 50 years by cutting personal income tax, adjusting the brackets as appropriate, and reducing consumption taxes. The GST was reduced from 7% to 5%. We reduced business taxes and we have also reduced excise

taxes. We have accomplished a lot of tax reduction, which means significant savings for families. For a typical family of four, that is a tax saving of about \$3,200.

Small businesses are important stakeholders in this economy and they have also seen significant tax decreases. A typical small business with \$500,000 in revenue is seeing about \$28,600 in reduced taxes.

One of the things we plan to do with our budget, which is one reason I support it, is take action to close some tax loopholes and make our tax system more consistent with economies in the rest of the developed world. Other countries have taken tax measures to make sure there is no tax loss trading that is done unethically and illegally. We will be making sure those loopholes are closed.

I want to highlight a couple of things that are critical for Toronto and Ontario, one of which is the long-term infrastructure plan. No country has committed this much money, as some members on the government side have mentioned, with \$53 billion over 10 years in the new building Canada plan, which is significant. Municipalities like the City of Toronto really appreciate that help from the federal government. As well, there is the commitment to Massey Hall, which is a project I really support. There is an investment of \$8 million in 2013-14 that has to do with some adjacent building that is going on. It is important that we get that Canadian landmark built, and the federal government is proud to participate in that.

To wrap up, there are some things in this budget for important industries like manufacturing and the automotive sector. It is a good budget for Canada, and the opposition has recognized the wisdom and the good sense in this budget. I wish it would support it. It puts economic opportunities for Canadians in place now and in the future.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a growing recognition that austerity budgets such as this one do not lead to economic growth, but rather to negative growth or stagnation, especially in a fragile economic situation like this.

I would like to ask the Conservative member what there is in this budget that is new. I am having a lot of difficulty finding anything new.

How does he think this budget will encourage economic growth in Canada in the short term and prosperity in the long term?

• (1115)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question.

She is talking about austerity, but approximately \$2 billion in cuts is not the austerity we are seeing in European countries, for example. It is sensible, quite simply. We will reduce needless spending on travel and support functions in departments, for example. It must be done and it is general practice.

The Budget

With respect to job creation, the measures put in place for the automotive sector are very important, as are the investments in research to improve productivity in those sectors. It is these measures that will really create jobs in those companies.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given that there has been significant worsening in employment numbers since 2007 with the global financial crisis and given that youth employment numbers are in fact five points worse in Canada today than they were in 2007, why would this budget freeze federal training dollars at 2007 levels, pre-recession and, in fact, in real terms 10% less if we take into account inflation?

Also, given that we have already heard now from the Ontario and Alberta governments that because of the cost-sharing nature of this proposal for the new jobs training program, they may not be able to participate in a robust way in co-funding this program, does the hon. member, as a member of Parliament from Ontario, believe it would have made more sense for the federal government to sit down with the premiers and the finance ministers prior to the budget to hammer out a policy structure that the provinces could buy into and participate in, as opposed to developing it on the federal side and then imposing it on the provinces unilaterally?

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Mr. Speaker, I love to talk about job training, because I spend a lot of time in my riding talking to business people about some of the challenges they are having.

One of the things they mention is that the skills are not there. They have jobs posted for months at a time. There is a machine shop in Etobicoke—Lakeshore that has been trying to get machinists for months. It cannot fill the positions and is looking to bring people in from places like Germany and the former Yugoslavia. Those are the kinds of jobs. When people look at the training programs now for the province of Ontario, they say that they do not work.

In the budget consultations we held for months before the budget was announced, the business people said that we needed a change, that the bilateral agreements negotiated in 2007 between the federal government and the province of Ontario did not work. They said that they wanted a program that was responsive to the business needs. That is what has been holding back the economy and it is what will be creating opportunities for young people.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to speak to Canada's economic action plan 2013, our Conservative government's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Our economic action plan is centred on the priorities of hard-working Canadians and their families. Our economic action plan is focused on building an enduring prosperity for all Canadians. We are taking clear and decisive action to further strengthen our economy, create quality jobs and a better quality of life for generations to come, for our children and our grandchildren.

Today, I am proud to highlight some of the many benefits that our economic action plan 2013 would provide for Canadians and their families. For example, our economic action plan would provide the right kind of support to Canadian job creators. As promised, we are

keeping taxes low to continue to help hard-working families and the employers who create prosperity and jobs for Canadians.

Since 2006, our government has consistently reduced taxes for hard-working Canadians, for the moms, dads, seniors and students. Simply put, we have reduced taxes for all Canadians.

Unlike the high-tax NDP and Liberals, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadians so they can spend their money on their own priorities and money can circulate in the economy.

As Conservatives, we believe keeping taxes low is critically important to the well-being of our economy. We will continue to encourage job creators to invest in and create jobs in Canada.

Our plan is working. In fact, Canada is leading the G7. This is no small feat. Since the depth of the recession in 2009, we have created over 950,000 net new jobs, the strongest job creation record in the entire G7. Canada's unemployment rate is at its lowest level in four years and significantly lower than the unemployment rate in the United States. This is quite a phenomenon.

Our banks are considered the most stable in the world, but the global economy continues to be fragile. That is why we are focused on job creation and not spending beyond what we can afford.

We are focused on eliminating tax loopholes that benefit only a select few. We are on track to balance the budget by 2015-16, as promised.

I mentioned Canadian businesses earlier. These businesses are our job creators. One of the measures I am very proud of is our continued support for small businesses and bright, industrious young people. Since 2006, our Conservative government has supported the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. Economic action plan 2013 continues that support by providing \$18 million to the foundation, which provide mentorship, advice and start-up financing for young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34.

Our Conservative government has also lowered the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, which allows small businesses to invest in growth, to hire our neighbours and to expand in new markets.

Our government is also providing a temporary credit of up to \$1,000 against the small business increase in 2013 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2012. This temporary credit will help approximately 560,000 employers if they hire more people. We have also increased the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 in 2014 for small business owners.

The Budget

Manufacturing jobs in southern Ontario are critical. That is why our Conservative government is helping businesses succeed and grow in the global economy. This economic action plan includes \$1.4 billion in tax relief through a two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new machinery and equipment for manufacturers. Our message to manufacturers is clear: please invest.

● (1120)

These are just a few examples of how our government stands strongly behind our job creators. In order for Canada to grow, we need more businesses to create jobs for Canadians, for our neighbours and more investment in our economy.

Canadian job seekers also need adequate skills and training to fill available jobs. Nothing is more disheartening than to hear my neighbours in Mississauga and Brampton say that they are searching for work and have been for months, only to then hear businesses say that they cannot find enough skilled employees to fill available jobs. There is a serious disconnect here. People are struggling to find jobs, while some businesses cannot grow as quickly as they should in order to compete.

Our government is taking decisive action to fix this growing problem, to ensure that Canada is on the right track for long-term economic prosperity. The new Canada job grant will provide \$15,000 or more per person in combined federal, provincial and employer funding to help Canadians get the skills they need for in-demand jobs. By asking employers to equally share in the cost of training their new employees, we know job creator will ensure that the training is targeted and results focused. The new employee is also reassured that he or she is training for a job that exists and needs to be filled.

We also believe in supporting our families and our communities. Economic action plan 2013 introduces several key measures to help Canadian families. We offer new tax relief for families adopting a child. We propose to enhance the adoption expense tax credit to better recognize the unique costs associated with adopting a child, and we wish these young families every happiness.

Let me also remind the opposition that since 2006, we have made the well-being of our children, our future, a priority. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit, promoting physical fitness among children through a credit of up to \$500 for programs from hockey to ballet. In addition, we also offer the children's art tax credit, which encourages moms and dads to sign their children up for piano or guitar lessons, also with a credit of up to \$500 for arts programs. As a mom, I know how very popular these programs are in the GTA among parents.

Our economic action plan also provides continued enhanced support for our veterans, for our nation's heroes. Canada's veterans deserve the very best. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, economic action plan 2013 is a budget that invests in our veterans. In fact, the economic action plan proposes to more than double the financial support for funerals for families, while also cutting cumbersome red tape.

Our government understands the needs of Canadians. We have removed over one million low income families, individuals and

seniors from tax rolls altogether. We are cutting taxes in every possible way we can. We have targeted personal income taxes by cutting them to the lowest tax rate, to 15%. We are increasing the amount that Canadians can earn tax free. The government has provided seniors with the very much needed ability to split their pension income. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, which has put nearly \$1,000 back in the pockets of the average Canadian family. With this plan, the typical Canadian family has seen savings totalling more than \$3,200.

Like all Canadians, we cherish our health care. My aging mother relies on hospitals, just as most Canadians sometimes need our health care. Even during these challenging economic times, our government will continue to provide a 6% increase to provinces for health care funding over last year's payments.

Our government's plan to return to a balanced budget is working. We have reduced the deficit by more than half over the last two years. Economic action plan 2013 builds on past efforts to reduce government spending by announcing an additional \$1.7 billion in ongoing savings. While the NDP and Liberals want to engage in reckless spending, we have a plan for Canada and our plan is working.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year was the International Year of Co-operatives. The Conservative government used the occasion to eliminate the co-operative development initiative and wipe out the Co-operatives Secretariat. This year, it is removing the tax credit for credit unions and caisses populaires.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us why is the Conservative government attacking the co-operative movement?

● (1130)

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

I think Canadians all understand that we are very fortunate to live here, with banks that are considered the most stable in the world. We only need to look at what happened in Cyprus earlier this week to understand how very fortunate we are to have the stewardship of this Prime Minister during this fragile global economy. Our government has a very strong record of supporting consumers and ensuring that their money is invested in a secure banking system.

The Budget

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but respond to the accusations made by my hon. colleague that my party is a party of reckless spending. It is unbelievable that she would say that.

My hon. colleague talked about cutting taxes so that money can circulate in the economy. I know that the finance minister is concerned about the large amount of cash that Canadian corporations and, indeed, corporations around the world are holding. They are holding that cash because they are afraid of the global economic risks that would bear upon any investment of that cash.

However, there is a tax credit that actually encourages companies to put that cash to use and take risks and invest, and that is the scientific research and experimental development tax, which was cut last year. I think the budget is a missed opportunity to restore these tax credits. I admit that it is a form of spending, but it is a way of encouraging corporations with a lot of cash on their books to take some risks, invest in research and development and invest in job creation.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, in fact through the capital cost allowance, we are accelerating the ability for manufacturers, for instance, to invest in new machinery. This is critically important, certainly, in Ontario and in the GTA. We have so many jobs in the manufacturing sector that were lost during the recession. We really need to ensure that these corporations begin investing again.

Our plan is paying dividends. As I mentioned earlier, since the depth of the recession in 2009, over 950,000 net new jobs have been created in Canada. Clearly, our plan is working.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the parliamentary secretary's area and in my area, there are a lot of young people just graduating from university and college who do not have a sense of what they would like to do. We are putting in this budget \$70 million to support an additional 5,000 paid internships for post-secondary graduates in Ontario and across Canada.

What does the member believe that would do for her riding?

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, in the greater Toronto area, in Burlington, in Oakville, in Milton and certainly across all of Canada, we are offering hope to these young people through this added money in the budget. We are offering them a chance to go on with their studies in order to gain additional skills as they begin their careers.

In Canada and around the world, people will now have a number of careers in one lifetime. It is imperative that we invest in that type of work.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

It is a reasonable expectation that a budget should not just explain to us but to all Canadians how the government plans to spend its revenues. It should tell Canadians what it plans on doing with their tax money. Further, it is a reasonable expectation that a government putting forward a budget would want, and therefore make efforts, to explain to Canadians how it would do that.

However, these are disappointed expectations. Instead, we have a government that lacks the courage to live up to these expectations and even lacks the courage of its own convictions. Instead, we have a fundamentally dishonest document in this year's budget. It ducks, dodges and dives. It makes stuff up and pretends.

Let me illustrate this point with the subject of military procurement. In 2008, the government introduced the Canada first defence strategy, or CFDS. It is not so much a policy or strategy, as it is a mighty expensive shopping list, calling for \$490 billion of spending over 20 years. We now know that is vastly understated.

Only two years after its introduction the Department of National Defence deemed the CFDS unaffordable. The briefing book prepared for the Associate Minister of Defence by the department in the wake of the May 2011 election stated, "The funding reductions from Budget 2010 and the reduced funding line going forward will make the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS) unaffordable". The recommendation is to "conduct a CFDS Reset to confirm level of ambition".

It needs to be noted that the CFDS was considered unaffordable even when the department was still budgeting just \$5.7 billion for the sustainment of the F-35, which the CFDS states the government will buy. Therefore, the department's assessment of the unaffordability of the CFDS was and remains accurate.

Of course it is not just the associate minister's briefing book that we have to look to for an assessment of the affordability of the CFDS. The Minister of National Defence put together a transformation team in 2010 to "develop ideas to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and to act as the driving force behind organizational changes needed to reposition the DND/CF for the future".

I am quoting from the forward to the "Report on Transformation 2011", otherwise known as the Leslie report after its main author, now retired Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie. This was not just about finding savings to the tune of a billion dollars per year from the budget. Rather, in Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie's terms it was also about making "the Canada First Defence Strategy more achievable within the resources available".

As early as 2010, that shortfall was anticipated to be at least a billion dollars per year.

It should be noted that none of Lieutenant-General Leslie's recommendations were implemented. Also, the reset or rewrite of the Canada first defence strategy recommended by the department and the associate minister remains an outstanding promise of the current Minister of National Defence. In other words, since 2010, the government has carried on pretending that it has a real, viable, affordable plan for military procurement. That pretense carries right on through into this budget with the incorporation of a document entitled, "Canada First: Leveraging Defence Procurement Through Key Industrial Capabilities", otherwise known as the Jenkins report.

The Budget

The Jenkins report's principal objective is to "outline an approach to maximize the overall benefit of the government's CFDS investment". It assumes that the CFDS is affordable, that it is a viable military procurement plan and that it is what it had proclaimed itself to be in 2008. It assumes that military procurement under the CFDS will generate \$49 billion of industrial and regional benefits. It continues the pretense that the CFDS is not long dead, and by way of the incorporation of that report into the budget, so does the budget.

One might ask what the harm is in pretending that we can afford that shopping list, when we cannot.

• (1135)

Let us examine the recent case of the joint support ships. In 2004 the Liberal government set out to purchase three of these with a budget of \$2.1 billion. By the time the bids from industry rolled in under the Conservatives in 2008, it was clear that there was not going to be enough money to get just two ships. The Department of National Defence advised the minister in August 2008, the very same month that the bids were deemed non-compliant, that it was going to cost at least \$3 billion to buy those ships.

The Conservatives responded by budgeting \$2.8 billion two years later in 2010. Now the PBO has advised in a recent report on the matter that the government should be budgeting over \$4 billion for what it intends to buy. More important, it also advised that the \$2.8 billion that the government has budgeted has actually less purchasing power than the \$2.1 billion the Liberals had budgeted in 2004.

The Conservatives started from behind and then stepped backward. The threat is that if the government continues to behave this way, if it continues to pretend that it can be things that it cannot, that it can buy things that it cannot, then we will continue to walk backward. It is called program failure and it has devastating consequences to the recapitalization of our Canadian Forces.

From the sea to the air, we can see that when one pretends to be able to buy it all, a priority is put on nothing. We have fixed-wing search and rescue being performed in this country by aircraft that is nearly 50 years old, belongs in a museum and is in need of replacement. However, the effort to procure replacement fixed-wing search and rescue capability has been grounded, squeezed out by other procurements higher up on that shopping list. Asked just last week about this procurement, the minister responded by saying that it was a good question and pointed his finger at his colleagues and their departments.

On the ground there is a different story still. Procurement projects for the family of land combat vehicles are all at different stages. This includes the LAV III upgrades, close combat vehicles, tactical armoured patrol vehicles, tanks and howitzers totalling, as best as one can make out from beating the bushes, about \$6 billion in acquisition costs.

Obviously it is the army for whom these vehicles are intended that seems to be taking the brunt of the budget cuts. Now there is no reference per se to DND budget cuts in the budget. Those facts, that information, in the words of one budget commentator, is only being whispered "in Swahili at the bottom of a well". However, the chief of the Canadian army, Lieutenant-General Devlin, appeared before a

Senate committee recently, acknowledging that his force is facing at least a 22% cut. Reports suggest that a further 8% cut is coming effective next week.

With the government keeping up pretences that the CFDS is affordable, that budget axe is going to fall on operations and maintenance and readiness. It means no more Arctic training. It means a fire sale on government property. It means recapitalized fleets with empty gas tanks as the fuel budget going forward comes nowhere near covering cost increases from the past.

The Conservative government introduced the Canada first defence strategy with the promise of "stable and predictable defence funding". That promise did not even last two years. It is just that the government has spent the last three years pretending that it did not break that promise.

This budget continues that pretence to the detriment of the Canadian Forces. This budget perpetuates the pretense that this is a competent government. It is most certainly not. The military procurement file brings that truth into sharp relief.

• (1140)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed with the member's speech. When it comes to military procurement I know what the NDP is against but I do not know what its members are for. It is funny.

When it comes to supporting our troops, we have to indicate what we are for because our troops have needs. When we were first elected to government we inherited an army that had been rotted out, an air force that had been virtually grounded and a navy that was sinking. We inherited the Liberal decade of darkness. I am proud of the unprecedented investments we have made into the Canadian armed forces.

That member rises virtually every day and indicates what he is against. Would he please say what he is for? If we are not investing enough into the military, perhaps he would like to indicate some areas where he would invest more. Specifically what assets would he procure or would his party support? How much more money than our government would his party invest into the Canadian Forces and the veterans in this country?

That is the kind of clarity that Canadians want. They want choices. I am tired of hearing what that party is against. Let us hear what it is for.

• (1145)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about what I am for. I am for honesty with Canadians in the budgeting process. I am for competent management.

The government has pretended that its military procurement strategy is a live document. For three years it has carried on this pretence. It is dead. The government has acknowledged it cannot afford it. The department has advised the government it cannot afford it, and the Conservatives continue to play games with budgeting.

The Budget

The challenge is the challenge of program failure. Because of that incompetence, because of that mismanagement, the government now has less purchasing power for the joint support ships a decade after that process started. That is how incompetent the government is.

The government started procurement for fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft a long time ago. Because of incompetence and mismanagement, we are at a place now where the specifications for fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft have not even been written, and those planes are 50 years old.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on this line of questioning.

The member made accusations about the performance of the Liberal Party. I must advise the member that it was the Liberal Party that brought the CF-18, replacing the CF-104s, the CF-5s and the Voodoos, which the previous Conservative government failed to recognize in terms of its replacement.

The CF-18 has been a fantastic aircraft for the Canadian Forces for a number of years. The Conservatives had nothing to do with the CF-18. It was the Liberal administration of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that ultimately brought on that particular aircraft.

The member for Charlottetown from the Liberal Party has tried to get the government to recognize the importance of increasing the amount of money being allocated to our war vets for burial services. The government was shamed into materializing the money for those war vets.

The F-35, as the member has pointed out, is quickly becoming a somewhat dormant issue because of the government's failure to act on the replacement of the CF-18.

I wonder if the hon. member could provide to the House some indication of where the NDP believe we need to go. Where the NDP would take the country in regard to a replacement of the F-35?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, that is a simple and short answer: an open and transparent competition.

Let me applaud the courage of the member for standing up to try to defend the Liberals for their history and their record on military procurement, because it is indeed dismal.

I did not really talk about it here, but they are often accused of being responsible for the decade of darkness. I think the important point for today is that the government, with the CFDS, promised stable and predictable funding, and what we find out is that we are back on the yo-yo.

The Liberals took us down. The Conservatives decided they would take us up, but we are headed down again, and that is the problem. The NDP government, post 2015, will bring stable and predictable funding for the Canadian Forces and ensure that they have the right equipment to do the job that we ask of them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the latest budget. It reads “Jobs, Growth and Prosperity” and says “Long-term” in very small letters. It does not say “budget” and, if you did not know, you might have doubts that it really is a

budget. What I have here in my hands is instead a fairly partisan political document that makes nice announcements and brags about what has been done since 2006.

For example, the budget spends a few pages telling us all the wonderful things that have been done for families. It pours out figures, programs and statistics. If this was a 2013 budget, we would clearly see what is being announced as of 2013. No; you need to do a little reading between the lines to see that it is sort of a compilation of what has been done since 2006. In short, as I said earlier, it is obviously a political document.

Another thing we can criticize about this budget or this political document—call it what you will—is its lack of clarity. For example, the paragraph concerning the financial literacy initiatives aimed at seniors reads:

The Government will work with partners to improve financial literacy among seniors and respond to specific challenges faced by seniors.

It is a noble intention that nobody can argue with. However, if we really want to do some serious work, if we want to have figures, names of partners and something a little more concrete, we will have to wait. Are we going to support this budget? What is this budget exactly? Where is the substance? Are there any analyses that justify moving in this direction? Do we even have figures that jibe with the announcements? No.

Therefore, I will reiterate that this budget lacks a lot of clarity and, instead, talks up dusty old policies and random measures that have been in place for several years now. This does not give us much direction. At any rate, I will not support the 2013 budget because, despite the lack of clarity in several respects, it still spells out a number of things that we are definitely not happy with.

Another appalling aspect of this budget is that it clearly demonstrates just how incompetent the Conservatives are when it comes to any kind of management. First, the Conservatives say they will give so much in infrastructure funding; then, in budget 2013, they adjust the numbers and take some funding back. They give, they take. First, the Conservative government said that it would put the provinces in charge of skills training; now, in 2013, it is taking that responsibility back. Why, how and what will it do better? No one really knows. It gives, it takes and it takes away.

I do not know if the government has any understanding of the nature of a long-term strategy, say for intergenerational equity or consultations, for example. These concepts are all very relevant and could perhaps help the Conservatives make clear announcements and long-term plans that would allow their partners to really know where they are going and plan for the future.

I will be voting against this budget, and I would like to make a quick comment on that. Voting against a budget is not the same as voting against children, families, workers or aboriginal people. No, it is more nuanced than that. I demonstrated earlier that the budget contains many measures and announcements, some of which are more specific and others that are very vague. Just because the Conservatives announce money does not mean that they are giving more than they originally planned. Sometimes, when they announce that they are giving money, it really means that they are taking it away.

The Budget

These documents are very nuanced. I say that as an aside for the people of my riding and any Canadians who are watching us debate this budget, because the Conservatives often use that demagogic argument indiscriminately. They say that the NDP voted against families, against this and that. In fact, the NDP is voting against the budget overall. Why? Because this budget gives less; it is not enough.

I would like to share my point of view more specifically as MP for Pierrefonds—Dollard and as the NDP critic for seniors.

First of all, I want to talk about infrastructure. I mentioned it briefly earlier.

● (1150)

I do not know how many members have ever been to Montreal, and more specifically, to the riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard. We need more than a little infrastructure investments for roads and existing infrastructure that need repairs, and for the many municipal and district projects supported by the residents, who are anxious to see those projects completed. Those projects are being blocked, however, because of a lack of funding and support from the federal government.

For instance, I am talking about the expansion of the urban boulevard and the highway 40 on-ramp. In Pierrefonds, the construction of thousands of homes is currently on hold and will be possible only if the municipality is able to carry out the project. Congestion on the boulevards in my riding is terrible. We need to do something for families, for workers and for the development of my region.

This is just one example. I have not yet spoken about public transit. Nothing has been announced in that regard. Yet, this is a vital issue for Montreal and its surrounding communities. Once again, there are many good proposals to promote clean, green public transit for our communities, and these proposals need more support. I met with STM representatives on several occasions. I know that they are doing incredible work to develop long-term strategies and make these proposals a priority. However, without any funding, these proposals cannot be implemented and Canadians cannot benefit from them.

Another factor that is relevant to my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard is co-operative housing. Pierrefonds is home to the second-largest housing co-operative in Canada, and that is not the only co-operative in the community, since there are also others, such as co-operatives for seniors. These are great institutions that have done a lot of work, but they need to know what they can expect from the government. The 2013 budget did not make any announcements indicating that the investments and agreements in this area would continue. Co-operatives and their residents are therefore concerned because they do not know whether they will be able to count on these investments and agreements a year from now.

The agreements expire soon. The government needs to be clear in this regard. If the Conservatives are not prepared to support these agreements and investments, they must say so unequivocally. They must stop trying to avoid this issue, thinking that if they do not talk about it then maybe people will forget about it. People will not forget about this issue. I guarantee it.

As the critic for seniors, I would like to raise a few points about the budget. Unfortunately, this budget is proof that seniors are not one of the Conservative government's priorities. Yet, we know that seniors constitute a growing percentage of Canada's population. This was to be expected. The population is aging and we have known about this for a long time. We can prepare for this phenomenon, but in order to do so, we must implement measures to properly support the changing needs of the population.

Contrary to what the Prime Minister said, the aging population is not a problem for our country. It can be something really positive; we simply have to prepare for this demographic change and adapt to it. Unfortunately, that is not what we are seeing in this budget.

First of all, I would like to talk about the targeted initiative for older workers, which was introduced in 2010 and is supposed to end in 2013-14. Will this initiative be extended? I do not know. The government has not made any announcement in that regard and has not said a word about it in budget 2013. We would expect some information, but there has been none. However, people really appreciate this initiative. That is apparent in evaluations done in Quebec, which show just how much workers and business people like it. In 2010, 96% of Quebecers polled said they were satisfied. I think that says it all. If the Conservatives really intend to force Canadians to work two more years by increasing the eligibility age for old age security from 65 to 67, older workers looking for a job quite frankly deserve a little help.

I could go on and on. I want to emphasize that even though the Prime Minister promised to make the budget all about job creation and the economy, unfortunately that is not what we are seeing.

● (1155)

However, I can promise that the NDP will continue to focus on a greener, more prosperous and fairer Canada.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple: how can my colleague claim that increasing taxes can create growth and more jobs in Canada?

The NDP—including the member and the party's leader—makes very vague references to additional taxes: a carbon tax and a sales tax. The NDP is making all kinds of claims, but what we have learned over the past decade is that higher taxes do not help create jobs or make a country more competitive.

How can she claim that the opposite is true? How far will she go in increasing taxes on Canadians?

● (1200)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague asked an excellent question about increasing taxes. The only people who are talking about increasing taxes are the Conservatives.

The Budget

The budget is about making choices. Increasing taxes is not the only option.

I could suggest that my Conservative colleague stop giving gifts to large, prosperous companies that do not create jobs, or I could suggest that he start seriously targeting tax evasion.

There are many ways to overhaul our spending in order to have money for Canadians and families. No, it is not necessary to increase taxes dramatically—or increase them at all—if we want to truly do something for families, for small and medium-sized businesses and for the environment.

That is not our only choice. There are many. The Conservatives make their choices and spend money in certain areas. The F-35s, for example, could have been better managed. We could have saved money. I could give many other examples, but I think I made my point.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was surprised to hear my hon. colleague from the government side say in his question that we can create jobs by lowering taxes. The question is, where does the money come from for research and training?

[English]

Where does the money come from to set up a regulatory system and to set up the infrastructure that our economy depends on? What about a legal system or regulations for communication? All of these things are needed by an economy and they all come from common benefits for which it is very appropriate that the government pays.

I would like to invite my colleague on the opposition side to further respond to the claim that the only way we can create jobs is by lowering taxes.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, this is another fine example. Sometimes investments pay off. A serious investment in infrastructure is a fine example of something that can help complete projects that Canadians would benefit from and that would create jobs to boot.

The cuts announced in this budget will result in job losses in Canada. One plus one is two. Cuts made in certain areas come at a cost. When we look at the big picture, we do not necessarily find any savings.

[English]

Mr. Chris Alexander (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with my hon. friend, the member of Parliament for Don Valley West, who is particularly well suited, and I think very keen, to speak to the budget.

I would like to begin by complimenting our outstanding Minister of Finance, my neighbour and the member of Parliament for Whitby—Oshawa, on the latest budget. He and his team have once again set an extremely high standard. By continuing to look a little ahead, he is following the example of Sir John A's great finance ministers, Alexander Galt and Sir John Rose, Hincks, Tilley and Sir George Foster, who looked to the whole world for Canada's economic opportunity. By putting responsible resource development, manu-

facturing and innovation front and centre in successive budgets, they have articulated a truly national policy for the 21st century.

I would like to speak briefly today about four issues: debt, jobs, markets and the future.

[Translation]

Let us be clear from the start: as the minister said, the past seven years have belonged to Canada, from the performance of our troops in Panjwai, Afghanistan, in 2006, to the G20 summit in Toronto, in 2010, where worldwide fiscal consolidation was on the agenda. That is when the world started to see Canada in a different light. At the height of the crisis, the world turned to Canada for its economic leadership. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have never failed to provide that leadership.

● (1205)

[English]

The Muskoka initiative has delivered an ambitious global partnership for maternal, newborn and child health, even as we have launched the most ambitious trade liberalization agenda in our country's history, all the while remaining the best in the G7 for job creation, growth and government-funded research. The key to all these achievements, above all else, is fiscal responsibility.

If one compares our deficit projection for this year, \$18.7 billion, with that of the U.S., their current projection is \$901 billion, with many variables ahead in Congress and elsewhere. The U.K. is £108 billion for this year. As the lesson of Cyprus has shown in the past week, the world is still on a sovereign debt precipice. Many of our allies and partners are already exceeding the 90% threshold for debt to GDP, beyond which growth has historically slowed on average by 1.2% per year, even in conditions of low interest rates, as Reinhart and Rogoff have recently shown in a now famous paper.

[Translation]

Every country that has an average per capita income that is higher than Canada's also has a debt level that is lower than Canada's, be it Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia or other small countries.

[English]

This budget resists the temptation to throw caution to the winds and to sacrifice fiscal consolidation on the altar of short-term advantage to saddle our young people with an unnecessary burden. However, that is exactly what both opposition parties would do with their uncostered proposals, their inconsistent statements, their bureaucratic reflexes and their politics of instant gratification.

The Conservatives will not travel this path. We will not miss this opportunity to continue Canada's economic leadership in mining, where we continue to be the world leader in new financing of exploration and development.

The Budget

[Translation]

In the aerospace and defence sectors, we have the capacity to produce the best products and develop future capabilities, and those sectors just received new support in this budget.

[English]

Nor will we miss this opportunity in advanced manufacturing, where we are taking action to promote innovation.

[Translation]

In the area of finance, Toronto and other very dynamic centres of Canada's financial sector—Calgary, Montreal and Vancouver—now rank among the top 10 financial centres in the world.

[English]

Also in agriculture, our exports of meat, grain, fish and other food products continue to grow. All of these sectors are creating high-paying jobs from coast to coast to coast, in urban areas and rural.

It is one thing to want to have a low-tax, high-skill jurisdiction; it is quite another to deliver on such a commitment. This Prime Minister and this minister have done both. International investors have been watching. We have the best business plan, according to *Forbes Magazine*. We have the soundest banks, according to the Davos forum. Over the past seven years, portfolio investment in Canada has grown 67%, while many other advanced economies have lost the confidence of investors, or stumbled. Direct investment by Canadians in the world has grown from \$806 billion to \$980 billion, while direct investment in Canada has advanced from \$802 billion to \$947 billion.

These are some of the keys to our recovery. These are the facts that underpin the creation of 950,000 net new jobs, most of them in the private sector and most of them high-quality, since the low point of the last recession. However, we must do more to ensure all Canadians have access to economic opportunity. That is why this budget also includes new measures to tackle homelessness, to build new affordable housing, to empower those with disabilities and to help young aboriginal Canadians find a trade or start a new business.

Let us be clear about our record to date. Canada's growth over the past seven years has been balanced and inclusive. Let us recall what TD Economics told us in December 2012. It stated:

Income inequality is both persistently lower and rising more slowly in Canada than in the United States. In fact, inequality in Canada has been flat since 1998, as measured by the Gini coefficient.

That is another record of achievement.

Let us look at the numbers showing the opportunity that Canada has. According to Statistics Canada, our GDP in 2012 was at \$1.833 trillion. Again, according to Statistics Canada, as of now the estimated population is 35 million. That is \$52,288 of GDP per Canadian, well ahead of larger countries in the G7 and well ahead of most of our peers.

● (1210)

[Translation]

Unlike the opposition, we harbour no illusions about the role that international trade has played in our success.

[English]

Let us be clear on what international economic experts are saying. Robert Z. Lawrence of the Peterson Institute said:

Trade has improved...living standards. With the exception of oil, emerging economies have been mainly complementary rather than competitive....

This is not what we hear from the NDP, who want to shut down all of our trade agreements in North America and beyond. The NDP is not coming clean with Canadians about what this would do to our living standards, our prosperity and to our future. Instead, the government is pursuing an ambitious trade agenda, building a powerful economic relationship with China.

[Translation]

We are pursuing free trade with India. We are negotiating an unprecedented free trade agreement with Europe for Canada.

[English]

We are multiplying free trade agreements with Latin America, and we are driving with the U.S., Japan and others toward a trans-Pacific partnership.

With regard to CIDA amalgamation with foreign affairs, I think all of us on this side of the House welcome it. It will help us to be more strategic about our position in the world, to have an effective policy for partnering with low income countries while trading and investing with developing middle income and high income countries coherently and powerfully.

Is it not a huge advantage for Canada to have a development commitment to the 54 countries of Africa, and to have mining companies that have invested, not \$5 billion in 2005, but \$32 billion-plus in Africa today? Does that not do more to raise living standards and to secure Canadian leadership?

What does this mean for a riding like Ajax—Pickering? It means young people will be considering apprenticeships in the many sectors where nearly a quarter of a million jobs are still going unfilled. It means small businesses will be seeking Canada jobs grants to plan for new hiring, even while welcoming the extension of the tax credit for new hires.

[Translation]

It means that investment in industrial equipment will continue. In 2010, there was an 11% increase and in 2011, the increase was nearly 25%.

The Budget

[English]

It means that those who attended our pre-budget round table on youth, women and unemployment last fall with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development now know that they have been heard. It means commuters, families, and public transit and municipal authorities in Ajax—Pickering can now have confidence that the largest long-term commitment to infrastructure in Canada's history, \$70 billion over 10 years, will benefit them. It means that those who believe in a strong defence industry for Canada will be looking to opportunities in shipbuilding, aerospace, and defence procurement to harness new ideas and support the next technological breakthrough in blast resistant materials or low emission propulsion.

During the ministry of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada represented only 1.3% of global GDP. Today, we represent something like 2.6%, after a crisis that has seen the share of other advanced economies slide and as emerging economies have seen unparalleled growth.

Global GDP has risen from \$41 trillion in 2000 to over \$70 trillion today, but Canada's place remains prominent. Canada's prospects remain bright. Canada's leadership remains strong, thanks to this budget.

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I came to Parliament, I was a school teacher. I believe in education. It is the best investment our country can make. Education is the starting point for sweeping change in every respect.

Education does figure into this budget, but what worries me is that it is always tied to jobs. Education begins at a very young age. Many of us here today have children. Our children sometimes have a hard time or have problems at school.

How does the budget help families with children who have difficulties at school? These learning difficulties could result in problems for young teenagers, and they may drop out of school. What is the government doing to prevent that? Nothing that I can see.

There is another thing that worries me about education. In the budget, it says, "provide \$10 million over two years for...marketing activities [for international students]." Come on. Education is not marketing. It is an intrinsic and important value.

I would like to ask my colleague why the education of our children and help for families are being cast aside.

•(1215)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, we have not cast education aside. We respect that it is under provincial jurisdiction.

Even so, we are providing \$10 billion a year in transfer payments to the provinces for post-secondary training. That level of funding is much higher than at any time in the past, particularly under the Liberals.

In addition, we have earmarked \$2.7 billion a year for labour market transfers to help people find work. There are a number of initiatives related to this in the budget. We have a youth employment

strategy, an opportunities fund for persons with disabilities and an aboriginal skills and employment training strategy.

These programs all contain an educational component and respect provincial jurisdiction, which remains one of the building blocks of our country and our Constitution.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about all the advantages of the 2013 budget. It promised a lot of things.

If the budget is so good, could he please explain why the government needs to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising to tell everyone that it is doing good things?

[English]

In fact, the advertising does not even explain any details of why the government is spending what it is spending. It is simply just to put some good feelings in Canadians. If the government thinks the budget is so great, why does it think it is so great to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on these kinds of feel-good advertisements?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I know the member was not here at the time and neither was I, but he really should know that the spending levels were much higher under the Liberal government. The hon. President of the Treasury Board has mentioned that point on several occasions. The member should also know that no one will take Liberals seriously on this question until they tell us what happened with the \$40 million in the sponsorship scandal, the biggest government advertising scandal in Canadian history.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands said in a previous question that on that side they only believe that jobs can be created by lowering taxes.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this: what do higher taxes do to job creation in this country?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it would be such a pleasure to be in this place if there were more questions like that. I encourage all hon. members to ask questions that are relevant to economic reality in the world today.

The short answer is that higher taxes would kill jobs. I will say that again so that everyone understands: higher taxes would kill jobs.

The NDP has not been following what has happened in Sweden. New Democrats think it is a socialist workers' paradise with very high taxes, but it is doing well because it has reduced taxes more aggressively than any country in Europe. It is doing well because it has lower debt levels, thanks to a government that is very similar to ours in its policies, more so than almost any in Europe.

Low taxes create jobs; high taxes kill jobs.

The Budget

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House to defend and support economic action plan 2013. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague from Ajax—Pickering, who did an outstanding job in his speech in talking about so many issues that are relevant in this budget today.

Economic action plan 2013 is about jobs, growth, long-term prosperity and Canada's bright future. Over the past several years, we have all witnessed the global economy destabilized and former leading nations crippled by global market forces, excess spending and debt. The citizens of these countries have suffered the most, with job losses, fluctuating currencies and a future of uncertainty. However, Canada could not be more contrastive, and budget 2013 is, quite simply, further evidence of why Canada continues to be an oasis for financial stability.

The praise for budget 2013 and Canada's economy is significant. Moody's rated Canada with a solid AAA rating. In the G7, Canada is the only nation with this top credit rating, and following the release of our fiscal plan, we will eliminate the national deficit in an expedient two years. This is complemented by a consistently high ranking by the OECD. Its economic survey of Canada reports that the economy is continuing to grow despite the persistence of international turbulence, federal fiscal plans are seen by markets as credible, the banking system is sound and Canada enjoys strong institutions and policy credibility.

To that final note, the decisions made in budget 2013 are additional evidence of the sound policy-making decisions and our economic stability. From global to local, the praise for our financial institutions and economic leadership is consistent. Canadian Building Trades said it is are "extremely happy" with the Canada job grant and said further, "This is an opportunity to really affect the [trades] industry in a positive way".

The Canadian Welding Association also said, "We are pleased to see that the Harper government is taking action to support skilled trades in Canada."

• (1220)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I will just interrupt the member. He cannot refer to members of Parliament by their given name, even when referring to the government.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Across a huge diversity of sectors, an impressive 950,000 net new jobs have been created since 2009.

Quite simply, the Minister of Finance understands that it is the economy and jobs that matter to Canadians and their families.

Knowing of the shortage of workers in skilled trades, the government has reallocated \$4 million over three years to work with provinces and territories to increase opportunities for apprentices. These apprentices would find potential employment through federally funded construction and maintenance contracts as well as through affordable housing and infrastructure projects.

I should mention that in the industry committee, we spent a lot of time interviewing witnesses on issues such as skilled trades and the

need for support in those areas. We heard from those witnesses, and this budget is testament to the fact that this government listens.

The government recognizes the importance of all Canadians working and contributing meaningfully to the workforce. It is for this reason that budget 2013 is committing to the labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. This program would focus on enhancing skills training and opportunities for those with disabilities.

It would also extend the opportunities fund to \$40 million per year, understanding that the structure of a building can act as a barrier for some individuals. Economic action plan 2013 has committed to an ongoing allotment of \$15 million per year for the enabling accessibility fund. This fund would assist in the costs of renovations to increase accessibility for people with ambulatory needs.

The government is here to help Canadians throughout their careers, from their first job to a career transition, ultimately leading to a full and productive life.

We are here to support our youth in finding employment. A primary barrier for new graduates following the completion of their studies is gaining work experience. These bright young adults would now have the opportunity to gain this experience through paid internships. The government would provide an investment of \$70 million over the course of three years to help support 5,000 paid internships for new graduates. This would be in addition to subsidizing the upfront costs of tuition, with over \$10 billion annually to directly support post-secondary education, including financial assistance such as student loans and grants.

Canada is an exceptionally diverse country. I am proud that my riding of Don Valley West is home to individuals from all countries. Knowing that each individual and cultural community adds to our vibrant cultural mosaic, this government has shown a consistent and substantial investment in supporting newcomers, including, in 2006, over \$1.5 billion over five years dedicated to settlement and integration programs.

Also, knowing that Canada is a highly sought after destination for immigrants, I was pleased to see that in economic action plan 2013 there would be a focus on international recruitment to meet Canada's labour market needs.

There is also a commitment to ensure success by providing opportunities for individuals from abroad to experience Canada through the temporary resident program. We would do so by funding \$42 million over two years to increase processing capacity for these applicants, as well as countless others. We would help individuals in areas such as Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park, two important neighbourhoods in Don Valley West.

The Budget

Coming from the automotive sector, I was very pleased to see the provision of \$1.4 billion in tax relief to the manufacturing sector, with a two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for machinery and equipment. This would help manufacturers purchase the equipment they need to operate their businesses and in turn create jobs and help to grow our economy.

Our government is committed to research and leadership and innovation, even in a time of global uncertainty.

● (1225)

This is evidenced by the \$920 million dedicated to renew the federal economic development agency, of which \$200 million would be applied to new advanced manufacturing. This would benefit countless local research centres, such as the MaRS research centre for innovation located in Toronto.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters voiced its support, saying:

The federal budget sends an important signal. It positions manufacturing and exporting at the heart of Canada's Economic Action Plan by focusing on practical steps that will enhance competitiveness, productivity, innovation, and business growth.

This is very good news for companies creating jobs in Canada, investing in our communities and developing and selling world-class products and services around the world.

It is our government's bold commitment to innovation with a measured fiscal responsibility that has ensured Canada has maintained its place as a leading economy.

The government also recognizes that an integral part of our economy is small business. These are the mom-and-pop shops down the street that provide a host of services that create a sense of community.

As I wrap up my time today, I want to also mention a very special centre of excellence in my community of Don Valley West, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. I was delighted to note in economic action plan 2013, on my favourite page in the entire book, page 235, that the CNIB would receive \$3 million to assist in the development of its national digital hub, which would provide new technology to assist the blind and the sight-impaired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the aspects of the budget that draws a great deal of concern is the fact that the government has said the provinces are no longer going to be responsible for skill set training programming. The federal government will take on that role and is prepared to allow these skill set developments to take place across the country as long as there are matching grants from the provinces. The provinces do not necessarily have equal resources, or potentially even priorities, for developing the programs that would be able to take advantage of the millions of dollars being offered.

My question for the member is this: what is the government prepared to do for those provinces that might not be able to match the funds for skills development training programs? Is it prepared to work with the private sector and ensure that every region is treated equally with the dollars being allocated?

● (1230)

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, job creation is very important to our country. We need to find ways in which we can assist in skills training and development.

I mentioned in my speech that at committee we heard from trade unions and labour unions that encouraged us to find ways to ensure that we could develop apprenticeship programs and skills training for youth that would allow them to become productive, find good jobs and get employed in our country.

With the internship program alone, businesses would be a partner in that development. The provinces and the federal government would be partners. At varying levels they will find ways to do it at numbers that work to the benefit of that province.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the job training program, which was initially entrusted to the provinces and then taken away in the current budget. The Conservatives often make decisions without supporting figures or analysis.

Could my colleague tell me where this decision came from? Do they have a concrete plan? Why do they think they can do better? Why could the provinces not go on managing this program, perhaps with the help of the sage advice of my Conservative colleagues?

These decisions are frustrating, surprising to a number of our partners and, so far, unexplained and unfounded.

[English]

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, Perrin Beatty, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, stated, "Everywhere I go, business of all sizes tell me that their No. 1 concern is finding the right people to do the job".

Clearly, we have not been meeting the need of industry and business across this country, whether in skills training, internship and apprenticeship development or helping businesses to succeed. By developing the programs we have developed, we would meet that need and help our provinces and businesses to achieve that end.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member if he does not feel there is some truth in the kind of commentary we have seen, for instance, in Jeffrey Simpson's column in *The Globe and Mail*, which said that under the Conservative government the tax code is getting increasingly complicated, that individual boutique tax cuts are not good fiscal policy and that we end up with a dog's breakfast of a few things thrown here and there to meet certain constituencies, but we lack a sensible coherent fiscal plan.

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2013 is about creating jobs, growing our economy and creating prosperity for all Canadians. Throughout the years, we have developed a tax plan that provides incentives and tax relief from coast to coast to coast, and I believe our tax plan today meets those needs and helps Canadians and especially families keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. Quite frankly, that is what our job is all about.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague from the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak about budget 2013. This budget obviously leaves much to be desired, and that is why we will vote against it. However, there is one positive aspect. Despite the budget's general underlying idea of cutting spending, and therefore slowing economic growth, the government at least has not cancelled two very positive measures that were introduced by previous Liberal governments.

I am obviously talking, first of all, about the gas tax. Acknowledging that there were major municipal infrastructure needs at the time, the Liberals very wisely introduced this measure, which channels funds from the gas tax to the municipalities. That measure remains intact. The second measure dating back to previous Liberal governments is the GST exemption for the municipalities. In other words, the municipalities do not have to pay GST as a result of this earlier measure.

That is the positive aspect of this budget. However, it has a lot of negative aspects. I would like to talk a little about infrastructure. We see across Canada and North America that now is the time to renew our infrastructure. I am not the one saying it. We need only read the newspapers and listen to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We really need to renew and repair our infrastructure, and in other cases we must build new infrastructure if we want to guarantee ongoing economic growth.

What disappoint us in this budget are the cuts to the building Canada fund over the next two years. This makes us wonder whether these cuts are based on an economic argument or a political argument. In other words, is the purpose of these cuts simply to enable the government to achieve its target of a balanced budget just in time for the next election, or are they being made for economic reasons? I doubt they are being made for economic reasons since this measure will slow economic growth. I sincerely believe these infrastructure investment cuts are being made for purely political reasons, to benefit the Conservative Party and further its political objectives.

Driving on roads that are in poor condition costs drivers money. Every time we have to go to a service centre to have our wheels aligned or a flat tire changed because our car hit a pothole, that costs us money. I know the government likes to talk about private investment, but taxpayers could invest that money in an RRSP, for example. Then there would be more money in their RRSPs 10 or 20 years later, which would be good for their eventual retirement. When we do not invest in infrastructure, that costs people a lot of money.

●(1235)

I would like to cite an American example from a study conducted by the American Society of Civil Engineers. That study was based on figures from 2009. The American Society of Civil Engineers found that the United States had lost \$78 billion as a result of traffic jams, which bring cars to a halt. That holds up traffic and wastes gasoline, since cars do not move forward. Those losses cost Americans \$78 billion. Repairs to cars as a result of potholes and

other causes totalled \$67 billion in the United States in 2009. That is not peanuts.

In addition, more car accidents happen when infrastructure is in poor condition. That is a fact. Car accidents in the United States, many of which were due to a road system in poor condition, cost \$230 billion in 2009. Not investing in infrastructure is an expensive proposition.

As we know, investing in infrastructure is costly. However, it is highly effective in creating jobs. In 2009, the University of Massachusetts Amherst concluded from research and analysis that every billion dollars spent on infrastructure creates 18,000 jobs. That is 30% more than if we took that billion dollars and gave it in the form of tax cuts. Investing in infrastructure is very effective. It is an effective way of creating jobs, and people obviously save the time and money they would have had to spend on car repairs.

Infrastructure must also be in good condition if we want to promote future economic growth. Economic activity cannot grow without infrastructure. Good infrastructure means strong economic growth in the long run.

●(1240)

[English]

As Liberal water policy critic, I observed something a little while ago, and now it is all starting to make sense. I observed that proposed waste water regulations were diluted between *Canada Gazette* part I, a part of the regulation-making process, and *Canada Gazette* part II.

What that means is obviously the quality of our water will not be as high as it would have been, but it also means that it will not be necessary to spend as much on waste water plants as we would if the regulations were stricter.

I am wondering now if the government diluted waste water regulations intentionally in order to minimize how much money it would have to invest across Canada in plant upgrades and construction of new plants.

Now it is all starting to make sense when I look at the budget and the political objective of balancing the budget. I am not saying that balancing the budget is not a good idea for the economy, but does it have to be by the fall of 2015? I am not so sure.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am troubled by the budget for a number of reasons. With regard to the failure to reverse the decision to cut essential scientific work in the environmental field from the Experimental Lakes Area to the Polar Environment Arctic Research Lab, there has been a year in which the government could have reconsidered. These are very small savings and pale in comparison to areas where there is a lot of spending.

The thing that shocks me most about the budget is that I cannot find any tables that tell us, department by department, where the money will be spent. I have never in my life seen a budget that did not include the budget.

I wonder if my colleague has any comments.

The Budget

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, when I worked on my speech this the weekend, I looked furiously for some numbers and some comparative tables that would allow us to get some kind of an historical perspective on what was being done and noticed the exact same thing.

There seems to be an effort of subterfuge, to basically hide the realities of this budget in an historical context. I find that quite ironic. While the government is hiding what it is doing, it is spending large sums of money promoting itself and its supposed good works on television. Even a small portion of that advertising money could have been used to keep the ELA going, which is known as the best freshwater laboratory in the world. It is a travesty that it is being shut down.

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Ms. H el ene LeBlanc (LaSalle— mard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to the importance of the co-operative movement in our lives and the fact that this government seems to want to attack such a significant economic force in Canada.

Can the member who just spoke explain the consequences of the elimination of the tax credit that allowed caisses populaires and credit unions to capitalize? What impact will this have specifically on caisses populaires, which are an economic powerhouse primarily in Quebec?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, caisses populaires and financial co-operatives across Canada are an integral part of this country's economic history. Caisses populaires have been around for a very long time. When I was in elementary school, I remember the caisse populaire coming to our school and we all handed over 10¢ every Friday. We were learning to save.

Credit unions play a very important role in a very stable banking system—thank God—based on a limited number of financial institutions. We need balance. On the one hand, we need good, strong major banks, and on the other hand, we need a more grassroots financial system to offset the concentrated strength of the chartered financial institutions.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question. I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. He spoke at length about infrastructure. The budget renews the P3 Canada fund, which means that the provinces and municipalities have no choice but to use the P3 model. I would like to hear exactly what my colleague thinks of that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: At first glance, the P3 model is not a bad way to promote the construction of new infrastructure and the renewal of existing infrastructure, but I am not sure that it is the right model for all infrastructure. One of my constituents is currently examining the P3 model as it pertains to water facilities. He is not certain that this model applies very well to this sector. In my opinion, the P3 model should be applied selectively.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the midst of a still fragile economy and dealing with a recession, what we see is a continued Conservative fiscal incompetence, buoyed only by the Liberal legacy of strong banking regulations, I might add.

I am pleased to rise today to debate the budget. When I read this year's budget, or more accurately this year's Conservative branding exercise, I am reminded of Winston Churchill's famous words, "I never worry about action, but only about inaction".

Unfortunately, the Conservatives' economic inaction plan 2013 leaves us all worrying about our futures. We are left to worry about the lack of action to help those engaged in the fishing industry, which is of paramount importance to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador where I live, especially to the fishers. As fish are a renewable resource, rather than work with those in the fishing industry and support what could be a sustainable industry, the Harper government is cutting another \$108 million over five years from the

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would remind hon. members not to use the name of the Prime Minister or any other member in their speeches.

The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

• (1250)

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is cutting another \$108 million over five years from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This is in addition to the \$161.1 million cut from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans again announced by the Conservative government in previous budgets. These cuts, coupled with the changes to the employment insurance program and the impact on seasonal workers, will make life a struggle for those who work so hard to make a living from the sea.

Over 80,000 Canadians make their living from fishing-related activities. We fail to realize that it is because of their efforts we have access to one of, if not the best, food sources in the world. Fish is a food of excellent nutritional value, providing high quality protein and a wide variety of vitamins and minerals. If the fishing industry were accorded the respect it deserves, Canada would not have dropped from sixth place to eighth place in the world among seafood exporting countries. Instead of slipping to eighth place, the industry could continue to be a major player in supplying the world with this major food source. Instead, it is treated with disdain by a government that has no appreciation for the industry or those who work in it.

We are left to worry about the economic reality facing our seniors with this budget and the lack of action to improve their situation. Having given so much during their lifetime to help our country succeed, the government is prepared to ignore what should be their right now, if they so wish, to spend time with grandchildren, travelling, enjoying retirement, doing what many could not do when they were working.

The Budget

The Conservative government has decided in its wisdom, or dare I say lack of, to move the eligibility age for OAS from 65 to 67, forcing seniors to work an extra two years before they can live that life to which many seniors look forward. What is it about Conservatives that makes them think somehow that the majority of our seniors have more than just very modest savings, if any, after years of being in the workforce and deserve to be eligible for old age security at a time in their lives when they can still enjoy the benefits that come from receiving their pension income, as modest as it is?

Ralph Morris, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Pensioners Association, is on record saying such changes as raising to 67 from 65 the age at which Canadians could qualify for OAS would push many seniors into poverty. He said, "I think that it is an attack on the seniors of this country again by a prime minister and a government".

According to Susan Eng, head of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons:

CARP members will be disappointed that the federal budget contained little to address their priority concerns—retirement security, seniors' poverty and equitable access to healthcare, affordable drugs and home care. The modest measures are still welcome. Any other improvements would have had some immediate impact but would mostly set the stage for the kind of future Canadians can expect in retirement.

We are left to worry about the increasing difficulty for young people graduating from post-secondary institutions, more educated than ever before, yet with worse prospects for employment, thanks to the continued lack of real action by the Conservative government.

Committing to a job grant program that will not come into effect for another five years is not real action. Requiring cash-strapped provinces to match federal contributions in order to avail of the program is not real action. Freezing funding for training at 2007 pre-recession levels is not real action.

Unfortunately the only real action from the government is the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on self-promotion. If people are looking for a job in the advertising industry, they might just be lucky because, as a result of this budget, that is the only place where they might find work, and then the job they find will be paid by their own tax dollars, hundreds of millions of which the Conservative government is using to shamelessly run a pre-election campaign. Fortunately Canadians see through these tactics as they try to deal with just living from day-to-day.

In today's economic reality, Conservative words will not improve the lives of those in Random—Burin—St. George's and the rest of Canada. Only positive action will improve this economy and create jobs. Unfortunately this budget offers Canadians nothing but empty words.

•(1255)

As the member of Parliament for Random—Burin—St. George's since 2008, I know only too well the hardships faced by many of those I represent. Fortunately, Canadians are no longer fooled by the practice of dropping goodies in budgets to try to distract them from the real message and inadequate performance.

The difficulty is that the budget is so short on detail that it is left to those of us who have the opportunity to read the budget documents to try and read between the lines and find out exactly what the

Conservative government intends to do. The contradictions in the messages are alarming.

For instance, in budget 2007, the government promised almost \$5.2 billion in new infrastructure funding for municipalities in 2013-14. However, budget 2013 only offers \$3.3 billion in new funding for each of 2014-15 and 2015-16. The Conservatives failed to deliver infrastructure funding announced in budget 2007 and are now trying to claim that same money as new funding over the next five years.

The Conservatives claim skills training is the most important issue facing the country. Yet they actually cut training, after inflation is factored in, by freezing funding at 2007 pre-recession levels. Talk about alarming contradictory messaging.

Predictably, Conservatives will decry how opposition members are not standing up for the constituents when they vote against the budget. It is unfortunate that the few positive measures laced in between extraordinarily destructive Conservative economic policy get caught up in the bigger picture.

The Conservatives will attempt to reduce my opposition to their overall economic inaction in their standard speaking points. However, allow me to address one of the changes that I not only support but welcome wholeheartedly.

Of particular interest to me, given my Motion No. 422 to enhance veterans' burial assistance in the Last Post Fund, is the increase in assistance for qualifying veterans from \$3,600 to \$7,376. Along with the Royal Canadian Legion, I support this measure. That is why I wrote to the Minister of Finance before the budget was tabled to ask that the Last Post Fund be enhanced. I was pleased to see part of my recommendation contained in the budget. In fact, if the Conservatives would agree to table this change in a separate stand-alone legislation, I am confident they would find unanimous consent to pass it.

When I wrote to the Minister of Finance to ask that the assistance provided be increased, I also expressed my concern for the 66% of those veterans' families who applied to the Last Post Fund for financial assistance to help with the burial of their loved ones but were denied. These denials meant that more than 20,000 veterans whose families applied to the last post fund for financial assistance were denied a dignified burial during the Conservative government's time in office.

According to the Royal Canadian Legion, although the assistance increase is positive, it will have absolutely no effect on the number of deserving veterans in need who are denied assistance by the Conservative government. Following this change, modern-day veterans, in other words, veterans who served in the post-Korean War, are still excluded from applying for government funding.

The Budget

Fortunately, the government will have another chance to reconsider and support my motion in support of our veterans when it comes up for debate next month. I sincerely hope, given the overwhelming support for my motion by veterans throughout this great country and the legion's Principled letter writing campaign, the Conservatives will vote in favour of my motion and take the necessary steps to implement it.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has piqued my interest. She deplored the budget in generalities, but never spoke about the measures in it. However, she indicated one measure that she would support if it was a one-off vote, which is the significant increase in the benefit for our veterans and their families for burial.

I will list a couple of other measures in the budget and perhaps the member could indicate if she would support them in a one-off vote.

For instance, there is the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers for two years, which is something very popular with manufacturers. Would she support that in a one-off vote? There is the support for regional economic development right across the country. Would she support that in a one-off vote? There is the indexing of the gas tax transfers for municipalities. Would she support that in a one-off vote? There is the massive funding for the building Canada plan. Would she support that in a one-off vote?

If the member is going to vote against these measures, then what exactly is she supporting?

• (1300)

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech when I started, what is so difficult about this budget is that it is hard to pick out a few good points when there are so many negative points contained in the budget.

While I look to my motion, M-422, in terms of support for veterans, obviously I would support it. It is the right thing to do. I am glad the Minister of Finance agreed with my request to increase the amount from \$3,600 to more than \$7,000. That is important.

However, there are so many other issues we are confronted with in this budget that are going to hurt Canadians. While the hon. member can stand and rhyme off three or four things in this budget that he thinks are good, members of the opposition and Canadians from coast to coast to coast can point to so many areas where the government has failed Canadians.

The government talks about job skills training as being a priority. The reality is that there will be nothing in the jobs grant program for five years, and then the provinces and the employers will have to match the funding. If they cannot, they cannot avail themselves of it.

That is just one example. If the member wants more, I can certainly give them to him.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the hon. member could perhaps put herself in the position of the government and answer the question of whether or not the Liberals would be aiming to balance the budget by 2015, or whether they would perhaps run a deficit.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, if the member would recall, it was the last Liberal government that ran a surplus.

In fact, we turned over a \$13 billion surplus when the Conservative government took power, and the Conservatives just burned through it. They just wasted \$13 billion in record time, even before the recession had started.

The Liberals run balanced budgets. We do the right thing. We look at what we can afford. We look at what is right for Canadians.

The Conservatives have run the highest deficit in the country's history. I can guarantee that is something the Liberals would not do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, like the member for Random—Burin—St. George's, I also could point to things I was pleased to see in this budget.

She gives me the chance to say I was very relieved that Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which is a fund that helps commercialize clean tech investments and developments in companies across Canada, has received enough funding that at least it will not die after this budget.

However, I was surprised—and perhaps the hon. member could comment on this—that the only sections on the climate change issue and the climate crisis in this budget refer to programs that the Conservatives have already killed in previous budgets, taking credit for the very successful eco-energy retrofit program.

I wonder if the member believes that program should have been continued so that homeowners could get some relief on high energy bills.

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, obviously I agree that the program should have continued.

It is the type of program that Canadians have looked to and respected, and they understand how important it is, particularly when we talk about the environment and how important it is to ensure that we do sustain our environment and that we take the measures that are right, and not find ourselves in a situation where there is nothing happening.

If it were up to the government, there would be no discussion of the environment. The facts and figures that are put forward are so convoluted that we cannot even see the forest for the trees.

We are finding ourselves in the situation, as members of an opposition, of trying to get a handle on what the government is doing with respect to the environment, and it is very hard to do because the government is not at all forthcoming when it comes to sustaining our environment.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today and speak about a budget that will continue to propel our nation towards long-term prosperity, not just for now, not just for our generation but for all future generations.

[*Translation*]

I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

*The Budget**[English]*

For our government, as it is for every Canadian from coast to coast to coast, a budget is a very serious thing. It is an integral part of a responsible way of life. Just as for any family, the budgetary choices we make today define the available opportunities for tomorrow.

By this measure, our government is signalling what a prosperous future in Canada will require, and we are taking concerted action today to make that happen: action by eliminating the deficit; action by investing in public infrastructure; action by providing incentives for hard-working Canadians to develop the skills and training that will provide them with good, high-paying jobs that will make a difference in the economy; action by investing in Canada's youth, who will drive Canada's economy long into the future, by supporting their educational endeavours.

As we all know, Canada is outperforming other G7 nations in economic growth by leaps and bounds. This budget will ensure that remains the case long into the future.

● (1305)

[Translation]

Our Conservative government is squarely focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs, supporting economic growth and securing Canada's long-term prosperity.

In fact, through the economic action plan, Canada has achieved one of the best economic performances of the G7 nations, during both the global recession and the economic recovery.

Here are the facts. Canada has created over 950,000 net new jobs since the depth of the global recession in July 2009. This is an indication that our economy is healthy. What is more, 90% of these jobs are full-time and almost 80% of them are in the private sector.

[English]

Over this period, Canada has had the strongest job creation record in the entire G7 by far. Canada's unemployment rate is at its lowest level in four years.

[Translation]

The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in four years, and it is much lower than that of the United States. This is a phenomenon that has not been seen in almost 30 years.

[English]

Both the independent International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are projecting that Canada will have among the strongest growth in all the G7 countries for many years ahead.

For the fifth straight year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world. Canada also has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. All the major credit rating agencies, Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's, have affirmed Canada's rock-solid AAA credit rating. Our net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far.

[Translation]

As we have said over and over again, the Canadian economy is not immune to the economic challenges beyond our borders. We are and will continue to be affected by the ongoing economic turbulence in the United States and Europe, which are among our largest trade partners.

For that reason, economic action plan 2013 focuses on positive initiatives to support job creation and economic growth, while balancing the budget and ensuring that Canada retains a strong economic advantage today and in the future.

[English]

We will maintain this impressive record of success by maintaining our focus on balancing the budget.

Before the global recession hit—and the hon. member who spoke just before clearly did not understand this—our Conservative government paid down \$37 billion in debt, bringing Canada's debt to its lowest level in 25 years.

[Translation]

As a result of our fiscal responsibility and our debt reduction plan, Canada was in an optimal fiscal and financial position to weather the global economic recession. When the recession hit, we deliberately decided to post a temporary deficit in order to protect our economy and our jobs. All political parties in Parliament agreed.

● (1310)

[English]

I have to repeat that in English. All parties in Parliament agreed with that plan in 2009.

While other countries continue to struggle with debt that is spiralling out of control, Canada is in the best fiscal position in the G7. It is very important to note that Canada's net debt to GDP ratio is 35.8%. That is the lowest level in the G7 countries. The G7 average is 80.4%. That is a sign of a healthy economy.

[Translation]

Whereas the NDP and the Liberals want to engage in reckless and risky spending, our Conservative government will balance the budget by 2015.

[English]

I have some pieces of information I want to share here. The previous discussion clearly misunderstood what we are trying to achieve for youth, so this information is important, and I will change the order of what I am speaking on to ensure that I am able to address this. Let us not forget that this budget would provide many things for Canada's youth, the next-generation drivers of our economy.

[Translation]

It is vital that we provide young Canadians with the information and the opportunities they need to make good choices about education and employment if we want to create sustainable economic prosperity for Canada.

The Budget

That is why economic action plan 2013 provides for strategic investments that will ensure that today's youth have the necessary skills for tomorrow's jobs.

[*English*]

We would do this by promoting education in high-demand fields, like the skilled trades, the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics. We would extend support for Pathways to Education. As a former school trustee who saw the benefit of that to my community, I applaud this investment. It supports students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, through tutoring and mentoring.

We would support more internships for recent post-secondary graduates by investing \$70 million to support 5,000 more paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates.

We would support post-secondary education for first nations and Inuit students by investing \$10 million to Indspire, an organization that provides scholarships and bursaries to first nation and Inuit students.

We would also support youth entrepreneurship. These are the commercial leaders of tomorrow and, by providing \$18 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to provide mentorship, advice and start-up financing, we would be helping many young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 34.

[*Translation*]

These investments are part of our government's solid support for Canadian youth. Since 2006, we have increased funding for the Canada social transfer and, since 2008, we have added \$800 million a year in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the post-secondary education system.

[*English*]

Investing more than \$330 million per year through the youth employment strategy is critical to help young Canadians get the skills and work experience they need to transition to the workplace.

We would add \$123 million to streamline and modernize the Canada student loan program. We would allow full-time students to earn more money: doubling the in-study income exemption, benefiting approximately 100,000 students; increasing the eligibility threshold for part-time students; and reducing the in-study interest rate for part-time students to zero.

Canadians can have confidence that there are many specific issues in this budget whereby we would help Canadians who are going to make a difference in this economy. I am proud to be part of a government serving the constituents of Winnipeg South Centre, who will make a difference with this economy.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether the member is particularly proud of the fact that her government has been running a deficit since 2008 and that it has made promise after promise to restore fiscal balance.

This government has even set some never before seen deficit records. It has conveniently delayed the fiscal balance until the next election. Furthermore, it is proposing a measure to recover money associated with tax evasion in order to restore fiscal balance.

At the same time, it is making cuts to the CRA, the agency responsible for recovering money associated with tax evasion. The government is making cuts to the agency's budget and asking it to do more.

Can the member help me with the logic in all of this?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something.

My hon. colleague does not understand how the Government of Canada's budget works in reality.

Before the global recession hit, our Conservative government had paid down \$37 billion of the debt, bringing our national debt to its lowest level in 25 years. That is the reality.

I must add that this decision was made by all parties present in the House at the time, including my hon. colleague's party.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to some of the questions from across the way. One was about climate change and whether we are on target to meet the goals. The Liberals allowed greenhouse gases to go up 35%, whereas we are going to reduce them by 17%. We did not take \$55 billion from the EI fund to help balance our books. We have created a AAA rating, and we have 950,000 new jobs, which are mostly full time.

To use the term my colleague across the way used, can the member help me with the logic in all of this?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to help my colleague with the logic in this.

[*Translation*]

Our government's logic is very simple. We are here for all Canadians. We are here to create jobs. We are here to create economic growth. We are here to create prosperity in the long term—not just for our generation. We have a record of doing so on this side of the House. We are here for all future generations.

The Budget

[English]

I am going to give a specific example of that. I must say it is a pleasure and an honour to serve under a Prime Minister who is clearly a transformational leader. He made a tough decision, and was roundly criticized by the NDP and Liberals at the time, when he decided to pay down Canada's debt by \$37 billion. He brought Canada's debt level to its lowest in 25 years, notwithstanding the manufactured commentary *sur l'autre côté*.

We actually have a record we can be extremely proud of, and because of those decisions, this is the country that survived the *crise mondiale*, the absolute crisis that took so many countries into despair. We survived it with the strongest banking system in the world.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to budget 2013. In fact, going on from what my colleague said, we are the first government in Canadian history to actually lower greenhouse gas emissions. That clearly indicates to me that the more the Conservatives are elected and sent to this place, the less hot air there would be going around Canada.

However, I do believe that for the most part this is going to be an incredible budget for my constituency of Fort McMurray—Athabasca. When we go up there to see how much job unemployment there is, quite frankly there is none. There are so many jobs that we cannot fill them. It is a sad state of affairs when we have a situation where there are jobs in this country and there are people who are jobless, and we cannot fill those jobs. People do not much better psychologically, mentally, physically, emotionally when they have a job and they know the future is bright.

Canada has tremendous opportunities to provide those jobs. However, up until 2006, there was no movement by any federal government to move forward with a situation in the country where people could take jobs, receive training, and either move on a temporary or a permanent basis to have jobs in their particular sectors.

In fact, that is why this government has continued to provide support to the manufacturing industry, whether it be the automobile manufacturing sector in Ontario or the machinery manufacturing sector in Ontario and Quebec, or whether it be one of many others. Again, this particular budget would invest in manufacturing, in jobs and job creation, and in skills.

Some may wonder what that is all about. The truth is that we have continued to do that since 2006, since we were first elected. What we have seen as a result of the election, and then the successive moves by this Prime Minister, this cabinet and this government, is the voting in of some good economic action plans and other budgets that have created jobs and successes.

We have heard from many speakers that we have had over 900,000 net new jobs created in this country. We have also been ranked as one of the strongest economies in the G7 year after year. We have the strongest banking sector in the world right now, bar none. For the past two or three years, we have had an incredible opportunity to create jobs, to fill voids in our sector, in our economy

generally across the board, and that has worked out to be tremendously successful.

However, these are about past successes. I want to talk about tomorrow's successes. That is why I want the opportunity to talk about budget 2013.

There are tremendous positive attributes of this budget, particularly, as I said, in job creation, job growth and stimulating economic development. However, we would also note, and members have probably heard this a couple of times before, this Conservative Government of Canada, since 2006, has invested more money in quality of life, in particular infrastructure, than any government in our history. Going forward, this is the plan by this government. We are going to invest in solid community infrastructure that would give Canadians the quality of life they deserve. They deserve a high quality of life, the best quality of life of anyone in the world.

We are going to build and construct roads, bridges, subways, public infrastructure, all in collaboration with provinces and territories and also with our partners in the municipalities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in 2005, identified that we had a \$123-billion deficit on our infrastructure across the country. As a result, we saw economic action plans that brought forward somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$33 billion in 2008, and a total of about \$45 billion up to today's budget.

Now we are going forward with even more. There is \$53 billion in infrastructure funding for the next 10 years, which I will state again is the largest and longest federal infrastructure plan ever in Canadian history. This would include job creation in that infrastructure investment. That would mean more jobs for Canadians all across the country.

The one thing we are doing differently from the previous Liberal government is actually investing on an equitable basis, a fair basis, all across Canada. Whether it be in each and every province based upon population, or in the territories, we are investing fairly so Canadians would get their fair share no matter where they are in the country. That is something different. We can see that clearly in the funding model we have come forward with today. For instance, \$32 billion over the next 10 years of building community infrastructure would include over \$10 billion in federal public infrastructure. It will be over \$14 billion toward major economic infrastructure, which would include major infrastructure, such as the Windsor-Detroit bridge, and other infrastructure investments across this country.

• (1320)

These things will increase the quality of life for Canadians. That is ultimately what I am doing here and what I was elected to do by the 150,000 or so people in northern Alberta, to give them a better quality of life and to be accountable with the money. There are no slush funds here or \$40 million missing. We will find proper investments, proper accountability and make sure that Canadians get value for money. That is why I am here. There is why I was elected and that is why I will continue to represent my constituents and give them exactly that.

The Budget

There is \$1.25 billion for creating more efficient infrastructure through public private partnerships. I like public private partnerships because overall they come in for less than budget and faster in time than public infrastructure. That is correct. We can give more money, more quality of life for Canadians, through this type of model. This government has been very good and very aggressive at setting this up and we are seeing the benefits of that. The benefits go straight back to my constituents, and all Canadians.

We are also doing other things, such as \$600 million in improving shelters and stable housing for the homeless with mental health and addiction issues. This is a big issue. These people should not be in prisons. They should be taken care of by the government through some form of alternative measures. We are moving forward with that so we will have stable shelters and housing for those people. Finally, there is over \$1.25 billion in renewing our investment in affordable housing.

Opposition members talk about how mean and nasty the Conservatives are, but this budget does not say that. This budget says we clearly care about all Canadians and that we are going to make sure there is an equitable division of the tax dollars that belong to them. We are going to make sure that every part of Canada receives what it needs. There are many priorities out there, but those priorities should be done on a fair and equitable basis. That is what we are going to do.

Along with infrastructure, I mentioned earlier that we are worried about Canada's manufacturing sector. Non-renewable resources, such as oil sands, gas, gold, platinum or uranium do not renew themselves. We need to make sure we have an economy going forward for the next thousand years. That is what we are doing. We are making sure we give tax relief for new manufacturing of machinery and equipment of \$1.4 billion. We are making sure we give new investments in our aerospace industry. I think we are the third or fourth largest in the world, and that is something to be proud of. We easily fight above our weight on the international stage in the aerospace industry and we need to make sure those jobs continue to happen into the future.

We also are looking at large-scale technology projects. Not only did our knowledge infrastructure program invest in all the universities and colleges across this country that provided tremendous opportunities for my children, other people's children and the next generation, on public infrastructure buildings, but we are also investing in training and trades. We are going forward even in a time of austerity. The world is looking pretty glum, but Canada is looking great and we are investing in new technology.

I want to talk about something that is near and dear to my heart, and that is the Canada jobs grant: \$15,000 for eligible participants. However, that \$15,000 to train new people is not just given to people; it is given to people under certain conditions. Those conditions include participation by the province. Certainly it is provincial jurisdiction to create jobs and to keep that going, but we are working together with our partners, not just municipalities, but provinces and the employers. That is right. Employers have to buy into this program as well. That means that the employers and employees do not get free money. They have to abide by certain regulations and conditions to get the money. However, the money

will be there. The employers have to train people. This is not a handout; this is a hand-up scenario.

I am very proud of that. We believe we will have at least 130,000 Canadians who will have access to training and eligible institutions like colleges and training centres that will take advantage of this money.

I also want to talk about new investments. It is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20% of my constituency who are aboriginal. I am proud to see there is \$241 million to improve on-reserve income assistance programs to help guarantee first nations youth access to job skills and training. One of the largest issues we have in this country is aboriginal youth who are unemployed. That is a large percentage. There is \$5 million to expand the facilities of Cape Breton University's Purdy Crawford Chair, in aboriginal studies throughout Canada. It goes on and on.

This is a government that cares about the people of Canada, that is equitable in the decisions it makes and that makes sure every part of the country receives a fair share. However, it is about jobs. Jobs are the future of this country and we need to take care of the people who cannot take care of themselves. We need to make sure we do the job properly in the best interests of Canadians.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech.

I was interested in what he had to say about public-private partnerships. That always makes me wonder the same thing. Recently, this government granted a loan guarantee to Newfoundland and Labrador for a hydroelectric project. The province requested that loan guarantee because it is very much aware of the Canadian government's borrowing ability on the market.

So, I will ask him once more: how will a PPP be of more benefit to the taxpayers than projects financed out of public funds, since there is the ability to borrow at a lower cost?

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and represent the 30,000 Newfoundlanders who live in my riding. This is a great opportunity for them. I am also very proud of Quebec for the hydroelectricity it produces, which we are able to sell to the United States and other parts of Canada.

The Budget

I also want to point out that we would cut taxes in this particular budget. We would cut tariffs on baby clothes. The 18% tariff on baby clothes would be zero. We would eliminate the 18% tariff on ice skates to zero. Hockey equipment has a tariff of up to 18%. It would be zero. There is up to a 20% tariff on skis and snowboards. That would be zero. Tariffs on golf clubs would be zero. Tariffs on exercise equipment would be zero.

We are cutting taxes, we are keeping the economy strong and we are creating jobs. What more could the opposition ask for?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that the member and I will have to agree to disagree on. However, he represents a part of the country that is important to me. I had the opportunity to live in Fort McMurray for nine years. Many people from Cape Breton live there. As he referenced, a lot of Newfoundlanders and Easterners have made their way there. I know Atlantic Canadians take a great deal of pride in their contribution to developing the oil sands. I think he understands that full well.

My question is on the Canada job grant specifically. What we know is that there has been absolutely zero discussions with the provinces on this piece. We know that negotiations have to come forward. His comments seem to be the polar opposite to what we are hearing from the premier of Alberta, Alison Redford. Why is the province where he resides not a big fan of the job grant program?

Also, could he enlighten us as to whether he is aware of any consultations that went on between the Province of Alberta and the federal government?

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, that is correct, the member was in Fort McMurray for a period of time. He is a great hockey player. Indeed, he spent time with the Oil Barons, which is a great hockey team.

I would like to point out to the member, however, that I do not work for the premier of Alberta, I work for the people of northern Alberta, Fort McMurray—Athabasca in particular. He is correct, there are a lot of Cape Bretoners and Newfoundlanders there. I do not know how I get 72% of the vote there, but obviously we might be on the right track with our government.

I would like to talk about parks a bit. I would like to advise him that since 2006 we have contributed more than \$17 billion to support conservation of our land, animals and green energy initiatives. As I said at the very start of my speech, we have created more national parkland than any other government in Canadian history. We were the only government to ever reduce greenhouse gases. That includes the former Liberal government, which had a long time to do that and did not.

Economic action plan 2013 would also bring \$325 million into Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which would further develop clean technologies. There is also \$20 million that would support the Nature Conservancy of Canada and protect ecologically sensitive land, and \$10 million to improve the conservation of our—

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

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso is rising on a point of order and I trust it is a point of order and not a point of debate.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the microphones are working because my question was on the job grant and I am getting something on parks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca has a few seconds left to complete his answer.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I clearly heard my friend talk about where he was parked for nine years and that he was parked in Fort McMurray, so I thought it would be necessary to talk about parks.

We have done a great amount of work on parks, and green energy in particular. In fact, \$4 million in 2013 will be spent to better protect against invasive species and water regulations. We are doing a lot to keep Canadians safe, making sure jobs happen, making sure that this economy continues and Canada has the best quality of life possible.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I rise today to speak to budget 2013. I cannot say it is a pleasure to do so, since the budget is not really going in the right direction. It is my pleasure, however, to report on the concerns of the people in Brossard—La Prairie.

A budget is a series of choices. The Minister of Finance and the government decide to go in one direction or another when they bring in a budget. The Minister of Finance and the Conservatives have chosen austerity. That is their choice.

The government's goal is to balance the budget in 2015, the election year. That is a purely political choice. In fact, when we look closely at what is happening today and when we consider the world economy and the situation in Canada where economic growth is less than what the government projected, it makes Canadians worried. The economy is not as strong as the government wants them to believe.

Talking about choices means looking at the measures that have been taken. Ever since the Conservatives came to power, the youth unemployment rate has remained twice that of the average rate in the population. The gap between rich and poor is increasing at incredible rates and reaching record levels. Household debt has reached 167%, which means that for every dollar they earn, people owe \$1.67. That is huge.

The Budget

The Conservative government has also decided to reduce tax rates for big business. They said that would stimulate the economy. What has happened? Companies have \$600 billion stashed away. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the Minister of Finance have said that the situation is worrisome. That is dead money, money that is not being reinvested in the economy and is not helping Canadians and their families. The government's measures are to blame.

For the 2013 budget, we propose a long-term vision that will also help employment. One of the first things we want to emphasize is the green economy. All members of this House can agree that a long-term vision should include a green economy, but this budget has nothing to offer in that respect. It still favours the big oil companies and subsidizes them to the tune of \$1.3 billion.

The government decided to discontinue the eco-energy program, which was working well. The program helped people and families do renovations and get tax credits in order to save energy and help the economy at the same time. Unfortunately, the government has not come up with anything new to achieve that. It mentions the program and says it is proud of it, but it cancelled the program all the same. In my opinion, that is a flaw in the government's vision.

We agree that budgets ought to be balanced. The NDP has demonstrated that at the provincial level. We have the best record on budgets. We are the party with the best-balanced budgets and the least debt. These figures come from the finance department. We agree on this, but timing is critical. Right now is not a good time for an austerity budget such as the government is proposing. An austerity budget slows down the economy and creates a problem.

Since household debt is at very high levels, we cannot count on consumer spending. Moreover, private companies are not reinvesting their money. All that leads to a possible economic slowdown and worse, a recession. I am not the one predicting this; the information comes from the IMF and OECD. Many studies have shown that such a problem would occur.

We made a proposal with respect to infrastructure. I am very disappointed that the government's budget did not include a national plan for infrastructure and public transportation. We proposed that the money from excise taxes be reinvested directly by giving it to the municipalities, enabling them to take the long-term view and invest, especially since our infrastructure deficit is about \$123 billion.

• (1340)

That is enormous. We cannot expect the municipalities to make this kind of investment on their own. There will have to be co-operation with the federal government, and unfortunately, it is not happening. I know the government struts about proclaiming the many infrastructure investments in this budget. They talk about investment over 10 years, for example. It is a nice idea.

However, when we crunch the numbers, we can see that after 10 years, these proposals will lead to a loss of \$4.7 billion. The government is taking money that already exists and pretending to make new investments, saying that it will be good in the long term, but if we look at today's figures, the money already invested and the existing programs, we realize that we lose in the end, and the consequences will be felt directly.

In my riding, Brossard—La Prairie, the Champlain Bridge is a good example. I know the government boasts that it is investing in the Champlain Bridge. However, I would remind the government that it announced \$124.9 million—supposedly new money—last summer. That was for a temporary bridge connecting l'Île-des-Soeurs and Montreal. The money in this budget is not new.

We want the numbers for the Champlain Bridge. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has already said that it would cost between \$3 billion and \$5 billion. We have no other details about these figures, and no other information about costs.

Having lived through the sad fiasco of the F-35s, we have many questions, particularly about the reliability of and methods behind the Conservative government's management of public funds. We do not want to deal with another F-35 fiasco. That is why we, on this side of the House, are demanding real numbers and an open, transparent, competitive tendering process with public input.

In Quebec, sadly, we have had many problems in the construction sector. Now is the time for the government to pay attention and choose to use a more open process. Unfortunately, that is not what is happening.

As for what is happening with the public transit that is supposed to operate on the Champlain Bridge, the government says it is co-operating fully. I have asked the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities a number of questions in the House on this topic. He says that co-operation with the provincial government is going well and reports that meetings are being held. However, when we read up on the subject, we find this is what the Quebec Minister of Transport has to say:

The Government of Quebec wants to work with the federal government on a common vision for this issue. Clearly, the Minister [of Transport] is not interested.

It is clear that the federal government does not want to work with the other provinces. It works behind closed doors without consulting anyone and then shows up after the fact. It should take a more open approach from now on.

The only thing I managed to find in this budget, on page 185 of the English version, is that for the new Champlain bridge, which will cost between \$3 billion and \$5 billion, no money is earmarked for 2013-14 and \$14 million has been allocated for 2014-15. No other information is provided. That is a problem. There is not a whole lot of transparency. The government has to learn to co-operate more.

I am running out of time, so I will move on to the fact that the government is attacking labour-sponsored funds by eliminating the tax credit. Since the budget was tabled, I have received many emails from my constituents. I would like to read one from Bibianne Bédard from Brossard, which I received yesterday and which was also sent to the Minister of Finance.

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with your announcement in budget 2013 that the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds will be phased out.

I urge you to reverse this decision that will have an impact on the middle class and its ability to save for retirement and will deprive small businesses in Quebec of significant support for their development.

The Budget

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight what I believe is a very important and really overlooked issue, which is health care.

Health care is one of the issues that Canadians hold very close to their hearts. They want to know that the health care services we have grown so dependent on will be there in the future. The federal government plays a very strong role in the national health care program. Part of being able to maintain a strong national role is that the government has to provide the cash dollars necessary to feed the growth within the government expenditures at the provincial level.

My question for the member is related to the health care accord. The current accord will expire in 2014 and we seem to have a Prime Minister who resists meetings with premiers at all costs. At the end of the day, to alleviate the concerns Canadians have with regard to the future of health care, the Prime Minister needs to concede that he has to meet with the premiers at some point in time to come up with a new health care accord.

Could the member provide some of his thoughts in regard to the issue of financing of one of our greatest expenditures and most important social programs?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague with respect to consultation. We need to have more discussion between the federal and provincial governments.

I mentioned the example of infrastructure, but that also applies to health care and at all levels. What we have seen is the Conservative government doing things behind closed doors, then telling us that we can take it or leave it. We have seen it with the provincial government, with first nations and with aboriginals. The government is not collaborative and not consulting. It basically comes up with solutions and it is a take it or leave it situation. Most of the time the conditions are not as favourable as the ones we currently have.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech on corporate taxes.

I would like to quote a passage from the recent OECD report drafted at the request of the G20 leaders, which is entitled:

[English]

“Addressing Base Erosion and Profit Shifting” and said, “Global solutions are needed to ensure that tax systems do not unduly favour multinational enterprises, leaving citizens and small businesses with bigger tax bills”.

[Translation]

Does he think the current budget really addresses this serious problem denounced by the OECD?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for her question.

On the contrary, with this budget, the government is continuing to do what it has done in the past, which is to favour large companies to the detriment of small enterprises and the population in general. For

example, the analysis done by the Conference Board of Canada provides striking examples of the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

We often hear that reducing taxes will benefit the economy and the population in general. However, we see that these measures do not work in practice when companies are sitting on \$600 billion. That is money that is not being reinvested in the economy. It is money that is not creating jobs.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my speech by making an announcement. I want to say just how reassured I was—relieved even—to learn yesterday that our great Prime Minister likes pandas. I think it should be mentioned in the House. A love of pandas is a great thing, especially since they are endangered.

However, I would really have liked it if the Prime Minister had been as receptive to the young aboriginals who walked more than 1,600 kilometres to come here and say that their living conditions are horrendous, that their community is suffering and that they need the politicians in Ottawa to listen. Unfortunately, because of the pandas, the cries of these young aboriginals went unheard. I find that absolutely shameful.

This budget is nothing but smoke and mirrors; it is mere window dressing. It is Orwellian in its vocabulary. In George Orwell's *1984*, everyone is happy when the government announces that chocolate rations are increasing to 50 grams per month. They immediately forget that their rations were 100 grams the month before and that the decrease is being passed off as an increase.

There are 300 pages of that in this budget—300 pages of phony announcements, incomplete numbers, recycled announcements and decreases in investments, which the Conservatives are trying to pass off as increases. They will be investing \$53 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years. Bravo. How wonderful. However, if we really look at the facts and figures, it is clear that if they kept up the pace of this year's infrastructure investment, they would be spending \$58 billion. They are trying to pass off a \$5 billion reduction in infrastructure investment as an increase. That is what is happening in every single chapter of the budget.

I do not want to simply focus on incomplete numbers and the charade that is the latest Conservative budget. I want to emphasize the fact that it is an attack on Quebec. There are nasty surprises in this budget, and they will hurt Quebecers, the middle class and families.

After butchering employment insurance, which has been discussed at length, the Conservatives are adding insult to injury: they are abandoning the job training agreement that was in place with the provinces. They are attacking Quebec's autonomy when it comes to control over how we train our youth and help them adapt to the labour market, and in a sense, although no one knows exactly how, they are privatizing the entire structure of job training. In fact, the Conservative government just made sure it could distribute thousands of cheques right across the country. We have already seen how this sort of thing turns out, under a government of a different political stripe.

The Budget

Raising Mouvement Desjardins's taxes is another attack on Quebec. This is further discrimination against Quebec, against the pride of the Quebec economy and against Quebecers' ability to save. These things will hurt people. The people of Quebec will receive less in dividends from the Caisses Desjardins because of the Conservative government.

One final aspect of the direct attack on Quebec's interests has to do with labour-sponsored investment funds. These funds have invested \$10 billion in Quebec's economy over the years. This winning formula has paid off. Unfortunately, we have an ideological government that is attacking the formula of labour-sponsored investment funds, such as the Fonds de solidarité FTQ and Fondation CSN, to name a couple.

Why is this a direct attack on Quebec? Here is why: of the \$350 million the government plans to collect, \$312 million will come directly from Quebec. This Conservative government measure is completely short-sighted and unfair. It will undermine job creation and is an attack on workers' and Quebecers' ability to save.

Since 1990, these funds have helped create, save or maintain half a million jobs in Quebec. This is a success story like no other. Businesses like Air Transat probably would not have been possible without the support of the Fonds de solidarité FTQ.

• (1350)

These funds have special features, and the most important one is that they create and save jobs in Quebec. What do the Conservatives have against successful job creation measures? It is completely absurd. Even the Conseil du patronat du Québec said it was surprised by this decision because these investment funds benefit Quebec and especially the regions.

This is an attack on the Quebec model in many respects. We hope that the Conservative government will listen to reason and that we will be able to save the tax credit for labour-sponsored investment funds.

What is the role of these funds? Why are they particularly useful? They are different than other funds and complement them. These funds equalize supply, result in the economic diversification of the regions and are a significant source of capital for businesses that operate in sectors that are sometimes overlooked. The yields on these funds are not the highest, nor are they the lowest. Nevertheless, they are used throughout Quebec to create employment, help small and medium-sized businesses, and help businesses start up, modernize, buy new technology, and remain competitive and up to date. This has to be maintained.

The investor gets the benefit of a tax credit. That is what provides the return on the investment. That is why this tax credit exists, why the province created it and why the federal government has applied it for years. We must keep it. Otherwise, this investment will be less attractive and less profitable for workers.

What is rather absurd is that the government constantly boasts about the fact that it is not increasing taxes. However, taxes on such items as bicycles and fans have increased, as well as taxes on the Mouvement Desjardins

Abolishing the tax credit increases workers' taxes. Seven hundred thousand Quebecers make regular contributions to these investment funds. The Fonds de solidarité FTQ has calculated that these people will pay \$425 more in taxes on average. Most of these investors contribute by payroll deduction. For every \$1,000 invested in these funds that create jobs in Quebec, the investor receives a \$300 tax refund. This amount will be reduced to \$150. For every \$1,000 invested, the federal government will keep \$150. That is \$150 that will be taken out of workers' pockets. The least fortunate often are barely able to save a little money for their old age.

We often talk about the poverty of seniors. We had a good tool to encourage them to save, one that benefited them, Quebec, the regions and the companies and that allowed them to have a little nest egg for their retirement. However, now the Conservative government is trying to do away with that tool.

This is not very surprising coming from a party that announced in Davos, Switzerland, that the age of eligibility for old age security was going to increase from 65 to 67. That was the Conservatives' first attack on Canadian seniors and pension plans. We have just seen another phase of that attack with the elimination of the labour-sponsored funds tax credit. This is a very real cause for concern but, unfortunately, it is not surprising coming from the government.

I would like to quote Léopold Beaulieu, CEO of Fondation, who said the following:

Such action by the federal government would deliver a serious blow to Quebec's economy in two ways. The only way that many people with low incomes can save for their retirement is to contribute to a labour-sponsored fund. [The only way.] These funds are a key source of funding for the development of many Quebec SMEs.

The government is killing two birds with one stone: it is attacking both the people and the SMEs of Quebec. The government is also attacking the Quebec model, which makes it possible to provide workers with economic training. Last year, the Fonds de solidarité FTQ alone made it possible to provide 295 courses and train 6,400 people. This fund helps people to better understand investments, share ownership and how their investments help to develop all the regions of Quebec.

Ideological decisions on labour-sponsored funds aside, this budget is seriously lacking in many other areas. It is never going help to stimulate the economy or create jobs. On the contrary, it is going to sink us deeper and deeper into debt and put us on the slippery slope to privatization. The Conservatives have not proposed any measures to fight poverty or provide social housing, and they are making even more cuts to measures that fight homelessness. They are attacking the poorest members of society.

That is why the NDP will be proud to vote against this budget that does not respect people.

• (1355)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for government orders has now expired.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

*[English]***COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IN SAANICH—GULF ISLANDS**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, here is an S. O. 31, uncensored and unscripted.

I have two big events to talk about in my riding. The first is that we all, or many of us, are wearing purple today to celebrate Purple Day to increase awareness of epilepsy and Parkinson's. I will leave it to my colleague, the member for Halifax West, who I am sure will tell us more about it.

On Saturday, March 23, we had a plane pull in Saanich—Gulf Islands, out at the Sidney airport, to raise money for this good cause.

I also want to shine a light on a great idea that came from the Sidney by the Sea town council. It is called Glow As You Go, and the goal is to make sure pedestrians are well lit so that motorists can see them. This little reflective armband was distributed in the town through a joint venture. It involved the RCMP, local business, Slegg Lumber, Sidney by the Sea town council and ICBC. It was enthusiastically received, and I urge other members to try it in their communities.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2013 is great news for the north.

I am pleased to tell Yukon residents of the record levels of funding through transfer payments to our territory. The \$861 million transfer is \$329 million more than we received under previous Liberal governments.

One of the greatest news stories is a line item to support the Yukon College Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. This trades and technical facility investment would ensure greater opportunities for Yukon people, for Yukon jobs.

[Translation]

The new road map reflects the government's commitment to enhancing the vitality of Canada's official language minority communities. It helps to strengthen linguistic duality. Canada's two official languages are an integral part of our national history, culture and identity. I am proud of our Franco-Yukon community.

* * *

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN BEAUPORT—LIMOILLOU

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beaufort—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 20, 2013, a raging fire left eight immigrant and refugee families homeless in the middle of the night. The victims, who lived on Bouchette Street, in the heart of Limoilou, lost everything. My riding office quickly became the collection point for donations. Quebec City rose to the challenge and was extraordinarily generous. Everyone put in hours of hard work, and now some of the families are moving into their new homes today.

I would like to acknowledge the firefighters, paramedics, police officers and Red Cross staff for their quick and effective response. I would also like to acknowledge the generous donors and volunteers from the Quebec City region, as well as the businesses that showed their support. I also thank my team, as well as Entraide Agapè, the Centre multiethnique de Québec, the Salvation Army and the Quebec City administration for their hard work.

It was a moving and rewarding experience for me and my team, as well as the families involved.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

* * *

*[English]***THE BUDGET**

Ms. Eve Adams (Mississauga—Brampton South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government's economic action plan is focused on creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada and its people.

The Canada job grant aims to help job seekers and job creators, providing nearly 130,000 Canadians with access to the training required to fill available jobs.

Our Conservative government has also introduced the largest long-term federal commitment to Canadian infrastructure in our nation's history, \$70 billion over 10 years. This is very welcome news in the GTA, where this money would go toward much-needed roads and transit.

We have also introduced tax-cutting measures, such as the first-time donors credit to encourage charitable giving within our communities.

Our Conservative government is committed to ensuring Canada's prosperity. We will not be stopped by the NDP's misguided plans to increase taxes and kill Canadian jobs.

* * *

*[Translation]***FRANCO-ONTARIAN NEWSPAPER**

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1912, James Whitney's Conservative Ontario government prohibited the use of French as a language of instruction by adopting Regulation 17.

Father Charlebois and many collaborators, both religious and secular, joined together to confront this threat and, through a successful grassroots fundraising campaign, founded the newspaper *Le Droit* in order to keep francophone schools in Ontario.

Statements by Members

The newspaper's first issue rolled off the presses on March 27, 1913, 100 years ago tomorrow. Since then, *Le Droit* has fought all the fights: for homogeneous school boards, for francophone colleagues, for linguistic duality and linguistic rights, for the Montfort Hospital.

My message today is for the more than 600,000 francophones in Ontario. Stay true to our language and our culture, and demand that *Le Droit* stay true to us. If the future belongs to those who fight, it is also up to our daily newspaper to fight with us.

Long live those who fight. Long live *Le Droit*, which is celebrating its first hundred years tomorrow.

* * *

●(1405)

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I attended a retirement dinner for Brian Duplessis, who is retiring after 40 years with the Department of Agriculture in New Brunswick.

Brian is the consummate professional, giving his all to the industry. In this day and age when we tend to speak first and engage the brain later, Brian listened first, thoughtfully considered the situation and spoke with determination and kindness.

[Translation]

Anyone who knows Brian will say that he is deeply concerned about the industry and all producers. Brian travelled all over numerous rural regions in New Brunswick, and if a farmer needed to be seen, Brian was probably at that farm.

[English]

Brian could carry the serious messages from producers to government while applying the appropriate filters to keep the discussions productive.

He is a true gentleman, committed to his work, his family and his faith. Each tribute at the dinner provided a glimpse into a man who was well respected and valued for his contribution to the entire industry.

I want to extend my best wishes to Brian on his retirement and to him, Suzanne and the entire family our hope for many years of health and happiness.

* * *

[Translation]

TÉMISCOUATA AND LES BASQUES

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two economic gatherings were held in my riding in recent weeks. The first took place in Pohénégamook, in Témiscouata, and the second in Saint-Mathieu-de-Rioux, in Les Basques.

In total, over 300 entrepreneurs and workers met to discuss the economic vitality in my riding. In Témiscouata, there are about 350

job openings in a number of businesses, such as Bégin & Bégin, Les Constructions Unic and Les Produits PBM.

In Les Basques, people shared some wonderful success stories, including that of Basques Hardwood Charcoal, which sells maple charcoal to supply chefs' kitchens across North America, and Fromagerie des Basques, a success story in its own right and the first business of its kind to develop and use its own biomethanation process.

Comments to local media outlets showed how happy people are to finally see some success stories, rather than bad-news stories.

I am proud to have been a part of this initiative. Keep an eye on Témiscouata and Les Basques. Our region's ingenuity knows no bounds.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2009, the United States implemented a protectionist measure for meat products entering the U.S. from Canada, known as country of origin labelling or COOL. Our Canadian government requested a WTO panel, which ruled that COOL was a discriminatory and illegal trade barrier. The Obama administration has shown no intention of complying with the WTO ruling, but instead has proposed even more detailed labelling laws.

COOL has devastated our livestock industry. Exports of Canadian cattle to the U.S. have fallen by half, and hog shipments have fallen by over 60%. This represents losses to livestock producers in the billions of dollars.

If history has taught us anything, it is that protectionism does not create economic growth for anyone.

The Obama administration is stubbornly supporting COOL. It is ignoring the WTO, violating the spirit of NAFTA, jeopardizing Canadian good will, unfairly punishing our livestock industry and hurting American processors.

If the Obama administration will not comply with the WTO, Canada will retaliate. We will not stand for this unfair attack on our livestock sector.

* * *

CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize a very special organization in my riding, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

The CNIB is an organization that serves Canadians from coast to coast who are blind or partially sighted. It provides a strong national voice for all who are a part of the community in Canada.

Founded in 1918, the CNIB offers a wide array of services that ensure that those in its community have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in all facets of life.

Statements by Members

I am pleased to note that budget 2013 would assist the CNIB in building its innovative national digital hub. This facility will “acquire and produce alternative format materials, and distribute them” to the print-disabled community.

Congratulations to president John Rafferty and his team in their pursuit to ensure that the CNIB continues to be an innovation leader in Canada.

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

RENAISSANCE BROME LAKE

Mr. Pierre Jacob (Brome—Missisquoi, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I participated in an event put on by a local organization, Renaissance Brome Lake.

This organization is made up of people who are concerned about protecting and restoring an ecological gem—Brome Lake. Nearby residents can enjoy this magnificent body of water at various times throughout the year.

In partnership with researchers and biologists, Renaissance Brome Lake has increased public awareness of the fauna in this area, which includes eight wetlands and various tributaries.

This lake plays a part in the economic vitality of the surrounding municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I invite you to visit this magnificent area, starting with a round of golf on one of the three courses around Brome Lake. Afterwards, you could stop for a while at Douglass Beach and then make your way to the Knowlton marina.

Congratulations to this organization on the work it does to protect the environment.

* * *

[*English*]

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today and stand in support of Purple Day. It is wonderful to see so many of my colleagues in the House wearing purple ribbons today. We are all touched by epilepsy, whether of a family member, a co-worker, a friend or a neighbour. Those living with epilepsy face challenges, discrimination and often a lower quality of life. Sadly, 300,000 Canadians live with epilepsy.

Although there is no cure for epilepsy, we can all play a more active role by helping others understand what it is like to live with epilepsy and by helping affected Canadians reach their full potential. There are many citizen advocates in my riding of Barrie, Ontario who are dedicated to increasing awareness of epilepsy by providing education for people with epilepsy and their families, friends and employers, as well as the greater community.

I pay tribute to Melanie Money, Jeffrey White and David Lowe for their sustained and dedicated commitment to this important cause in Simcoe County.

PURPLE DAY

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today orange turns purple. This is what is in our hearts today on this, the first official Purple Day for epilepsy awareness. The purple we see is simply the outward sign of our solidarity with all those who live with epilepsy, and there are many. This is not a disease that affects the very few. About 300,000 Canadians have this neurological disorder, and they come from all walks of life.

Among them are heroes of mine, such as the great Canadian singer-songwriter Neil Young and young Cassidy Megan, who has epilepsy, yes, but also the power within her to inspire all of us into not just a single day of unity but an annual display, in purple to boot.

For Cassidy and others, the purple is about educating Canadians without epilepsy, but may all the purple in this House today also send a message to those with epilepsy. The message is that they are not alone and should not feel alone.

Tomorrow on this side of the House, purple will become orange again, but we are on their side year round.

* * *

PASSOVER

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise in the House today to extend my best wishes to Canada's Jewish community for celebrating Passover.

Last night Jewish families and friends across Canada shared traditional seder meals during which they retold the story of Passover. Passover commemorates the Exodus of the Israelites from ancient Egypt and their freedom from slavery. As the Israelites fled Pharaoh, the bread they had baked did not have time to rise. During this eight-day holiday, Jews eat matzo, flat unleavened bread, to commemorate the Exodus.

Passover is a time when all Canadians can reflect on the importance of freedom, family, tradition and faith and a time to think about those who struggle for basic human rights.

I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in wishing all Canadians celebrating Passover a joyous holiday. *Chag Sameach.*

* * *

PURPLE DAY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the unanimous support from members on all sides of this House last year for the Purple Day Act, I am thrilled to stand in the House today to recognize the first official Purple Day in Canada.

Purple Day was founded by Cassidy Megan, a young woman from Halifax West, to raise international awareness about epilepsy. This condition affects 300,000 Canadians and 50 million people worldwide. Cassidy and members of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance are on Parliament Hill today to help us celebrate Canada's leadership in epilepsy awareness. I invite you, Mr. Speaker, and all my colleagues to a reception down the hall after question period to meet Cassidy Megan.

Oral Questions

I know all members will join me in extending our thanks to Cassidy for her courage and her commitment to improving the quality of life for all people with epilepsy.

* * *

• (1415)

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Darryl Sutter is a Stanley Cup champion, and this native Albertan is also a champion of Canada's job-creating energy industry. When he meets with U.S. President Barack Obama, he will raise the importance of the Keystone XL pipeline in the long-term prosperity and energy security of both our countries.

Contrast this with the leader of the NDP who, on his recent trip to Washington, argued against Canadian jobs and met with convicted cop shooter Gary Freeman. When asked about why he met with someone who shot a brave front-line Chicago police officer, the NDP leader said, "There are values that guide you in what you do in your life."

What are the NDP leader's values? Through his actions he has put left-wing extremism ahead of keeping our streets and communities safe. He has argued against a vital sector of our economy that creates jobs from coast to coast to coast.

Our Conservative government will continue to stand up for law-abiding Canadians, stand up for our economy and ensure that the NDP leader's wild socialist schemes will never come to pass.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since forming government in 2006, Conservatives have consistently ignored and marginalized women.

They gutted child care programs, cut pay equity and closed Status of Women offices, and now they continue to undermine social supports for women and families.

On Friday, we got a window into their mindset when the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, while defending the budget, said, "Grace, you're a great cook. You're going to make a wonderful wife for somebody."

Instead of apologizing, the minister tried to claim his words were taken out of context. The only context that could possibly make this acceptable would be if it was still the 1950s or if the minister prefaced them by saying, "It would be incredibly inappropriate for me to say the following".

Canadian women deserve better. Fortunately, Canadians have the NDP. A New Democrat government would ensure its cabinet actually respects the contributions of women to all aspects of modern Canadian society.

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the future of our country, it is a matter of choices. For example, our government has a responsible plan to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

The NDP leader, on the other hand, has schemed up a \$20-billion job-killing carbon tax that would raise the price of everything.

Under our Conservative government, the Canadian economy has created over 950,000 net new jobs since the depth of the global economic recession.

In contrast, the NDP leader's job-killing carbon tax would kill Canadian jobs and stall economic growth.

Economic action plan 2013 builds on the strong foundation our government laid last year to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

The NDP leader has decided to abandon hard-working Canadian families by travelling to Washington to trash Canada and lobby against Canadian jobs.

Canadians chose to support Canada's government—

The Speaker: Oral questions. The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are having a hard time defending their budget. They cut infrastructure but pretend that it is new spending. They cut hundreds of millions in provincial skills training but pretended that it is new money. They leaked information about a small tariff reduction on hockey equipment, then turned around and actually raised tariffs by over \$300 million. There is a tax hike on almost everything.

Why the shell game? Why will the Conservatives not tell Canadians the truth about the budget?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note how well the budget has been received across the country. I note in particular the first issue that the member raised, the infrastructure program; this government is undertaking the largest infrastructure investment in Canadian history. That is why the budget is supported so strongly by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Really, there is a choice. Is the NDP going to vote against infrastructure once again and vote against the FCM once again, or is it going to stand with municipalities and with these infrastructure investments?

Oral Questions

●(1420)

TAXATION

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP will never vote for budgets that deceive the Canadian people.

The Conservatives are even hiking taxes on hospital parking. Conservatives are trying to claim that hospital parking is like any other commercial parking, but it is not. These people are not going shopping; they are going to visit friends and family who are sick or dying in the hospital.

The Conservatives are already raising tariffs by over \$300 million. Why are they adding insult to injury by also increasing taxes on hospital parking?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this government that lowered the GST on everything by 2%, and once again the NDP voted against the interests of consumers on that occasion.

In terms of support for the budget, I would note that various measures are supported by the Canadian Building Trades, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, the Forest Products Association of Canada, Food and Consumer Products of Canada, the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, the Canadian Auto Workers union, the Canadian Steel Producers Association and the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries.

Will the NDP get onside with the Canadian public and get onside with job creation, or will it continue to campaign against jobs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once the government brings in a budget that actually deals with the issues that affect Canadians, we will be there to support it. It will take the NDP to bring it in.

Just before Christmas Jane Kittmer of Stratford, Ontario, won a legal fight over EI. This is a mother with cancer who was denied EI while she was on chemotherapy. The Conservatives have chosen to appeal this decision, and they are even going after the \$5,000 she was awarded, despite the fact that they have already acknowledged they are going to change the unfair policy.

Why will they not do the right thing and drop this case against this mother and cancer survivor?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reason the NDP has voted against so many job creation measures, as we learned from its leader in Washington, is because it actually opposes job creation in this country. That is the unfortunate reality.

In terms of the specific situation that the member has mentioned, he will know that this government has changed the rules so that those who find themselves with these kinds of illnesses are protected by employment insurance in the future. He knows full well that I cannot comment on a case that is before the courts. The fact of the

matter is that this is a case under the previous rules, but the government is exploring ways that this matter can be addressed and resolved.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are taking a cancer survivor to court because she collected employment insurance benefits while she was ill. The government must have no heart or feelings if it is going after this courageous woman. The only decent thing to do is to abandon this ridiculous legal battle. Could the Conservatives look up the word “empathy” in the dictionary and apply it to this situation?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, this government changed the legislation so that vulnerable people who find themselves with these kinds of illnesses are protected in the future. The case currently before the courts falls under the previous rules.

Obviously, I cannot comment on this case, but I can assure the opposition that the government is looking at a way to resolve this case.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the honourable thing to do would be to withdraw the case.

The Conservatives are reaching into Canadians' pockets with both hands to deal with the enormous deficit they created. Going to visit a loved one in the hospital? There is a parking tax. Doing your grocery shopping? There is \$300 million in taxes on imports. Belong to a credit union? There is a rebate tax.

Do the Conservatives realize that they are destroying our economy by taxing everything?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that budget 2013 is about jobs, growing the economy and the long-term prosperity of the country. All the measures in this budget are aimed toward that.

We hear the NDP members are going to vote against that. That means they are going to vote against businesses. We are helping small businesses. It means they are going to be voting against Canadians who want to retrain. There is a plan in this budget to help Canadians retrain for jobs that are available for them. We think that is very important and we would encourage the NDP to support that.

●(1425)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three provincial ministers of finance, from Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia, have all expressed strong concern about the unilateral nature of the changes announced by the Minister of Finance in the budget on skills training. Since when is it a sign of progress for the federal government to announce a program, reduce its funding to 2007 levels and then tell the provinces and the private sector that they will have to pay two-thirds of the price?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest economic problems we have in our country is not simply that there are not jobs for people, but in many cases there are not people for jobs that could be filled. This is something this government has heard in talking to Canadians all across the country. It is a matter that we are determined to address.

Obviously we are planning to sit down and discuss this with the provinces, the private sector and our partners. We do want to see a partnership on that. However, it is absolutely important that we move ahead and ensure that our funds are used to get people into jobs where they actually can work and support their families.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): If the federal government is so serious about negotiating, why is it announcing the details of a program before sitting down with the provinces? That is ridiculous. That is not the way to manage the federation. None of the parties in Quebec, including the Parti Québécois, want the federal government to unilaterally intervene and cut transfers.

Why manage the country that way?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made this announcement because, on this side of the House, we are taking action. It is important to act and to tackle our problems head-on. There is a shortage of certain skills for jobs that are available. We want to work in collaboration and in partnership with the provinces and the private sector so that we can be sure to fill these positions. It is essential that we take action and find jobs for the unemployed people in our country.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the control freak nature of the government is really extraordinary. Conservatives announce a program without negotiating it with anybody, then they start advertising the program without discussing it with anybody and they are actually spending less than they were spending in 2008-09.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. Is this why his members from Vegreville—Wainwright, Langley and from other ridings are now coming into the House and expressing concern that they are not allowed to speak their minds? He will not let the provinces speak their minds. Why will he not let his own members speak their minds?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal Party members were actually listening to Canadians, they would understand that this is a very important issue to the Canadian economy, their most important issue on which they expect governments to act, to work to create jobs. This is something we want to do in partnership, not just with provincial governments but, quite frankly, with job creators and with job seekers. They are the ones we have to put together to actually make things happen. This government is determined to act and we have the strong support of the Canadian people to do it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the Conservatives it is not enough to tax the hospital parking fees we pay when visiting a sick family member. The Conservatives have also increased customs tariffs, which will increase the cost of almost

everything. This \$300 billion increase contained in the budget will have an immediate impact on Canadians' grocery bills.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to be honest? Why are they shamelessly picking Canadians' pockets?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, preferential tariffs were actually about 40 years old and it was a program that was used as an official aid.

What we are trying to do is provide a level playing field for our Canadian companies and Canadian businesses so they are able to compete. For some of the other countries that are also wanting to export, it provides a level playing field for them as well.

• (1430)

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, even if we do not manufacture the same things in Canada, it does not make sense. The fact is the Conservatives are increasing the tariffs of over \$300 million and even callously raising taxes on hospital parking. This budget is a tax shell game and it is hitting Canadians right in the pocketbook.

The Minister of Finance has admitted he does not know what the costs will be to consumers, so why are Conservatives playing games with Canadians? Why are they pretending to lower tariffs and then turning around and raising them by over \$300 million?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about millions of dollars, but from what I hear from the NDP, its carbon tax alone would increase the cost of everything by \$21 billion.

I know the only way we could ever get the NDP to support this budget is if we had tax increases in it, but no one will find tax increases in this. We are trying to help Canadians grow jobs and we are worried about their long-term prosperity.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new in this so-called new building Canada plan. It is old money with a different name. The building Canada fund went from \$1.2 billion a year to \$210 million. That is a billion-dollar cut in this renaming exercise. Playing a shell game with Canadians stuck in traffic gridlock or suffering from poor water quality is a cruel joke.

When will we ever see real solutions to the real problems faced by Canadians?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is wrong and the member received all the answers in committee last week. She has all the information, but she prefers not to consider it.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

If the member opposite cares so much about infrastructure spending, she should support our government for creating the building Canada fund, doubling and making permanent the gas tax fund and creating the economic action plan. She will have another chance. She will have to vote for this budget, the economic action plan, because we have a new plan for infrastructure.

* * *

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first thing the government has to start doing is being straight with Canadians. Now the Conservatives' shell game with skills training is also unravelling. Their job grant is not the same money; it only has new conditions. Once again, it is being unilaterally imposed upon the provinces, a relationship that is already in tatters. The relationship with the provinces and territories is already in tatters.

What is the new intergovernmental affairs minister going to do to repair some of that damage?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. As the Prime Minister said in the leaders' round in question period, our project is about working with provinces to ensure that Canadian jobs are available for Canadians, for those businesses as well, by the way, where we are seeing a growing gap between jobs that are available and Canadians' unwillingness to fill them, frankly, because they do not have the skills. We want to match the skills with the jobs, and this project is about that.

We will negotiate with the provinces, we will move forward and we will continue to invest in jobs and fight for Canadian jobs in a way that the NDP, frankly, simply does not understand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, starting negotiations after decisions have been made amounts to coercion.

The minister has rejected outright the provinces' grievances concerning the shell game he is playing with worker training. It is simple: with one hand he is taking the money given to the provinces and, with the other, he is asking for additional money from the provinces for a program designed and managed by Ottawa. His predecessor did not hold consultations, and the current minister seems to be following his lead.

Is the minister holding discussions with Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia in order to find potential solutions for a problem that he created?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said and as some members mentioned in their budget speeches, the budget indicates that we will be working with the provinces to ensure that the program creates jobs for Canadians. My colleague should know that we have created 950,000 new jobs in Canada, which is the best job statistic of all G7 countries. We will continue to go in that direction and to create jobs in every region of the country by working with the provinces.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, centralizing job training without consulting the provinces is another foolish decision. The Conservatives can wreak havoc and attack worker solidarity, but the reality is that investments in labour-sponsored funds help put food on the table for tens of thousands of Quebecers. The reality is that tens of thousands of Quebecers enjoy a better retirement because of these investment funds. This is a model that works, and Quebec is very proud of it.

Why are the Conservatives attacking investment funds? Is it because they are related to unions?

• (1435)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. member that these investment funds will continue to exist and that small investors in Quebec and the rest of Canada will be able to invest in these funds through RRSPs.

We have also created other products for small investors, such as the tax-free savings account, which is useful to them. We stand with small investors because we know that when they have money, they can create wealth, and that jobs and wealth are important.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives were really serious about helping investors, they would not do away with a winning formula that has been working in Quebec for years.

Rather than talk about the Conservatives' tall tales, I am going to talk about jobs and, more specifically, about the people employed by Manac, the truck trailer manufacturer located in the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism's backyard. Manac benefited from investments from the FTQ's Fonds de solidarité, and most of the 600 workers with good jobs in St-George-de-Beauce owe them to the FTQ's Fonds de solidarité. The economic spinoffs are felt throughout Beauce. Can the minister explain why he is attacking jobs in his own region?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue. The Fonds de solidarité will continue to invest in companies. The fund has over \$8.8 billion in investments and was given a tax break to allow it to capitalize. Today, this fund operates on capital markets like other funds, and the money will be available for investment in cost-effective companies such as Canam Group.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are having a hard time getting people to accept attacks on labour-sponsored funds. They are also having a hard time with the northern gateway project because they were incapable of responding to the concerns of Canadians about their unbalanced and unsustainable approach to developing our natural resources. That is why they spent millions of dollars on advertising to compensate for their inaction.

Does the Minister of the Environment understand that spending millions of dollars on propaganda cannot buy a good reputation?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, natural resources create jobs and economic growth in all regions of Canada. We want to improve Canadians' awareness of our responsible approach to developing our resources. Canada has one of the most stringent environmental protection regimes in the world, and we are strengthening it further with new security measures for pipelines and marine traffic.

[*English*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it is a great example of Conservative propaganda. The real issue here is how Conservatives are scrambling for a public relations response to what is a policy failure.

British Columbians do not trust the government on environmental protection or on pipeline safety. That is the truth. However, instead of addressing these legitimate concerns, Conservatives are spending millions to sell their unbalanced and unsustainable approach.

Taxpayer-funded Conservative propaganda is wrong. It is that simple. Why are the Conservatives using other people's money to promote these failed economic policies?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is common practice for governments of all stripes to use advertising for public information to communicate with Canadians. Providing Canadians with the facts helps them to make informed decisions.

This is a fact-based ad. All government policies and rules were followed in developing this campaign. We have every right to be proud of our responsible resource development policies.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is tax time and soon we will be bombarded by expensive ads about a taxpayer-funded tax cheat line.

With Mr. Penashue in mind, I am just wondering, if people call the snitch line to report tax cheats hiding almost half of their total income from authorities and claiming \$50,000 in illegal receipts, can the Prime Minister decide that the tax cheats are immune from any consequences because he thinks they are hard workers who made the simple mistake of having an amateur chartered accountant help file their tax form? No? Well, why do cheaters like—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are keeping tax rates low for Canadians by closing tax loopholes and making the system fairer. We are going to launch the stop the international tax evasion program to improve identification of tax evasion and to protect Canadians.

Since 2006, our government has introduced over 75 measures to improve the integrity of the tax system. If the opposition is serious about cracking down on tax evasion, then it will support the budget and give the CRA the tools it needs.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it must be the Penashue loophole.

The Conservatives keep shovelling it into their latest EAP, extravagant advertising propaganda. They are spending tens of millions of dollars again this year on thinly veiled partisan advertising, paid for by Canadians from Labrador to Vancouver Island and supported by Peter the cheater.

Yet there is not a nickel in this year's budget for the long-sought-after regional airports in Nain and Port Hope Simpson, Labrador. Why not?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the advertising budget which, of course, supports our obligation to communicate with the Canadian public on issues of national importance, including how the budget might affect them, is down by 46% since 2009-10. We are acting responsibly but still communicating with the public.

Of course, the last full year of the Liberal government, the Liberals spent over \$20 million more than we did.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the whole Peter Penashue affair is quite funny. Indeed, he spends millions on self-promoting advertising. This is a gentleman who is a fraudster, self-admitted. He admitted to electoral fraud but at the same time, he blamed someone else. He might as well have just said, "Look. I smoked, but I didn't inhale".

Oral Questions

Here we have a situation where while he was here, he not only ignored search and rescue but ignored other major files pertaining to Labrador. In this particular situation, when will Peter Penashue be held to account before—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Peter Penashue is an honourable man. He has represented the people of Newfoundland and Labrador effectively—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of National Defence has the floor.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, he was a first nations leader through much of his professional career. He was a dedicated constituency man. I can tell members that he approached me a number of times with respect to the issue of search and rescue in his constituency.

It was because of those approaches that we made the decision—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The Minister of National Defence still has the floor. I do not want to waste a lot of time having to get up to call for order.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, Mr. Penashue approached me with respect to the issue of augmenting the search and rescue at the Goose Bay base. Because of those interventions, we increased the number of Griffin helicopters to be made available for search and rescue.

We also, as a result of his interventions, increased the way in which we communicate with the provinces to respond to important search and rescue needs.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we welcomed young Cree walkers and heard their call for reconciliation. The Conservatives are failing to forge new respectful relationships with aboriginal peoples. Now we learn Conservatives are also letting down the front-line officers in aboriginal communities. Like in so many communities, police in NAN territory are chronically underfunded, housed in shacks and facing extreme levels of trauma and stress.

Conservatives had an opportunity in the budget to close this funding gap, so why are they turning their backs on northern communities?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce that our Conservative government will be providing stable, long-term funding for first nations policing. Spending on first nations policing has increased substantially under this government.

This important initiative is part of our government's plan for safe streets and communities and we are pleased with the reception it is receiving from the first nations community leaders that I met with.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the walkers from Eeyou Istchee showed how determined and courageous aboriginal youth are. Although the minister had some nice things to say, there was nothing in the Conservative budget for them. Funding for education is 30% lower on reserve than off reserve. Nothing has been proposed for access to drinking water or housing. We are not going to build respectful and lasting relationships by asking for a hasty meeting with these youth.

I have an easy question for the Minister. When will he put words into action?

• (1445)

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe if the hon. member opened his eyes, he would be able to see the actions the government is taking.

In this year's budget, we are once again investing hundreds of millions of dollars to improve conditions in aboriginal communities across the country. We are investing in education, investment in infrastructure, and funding for the education and training of aboriginal youth.

I invite the NDP members to stop spinning their wheels and support this budget.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that the following remarks were taken out of context: "Grace, you're a great cook. You're going to make a wonderful wife for somebody."

In what context are those remarks acceptable?

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we have already dealt with that situation. What we are concentrating on is economic action plan 2013, jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We are doing all of that without increasing taxes, without reducing transfer payments to the provinces, unlike the NDP, who would raise taxes with a \$21 billion carbon tax.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the next time, the minister should stick to his knitting instead of offering unsolicited marriage advice. From childcare to EI—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. John Baird: Kick her out.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Megan Leslie: I am sorry I did not cite my source.

Oral Questions

From childcare to EI, the government has gutted services designed to help and protect women. Instead of encouraging young women to have a future of their own making, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans simply suggests that one day, we will make great wives.

Will the Minister for Status of Women—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Megan Leslie: No, actually, I will not stop.

Will she stand up for Canadian women and apologize for her colleague's comments?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand up and share with the House that on Friday, I was with an organization called Women Building Futures. I was with a graduating class of young women, exclusively young women, who are going to become heavy equipment operators in the oil sands. They were thrilled to hear about our Canada job grant, which would support thousands of other young women who want to get into high-paying trades jobs.

We will continue to focus on what matters to all Canadians, including women, and that is creating jobs.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the recession, we have seen over 950,000 net new jobs created. Budget 2013 announced an exciting new job creation initiative, the Canada job grant.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage please update the House on how the initiative is being received across the country?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have 950,000 net new jobs and better than that. Canada's job records since the worst point in the recession are the best job numbers in all of the G7. Budget 2013, our economic action plan, will build on that further with our Canada job plan. As was said today by the National Association of Career Colleges, this job grant will “benefit Canadian job-seekers as well [as] employers seeking qualified and skilled employees”.

Canadians have said time and again that they want Parliament focused on creating prosperity and jobs for Canadians. That is what budget 2013, our economic action plan, will do with this important piece of it.

* * *

[Translation]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, training exercises at the Halifax centre revealed some major shortcomings in the coordination of rescue services in both official languages. Despite those shortcomings, some activities of the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre will be transferred to Halifax in three weeks. In light of the Conservatives' contempt, we have asked the Commissioner of Official Languages to conduct an urgent investigation to determine the current linguistic status of that service.

Do the Conservatives realize that closing the Quebec City centre will endanger the safety of francophones on the water?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Coast Guard intends to maintain its excellent record of safety and service to mariners. As we have said all along, consolidation will be based on operational needs, public safety and taking the time needed to complete the work properly. Of course, we will maintain bilingual services.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the Conservatives' decision is not the right one. Experts in marine safety, the Corporation of Mid St. Lawrence Pilots and rescue coordinators all agree that this is a bad decision. They are saying that closing the Quebec City rescue sub-centre will jeopardize marine safety.

What is the minister waiting for? Is he waiting for someone to be hurt or die in a marine accident because the dispatcher did not understand the distress call? The minister will have to bear the responsibility if an accident happens because of a language barrier.

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, consolidation will be based on operational needs, public safety and taking the time needed to complete the job properly. Of course, we will provide bilingual service.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Newfoundland they expect fishermen to speak Italian.

In Labrador West, the prevalence of silicosis is unusually high among workers at iron ore mines. Retired workers and their spouses are being made sick and even dying from chronic exposure to silica dust. They are looking to the government for help. The government has been aware for years of the dangers of silica dust.

What are the Conservatives doing to ensure the health of workers in Labrador?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of workers across the country is an important part of the work that is done by the Department of HRSDC, and the Minister of Labour takes all these matters very seriously. We would be pleased to be work with the member opposite to continue to advance the safety of workers across this country.

*Oral Questions***MINING INDUSTRY**

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats will always oppose budgets that hurt Newfoundland and Labrador, like this budget. Tucked away on the corner of page 151 of the budget, we learned that the accelerated capital cost allowance is being cut for the mining sector. This decision comes as a blow to Labrador companies just at a time when they are discovering new mineral wealth in iron ore and rare earth minerals.

Why are Conservatives pouring cold water over Labrador's mining industry just as it is gaining momentum?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a surprising question about resource development coming from the NDP, which spends most of its time on a trash can tour, going down to the United States and trashing Canada. The leader of the NDP has consistently called the resource sector in this country a disease. We find that very offensive and so do Canadians.

We are working on what is important to Canadians, which is finding jobs for Canadians, protecting the economy and growing the long-term prosperity of all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we heard the Prime Minister. The government is unilaterally intervening, without consultation, in a provincial jurisdiction—job training—without increasing its own funding, and instead requiring that the provinces chip in the money. Not surprisingly, this does not sit well with them and there has been an outcry.

This government finally has a Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, so he should rise and tell us how he plans to clean up the mess the latest budget has made of our federation, especially in terms of job training, an area in which collaboration is essential to success.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the member opposite missed the Minister of Finance's speech, missed the Prime Minister's answers today and did not even read the 2013 budget.

The 2013 budget very clearly states that we will work with the provinces on this issue that is very important to our economy. To create jobs for all Canadians, we will work with the provinces and the private sector to continue to build a strong economy in every region in this country.

* * *

• (1455)

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is either wilfully blind to scientific evidence or it does not care. Why else would it ignore health care in the budget?

Data shows highly contagious TB rates among Inuit increasing at 185 times the non-aboriginal average. TB flourishes in poor,

overcrowded and undernourished populations. In 2010, Public Health Canada reported that Inuit live in these conditions, and 50% have no access to nutritious food. The Minister of Health knew this three years ago. Why did she do nothing then, and why has the budget done nothing now?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a minister coming from the north, I understand too well how serious this matter is in our aboriginal communities and our communities.

This is why our government has taken a wide approach in our mission to eliminate tuberculosis across Canada. We recently announced two new research studies in Nunavut that will raise awareness of TB and will also evaluate state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment. We are also forgiving loans for doctors and nurses in remote communities. We have signed a tripartite framework agreement in B.C., with \$2 billion for health care programs for services for first nations and Inuit. We have made significant investments in—

* * *

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years the NDP has been calling for a transition fund for workers in the asbestos industry. Months ago, I moved a motion calling for consultations with the sector in order to draft a plan to restructure the industry. The Conservatives voted against it and then announced \$50 million in aid over seven years, without a public consultation process. Talk about inconsistent.

Why seven years, when hundreds of workers need jobs now? The government has abandoned the regions, even the ones it represents.

Why not make this transition funding available to businesses and workers right away?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Marois government decided to put an end to all chrysotile mining, our government showed leadership. Obviously, we no longer had any reason to oppose the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos on the list of products subject to the PIC procedure of the Rotterdam Convention.

We showed leadership by announcing \$50 million in funding to diversify the economies of Thetford Mines and Asbestos. This economic diversification will not happen overnight, as my colleague would have us believe. I hope that they will support the budget and that the member for Richmond—Arthabaska will stand up for his region.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal and Conservative record on asbestos has been shameful for years. They ignored the science and put workers and people in the developing world at risk. For years, they buried their heads in the sand rather than help Quebec develop the transition plans for these communities and families.

At last, thanks to those communities, labour and the opposition, there will be some assistance for transition. Now that we have this assistance in place, will the Conservatives finally agree to take the final step and ban the export of asbestos in all of its forms?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that natural resources fall under provincial jurisdiction. The Marois government decided to stop chrysotile mining. Our government immediately showed leadership by announcing a \$50 million fund to help affected communities diversify their economies. Canada no longer has any reason to keep chrysotile asbestos off the list of products subject to the PIC procedure of the Rotterdam Convention. We hope that the NDP will stop crying wolf and support us in our efforts.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Natural resources create hundreds of thousands of jobs, billions in economic growth and billions in social services across Canada.

Keystone XL is an important project for the future health of the Canadian economy, with Canada losing \$50 million a day due to a lack of market access. The importance to Canada is clear, though the NDP refuse to listen and support this project.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on the latest news on this front?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today Darryl Sutter is meeting with President Obama and will advocate for the Keystone XL project and the thousands of jobs that it will create. We applaud Coach Sutter for promoting Canadian interests on the world stage.

We hope that the NDP leader, who left a false impression with the Obama administration that Canadians are opposed to pipelines, will pay attention. He should start listening to Darryl Sutter instead of Daryl Hannah.

* * *

● (1500)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lake Winnipeg is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world, and it is dying. The government has failed to protect one of Canada's greatest lakes.

The Global Nature Fund has declared that Lake Winnipeg is the 2013 threatened lake of the year. Could the government explain how the closing of the Experimental Lakes Area, Canada's world-renowned freshwater science facility, is going to benefit the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague should know exactly what our government has done to help the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg. Since 2007, we have invested \$18 million to build a scientific foundation for action and provided funding for locally driven stewardship actions.

Even with this progress, though, my colleague is quite correct. Challenges with water quality and algae blooms remain. However, our government is taking action to reduce nutrient inputs to the lake by directly supporting stewardship initiatives, scientific research and monitoring.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again Manitoba and Saskatchewan are facing major flooding, yet every season the Conservatives feign surprise when communities are devastated.

In 2009 and 2011, first nations were disproportionately impacted by flooding. Yet since those floods, the government has done virtually nothing to provide permanent flood protection to communities like Fisher River and Peguis.

When will the government step up and provide the tools to these first nations to fight this year's flood, and will it finally commit to permanent flood mitigation?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Of course, Mr. Speaker, we will wait to see what happens, but I am very confident that the Emergency Measures Organization in Manitoba that is on the front lines is doing a good job in terms of preparedness.

In respect to flood mitigation, it was our Prime Minister who, in 2011, announced \$100 million for flood mitigation. Presently there are discussions with all provinces as to how we can look at flood mitigation as an ongoing program.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is working hard to fix the disastrous mess left by the Liberals in our immigration system.

The Liberals left an immigration backlog of close to one million people, waiting up to eight years for their applications to be processed.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration please update this House on the progress made by our Conservative government to create a fast, flexible and effective immigration system?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about a half hour ago our Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism announced that the backlog that was left on this government by the previous Liberal government has been reduced by 40%.

The program that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary still has the floor.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, further to that, the foreign skilled application process, which brings skilled workers to this country and took years to complete, is now down to a year or less.

The parent and grandparent reunification program in this country has been reduced by over 25%, not because anyone on the other side of the House has supported this but because this government is taking action when it comes to immigration.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may say that the economy is their priority and boast that the regions will also be their priority, but those are empty promises.

Budget 2013 confirms a 15% cut to funding for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec.

The Minister of Transport himself was boasting recently about temporary initiatives put forward by his government. I have a little news flash for him. There is nothing in the budget to make up for the loss of many of these programs, which are very beneficial to communities in Quebec.

The Conservatives have already butchered employment insurance. Was it absolutely necessary to cut spending allocated to the economic development agency for the regions, which is so beneficial to them?

• (1505)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, that is completely false.

We have not reduced the department's operating budget. Two temporary initiatives are simply ending.

I repeat, the cruise ship initiative and the initiative for the strengthening of Quebec's forest economies are coming to an end.

Point of Order

We have business offices in all regions of Quebec. Not too long ago, I had the honour of accompanying the Prime Minister to the beautiful region of Rivière-du-Loup, where we made an important announcement at Premier Tech. We will continue to invest in Montmagny and across Quebec.

We are doing our job everywhere, and I am very proud to serve as Minister of Economic Development Canada.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with its budget, the federal government wants to impose its vision for worker training on Quebec. In so doing, it is prepared to gut proven programs.

Last year alone, Quebec's employment assistance services allowed the federal government to save \$220 million in employment insurance benefits. The Government of Quebec has been clear: it is refusing to put up with Ottawa's interference and will not participate in the new program.

Is the minister aware of Quebec's refusal or is she going to continue to be adversarial by imposing her reform on Quebec?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard Canadians calling for the creation of new jobs throughout Canada, including Quebec.

In the future, we will certainly work with the provinces, including Quebec, to create jobs in every region of the country, including every region of Quebec.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Enkhbold Zandaakhuu, Chairman of the State Great Hural of Mongolia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in one of my responses earlier, I mentioned that Canam Group receives financial assistance from the Fonds de solidarité. I should have said Manac, not Canam Group. Manac receives investments from the Fonds de solidarité and will continue to do so.

*The Budget***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

Economic action plan 2013 is great news for my riding of Brant, for southern Ontario and indeed for all of Canada. It is a plan that keeps Canada well positioned for long-term, stable economic growth and balanced budgets. It includes a variety of exciting common sense proposals that would make government more productive and efficient and create jobs in southern Ontario.

Economic growth in my riding of Brant is largely driven by small and medium-sized businesses that are innovating and gaining a leading edge in the 21st century economy, and I will provide an example of a company. GreenMantra Technologies recently opened up as a new start-up company. As a government we were able to help it through our southern economic development agency, FedDev, to get the funding to produce new, innovative and patentable technologies creating wax products for commercial use. This is a very exciting development and one which would create hundreds of jobs in our community down the road.

Our government continues to build on the unprecedented support for businesses that are innovating and transforming southern Ontario's economy. In particular, we are providing record support for manufacturers and processors. Since 2006, our government has assisted manufacturers by lowering taxes, making Canada the first tariff-free zone for manufacturers in the G20, reducing unnecessary red tape and improving conditions for business investment.

In economic action plan 2013, we are taking further action to support Canada's manufacturers. We are providing tax relief for manufacturing equipment through the extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance. This measure would allow manufacturers to invest in new machinery and equipment to help them compete. We are also continuing our support for innovative businesses like GreenMantra Technologies, which I referred to earlier, by renewing the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario with new funding of \$920 million. FedDev has been a critical agency. It has helped provide much needed support in my riding by boosting businesses that are showing leadership with transformative projects, which in turn would allow them to capitalize on new world market opportunities and compete in the 21st century economy.

I would like to refer to another company in my riding called Systems Logic. Systems Logic produces software and hardware for the warehousing industry. It has recently expanded its market base extensively into the United States with new and innovative products. This is another great example of new jobs being created in the 21st century right in my community as a result of our budget initiatives.

Through economic action plan 2013, FedDev Ontario would offer businesses in Brant new support through the exciting new \$200 million advanced manufacturing fund, which is aimed at helping our region's manufacturing industry to further innovate and become more competitive.

The good news for Brant does not stop there. There is a burgeoning entrepreneurial spirit that is emerging in my community. Businesses are seeing the opportunities and investing in my community, which has a skilled labour force made up of people from all walks of life who are ready and willing to go to work and take advantage of the new economic opportunities.

Our government understands the tangible benefits that such an entrepreneurial spirit can deliver for our communities and knows that southern Ontario's long-term economic competitiveness needs to be driven by globally competitive, high-growth businesses that take risks, innovate and create high-quality jobs. That is why economic action plan 2013 continues building on our government's support for entrepreneurs and risk takers in my riding.

● (1510)

Economic action plan 2012 announced resources to support Canada's venture capital industry, including \$400 million to help increase private-sector investments and early-stage risk capital and to support the creation of large-scale venture capital funds led by the private sector. Shortly after, our Prime Minister announced a comprehensive venture capital action plan, which will improve access to venture capital financing by high-growth companies. The plan will promote a vibrant capital environment in Canada, rooted in a strong entrepreneurial culture and well-established networks that link investors to innovative companies.

Budget 2013 would advance the venture capital action plan by offering \$60 million to help outstanding and high-potential incubator and accelerator organizations expand their services to entrepreneurs, as well as \$100 million through the Business Development Bank of Canada to invest in firms graduating from business accelerators. We would also provide funding specifically designated for young risk-taking entrepreneurs who are working to create the jobs of tomorrow through the Canada Youth Business Foundation. All of this is great news for entrepreneurs, not only in Canada but in my specific riding of Brant.

The Budget

We know that businesses and workers alike in my riding would benefit from the tremendous new support that the economic action plan offers in terms of skills training and connecting workers with jobs. We would increase skills and training support with the new Canada job grant to help more workers get high-quality, well-paying jobs. Under the new grant, Canadians would be able to qualify for up to \$15,000 per person to get the skills and training they most importantly need. Training and skill development would be focused on jobs that are in demand. In fact, the grant would directly connect employers looking for skilled workers with Canadians who want to fill those jobs.

Meanwhile, our budget would create opportunities for apprenticeships that would allow young people to learn a skilled trade while gaining paid, on-the-job work experience. Also, we would offer even more targeted support to promote labour market participation and a more inclusive workforce.

Residents of the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation in my riding would benefit from an investment of \$241 million to improve the on-reserve income assistance program to help ensure aboriginal youth can access the skills training they need to secure employment and better outcomes for their futures.

Among a series of new proposals that are garnering excitement among disability advocates and experts from across the country, our budget calls for \$222 million per year to improve employment prospects for persons with disabilities. Canadians with disabilities represent a significant untapped pool of talented people who are ready, willing and able to work. In fact, there are more than 800,000 Canadians whose disabilities do not prevent them from working. We know about the enormous opportunities for social and economic inclusion that gainful employment can provide these people.

In my riding, we have several fine examples of entrepreneurial companies that have hired people with disabilities. One is Brantford Volkswagen, and someone from this company will be coming to Parliament to tell the human resources committee about how positive the experience has been and how much of a business case there is for taking on people with disabilities.

I am thrilled to see that we would move forward to help those who want to get work—those who are willing and able—move in the directions that employers and entrepreneurs and businesses need.

• (1515)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's comments on the budget, and one of the challenges we have had with this budget is that there is not enough detail. Looking back to budget 2012, we still have not got the facts. In fact, Kevin Page was just in court trying to get that.

I want to get the member's answer precisely on the numbers when it comes to job training. I would like him to share with us exactly when this job training program would take effect in Ontario and specific dates, and I want to know exactly how much money in this budget would go to Ontario for job training and when that would take effect.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows what the numbers are in terms of the actual results since the middle

of the recession, our government having created 950,000 net new jobs in this economy. He asked a question about projections into the future. The budget outlines the structural framework for us to connect the people who are interested in having jobs to develop their skill sets with up to \$15,000 for the new Canada job action plan.

From the position of listening to employers in my riding and knowing many employers, particularly in the construction industry where I spent the majority of my working life, I know this is exactly what they need in terms of targeted assistance to be sure that the people they hire have the skill set, get the skill set and earn the kind of income they so richly deserve once they get that skill set.

• (1520)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians recognize the importance of enhancing a person's skill set, so that when it comes time to be able to be gainfully employed there is a great deal of benefit. Often government does come to the table and provide some sort of assistance in getting those skill sets.

In the budget that is being proposed, one of the important things to note is that Ottawa would require provinces to come onboard and match, along with the private sector, the funds. Already a number of provinces have indicated, for whatever reason—some of it because they may not have the same resources—that they would not be able to provide those funds.

How should a province or Canadians living in that province be compensated because a province in one region of the country is unable to participate in the program that is being offered today?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, provinces already have resources established for training. When we talk about the principle of a shared program, of one-third, one-third and one-third—in this case the federal government, provincial government and the actual employer having what I will call skin in the game—it is a model that has worked excellently across the country in ventures other than training. We are taking a very successful model that has been working when P3 partnerships happen. This means that everyone's interest is there. Provinces would have to redirect perhaps some of the funding they currently are using in other areas into what would be a more efficient, more effective way to get people into jobs where their skill set fits.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a lot in this budget that I appreciate, particularly for Okanagan—Coquihalla. Given the issue of jobs training and skills, the fact that there are so many people either unemployed or underemployed, I and many of my colleagues have heard from employers who say that academia has been slow to connect both the skills training and encouraging workers to go into fields where there are currently employment opportunities.

How does the member feel the job grant would fit into this, and does he believe this would improve the situation down the road?

The Budget

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, this aligns absolutely almost perfectly for post-secondary education, which right now as we speak, in this country, is realigning itself to produce programming so that people can be retrained and go back into the workforce. I know that as a former governor of a university here in Canada, and I know our program would produce outstanding results.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of economic action plan 2013, a budget focused on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

When we ran in the election of 2011, we asked the Canadian people for a mandate, which included balancing the budget within the term of that mandate, by 2015. This budget presented by the Minister of Finance with the support of the Prime Minister of Canada would keep us on track to having that budget balanced by 2015.

As we move toward a balanced budget, there are three paths we could take.

The first path is to raise taxes, and many governments across Canada have taken the challenge to balance their budgets by raising taxes. However, that is not the path this Minister of Finance took. That is not the path of this government. We will not balance the budget by raising taxes on the people of Canada.

In fact, since we were elected in 2006, we have cut taxes for the average Canadian family by \$3,200, and we are still going to balance the budget by 2015. By lowering the tax burden on the people of Canada, we are increasing the jobs, growth and productivity of our country. Low taxes mean more jobs. More jobs means more productivity. That is the path we are taking.

The second path we could have chosen was to cut the transfers to the provinces, as we saw the Liberal Party do the 1990s. Those transfers are valuable to provinces as they try to deliver on the priorities of Canadians in terms of education and health care. We saw billions of dollars taken back from the provinces in terms of those transfer payments in the 1990s, which saw hospitals close, nurses laid off, teachers laid off and Rae days in Ontario. We do not want to go back to that path. We will not support that.

This budget does not cut any transfers to the provinces. In fact, since we took office in 2006, the federal government has increased transfers each and every year. The transfer for health care, the social transfer and transfers for equalization have all been increased each and every year, which is more support for the provinces. Even though we are increasing that support for the provinces, we are still on the path to balance the budget.

In fact, since 2006 when we took office, we have increased those transfers from the federal government to the provinces by more than \$20 billion to a record high in 2013-14 of \$62 billion. This is an incredible amount of money that our provinces can use to support health care; to support education; to pay doctors, nurses and teachers; and to support other social programs in their provinces. That is an incredible commitment the federal government has made to the provinces, and we are keeping that promise.

My own province of Nova Scotia has seen the transfers from the federal government increase in 2006 from \$2.2 billion to almost \$3

billion, which is an increase of almost \$700 million. That \$700 million is a lot of nurses, teachers and support for the priorities of Nova Scotians, and that is contained in this budget.

The third path is the one we chose to balance the budget. It is the path that looks first into government spending to make sure we focus government spending in a pragmatic and prudent way, focusing on the priorities of Canadians. That is what we see in this budget. The budget supports my constituents in a large rural riding on the east coast because it focuses on the same priorities: jobs, growth and prosperity. It supports industries that are needed in my riding that hire the vast majority of the constituents I represent here in Ottawa.

For example, this budget supports infrastructure. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities asked this government to support infrastructure: waste water treatment plants, roads, bridges and all the infrastructure needed to attract business to rural parts of Canada. This is infrastructure that is needed both in urban and rural Canada. This budget focuses on that.

The build Canada plan, which sunsets next year, put in billions of dollars and worked with municipal leaders across Canada to support infrastructure development. However, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities asked the government to do a longer-term deal in this budget, which we have done.

• (1525)

It is a 10-year deal for the new building Canada plan, adding \$53 billion for infrastructure from coast to coast to coast, for roads, bridges, recreational centres and waste water treatment plants. These are the projects that this fund will help, which will help build the economy in rural and urban parts of the country.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities also asked the government to support it again with the gas tax. We all know that in previous budgets we made the gas tax allowance permanent. That was asked for and delivered. In this budget, we are indexing the gas tax allowance to protect the municipalities from inflation so they can count on that money. It will be continued at an indexed rate so they know they will not be hurt by inflation. That was asked for by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities made and something we delivered on.

Does it support the budget? Absolutely. It stated:

Today's budget delivers significant gains for Canada's cities and communities. We applaud the government for choosing to continue moving our communities forward even as it meets its immediate fiscal challenges...This is also a budget that delivers real gains for Canadians...it will spur growth and job creation while laying the foundation for a more competitive economy.

This budget, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have delivered for municipal leaders across Canada and in my riding.

The Budget

In Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, there is a large forestry industry. Does this budget support the forestry industry? These are the guys who go out in the woods and cut the trees down. Not only does it support them, but the truckers who transport the logs to the sawmills. It supports the sawmill workers who turn the logs into lumber. It supports the manufacturers who turn the lumber into products which we export not only domestically but worldwide. This is a strong budget in support of the forestry industry.

The Forest Products Association of Canada supports this budget. It stated:

—(FPAC) welcomes the additional support for innovation and market development unveiled in today's budget and also applauds the government's focus on skills training...We applaud the government for its continuing support for the forest products sector even at a time when tough measures are needed to reduce the deficit. This is a strategic future-oriented decision that demonstrates ongoing commitment to the transformation of the industry.

We have support from the forestry industry for this budget.

In my riding, agriculture is a heartbeat. It employs literally thousands of my constituents. There are blueberry producers, dairy farmers, beef farmers and poultry farmers. There are agriculture producers who have created innovative products. There are fruit producers in the riding. This government and this budget supports the agriculture sector. It is expanding our markets internationally. It is investing in research and innovation so agriculture producers can develop new products and sell them in new markets. This is a strong budget in support of research, innovation and agriculture and supports, in particular, the extension of international trade so we can produce and export our agriculture products to new markets.

What does the agriculture community say about this budget? The Canadian Cattlemen's Association stated:

The CCA welcomes Budget 2013 and appreciates the Federal Government's continued commitment to innovation, competitiveness, market development, regulatory cooperation, and addressing labour shortages. These are the top priorities for our industry and for the CCA.

That is strong support for this budget by the agriculture community and the industries that are important in my riding.

Also in my riding there is manufacturing, which is centred around the aerospace industry. There is an IMP plant in Amherst, which employs 400 people. There is an IMP plant in the Halifax airport region, which employs over 1,200 people. There are 1,600 of my constituents who are directly employed in the aerospace industry. I know there are many thousands in the Quebec aerospace industry who put dinner on the table for their families due to direct employment by the aerospace industry.

What does the aerospace industry say about this budget? It stated:

—(AIAC) is very pleased with measures announced in the Economic Action Plan 2013...The measures announced in [this budget] constitute an excellent short-term response to the Aerospace Review report...

Therefore, there is support for this budget by that industry.

This budget supports my riding, the agriculture community, the forestry industry, the municipalities, infrastructure and the aerospace industry. Many of my constituents will benefit very much from the implementation of this budget. I ask all my colleagues in the House to stand and support economic action plan 2013.

● (1530)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member talk about who in his riding supported this. Has he talked to those running job training programs? I have talked to the Worklink Employment Society and the youth Pathway Society in my riding. These organizations operate important programs to get people their first jobs, or to get people back to work or to get people the skills training they need. This new program that has been announced by the government has no budget, no start date, no agreement with the provinces. These organizations are worried that they are going to have stop operating these important programs in my community at the end of the year. They are concerned about this very vague training program that has nothing specific in it for them or the people they serve.

● (1535)

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, the opposition often criticizes our government for failing to consult and for not listening. As part of this budget, we are going to start consulting with the provinces on skills training. Why is this important? It is important because last year alone there were over 250,000 highly skilled jobs available, but employers could not find people to do the jobs. We also had this large amount of people who could not find work.

We have a disconnect between available jobs and people with the skills needed to fill those jobs. We need to work together across the country with our provincial partners to put processes in place so we can match people who have the skills needed with the jobs that are available today. This plan is about that. There will be consultations with the provinces. The people who are worried about how this will affect their programs should not worry very much.

I have 18 years as a professional educator. This is the first budget I can remember that has education and training as a centrepiece. As an educator, I am pleased to see that in the budget.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is the second speaker on the Conservative side who has talked about aerospace jobs. Those members are trying to say that they are standing up for aerospace jobs. I have a real problem with that and a serious concern.

The government is aware that the Air Canada Public Participation Act made it very clear that Montreal, Mississauga and Winnipeg would continue to have those important aerospace jobs, the overhaul maintenance jobs, with Air Canada. When Air Canada offloaded those jobs to Aveos and Aveos ultimately closed down, there were serious allegations that Air Canada violated the law. The Prime Minister and his government did absolutely nothing to protect those important aerospace jobs.

Could the member tell me why the Government of Canada did not protect those important aerospace jobs when a law was there, and is still there today? Hundreds of employees felt the government stood by and allowed Air Canada to get rid of those jobs.

The Budget

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I find it laughable that a member of the Liberal Party is criticizing the support this government has provided to the aerospace industry after the decade of darkness the Liberals delivered to Canada's military. When we took over government from the Liberals, we had helicopters that would not go up and submarines that would not go down. It was a decade of darkness, as General Hillier said in his book. The damage that did to our aerospace industry was devastating. We are only beginning to recover.

Canadians can count on this government to continue to work with our aerospace partners. The aerospace industry supports this budget. We are going to continue to support those jobs because those are important manufacturing jobs, not only in my riding but across the country.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see a pattern with the Conservative government when it introduces a bill, whether the bill affects aboriginals, search and rescue or the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The government brings in a bill and promises to consult afterwards. Do the Conservatives not trust the provinces to deliver this jobs program that has gone on for a number of years? To be effective, job training programs should be done at the local level where organizations understand the local issues, demands and priorities. The Conservative government, without any consultation, wants to bring this to Ottawa, and we know what happens in Ottawa. Could the member elaborate on that?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, on that issue, the minister in charge of education in Nova Scotia is interested in working with the federal government on the jobs grant program. She says that this is an interesting program. She is going to negotiate and collaborate. This is an NDP minister in Nova Scotia. Therefore, I think there is more of this across the country with the provinces, which all realize we need to focus on jobs and skills.

In Nova Scotia alone we have a \$25 billion shipbuilding program. We are going to need thousands of skilled tradespeople to fill those jobs in the maritime provinces. This jobs grant is going to meet that need. We are going to collaborate and work with the provinces to deliver on that goal.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Surrey North.

Almost a year ago, my leader gave me the official opposition housing critic portfolio. Since then, I have risen many times in the House to demand that the government make housing and homelessness priorities.

I also travelled across Canada to meet with Canadians and interest groups to find out what they think about these very important issues. When I read the budget tabled last Thursday by the Minister of Finance, it became clear that I have a long road ahead of me to get anyone to bother listening to these people.

I cannot say that I am surprised by the lack of housing and homelessness measures in the budget. I never once believed that they were priorities for the Conservatives.

I knew what I was in for when the Conservatives voted as a block against Bill C-400, which was introduced by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to ensure that the different levels of government and the stakeholders would sit down together to assess needs and establish a national housing strategy. But I was shocked when I saw that, the day before the vote, the government posted a document on the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation website claiming that Bill C-400 would cost Canadian taxpayers \$5.5 billion even though the stakeholders had not yet met to discuss what was needed, which was the one and only purpose of the bill. The government must be clear and honest with people.

On pages 1112 and 1113 of O'Brien and Bosc's House of Commons Procedure and Practice, we learn that:

There is a constitutional requirement that bills proposing the expenditure of public funds must be accompanied by a royal recommendation, which can be obtained only by the government and introduced by a Minister. Since a Minister cannot propose items of Private Members' Business, a private Member's bill should therefore not contain provisions for the spending of funds.

That seems pretty clear to me. What this means is that a private member's bill cannot commit public funds. In light of what I just said, I would like to know how Bill C-400—which was introduced by the member from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and whose only objective was to have government representatives and stakeholders sit down together to discuss housing issues—could have been assigned the kind of price tag that the Conservatives used to justify voting against the bill? Such a bill would have been considered out of order under the rules of procedure of the House. I will not speculate about the government's motives, but will allow people to draw their own conclusions.

The budget presented last Thursday does not satisfy the NDP official opposition with regard to housing and the fight against homelessness, but let us nevertheless play along and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's.

I am pleased that the government has finally committed to renewing the homelessness partnering strategy, as I have requested many times in the House without ever receiving a satisfactory response. However, when I said renewal, I was not just talking about extending full funding for the HPS. I was also asking that it be increased. Unfortunately, funding for the fight against homelessness has never been indexed since the SCPI was introduced in 1999.

You do not need an advanced course in economics to understand that costs and salaries have increased since the program was created and that funding allocated to the fight against homelessness in Canada has been doing less and less to meet the needs of groups in that regard.

The Budget

I was not only asking that the budget allocated to the program be indexed to reflect those realities; I was also asking that it be increased to reflect the needs of the groups combating homelessness and its repercussions.

Why? Because, unlike my colleagues opposite, I consult stakeholders in the sector and I listen to them. They can tell us about the needs they see, and they can clearly see that homelessness is increasing year after year.

Unfortunately, I get the impression I was simply misunderstood. When the Conservatives say renewal, they understand it in the literal sense. To them, it means “change everything.”

Reading the budget that was presented to us last Thursday, in the section ironically entitled “Housing for Canadians in Need”, on page 228, we see that the government has extended the HPS, providing \$119 million in funding a year over five years using a housing first approach.

● (1545)

We in fact learned about this on the morning the budget was presented because, once again, the Conservatives leaked the information to the media in a Canadian Press article entitled “Budget to fund and reorient federal homelessness strategy; new focus on housing.”

There are two important things to know about the HPS. First, not only have the Conservatives not increased or even indexed the program to reflect rising costs and salaries; they have also cut the amount that was allocated to it.

From 2011 to 2014, the program received funding of \$134.8 million a year. Now it will be \$119 million, which means that groups that already could not meet needs will collectively have to absorb an annual \$15.8 million cut to the budget allocated to combat homelessness.

Second, the program's approach has been completely changed. With the housing first approach, any intervention funded by the HPS may be terminated if a number of projects do not give housing priority. Several organizations could thus lose their caseworkers, and the development of new projects to fund capital expenditures could be jeopardized.

In my riding of Hochelaga alone, where homelessness comes in many forms, the program's new purpose could harm several groups already established in the area. Dopamine, a substance abuse organization, and the shelter for prostitutes planned by the CAP Saint-Barnabé could lose caseworkers. This organization may also find it impossible to develop new services starting in 2014.

Far be it from me to speak out against the promising outcomes achieved by the inspirational at home project. However, I want to be very clear. Homelessness is not just a housing problem. Drug abuse, mental health problems and drug-related prostitution should also fall under this program.

In reaction to the budget, Tim Richter, president of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, who had asked that the HPS take more of a housing first approach, said the following:

[English]

While this news is very exciting, there are some important questions that will need to be addressed, namely: What does the government mean by Housing First? What will this shift to Housing First mean to HPS funded communities, programs and existing investments? How will community planning processes & Community Plans change? How will the transition to Housing First be managed?

It's also important to remember that Housing First is a critical component of ending homelessness, but it is not a silver bullet. There are many other critical elements that need to support community plans and Housing First programs in order to reduce & end homelessness.

[Translation]

For us, the HPS must retain a diversity of approaches and respect the independence of the provinces and municipalities that are more familiar with their communities' problems.

Now, the economic action plan has little to say about funding for social housing. The only intentions this government has are stated in the main estimates for 2013-2014, according to which a net decrease of \$23.3 million in CMHC's budget, for this year alone, is “to reflect the expiry of long-term project operating agreements.”

Once again this year, the government is not only confirming its complete withdrawal from social housing; it is doing so on the backs of the least well-off in our society and of the Canadian provinces. Those long-term operating agreements currently allow co-operatives and non-profit housing organizations to grant subsidies to their members and tenants so that they do not allocate more than 25% to 30% of their incomes to rent. They also enable the provinces and municipalities to provide low-income housing to the public.

Many of those agreements with CMHC have gradually been expiring in the past few years, and the government is simply not renewing them. Even worse, it feels it is saving money.

If we let this withdrawal continue, by 2030, these cuts will have amounted to \$1.7 billion a year, and CMHC will only be managing approximately 15% of its current budget. When I think that the Conservatives were prepared to sign a multi-billion-dollar blank cheque in the F-35 scandal, I feel like saying, “We want houses, not airplanes.”

● (1550)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member from the island of Montreal. I listened to her speech, and I have a fairly easy question for her.

We have read the budget. I think she has read it, too. The Conservative members talk about how they obtained this or that measure for their constituency or region.

As the member from east Montreal, I would like to know if there is anything in the budget for my region and for the city of Montreal. I did not see anything.

Is this something the Conservatives made up or is it because we do not know how to read? Are the journalists and all the members of the National Assembly of Quebec mistaken? Is it because we do not really know what is going on or is there really nothing for Quebec, the city of Montreal and east Montreal?

The Budget

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, not only is there nothing for Montreal or east Montreal, but the government is also making cuts.

His riding and mine need social housing, but the government is making cuts. It announced cuts to the caisses populaires. People will not be able to benefit as much.

Is it a coincidence? Do the Conservatives want to punish Quebecers? It would not surprise me. However, Quebecers are smart and, in the next election, they will have realized what the Conservatives are doing. That is not what will win them votes.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her presentation and also for her hard work on housing. It is a crisis in this country, and I am so glad we have members like her here raising that issue.

In 2005 something extraordinary happened. In this House, the NDP was able to negotiate a deal with the government of the day to get \$4.5 billion that was just going to be thrown into corporate tax cuts, going God knows where, into things like housing. The money stayed for 2006-07. The government actually cut ribbons and made big announcements about using that very money that it voted against.

What we see now is a government that does not seem to have a plan when it comes to national housing. It has announcements, but we do not know how much money is really going to get to people.

My question to my colleague is this: how can we have any faith in the government when it does not come forward with a national housing strategy? All other G7 countries that we work with have national housing strategies. They invest in housing for people and get results.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP contributed to these changes, but the Conservatives are taking all the credit. They do not deserve the credit; Jack Layton does. He worked very hard advocating for social housing.

Bill C-400 almost passed, which was the then Bill C-304. Everyone was in favour of it.

This time around, it is totally ridiculous that the Conservatives all voted against the bill. We were previously unable to pass the bill that the Conservatives agreed with and now suddenly they no longer agree with it. What changed? It is not true to say that it cost money. As I was saying earlier in my speech, a private member's bill cannot give rise to expenditures.

We were simply asking to sit down and talk. Why does that intimidate them? Are they afraid of what they might find? How did they come up with the figure of \$5 million, or thereabouts? Were they already aware of the need in this area? Have they identified that need? Is the figure they came up with the one that they should be spending but are unwilling to? Is that the real reason?

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am always struck by the fact that the members opposite talk about the cost of social housing, but they never talk about the cost of inaction. For example, people

living in toxic environments full of harmful spores end up costing the health care system a fortune.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that aspect of the problem.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, with pleasure.

The Conservatives have a very short-term vision. They are saving a dollar here, but they are not looking at the situation over the long term.

Over the long term, the dollar they are saving now could have brought in \$1.25 or \$1.40. The NDP has a long-term vision. People are telling us that they realize this strategy will save money in other areas and that it is an investment in social and affordable housing. I am talking about real affordable housing; not \$300,000 condos.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North, I am honoured to speak to the budget bill for 2013.

I am very concerned about the budget, its deficiencies, its hidden realities and the effect these will have on my constituents. The government has been promising that it will focus on jobs, but instead the Prime Minister is pushing ahead with job-killing cuts and introducing no new measures to create jobs. Instead he is playing a shell game with skills and training money. Again, the Prime Minister is not listening to Canadians. Instead, he is listening to his friends and insiders.

I have been consulting with my constituents in Surrey to seek their priorities as to what they would like to see addressed in this budget. The responses are reflective of not only my constituents in Surrey but of many concerned citizens across British Columbia and Canada.

My constituents from Surrey North are very concerned about homelessness and poverty in my community. In the past 10 years, Surrey has had an increase of over 100% in its homeless population. Throughout the B.C. Lower Mainland communities, Surrey hosts the highest percentage of homeless women, a significant number of homeless youth and seniors, the second-largest majority of homeless families and the highest number of unsheltered persons, including persons who identify as aboriginals. In this respect, the budget has completely let us down. While on the surface it would appear there is a commitment to homelessness reduction programs, the reality is that there is less funding allocated in this year's budget than in last year's in 2012.

Surrey is one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada. My constituents are concerned about infrastructure development, particularly public transportation. In short, public transportation in Surrey is not adequate. Many residents living in Surrey commute to work in neighbouring cities. The SkyTrain system does not serve the majority of our citizens in Surrey, making it difficult to access employment.

The Budget

While the Conservatives say they are addressing infrastructure concerns, it is evident that this is not happening. In fact, the government is reducing the amount dedicated to the development of infrastructure. My constituents not only feel it already but will be feeling it in the coming years.

My constituents are also concerned about support for seniors in our community. The budget places undue stress on seniors. By raising the age of eligibility from 65 to 67 years old, the government would deprive seniors of old age security and force them to continue working even longer. This only benefits the Conservatives' friends and insiders, who are taking money directly out of the pockets of our seniors.

Seniors have built this country. It is time for us to look after our seniors, who have paid taxes all their lives. We should be providing support for them to live with respect and dignity in their retirement years.

British Columbians are very proud of our natural pristine coast and our extraordinary wildlife. Surrey is proud to be home to 1,400 kilometres of waterways hosting five species of trout and salmon. My riding is home to over 900 spawning chum salmon in Bear Creek. The \$108-million cuts to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is upsetting many constituents in my riding, who enjoy fishing and taking their children to watch the salmon runs every autumn. It is additionally damaging to the fish and the dependent ecosystems that live in our rivers. Likewise, it is embarrassing that there is no mention of climate change in the budget for 2013.

My constituents are especially concerned about jobs. With a large immigrant population, Surrey North residents are concerned that the new budget has overlooked foreign credential accreditation. By not recognizing new occupations, we are depriving the Canadian economy of the skills and experience of new immigrants to this country.

● (1600)

Surrey is the home to over 25 post-secondary institutions, including universities, colleges, trade programs and education for students with disabilities. My constituents are concerned about the rising costs of tuition fees. While the budget does address the need for the development of skilled workers through the Canada jobs grant program, I am concerned that this may pull resources away from other effective programs. Shifting money from one program to another does not properly address the job training support that is needed in our community. Furthermore, this program is pending until renegotiations with the provinces have been completed. We have no way of knowing what programs would look like after this discussion. My constituents cannot sit idly while the future lies in the balance.

Moreover, my constituents are also concerned about the lack of post-graduation employment opportunities. Post-secondary enrolment in B.C. is increasing year after year. Students are concerned about investing money and time into studies that will not provide employment for them. For every job advertised, there are six Canadians looking for work. Considering the increase in enrolment, these job-seekers cannot all be uneducated.

With one of the slowest job creation rates in Canada, unemployment in British Columbia is growing. The disappointing loss of funding for social programs, the cuts to infrastructure funding, the inadequate support for development of sustainable technology and the reduction in funding to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will all result in job losses. As well, by raising the age of eligibility for the OAS and forcing seniors to work longer, jobs that would have been released back into the market continue to be unavailable. The intersection of all these problems, along with recent job losses in the British Columbia construction industry and social service sectors, will accumulate into a considerable number of unemployed persons in British Columbia.

The 2013 budget claims to focus on reducing Canada's deficit and the developing economy. The Conservatives' record on the deficit is very clear. They have not produced a single budget surplus since they formed government seven years ago and yet they call themselves competent economic managers. Their record indicates that they have mismanaged our economy. I would call this incompetence on behalf of the government. Who will pay for the Conservative mismanagement of deficits and our economy? The very young people who are overburdened with student loans under the government will be paying for this mismanagement over the years to come. Under the current government, Canadians have the highest debt load. There will now be an additional load put on them by the government due to large deficits over the years to come.

On the one hand, the Conservatives are producing deficit after deficit to be paid by future generations. However, on the other hand, the Conservatives have been giving billions of dollars of tax breaks to their friends and insiders. Canadians will not forget this in 2015 when the next election is called.

There are many proposals that we as New Democrats would offer to bolster the Canadian economy. We must invest in Canadians themselves. We must build individual agencies by properly addressing unemployment, job creation, education and skills training, not shifting money around. A large workforce provides increased innovation and resources and generates more spending money that employees can put back into the economy. We need to invest in communities by providing infrastructure and supporting social services that prevent poverty, homelessness and other public concerns. We need to invest in our environment so we can support our tourism industry, foster our fishing commerce and protect those who have jobs in the environmental sector. By investing in our country, we will see positive consequences resonate by stimulating our economy.

This budget does not address the priorities and needs of Canadians. Therefore, the New Democrats and I will not be supporting it.

● (1605)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed with the speech we just heard. There were so many things in that speech that were wrong. The member was saying one thing and then coming back on the other side of it as well, a little on the hypocrisy side.

The Budget

There have been 950,000 jobs created. We have had balanced budgets. The first three years we were in power, we paid down \$40 billion in national debt. He said we have not had a balanced budget. He is wrong. Out of all the other G8 countries, we are in the best position.

The question that he asked was on deficits. "They put Canada into a deficit". Yes, but we also have a plan to be balanced by 2015. Many of the other countries, industrialized countries, do not have that plan.

He spoke about the future and who is going to pay. The truth of the matter is that when we came into deficit, the NDP members and the Liberals said, "Spend more. Spend more". We have a disciplined approach to a short-term deficit budget that would become balanced in 2015. We have created 950,000 jobs. The best thing for these young people with their education is to have a job when they come out.

Would the member like to respond to the fact that we have jobs, that we have a future, that the future is bright for those young Canadians coming out of learning institutions to find employment?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the member from Alberta is disappointed with my speech. We are talking about facts and Conservatives do not like that.

The facts are that year after year the current government has created deficits that are going to be paid for by future generations. It is not only that, but we have had the largest deficit ever under the current government. That is its record. The government will tell us that it is competent to manage the Canadian economy, but its record shows otherwise.

On the one hand the government has created this large deficit that future generations are going to pay for, yet it has given billions of dollars to its friends and insiders who are sitting on \$500 billion in cash on the balance sheets. That is the government's record.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to follow up on the line of questioning from the previous questioner, it seems there is something artificial in the budget balancing here.

We have shovel-ready projects across the country for needed infrastructure. Yet, the funding for infrastructure has been loaded into the back. It would be decreased in the next couple of years and then it would increase quite a lot in the future. It seems artificial because it seems it is there so the budget can be balanced by 2015 and the government can go into an election saying, "We balanced the budget. Then, we have all this infrastructure spending. Then, we have all these tax credits going away. Then we have something that has not even been included, which are the promises in the last election campaign for further program spending that would depend upon the budget being balanced".

I do not even know if the budget will actually be balanced because once it is balanced the government has promised to spend a whole bunch more. It is all very artificial, and it is all timed around the next election.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, year after year the government has talked about a balanced budget, saying that it will have a

balanced budget in 2015. Sometimes it is 2014, depending upon whether we talk to the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance. We do not know when that balanced budget will be. All we hear is that it will be done sometime in the future.

The Conservatives are playing shell games with this budget. Not only are they playing shell games with the budget, they are playing with the future economy of Canada. They are playing with the future of the young people of Canada. They have created this huge deficit year after year, and yet they expect the young people in our country to pay for it in future.

They are delivering that money right now to their friends and insiders, the corporate world of the Canadian economy, who are sitting, and I want to highlight this, on \$500 billion in cash. Where did that money come from? It came from deficits and from hard-working Canadians. It is time that they put that money to work and created some jobs that are needed in this country.

● (1610)

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be splitting my time today with the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

I rise today to speak about yet another excellent budget presented by the Minister of Finance. This is the ninth time that the minister has addressed the issues that were discussed in my pre-budget consultations in my great riding of Leeds—Grenville.

I know my constituents are pleased with what they have seen on the pages of the latest budget. In fact, the day after the budget was introduced, I received the following email from the warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. It said:

Great job on the budget. Congratulations to...all involved.

A great number of items that are addressed in this budget are important to my riding. Let me explain a few of them. Economic development is a key issue in my riding. We are always eager to welcome large plants and businesses to the riding. However, more often than not the businesses that are starting up and expanding in my riding are small businesses, and more often than not they need a hand up along the way.

That is where the Community Futures Development Corporation comes into play. This is the economic development arm of the federal government at work, on the ground, in ridings such as mine. Working with a volunteer board of directors that is made up of local people, these boards know what is needed in the communities they serve, and they clearly reflect community priorities in how they spend this money. Over the past few years they have received an additional shot in the arm through the eastern Ontario development program. This is a \$10 million-a-year fund that is shared throughout rural eastern Ontario, and it has allowed a great deal more work to be undertaken to aid economic development.

From feasibility studies to direct aid, this funding is making a huge difference in my riding of Leeds—Grenville. I am pleased to say that the Minister of Finance is renewing the eastern Ontario development program for five years beyond 2014, through continued funding in FedDev Ontario.

The Budget

While I am on this subject, I want to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working folks from the three CFDCs that serve my riding, namely the 1000 Islands Community Development Corporation that is based in Brockville; the Grenville Community Development Corporation, in Prescott; and the Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation that is based in Smiths Falls. I know their work is greatly appreciated in their areas.

My riding is a border riding. The mighty Saint Lawrence River, the route that brought the explorers inland to discover what is now Canada, is a narrow boundary that separates my riding from the United States. Leeds—Grenville is fortunate to have two border crossings, one that is directly south of Ottawa, at Johnstown, and a second that is in the heart of the 1000 Islands, near Lansdowne.

Last spring I was pleased to be able to participate at the grand opening of the refurbished border crossing at Johnstown. That renewed facility has been received with great enthusiasm by businesses and residents in my riding. The question arose at the time about the refurbishment of the busy 1000 Islands crossing. More than two million vehicles, private and commercial, cross that bridge each year. By any measure, this is a very busy crossing. In fact, by the numbers, it is about the seventh busiest crossing in Canada today. I am pleased to see there is a commitment in the budget to upgrade the border facilities at the 1000 Islands crossing. I know this refurbishment will be well received and will provide better services for travellers and commercial operators returning to or entering into Canada.

I would like to speak for a few moments about infrastructure. Many communities along the St. Lawrence River in my riding are older communities, having had their start when the United Empire Loyalists arrived to settle eastern Ontario. Still others, such as Kemptville in North Grenville, are expanding rapidly. One common issue among them all is the need for infrastructure development and renewal. When I meet with municipal officials, this is a common theme. They appreciated it when our government made the gas tax permanent. This gave them a stable, predictable source of funding, and all municipalities have used this money wisely.

● (1615)

Just last week I was in Brockville celebrating the completion of a major project on that community's recreation centre, which was partially paid for by gas tax money. All of the communities in my riding are pleased with the renewed commitment to infrastructure funding in the budget.

The new long-term infrastructure program would provide \$70 billion over 10 years, which we have already heard is the largest and longest commitment of infrastructure money in Canada. Of this money, \$32.2 billion would go to the community improvement fund to build roads, public transit, recreational facilities and other community infrastructure. I know this fund would be well used by the communities in Leeds—Grenville.

There would be \$14 billion for the renewed building Canada fund to support major economic projects of national and regional significance. During the last round of this type of funding, there were several major projects undertaken in my riding that have regional significance.

The Port of Prescott is an example where infrastructure was refurbished to ensure that area municipalities could continue to obtain salt for their roads without having to truck it from Sarnia and Goderich. Area farmers are able to drop off and store corn at the new facility, and this is just one example of where this fund was used previously. Municipalities in my riding are waiting for details on this fund.

I will also speak briefly about the new initiative for retraining, the Canada job grant. My riding was hit hard by the closure of manufacturing plants, and every community in my riding was affected as factories closed in the wake of the economic adjustment that has taken place over the last decade.

I am talking about plants that had been operating in communities in one form or another, and in some cases for close to or more than a century. These plants were where people growing up in these small towns knew they could get work when they graduated from high school, college or university. When these plants closed, many of these hard-working people did not know where to turn for another job. Thanks to programs instituted by our government, many were able to receive retraining and acquire new skills and move on to new jobs, but there are still some who have been left behind. Either they were trained for jobs that do not exist or do not meet their expectations, or they were unable to find a meaningful program.

The Canada job grant would help these folks and many others across Canada. Employers and employees will meet in the marketplace, and with the help of the Canada job grant outlined in our budget, employees would receive direct training for jobs that exist. They would know that when they finished their training, they would be able to get work and start earning money.

The Canada job grant would provide at least \$15,000 for retraining, and we know that the average retraining cost is about \$7,000 and takes well less than a year. In a minimal amount of time, there would be an employer with a job filled and a previously unemployed person in a productive job.

The budget also would strengthen the apprenticeship program, making it easier to get needed experience for journeyman status, and would provide tools for persons with disabilities, youth, aboriginals and recent immigrants to find work.

Businesses would be helped to succeed and grow with a two-year extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for new machinery and equipment, and an extension and the expansion of the temporary hiring credits for small businesses.

The increase in the lifetime capital gains exemption to \$800,000 for small business owners, farmers and fishers, indexing the new exemption limit to inflation, is also very welcome news to the small business owners in my riding.

The government would continue with support for advanced research, supporting business innovation and enhancing Canada's venture capital system.

The Budget

Families have not been forgotten in the new budget. New tax relief would be provided for families adopting a child, using home care services and purchasing a number of items such as baby clothing, sporting goods and exercise equipment that would have the import tariffs removed. These may seem like small things, but they make a big difference in the pocketbooks of most people in my riding.

A new consumer code would be developed for people using financial products, and the government would work with provinces to help protect the vulnerable who use payday loan services.

The government would also provide close to \$1.9 billion over five years to create more affordable housing and to combat homelessness.

One of the items that is very important in my riding is the new super credit for those who are donating to a charity for the first time or who have not donated for more than five years. There are many charitable organizations in my riding, and I myself have been able to help support my local United Way through a charity hockey game each year. This new super credit would help encourage people to give to help others in their community.

• (1620)

I have two final points. First, the Minister of Finance has accomplished all of this without raising taxes and without cutting transfers to provinces for health care, education and other important services. Second, in 2013-14, most major transfers to Ontario would be \$19.9 billion: almost \$3.2 billion through equalization; almost \$12 billion through the Canada health transfer; and \$4.7 billion through the Canada social transfer.

The people of Leeds—Grenville are very happy with this budget, and I look forward to seeing it move through this Parliament as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

To those who are saying that there were no tax increases, I think that Mouvement Desjardins in Quebec might have something to say about that. This budget does increase taxes on this important economic engine.

Let us talk about infrastructure, one of the points my colleague focused on. I find it intriguing that the government is investing \$53 billion in a supposedly new fund, the building Canada fund, even though the country's infrastructure deficit is \$123 billion. I think it will be hard to get this deficit under control with so little money, over the course of 10 years, no less.

The Fédération québécoise des municipalités, whose board of directors includes mayors from my riding, opposed this budget for exactly those reasons. Urban sprawl is a significant issue where I come from. People are leaving Montreal and moving to the suburbs. We are desperately in need here, and the budget does not do enough.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about this issue. How will the government try to eliminate the deficit with so little investment?

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member bringing up this question because I am very proud of what our government has done on infrastructure. I have been a member of Parliament here for almost nine years, and I can say that in my riding the two key things people want our government to do are, first, invest in infrastructure and, second, invest in economic development. These are the things they see as priorities.

This government has invested more money in my riding and in Canada since we formed government back in 2006 than had ever been invested in infrastructure before. We heard from so many municipal groups across the country. The FCM said that this "... budget delivers significant gains for Canada's cities and communities". This is what I heard from my mayors and my constituents in the last week since the budget was delivered. They are very happy that there would be long-term predictable funding for infrastructure. It is something that would serve the communities of Leeds—Grenville very well.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was quite surprised to hear the member say that all of these measures would be brought in without any increase in taxes. I am looking at page 292 of the budget. Perhaps he has not had a chance to look at it, but on page 292 it shows that the projected premium rate for EI premiums for employees and employers would be increasing and would continue to increase over the next four years. Perhaps what he meant to say is that there would be no increases in taxes unless one is an employee or an employer. I invite the member to correct that statement.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I have been an employer and my family has employed many hundreds of people over the years in my community of Gananoque. I know a lot about the issue of employment insurance.

The fact is that the member got up and talked about employment insurance, but in fact it was the former government that took \$56 billion out of the fund that it raided and took out of the pockets of employees and employers and hurt businesses in this country. It was our government that stopped that, and it has changed the program so that we now have a more equitable program. I know that the employers and employees in Canada are very happy about that not going up to the rate that it would have been under the former government.

• (1625)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this member referred to the eastern Ontario development program. I know this member has been very strong in his support for that and community futures. Could he talk about the importance of this program to his community and communities throughout eastern Ontario?

The Budget

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question because this member, the member for Peterborough, has been a staunch supporter of this program and a strong advocate because he knows and I know and all of the people in rural eastern Ontario know how important this program is to support economic development in our communities. It supports projects and businesses that otherwise would not be supported. There are many jobs today in rural eastern Ontario because of this fund, and I am delighted that the Minister of Finance would make this a five-year commitment, the longest we have ever had.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Edmonton—Strathcona, Government Contracts; the hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Ahuntsic, Public Safety.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak to the 2013 economic action plan and what it means for my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. There are many reasons why I am in full support of the budget that are unique to my riding. However, there are initiatives that are in our national interest and I would like to briefly speak to those.

There are times when as Canadians we must rise above partisan interests and recognize areas that are of Canadian concern. I am not alone when I say that many of my constituents are concerned when they see temporary foreign workers taking jobs that many of us agree Canadians should be working. Let us also recognize that the program originates back to the early 1970s. It was always intended to be temporary and yet, nearly 40 years later, the program is now older than many members of the House. In fact, the origins of the program are older than I am.

What has changed over the past 40 years is that today the temporary foreign worker program is increasingly being accessed because of the lack of skilled workers available in local markets. Let us also recognize that there are massive amounts of provincial and federal tax dollars spent on post-secondary education. At a time when many of Canada's higher paying employers cannot find enough skilled workers, there are students graduating with degrees in fields in which they can find no employment. The reality is that academia has in many cases been slow to respond to the needs of local employers. That is unacceptable.

The economic action plan for 2013 is the first budget in close to 40 years to propose significant measures that would provide Canadians with the skills they need in our new economy. I commend the Minister of Finance for his vision in this area. It is one of the reasons why I am supporting the budget.

One thing I do with great frequency in Okanagan—Coquihalla is to meet with our private sector employers. They are the wealth providers and the true engines of our Canadian economy. Let us never forget that without a vibrant and prosperous private sector there would be no funds to pay for the public sector.

Recently, I toured a value-added lumber mill in my riding. My host, Mr. Nick Arkle of Gorman Bros., gave me a tremendous

amount of insight into the many value-added wood products that his company ships to over 28 different countries worldwide. It was truly an impressive and innovative operation by any measure.

One of the things I learned is that if the company was not in the top 10% of the lumber industry for efficiency, it would be shutting the doors during the inevitable down cycles of the economy. In this industry, every cut of lumber is carefully analyzed. Any waste is considered lost revenue. Therefore, the many large-scale investments the company makes has made it a leader in its industry. The specialized machinery to make these cuts is very expensive. That is why tax relief measures in our economic action plan for new manufacturing equipment is critically important for this and other lumber mills' survival.

Let us also not forget that this new machinery requires skilled workers to operate and maintain it. I spoke with members of Mr. Arkle's saw technician team. In many cases, they will work up to a hundred saws in a single shift to minimize the loss of valuable wood to sawdust, while increasing safety and also prolonging the life of the equipment. It was remarked that at starting wages a saw technician is well compensated and it is a great opportunity for young people to stay in the southern interior of British Columbia, while providing for their families. They just need the required training and a desire to put those skills to work.

That creates new jobs and is another reason why I am supporting the budget, because job creation is as important for my riding as it is for our great nation.

• (1630)

Let us also recognize that lumber mills not only provide hundreds of well-paying jobs that help drive the economy of an entire region but also pay a very significant amount of property tax to local governments. As a former municipal councillor, I know all too well of the importance of industry tax revenues and well-paying jobs to the fabric of a community.

That brings me to my next point. The economic action plan would continue to provide support for both the community improvement fund and a new building Canada fund. This is long-term stable funding that helps communities plan their infrastructure needs in a manner that they can afford.

In the past, we have seen federal governments that have reduced funding to the provinces, which in turn leads to downloading onto municipalities. I hope that all members will join me in recognizing that the budget would maintain support for our communities and our provinces, and that is another reason why I will be supporting it.

The Budget

Although I could easily go on for several hours on the many reasons why I support the budget, in the interests of time, I would like to draw attention to a final point. Many have overlooked this point but I think it is very important. The economic action plan has many measures that would support job creators. One is the 15% mineral exploration tax credit. When many people think of Okanagan—Coquihalla, they think of the beautiful vineyards and some of Canada's finest wines. On a side note, people can buy some of those fine wines directly if they happen to live in Manitoba and soon Nova Scotia. Hopefully, Ontario will be next.

What many do not realize is how critically important mining is to my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. Logan Lake has one of Canada's largest open pit copper mines. The Highland Valley Copper Mine directly supports 900 families and thousands more indirectly. For those who do not support responsible resource development, which is basically the entire opposition caucus and the opposition leader, Teck Resources Ltd., the operator of that mine, was recently named Canada's most sustainable company.

From speaking to Mayor Marlon Dosch, this mine plays a major role in the Logan Lake economy, both as a driver for local employment and a large contributor to the local tax base. It is my understanding that due to a number of retirements, it will soon be looking for more skilled workers. This is something that they welcome as a community, as it means new development and more families moving to Logan Lake and enrolling in their schools. All of this adds vitality to this rural community.

In Merritt, there is also a relatively new Huldra Silver copper mine. Although smaller, it has a workforce close to 60 people, including local first nations, and injects roughly \$15 million annually into the local economy. President Sharp has made the employment of local first nations a priority. The measures in this year's economic action plan would support these goals and would thus support the area of Merritt and the Nicola Valley.

In Okanagan Falls, Unit Electrical Engineering is a specialty manufacturer of equipment that includes specialized mining components. UEE is the largest employer in that region and has produced equipment for some of Canada's largest mines.

Supporting the mineral exploration tax credit is important to many families in Okanagan—Coquihalla, who depend on these highly paid jobs within this important industry. That is another reason why I am supportive of the 2013 economic action plan.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Let us also not forget that the economic action plan continues to keep Canada on track for a balanced budget in 2015-16. It also builds on the principles that allow Canada to keep its AAA credit rating and it secures our internationally respected financial position as a leader among the G7 countries.

The opposition says we should increase spending and raise taxes, but let us not forget that other countries went down that road and they are still paying the price. In my opinion, Canadian values would have us live within our means.

Our country was not built on handouts, high taxes and a host of expensive social programs.

[*English*]

I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and show support for the Minister of Finance's economic action plan 2013.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my Conservative colleague's speech, and I would like to ask him a question.

When I returned to my riding on Friday after the budget was tabled, I met with some very angry people. They were angry because, with the elimination of the labour-sponsored funds tax credit, \$800 a year is being taken away from people who are trying to plan for their retirement, people who are trying to save some money and invest in a fund. They are losing \$800 a month. That is a very hard blow for a family that is planning for the retirement of one of its members.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why the government eliminated this tax credit when he himself said that it is very important to invest and to plan for one's retirement. This seems rather contradictory to me.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges we have before us is to take a look at all of the things we can take advantage of, bearing in mind that there is an uncertain economy throughout the world. The government has been very forthcoming in saying that we need increased productivity and in putting out plans for new venture capital, including the funding of that.

I would simply point out to the member that there are many things in this budget to support. I would ask for her support of the budget, simply due to the number of comprehensive parts that will help our country grow its economy from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reference the Experimental Lakes Area, an area that the government has seen fit to ultimately take apart and decommission. The cost of doing so is well into the millions of dollars. In order to continue with the ELA, the government would be able to fund it somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually. It is costing it more to decommission the ELA than to allow it to continue for the next number of years. The scientific work done there to protect our fresh waters, not only in Canada but around the world, is second to no other. It is a first-class research facility and desperately needed.

Today I asked a question of the government about Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg is dying. Can the member please explain to me how the government justifies decommissioning the ELA when there are lakes in dire need of research to ensure their longevity going forward?

The Budget

•(1640)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, simply put, this government has provided millions of dollars to the investment in Lake Winnipeg and continues to work with local stakeholders to get the most out of that investment.

I would like to take a moment, though, to talk about my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. The Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory is considered to be a world-class facility. Millions of dollars have gone into it over the years and it has provided a tremendous amount of research and pride on behalf of Okanagan—Coquihalla.

I would say that no government supports science more than this government. I would invite the member to see DRAO at some point because it is something that all members in the House should be aware of and support.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the member was elected to this place, he has made considerable contributions. One thing he did was to seek to take down tariffs and allow for wine produced in British Columbia to be sold in places such as Ontario and elsewhere in the country. The government has further picked up on that and reduced tariffs on things such as sports equipment and clothing for infants.

Can the member speak about the importance of bringing down tariffs and making products more affordable for Canadians?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, there has been no government that has worked as hard as ours on lowering tariffs. One of the things manufacturers have spoken most in favour of is how out of all the countries in the G7 we went tariff free on the importation of manufacturing goods.

When we talk about our national interests, it is important for the federal government to lead the way. When we talk about getting rid of old 1928 Importation of Intoxicating Liquors legislation that prevented provinces from shipping their wine to other provinces to many of the things in the economic action plan such as job skills training, it is important that the federal government take that leadership role and continue to make our local and provincial economies or our national economy as a whole better. To take the lead is important.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the debate. I certainly was listening carefully to the comments of the previous speakers and I have some comments to make about what has been said.

Last week I said in a scrum that if the Minister of Finance was William Tell, I am very glad that I did not have an apple on my head.

I would like to document the gross inaccuracy of the predictions that have been made by the minister before the members opposite start congratulating themselves too much on their alleged record of economic management. Let us have a look at that record.

In 2006, in his first budget, the Minister of Finance predicted 3% growth. The actual growth was 2.8%. In 2007 he predicted 2.3%. He missed that target as well. In 2008 he predicted 1.7% growth and actual growth was 0.7%. In 2009 the minister had to admit that there

was going to be a contraction in the economy of 0.8%. The actual contraction was 2.8%. In 2011 he predicted 2.9% growth and the actual growth was 2.5%. Last year he predicted 2.1% growth and the actual was roughly 1.8%.

If the annual real GDP growth experienced under every prime minister were averaged, only one prime minister in the living memory of some members, R.B. Bennett, had a worse economic growth record than that of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's average annual growth during the time of his prime ministership has been 1.4% over his seven years.

When the Minister of Finance announced the economic action plan in budget 2009, he promised a temporary deficit that would be eliminated in 2013-14, which by the way, begins six days from now. Instead, we have an \$18.7-billion deficit predicted for 2013-14. Based on his previous record, that is not going to be an easy target to reach.

I want to go back over the ground because members keep saying "Let's pretend we don't have a memory of any of these things". The problem is we do have a memory and we do have a record.

In 2008 the minister predicted a surplus of \$2.3 billion. That became a deficit of \$5.8 billion, an \$8.1-billion difference. In 2009 he predicted a deficit of \$33.7 billion, which became a deficit of \$55.6 billion, a \$21.9-billion difference. In 2012 he predicted a deficit of \$21.1 billion, which has become a deficit of \$25.9 billion, a \$4.8 billion-difference.

Perhaps the most famous inaccuracy of the Minister of Finance, and the bow and arrow is looking a bit shaky in his hands right now, was the 2008 fall economic update, which is perhaps his most infamous economic prediction. We all remember that because it was the one where he predicted no recession for Canada, a series of future budget balances that came in at a \$0.1-billion surplus and the balance would be achieved from the future sale of government assets.

It is worth recalling that we reached our lowest point in terms of our debt at \$458 billion six years ago. This budget predicts that by the end of this fiscal year it will be \$627 billion, an increase of \$169 billion.

This is the same Minister of Finance who, as he is delivering his budget speech, stands up and waxes full of pieties saying governments cannot spend their way out of a recession and then, looking meaningfully over at the opposition, says some people might disagree with this statement, but nevertheless the government is standing by its record of economic management and fiscal prudence. A \$170-billion increase in the national debt and the government has the nerve to say that it is some kind of an example of fiscal prudence. It is preposterous.

•(1645)

It is also preposterous to say that it is a government that has somehow embraced restraint. Program spending has gone from \$175 billion in 2005-06 to \$253 billion today, which is a 45% increase. That is far greater than the rate of inflation and the rate of growth in the real economy.

The Budget

Let us look at the fact that Canada is a federation. One cannot just take the federal programs and the federal approach in isolation. What I would like to see in this budget is not only a statement of the federal government's plans and hopes for the future, which is allegedly what we had in the budget statement. I, and I think most Canadians, would like to see how the federation is doing. How are Canadians doing? Where is the unemployment rate? Where is the job-creation rate? How indebted are Canadians? Have they fallen behind or are they moving ahead? How are the provinces doing? How are the municipalities doing?

Let us look at simple facts. Since 2007-08, the provincial debt, the debt of all the provinces, has gone from \$321 billion to \$534 billion, which is a \$230-billion increase. This year, 2012-13, only Saskatchewan and the three territories that are largely supported by the federal government are now expected to run a surplus. Therefore, when we look at the actual condition of the federation, it is far more serious than the government is prepared to tell us. It is far more problematic than the government is prepared to admit.

However, we have a government that nevertheless is eager to pat itself on the back. I heard this in the statements of my colleagues for Leeds—Grenville and Okanagan—Coquihalla, who said that this was such a wonderful budget because for the first time in 40 years the government had identified the skills challenge as a problem facing Canada. What?

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

This is not the first time in 40 years that a problem with job training has been identified. There is obviously a problem. Everyone is well aware of this and recognizes the problem. However, acknowledging that there is a problem and proposing a solution are two completely different things.

Let us take a moment to talk about job training. Six years ago, the government signed a number of agreements with the provinces whereby it handed over complete authority for training to the provinces. The government gave them money and told them to do their best to solve the job training problem.

It seems that the Prime Minister became angry recently when he learned that there was a problem. He was the last to notice and to realize what was happening.

The Prime Minister went slightly overboard six years ago. Now he is getting back to work and is saying that he has a solution. He has announced that the government will allow young students and workers to receive \$15,000. The government will take care of all the advertising for this wonderful program and will take back responsibility for training.

The Prime Minister said that his government would solve this problem that no one else had addressed before. What an exaggeration, what arrogance on the part of the federal government and the Conservative Party.

The provinces had actually started working on it. Not everyone wanted the government to create a \$15,000 program because the Prime Minister would then announce that everyone—including the

federal and provincial governments and the private sector—would have to contribute \$5,000.

Today, the Prime Minister is saying that he is prepared to sit down and to negotiate with the provinces. It is not a good idea to announce a program before you have conducted negotiations. In fact, that is contrary to what should be done. Better yet, the government should say that it has things to discuss with the provinces and that it wants to do that.

[*English*]

They had an opportunity. Just six months ago, the premiers made an unprecedented decision to tell the Prime Minister that they would like to have a meeting to discuss the economy. They wanted to have a chance to discuss the issues that concern them and concern the government, because running a modern economy or running a federation is not the exclusive property of the Government of Canada. It is not the exclusive jurisdiction of the Conservative Party. It is a concern of every political party, a concern of every region, and a concern of every government.

The Prime Minister declined. The Prime Minister of Canada refused to attend. If we compare Canada to every other federation in the world, no other federation would be in a situation in which the leader of its federal government would refuse to sit down with the premiers who had specifically asked for a meeting to discuss the economy. It is unbelievable.

After the last 48 hours, I have a suggestion for the premiers: they should rent themselves panda costumes and get together and tell the Prime Minister there is going to be a fantastic photo opportunity. They will not even be behind glass. They will be out in public and willing to sit down. That is the only way I think we can get this Prime Minister to sit down and talk to the premiers.

Instead of having a meeting and a serious discussion, what does the Government of Canada do? On health care, the Minister of Finance walked into a luncheon meeting of the ministers of finance and said, "I am too busy to have lunch. By the way, I want to tell you what the transfers for health care are going to be for the next 10 years."

The member for Peterborough is saying "Hear, hear". Maybe that goes down well where he comes from, but having sat at a premiers' table and at a ministers of finance table, I can say it is ridiculous to have a federal government walk in and in five minutes describe what the program for transfers is going to be.

There has to be a discussion. The government cannot have a take it or leave it approach. The take it or leave it approach is even being rejected by the members of the Conservative Party opposite.

Even now, even at this late hour in the life of the government, we are beginning to see signs of life, signs of people wanting to speak up, signs of members of the blue army chorus saying they want to wear something different and come out today and have a voice of their own. However, even that is being stamped down by the leadership of the Conservative Party.

The Budget

This budget does so much less than what it pretends to do. In the dialogue between the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla and the member for Peterborough, the member for Peterborough was saying, “Isn't it a wonderful thing? We have discovered that if you reduce tariffs, it is going to have a positive effect on the economy.”

The Conservatives raised tariff revenues for the federal government in this budget by \$300 million, but the two items upon which they reduced them magically leaped out—magically.

John Ivison from the *National Post* magically picked the items out of all the possibilities of items that the government would either reduce or increase, and he said that the reporters from *The Globe and Mail* had the same magic information. How did that happen? How would they have suddenly landed on baby clothes and hockey equipment? Of all the items that are there, those are the items they picked.

I do not think so. I do not think it was a lucky guess. I know my friends in the New Democratic Party have written to the RCMP and are going to launch an investigation. I wish the investigators well in their search for this difficult piece of information.

The government has raised tariffs by \$300 million. I would love to be a fly on the wall listening to the Minister of Finance talking to our Asian friends and saying, “We really want to lower tariffs and we really want to engage with you in the Pacific negotiations, but by the way, we are taking a \$300-million cash grab before we sit down and have a serious discussion about tariffs.”

It is ridiculous. The range of things the government is doing, not to improve the budget but to simply sell the budget, is unbelievable to me.

• (1655)

I have to hand it to the government. It knows how to orchestrate leaks. It knows how to feed little pieces of gruel to the press the week before and say, “Here is a little item. You might want to nibble on this. You might want to nibble on that.” Suddenly and magically, the press knew that skills training and infrastructure were going to be the focus of the budget. Every single speech given by a member opposite, dutifully prepared by the Prime Minister's Office, expressed it.

That is what we know. We know the Conservatives know how to orchestrate. We know that after they have orchestrated, as the member for Cape Breton—Canso would have said, they also know how to sell.

He is not even here to listen to what I have to say. This is what happens to an interim leader. He says to mention his riding, but when I go to the length and trouble of bringing him into the story, he walks out. I cannot understand it.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Toronto Centre is a very experienced parliamentarian. He would know that it is improper to refer to a member not being present.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, one forgets after years of experience. It happens.

The point is that it is very clear that they know how to orchestrate and they know how to sell.

This weekend, the advertising started. I would defy any journalist or any analyst of those ads to tell me the information that is being conveyed. What are the facts that are being conveyed? These are not facts. This is not information. They are pure and simple travelogues, pictures of people putting things together, waterfalls falling down, ships going down a river, blah, blah, blah. It has got nothing to do with information or with facts. It is propaganda in its most classic form, and it is sell, sell, sell.

That is what the Conservatives have. They have a very tiny product to sell. It is not very good. If we actually look at it, it is less than what it appears to be. The infrastructure money is actually down, not up. Sure, they can announce it for 10 years. They say that it is a stable announcement for 10 years. They must think they are going to be in government for 10 years, but they are not. What kind of arrogance is this?

If they want to make the program sound bigger, why not make it a 20-year program or a 40-year program? Why would they be such pikers and say it is the biggest investment ever announced? Anyone can announce something and then go and take out ads for it, but what has this got to do with a real program?

It does not have much to do with a real program. There is less on infrastructure. When it comes to skills formation, the Conservatives are actually spending less. They are taking the money out of 2007 and extrapolating it into the years ahead. They say there is a crisis, and then they say that in two or three years, they will have the program in place. That is a real crisis. The crisis was so great that the Prime Minister could go and see the pandas, but he could not go and see the premiers.

We have a Prime Minister who is not too busy to go and see two pandas that are not even allowed out of quarantine, but he is too busy to see 12 premiers. He is a Prime Minister who is too preoccupied with the health of the economy to sit down and talk about it with the first ministers of the country, but he has time to visit and to welcome two pandas coming to the country.

Rather than pandering, it is time for real discussion. This is actually not a serious budget. It is not a budget that really addresses the state we are in. It is not a budget that tells the truth about how wrong the government has been about our current economic state. It is not a budget that talks about where we really are on inequality, on health care, on poverty, or on the condition of the people. It is a budget that is about selling something. It is about orchestrating something rather than doing something.

That is the reason the Liberal Party will be voting against the budget.

• (1700)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, you mentioned that the hon. leader of the Liberal Party has tenure. He has served in public office for some time. Indeed, at one point he served as the premier of Ontario.

He talked about first ministers' meetings. I wonder if he would let us in the room and allow us to understand how the Liberal Party handled it when it determined that it was going to cut transfers to the provinces by \$26 billion.

The Budget

He was upset that our finance minister went in with good news, the good news that we would be increasing education transfers and health transfers to record levels and that each and every year we would not touch transfers. In fact, we guarantee them for 10 years.

However, when he was premier of Ontario, the then Liberal government cut the knees right out from under him. I would love for him to let us inside the walls of that first ministers' meeting.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, we had first ministers' meetings.

I am glad to see the member for Peterborough up on his feet again in the House. He has been a retiring, shy flower the last few weeks, and I am very glad to see him up. If the member would like to be, metaphorically, a fly on the wall, I will tell him.

We met regularly with Brian Mulroney. We met regularly with Jean Chrétien. Did we always agree? Was there enthusiastic embrace of the fact that there were cuts? Of course not. Of course they were tough discussions, but we had the discussions. We had the discussions and the debates, and around that table everybody knew what was at stake.

Yes, collectively, we did make some very tough decisions. We collectively decided and determined that Canada was going to turn the corner in 1993-1994. None of us liked the consequences for each one of us, and some of us would have liked to have seen it done in a slightly different way. However, I have to say that when all things are considered, this country began to turn some very important corners as we were facing the crisis we were facing in the early 1990s, and I am very proud of the fact that the premiers did it together, with the Prime Minister of Canada.

● (1705)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I get the sense that we just witnessed history in the making by listening to the speech by the hon. member for Toronto Centre for whom I have a great deal of sympathy. We have taken similar paths.

[English]

We are like two sides of the same coin, in the sense that he was an NDP member who went to the Liberal Party and helped it become the third party of opposition, and I was a Liberal who became a member of the NDP, which is now the official opposition.

I always enjoy listening to any speech that the hon. member for Toronto Centre makes, because he is definitely an inspiring and inspired person.

[Translation]

I am tempted to ask him a question, but I would rather end on an extremely positive note. It would be too easy to go back to the infamous 1990s. The member for Peterborough asked what the federal-provincial conferences were like at the time. I was a radio host at the time and if memory serves me correctly, it was not easy to have such collaborative conversations.

That being said, I will leave it up to my colleague from Toronto Centre to continue, if he wants to add anything to his speech.

I simply want to thank him for often making the debate in the House so interesting.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question. All I can say to the hon. member is I appreciated the nice things she had to say and did not appreciate the other thing she had to say.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for Toronto Centre and his speech. Certainly it is good to have a thorough discussion about the issues that face our country.

The member seems to be critical about the changes to the tariffs, which amount to about \$330 million, I believe. Many of these tariffs have not been looked at in 40 years. I believe it was in 1974, before I was born.

The original reason the tariffs were struck at a preferential rate was to help many of the countries that were under that classification to grow their economies. Many of these countries' economies have grown and developed greatly. Some examples are China, Brazil, Russia and India.

If not now, when?

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, perhaps there will be another opportunity for the hon. member to express himself. In the self-congratulatory exchange he had with the member for Peterborough, he seemed to be saying that the reduction of tariffs would be a boon for the Canadian economy.

I pointed out in my speech that this is not a budget that would reduce tariffs. It is actually a budget that would dramatically increase tariffs.

At the same time, the hon. member has to understand that we are in the middle of free trade negotiations with the Europeans. We are in the middle of free trade discussions with all the countries of the Asia-Pacific. I think one has to look at these increases as temporary cash grabs by the finance department that run in total contradiction to the overall position and direction of Canadian public policy.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member for Gatineau, I can say that there was a day when she was tempted to come back to the Liberals.

I will talk about the budget because that is more important, especially since it affects things that are important to Quebec. Unlike other budgets that were meant to unify the country, this budget, once again, divides the federation. I would like my colleague, the leader of the Liberal Party, to say a few words about skills training and the fact that this budget has a negative impact on small investors in Quebec who wanted to invest in the labour-sponsored funds, whether at the CSN or the FTQ. I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

● (1710)

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

The Budget

As far as the labour-sponsored funds are concerned, again, this series of proposals in the budget is a clear attack on the venture capital that exists in the province of Quebec. The labour-sponsored funds do important work, especially in the regions of Quebec. There is no alternative. The government is in the process of eliminating something without offering an alternative, which, I must say, shows a serious lack of sensitivity toward Quebec, toward Quebec's entrepreneurs and toward those who want to save money by contributing to labour-sponsored funds. I was a bit surprised that the government made this decision.

The same goes for professional training. That is a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. The federal government has a role to play, but acting unilaterally is not the solution.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it may be my last occasion to put a question to the hon. member for Toronto Centre while he is interim leader of the Liberal Party, and I commend him for once again a very entertaining, engaging and insightful address on the budget, which I believe is now referred to as economic action panda 2013.

I have read a lot of budgets, but I cannot figure out if we are up or down. We read that there would be more money for infrastructure, for Environment Canada, for the meteorological service and a bit more money for VIA Rail, but since VIA Rail was cut in half in the main estimates and there are no totals in the budget, what would VIA Rail get in 2013-14? What would Environment Canada get in 2013-14? I cannot figure out if we are up or down because the budget is missing the bottom-line numbers.

I ask my friend from Toronto Centre for his comments.

Hon. Bob Rae: I think the member is really on to something, Mr. Speaker. If I can compare it to other economic statements I have seen, I am used to seeing economic statements where the spending by departments is clearly listed, where there is a comparative number from year to year and where one would have a sense of what is happening.

The only thing we do know from this budget is that the government has to be finding its cuts somewhere. The relatively low level of program spending would lead to cuts. I do not think we have seen them. They have not been announced, and I do not think they will be announced. This is not a government that will announce cuts. This is a government that will simply sell the sizzle, sell the smell, not sell the reality. That is what we are into.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on budget 2013, a plan for job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 is a comprehensive agenda to bolster Canada's long-term economic strengths and promote job growth. It is a plan not just for the next twelve months or three years, but it is a plan for the next generation.

Our government is proposing measures that would ensure long-term prosperity and growth. It is about putting the country on track for success both now and going forward. Economic action plan 2013 would ensure we are focused on enabling and sustaining Canada's

long-term economic growth. Let us be clear. The global recovery remains fragile, especially in Europe and the United States. Too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why this budget would move ahead to secure jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canada.

Obviously, in an over-400 page budget document the initiatives are many and let us consider just a few of our proposals. Economic action plan 2013 includes key measures that would strengthen Canada's economy, such as increased skills and training support including the new \$15,000 Canada job grant to help more Canadians find high-quality well-paying jobs. Once fully implemented, this grant would help nearly 130,000 Canadians access training each year.

It includes tax breaks for manufacturers who buy new machinery and equipment to stay competitive and an extended hiring credit for small businesses that create jobs. The tax break for purchasing new machinery and equipment would provide B.C. manufacturing and processing businesses with approximately \$129 million in tax relief to grow their companies and to create jobs.

It includes a record \$70 billion in federal investment in infrastructure including money for jobs, roads, bridges, subways, rail lines and ports. This includes a new building Canada fund, the community improvement fund, the P3 Canada fund and specific funding for rail passenger service. Surrey and other B.C. municipalities would benefit from stable and predictable funding to support the community and infrastructure projects.

* * *

● (1715)

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-14, An Act to amend the Corruption of Foreign Public Officials Act, to which the concurrence of the House is desired.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:17 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Budget

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1800)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 648)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon

Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravnigan
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote— 133	

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauson	Lebel
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet

Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	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
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Zimmer — 150

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CBC AND PUBLIC SERVICE DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

The House resumed from February 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express my opposition to Bill C-461. People who defend this bill will say that its purpose is to improve the CBC's transparency. My New Democrat colleagues and I want to show that it is actually a sleight of hand designed solely to target our national broadcasting service while weakening it in the face of its private competitors.

It is important to shed light on the Conservatives' real intentions. With this bill, the Conservatives are trying to discredit the CBC through insinuations that are not only unfounded, but also wrong. We wonder why are they doing this. Is it to punish our national broadcaster, whose only crime was apparently being too dedicated in its duty to inform Canadians, especially when it comes to the actions of the Conservative government?

With this bill, the Conservatives want to imply that the CBC operates opaquely and apparently has something to hide from Canadians. For example, the government wants us to believe that the CBC's most senior executives are hiding their salaries from Canadians. That is absolutely not the case. Every Canadian can go to the CBC website and find the executive pay scale. All you have to do is click on the "Reporting to Canadians" tab.

The hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert said that this information is worthless since we are talking about a pay scale and not a specific salary. Since exact salaries constitute private information, I would like to remind hon. members that no Canadian broadcaster is required to provide any information about its executives' salaries. The CBC therefore demonstrated great transparency by providing its executive pay scale.

Next, I would like to draw the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert's attention to the fact that the pay-scale method is necessary in

Private Members' Business

a society that recruits its executives from a competitive market. The Conservatives always like to claim that they are the only ones who understand how the market works. They should therefore understand this basic principle.

What is more, salary amounts are decided by the board of the CBC, whose members are appointed by the Conservative government itself. In that sense, I really do not see how the Conservatives can continue to insinuate that there is any sort of problem with the income of CBC executives.

The Conservatives are also speaking out against a system of exemptions for the CBC. They are suggesting that there is no justification for such a system. Must I remind the government that there is no other public broadcaster in Canada? Is it not then natural for the legislation governing a public broadcaster to make specific reference to the CBC? Clearly, there is a discretionary exemption, as the Conservatives call it, since the CBC is the only company involved.

I want to remind the Conservatives that they are in no position to lecture the CBC on transparency. For example, every time the CBC refused to disclose documents in order to preserve journalistic confidentiality, the corporation sent the documents to the Information Commissioner for her to verify their protected nature.

Finally, it is my pleasure to remind the House that the Information Commissioner herself gave an A, the highest grade in access to information, to the CBC. The same cannot be said of the Conservative government, which has been criticized more than once by the same commissioner for its overly high rate of refusal, for its unreasonable response times, and for its excessive tendency to censor information.

Therefore, since we already know the salary grid of the CBC's managers and since it has shown exemplary transparency, what is the real aim of Bill C-461 and what will its consequences be if adopted?

● (1805)

First, it seems clear that the purpose of this bill is to attack our national broadcaster.

Ever since the last election, the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert has been on a crusade against the CBC. He has even gone so far as to say that Canadians do not need a national broadcaster. Fortunately, that is not his party's unanimous position, and the members of the Conservative caucus know that any attempt to suppress the CBC will fail. They know that Canadians treasure the continued presence of an independent information system. They know that Canadians love the CBC.

Noting the opposition to his bill, the same member has tried to attack the CBC's financing. First he suggested removing public subsidies. Realizing that his position was marginal, even within his own caucus, he has now resigned himself to trying to discredit an institution that is considered a model of transparency.

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In fact, one of the primary goals of this bill is not to clarify the law, but to set off a spurious debate that will give him an opportunity to suggest that there is something fishy about the CBC's operations. And yet, the truth is that the CBC is already subject to many more transparency rules than its competitors.

What is this if not the Conservatives' mistrust of the CBC? It is no secret that the government sees the CBC as an adversary.

Why is the CBC seen as a threat? It is seen as a threat because it is still at arm's length from political power and the Conservatives have a hard time with that.

This is their logic: if the general public will not allow them to directly hurt the CBC, then they will interfere in how it does business and make it harder for the CBC to be competitive.

That is exactly what will happen when this bill is passed.

As if draconian budget cuts were not enough, the Conservatives now want to add as much of an administrative burden as possible to the disclosure of information.

With the passage of Bill C-461, requests for access to information will increase. These requests are not from Canadians wanting to know more about public spending. They come almost exclusively from certain members of the Conservative caucus and private competitors, their cronies.

Out of all the complaints regarding the CBC's performance in terms of access to information, 80% come from Sun News Network and its owner, Quebecor.

As a result, Bill C-461 seeks only to put the CBC at a disadvantage with respect to its competitors who are under no obligation to disclose information, even though they receive government subsidies.

In short, with this bill, the Conservatives are killing two birds with one stone. They are unfairly discrediting a corporation that continues to be exemplary despite budget cuts while threatening its independence and putting it at a disadvantage with competitors that they see as less of a threat.

We will be voting against this bill. It is nothing more than an ideological attack, another ideological attack, against the CBC, Canada's only public broadcaster.

The Conservatives should be proud of this institution instead of trying to destroy it at all costs.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House on Bill C-461, which is an interesting piece of legislation. At the end of the day, one may question whether the bill will be sent to committee, but it brings up what I believe are very interesting issues that are important to discuss.

I was listening to the previous member speak to the issue of CBC, its legacy and how Canadians perceive it today. I truly believe that Canadians from coast to coast to coast tune in to CBC radio and television networks on an ongoing basis. The services that CBC

provides to Canadians are second to none in terms of they type of programming and ensuring that there is a high level of Canadian content, which is very important for the industry here in Canada and taking the talent we have to the next level.

Not only does CBC have direct benefits for the viewing and listening audience here in Canada, but we often find people abroad and around the world tuning into CBC Radio. Now because of Internet technology, we find that more and more people are tuning into the websites of CBC.

Historically, there has been a high level of respect for the integrity of news and other types of programming, particularly documentaries, that CBC has aired over the years. Members will find that Canadians trust and want to see that continue because it is very important in terms of our own heritage as a country. We need to be able to feel comfortable in knowing that we have an industry that will continue to be there in a very healthy fashion.

Let there be no doubt, CBC does afford the opportunity for Canadians to have more than one radio or TV broadcasting program. It provides competition to the other industry stakeholders. It is not like we have 20 or 30 different broadcasting networks. Canada is not in a position to have those kinds of numbers. We have two or three private companies that have invested hundreds of millions of dollars, such as CTV, Global and Sun Media, which are healthy competition for the CBC.

I think we have to be very careful that we do not buy into what I believe, and many Canadians believe, is a hidden agenda from the Conservative right. There are many within the former Reform Party, now Conservative Party, who believe that Canada would be better off without the CBC and that there is no need for it. Therefore, generally speaking, people need to be aware that there are those, even within the House, who would like to see the demise of CBC TV and radio.

I am not one of those people. I believe in the CBC and the services that it provides to Canadians. Members will find that the Liberal Party of Canada believes in the valuable contributions of the CBC, whether from its broadcast news, other types of broadcast programming or its radio division and the services it provides to not only Canadians here in Canada but abroad as well. At the end of the day, the Liberal Party will stand up for the CBC and will fight to ensure that it is going to be there for future generations.

• (1815)

That said, the Liberal Party also believes in accountability and transparency. It is interesting that the bill attempts to deal with deputy minister level one salaries and higher. That is an important aspect of the bill.

Transparency and accountability are important. We know that the government, probably more than any other government that predates it, is somewhat reluctant to provide what we believe is important information, which Canadians should have the right to know. There is no hidden agenda there. We do believe there needs to be more transparency.

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It is interesting that the bill has come before us at a time when we are debating the budget. For members who were here listening to the leader of the Liberal Party talk about transparency and the budget lines in the tables, there was a question posed about those line-by-line comparisons that used to be there.

In the name of accountability and transparency, we would argue that the government has done a disservice in terms of providing that transparency and accountability. That is why we find it interesting that we now have a private member's bill asking for more transparency and accountability from within the very Conservative cabinet.

I suspect that if the bill does happen to pass out of the House and is sent to committee, one of the areas of discussion would be in regard to cabinet and to what degree they are prepared to ensure there is more accountability and transparency in terms of freedom of information access requests. The government goes out of its way to avoid that sort of accountability, yet many of its members are calling for more accountability with the CBC. I will have to be excused for not necessarily believing that the government is being genuine on the issue.

At the end of the day, Canadians as a whole cannot be blamed for being suspicious of anything the Conservatives want to do in regard to the CBC. This is because a very high percentage of Canadians believe in the value of the CBC. They see what the Conservative record has been. They see the petitions that have been introduced in the past number of months in regard to targeting the CBC, and some of the comments that have been put on the record in regard to the CBC. There seems to be this opinion that there is this pent-up frustration from many of the Conservative, or maybe the past Reformers within the party.

There is a potential hidden agenda there that is not healthy for our country, if we believe in the preservation of heritage and the promotion of the role that CBC has played both in the past, in the present and hopefully well into the future. This is why we approach it with some skepticism.

On the other hand, we do believe in the merits of ensuring that there is more transparency and accountability with respect to the ministers and the government as a whole. It would be nice to see the government approach things in a more accountable and transparent way and be clear in terms of the future of the CBC from the government perspective.

If the government was more transparent in regard to the CBC and if it had a long-term vision that it was prepared to share with Canadians, maybe then there would not be as much skepticism.

• (1820)

I suspect the freedom of information request that would be filed if this legislation were to pass would come from CBC's competition and many of the Conservative government members. This is really where the drive for this additional information is coming from. That is why I would caution members on what we will be voting on and to be very suspicious and watchful if it ends up going to committee.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak for a few minutes on the subject of Bill C-461, An Act to

amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information).

I begin by thanking the member for Edmonton—St. Albert for his efforts to bring forward this issue. Bill C-461 promotes greater transparency and accountability, not only in relation to CBC but also in relation to the public service as a whole.

Overall, the government agrees with what Bill C-461 is trying to accomplish. The public has a right to access information from the CBC as it receives funding from the government. The public has a right to find out the salaries of the very highest paid individuals in government institutions. These are important things the public needs to know.

That being said, we have looked at Bill C-461 and we believe it requires certain modifications. Therefore, the government will propose amendments. These amendments will not hinder or detract from the main goal that Bill C-461 tries to achieve.

Before I describe these amendments the government will propose, I will begin by spending a bit of time describing for the House what Bill C-461 seeks to achieve. I will first focus on the part of Bill C-461 that relates to the CBC.

Currently the Access to Information Act only allows a requester to access records that deal with the general administration of the CBC. Only requests that deal with such records will be considered and processed by the CBC. As a result, any record that contains information that relates to the journalistic, creative or programming activities of the CBC are excluded from coverage by the Access to Information Act. This means that if the CBC receives an access request that involves any records containing information that is journalistic, creative or programming activities, these records are not even processed as the access regime simply does not apply to them.

Generally speaking, broad exclusions are undesirable in an access to information regime from the perspective of openness and transparency. The current exclusion for the CBC is a problem because it excludes too much information. It is unclear and it also raises problems of interpretation and of application. In fact, it led the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics to undertake a study of the CBC's application of the exclusion. It also led to a court dispute between CBC and the Information Commissioner. I will come back to this later. Bill C-461 proposes to replace this problematic exclusion with an exemption, which will be more beneficial to the access regime.

When I say that the current exclusion covers too much, the point I am trying to make is that not all of the CBC's journalistic, creative or programming records are so sensitive that they deserve to be excluded from coverage by the Access to Information Act. However, I am certainly not suggesting that these CBC records should automatically be disclosed to a requester. On the contrary, Bill C-461 proposes that the CBC can protect these records with an exemption that can be used at its discretion.

The exemption would contain an injury test specific to CBC. That injury test would allow the head of the CBC to decide to protect the information from disclosure if it was determined that disclosure would be prejudicial to the CBC's journalistic, creative or programming independence.

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These activities are at the core of the CBC's mandate as a broadcaster and it is recognize that disclosure of information about such activities may hamper the CBC's ability to function in such a competitive environment. The requirements to demonstrate harm to a category of activities in order to protect information from disclosure is the type of exercise that many government institutions already perform on a large number of federal government records in the course of responding to access requests.

There is a secondary benefit to the changes proposed by Bill C-461 with regards to the CBC. It will allow for a very important review of the role by the Information Commissioner, an independent officer of Parliament with the responsibility of overseeing the application of the Access to Information Act. Review by the Information Commissioner of CBC's records was the subject of the dispute I mentioned earlier. The exemption for records of the CBC that Bill C-461 proposes will make it crystal clear that the Information Commissioner can carry out her crucial oversight role in relation to the CBC.

I will speak now about an exclusion for confidential journalistic sources of the CBC. While I have spoken now about the problems caused by an overly broad exclusion, there is no doubt that an exclusion offers the highest level of protection for information. There are some limited and specific categories of information that should be covered by a targeted, well-defined exclusion.

● (1825)

With respect to Bill C-461, it is the government's belief that information that would reveal the identity of confidential journalistic sources should continue to be excluded from the act.

When we previously spoke about Bill C-461, we noted that the ability to protect the identify of confidential journalistic sources was a pillar of journalism. Individuals who are confidential sources of information are understandably nervous about being identified. If a broadcaster cannot offer them complete guarantee of anonymity, they will go to another broadcaster or journalist.

As Bill C-461 is currently drafted, it would not allow the CBC to provide its confidential journalistic sources with an ironclad guarantee of continued anonymity. This is because the proposed new exemption in Bill C-461 contains an injury test that can result in their identity being revealed if the test is not met and will allow the Information Commissioner to review documents that identify them.

The position that we are taking with regard to the confidential journalistic sources is consistent with the 2011 Federal Court of Appeal decision on this matter. The court considered the CBC's exclusion and concluded that for journalistic sources, the exclusion was absolute and the Information Commissioner could not examine such information.

Bill C-461, with the amendment proposed by the government, would essentially reflect the outcome of the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal. I will stress that both the CBC and the Information Commissioner expressed satisfaction with the outcome of that decision.

I will speak now about disclosure of information on officers or employees of government institutions.

The next area where Bill C-461 would seek to increase openness and accountability is with regard to the expenditures of public money. Bill C-461 would increase openness and accountability by requiring more disclosure on expenditures in two areas: one would be the reimbursement for work-related expenses received by public servants; and the other would be the exact amount received by the highest paid individuals in government institutions.

Let me start with the issue of exact salaries.

In the public sector, job classifications are accompanied by a salary range within which someone is paid. Where they specifically fall within that range depends upon a number of factors, including time spent in the position and performance reviews.

Until now, the only information regarding salaries that could be made available to an access requester was the salary ranges of individuals enquired about. This salary range, along with other disclosable information, was enough to give a requester a good idea of how much an individual was remunerated by the government. We believe that being able to obtain salary ranges for the majority of public servants pursuant to an access to information request is appropriate.

In 2006 the coverage of the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act was expanded to a number of crown corporations. This change was brought forward with the Federal Accountability Act. Information on parent crown corporations and their wholly owned subsidiaries is now accessible under the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act. As a result, the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act now include a number of government institutions whose employees and officials are much higher paid than the vast majority of civil servants. We support the idea put forward in Bill C-461, that the highest paid individuals in the public sphere should have their exact salaries disclosed.

However, we propose an amendment to permit the disclosure of the exact income of those individuals that exceeds the highest level of the deputy minister level. This is a more practical level to administer than pledging the threshold in the middle of the deputy minister classification as is currently in Bill C-461. It also better reflects the intention of disclosing the income of the very highest paid individuals.

This is a sensible amendment as it crystallizes the fundamental idea that if an individual, in the course of their employment, incurs an expense and is compensated for that expense by the government, then that information should no longer be treated as personal information. The more noted expenses, when they are paid back to the employee, will be known by all. It is important to be transparent because we want the government to be money wise and only spend money where it is necessary.

Both the provisions of Bill C-461 requesting exact salaries and reimbursement of expenses go toward furthering transparency in the mechanisms of government. Individuals and institutions that are trusted with the public purse should be able to demonstrate where and how money is being spent.

The government supports Bill C-461, with the amendments I have described, because it would go toward achieving the transparency and accountability sought.

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• (1830)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have served with the member for Edmonton—St. Albert on various committees, including in the last Parliament when we served together on occasion on the justice committee. I respect his work because he speaks his mind and his opinions are based on his values. However, just because I respect his approach to Parliament, it does not mean that I always agree with him and this is a case where I do not agree with him and am opposed to this bill. In trying to figure out where I stood on this bill, I did a bit of an analysis, which I would like to share with everybody today.

The first step is to look at what the bill would do. I want to focus in on section 68.1 of the Access to Information Act. Section 68.1 reads:

This Act does not apply to any information that is under the control of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that relates to its journalistic, creative or programming activities, other than information that relates to its general administration.

There is an exclusion here. Why the exclusion? These sections are drafted to ensure that a public broadcaster's administrative functions are not excluded from the reach of FOI, or freedom of information, and accountability. It is the program and content activities for the public broadcaster that need to be distinguished and excluded. It is an acknowledgement of the separation between media activities and other activities as a crown corporation. This bill proposes to amend the Access to Information Act to repeal that exclusion for CBC for information related to journalist, creative or programming activities and replaces it with an exception.

When considering a section like this, it is useful to compare ourselves to other jurisdictions to see what is happening in similar situations in other countries. The public policy goal of an exclusion like this one is to ensure public accountability, while protecting independence and integrity. Let us take a look at the other jurisdictions to see how they strike that balance.

We have heard that other countries have similar legislation, like Australia, and have had this legislation for years. In fact, it has been well over 20 years.

Since 2000, the Irish public broadcaster, RTÉ, has been subject to the Irish freedom of information act in relation to its administrative activities, but it is excluded in relation to a range of material, including information gathered or recorded for "journalistic or programme content purposes, whether or not a programme is produced on the basis of such information, or is broadcast". RTÉ's exclusion also extends to other activities like the identification of sources of information, editorial decision making about program and schedule content and post-transmission internal review and analysis of any program or schedule of programs broadcast.

Since the U.K.'s freedom of information act was enacted in 2000, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the BBC, has been subject to the act except in respect of information held for purposes of "journalism, art or literature".

The first step of the analysis is to explain the purpose of this exclusion and it seems we are on the same page as other countries with public broadcasters.

Let us look at the change and figure out what exactly this change would do. I will read clause 18.2 of Bill C-461, which states:

The head of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation may refuse to disclose any record requested under this Act if the disclosure could reasonably be expected to prejudice the Corporation's journalistic, creative or programming independence.

It is important to note that when the Federal Court of Appeal, when it has been asked to review whether documents should be released, it has settled matters such that both the Information Commissioner and the CBC have supported. At best, this bill is gratuitous. The access to information system was already working and the CBC was often proactive in its disclosure of information when it came to things like expenses. At worst, this bill is an attack on the CBC's viability as a journalistic source that puts its investigations at risk by jeopardizing its ability to protect its sources.

The attempt to reverse this burden of proof, to force the CBC to prove that a request is "injurious", is part of an ideological attack on public broadcasting in Canada. Further, the protection that will remain is defined narrowly, too narrowly to adequately protect journalistic work. These changes put an unjustified burden on the CBC and will make the CBC vulnerable to unfair and compromising requests, not to mention expensive legal battles.

• (1835)

What is clear is that the integrity of a journalistic entity that is free of corporate influence is in jeopardy.

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression has weighed in with a statement. If people are listening at home, they can find that statement on the group's website. In its statement, it writes that Bill C-461 would:

...significantly weaken the CBC's ability to deliver a key component of its mandate: carrying out public service journalism and creating programming completely independent from the government. That mandate was given to the CBC by Parliament decades ago and remains in force. To carry it out, CBC journalists must be able to conduct research and prepare programs without pressure to disclose the results prematurely or surrender operational details. The corporation must be able to acquire broadcasting rights and creative content without being required to disclose negotiating positions or strategy. In this respect, arm's-length public broadcasters differ from other government departments. That is why other parliamentary democracies protect these broadcasters with exclusions like the one current in section 68.1 of the ATIA. Canada should do no less.

The CJFE goes on to describe what effect this attack on public journalism would have on the quality and breadth of news Canadians would be able to expect from the CBC. They say:

...what whistleblower would approach a CBC reporter? How could CBC journalists in good faith promise to protect their sources? How, both commercially and ethically, could the CBC sustain any investigative journalism if the process and the research could be revealed to CBC competitors or to the subjects of CBC investigations? In fact, a chill would fall upon CBC journalists and the broadcaster's ability to produce journalism with integrity would be seriously jeopardized. A bill that ostensibly aims to increase accountability would destroy the public broadcaster's ability to hold government and the powerful to account.

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I have heard some of the debate in the House in relation to Bill C-461 over the past couple of months, and certain Conservative members have come forward to say that the bill does not single out the CBC. I beg to differ. The bill is called the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act, so it is pretty clear that it is about the CBC. It applies to the CBC and no other organization. That is pretty settled.

I have also heard statements saying that the bill is not an attack on the CBC. The member who brought the private member's bill forward is on the record saying:

I don't know that we need a national broadcaster in 2011.... We have to wean them off...of the taxpayer's dollar....

In my opinion, this has nothing to do with transparency and everything to do with attacking the CBC.

Journalistic freedom is the foundation of democracy. It is unconscionable that the Conservatives are attacking public investigation. The CBC has an important role to play in investigative journalism. My New Democrat colleagues and I believe in a strong and independent public broadcaster. It is essential that the CBC remain a trusted news source on which Canadians can rely.

Bill C-461 should be defeated.

• (1840)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise and speak at second reading of Bill C-461, an act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information) or, as the bill's short title makes clear, the CBC and public service disclosure and transparency act.

I would like to respond to some of the criticism I have heard tonight. The bill would actually bring the CBC in line with other crown corporations. Exemptions that exist for the CBC that have been abused would be eliminated.

There are many reasons to support the bill. I would like to take a moment to highlight some of mine. As someone who has used Canada's access to information laws to review government spending, I am already familiar with the importance of such laws to get at information either that governments may report to the public out of context or, at worst, that they wish to hide.

These laws are important because they hold governments accountable. How exactly does this happen? When decisions are subject to review, individuals throughout the public service are much more likely to follow rules and reflect on how tax money is spent. When they do not, the results cannot be quietly locked away safe from public review. For this reason, sunshine in government is a useful disinfectant for unscrupulous behaviour.

Let us look at the bill's specific reforms. First and importantly, as the bill's name suggests, it would bring greater accountability to the CBC. I believe it is the duty of government to be transparent and open. Canadians need to know that when household income is taken away from them in taxes it is being put to good use. Yet a problem currently exists. There is a loophole in the Access to Information Act, which was created for the CBC, whereby this news, culture and entertainment company can refuse to release any documents it believes are inadmissible.

Aside from going through the courts, there is no adequate oversight review. This loophole has been exploited by the CBC to refuse replying to information requests. Specifically, the act currently states that:

This Act does not apply to any information that is under the control of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that relates to its journalistic, creative or programming activities, other than information that relates to its general administration.

This means the CBC is not required to provide any transparency except for information about its general administration. However in turn, it is expected, actually required, to report on what is covered. Yet the CBC has erroneously applied its exemption broadly and at times refused to provide information that it is obliged to, in my opinion. It has used that clause to delay or deny the provision of information even to the Information Commissioner, whose job it is to determine whether or not Canadians have a right to access requested information.

In this case, the matter went to the court. Both the Federal Court and the Federal Court of Appeal agreed that CBC was wrong to withhold certain documents from the Information Commissioner. The courts also found that the wording of that section of the Access to Information Act is less clear than it could be and "a recipe for controversy", which is exactly what it delivered.

The sponsor of this bill is responding to a flaw in the current law as identified by the courts. The Information Commissioner is correctly asking that greater onus be placed on the CBC to demonstrate that it could actually be harmed by releasing certain exempted documents, and the public interest should be weighed in each decision.

The NDP member for Halifax just stated that we are actually already on the same page as other countries, but that is not quite accurate. Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom all allow independent bodies to review documents held by their public broadcasters. I believe it is time Canada did the same, because right now under the law, it is the CBC that acts as judge and jury in these cases. If people want to appeal, they have to go to the courts, which is expensive and time consuming. However, neither the commissioner nor any other taxpayer should be forced to go to the Federal Court to resolve disputes.

Bill C-461 would redefine the exemption clause for the CBC with what is called an injury test. This means that unless disclosing the information could reasonably be expected to prejudice CBC journalistic, creative or programing independence, the information could not be withheld. Also, in line with other areas of the federal government, the CBC would not decide what is covered and what is not.

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•(1845)

Explicitly giving an officer of Parliament, in this case the Information Commissioner, the authority to adjudicate whether or not this injury test is met is wise public policy because it would ensure that an independent third party ruled on what could or could not be made available to the public. This would help avoid the possibility of lengthy litigation processes that could result in further information being effectively denied through delay.

In effect, what both the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and the member for Halifax are stating today is that they do not trust the Information Commissioner to resolve these disputes; yet the Information Commissioner looks at all sorts of confidential government documents and in those cases is trusted to decide what is to be released and what is not to be released.

I believe this clause would not expose media sources to prying eyes or impact the CBC's independence, and frankly, we do not want it to.

If anyone argues the CBC should be exempt, as I have heard tonight, I would ask why others should not be exempt. I ask that rhetorically, because I do not believe federal government agencies should be exempt from oversight. Supporters of the CBC, of which there are many, might believe the mother corporation is in a unique position compared to other crown corporations, but it is not. At the end of the day it spends public dollars, and Parliament must hold all such agencies, departments and crown corporations accountable without fear or favour.

Second, the bill would amend the Privacy Act to allow for the public disclosure of specific salaries and responsibilities of anybody who earns more than \$188,600 from the federal government.

Nova Scotia and Ontario require the disclosure of the name, salary and job title of anybody making \$100,000 or more from the respective provincial governments. These sunshine lists hold those governments accountable for the salaries given to the top bureaucrats, civil servants and anybody else who earns six figures or more per year from the government. Manitoba, incidentally, sets its transparency level at a mere \$50,000.

My own province of New Brunswick has a disclosure limit at \$60,000. What is more, employees receiving in excess of \$10,000 in retirement are subject to public disclosure. These numbers are reported annually, and this has been a good thing for taxpayers and open government.

Right now the legislation of the Government of Canada only allows for the disclosure of a very broad, very vague and almost entirely unhelpful salary range.

As my hon. colleague, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, found out, the salary range for the current CEO of CBC is somewhere between \$358,400 and \$422,000. However in addition, generous bonuses can be paid to the CBC president and other civil servants. At most, bonuses in the federal system can reach 39% of the basic salary, yet taxpayers have no idea if a bonus was paid or what amount was paid.

I will note that, again, when my hon. colleague from Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe set his threshold level on behalf of the

government he could not even bring himself to tell us what that level would be, so let me tell the House. If we were to go with the top end, as the government is proposing, it would mean a disclosure level at about \$444,000, which is a level that would effectively neuter this legislation.

All my colleagues in the House, as well as other places, are required to disclose their salaries. They are public knowledge, and rightfully so. I believe the amount in this legislation is set too high. Instead, it should start at the rate of pay for members of Parliament, which is currently \$157,731, an amount incidentally that has MPs already in the top 2% of all Canadian income earners. This figure is well higher than the minimum limits we see in provinces with sunshine laws.

With the passage of the bill, Canadians would be able to shed new light into some of the currently dark corners in the civil service. This is not to suggest something untoward is happening in the corners that are exempt from public oversight, but the fact is that we do not know. We and all taxpayers have a right as citizens to ask and receive answers. Taxpayers are, after all, the ones footing the bills. I hope no person elected to this chamber will argue that some areas of government ought to be exempt from accountability.

That is why I will be supporting Bill C-461, and that is why I hope my hon. colleagues will do the same.

•(1850)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, I must inform her that she will have only about six minutes remaining for her speech so that there is enough time for the right of reply.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since I have only six minutes to speak to Bill C-461, I would simply like to say that I am strongly opposed to it.

In my opinion, it is another ridiculous, ideology-driven bill, which the Conservatives are using to muzzle institutions that are not to their liking. Under the guise of increasing transparency at the CBC, the Conservatives are using this bill to weaken the public broadcaster.

The bill's sponsor, the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, already shared his true feelings during the last election when he said the following to a local chamber of commerce:

[*English*]

I don't know that we need a national broadcaster in 2011. ... We have to wean them off ... of the taxpayer's dollar....

[*Translation*]

In December 2011, he told *The Globe and Mail* that he and other Conservative members were urging cabinet ministers to make more aggressive cuts to the CBC. What the Conservatives are really trying to do with this bill is dismantle the crown corporation.

Private Members' Business

We need to understand that this underhanded attack on the public broadcaster is widely supported in Conservative circles and by this government. In June 2003, when the Broadcasting Act was undergoing a thorough review at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the Canadian Alliance—the precursor to the Conservative Party—clearly stated its policy on the public broadcaster in a dissenting report that said: “We would significantly reduce CBC operating subsidy by commercialization of CBC television.”

The Prime Minister himself has said on several occasions that he wanted the CBC to get to the point where it no longer needed parliamentary subsidies. In May 2004, for example, he made the following statement:

[*English*]

I've suggested that government subsidies in support of CBC's services should be to those things that...do not have commercial alternatives.

[*Translation*]

As we can see, the Conservatives' aversion to the public broadcaster is in their DNA. The Conservatives think that the ideal public broadcaster is a dying, insignificant and insipid broadcaster. It is also important to note that the Conservatives started undermining the public broadcaster as soon as they had a majority government. In 2012, they announced \$200 million in ideological cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada. These cuts had an impact on the quality and quantity of services, on both the information and the entertainment sides of things. Let me give you a few examples.

The mandate of RDI and Espace Musique was reduced in the regions. Regional programming was affected, especially in French-language minority communities. Regional stations' music libraries will be eliminated. Broadcasting by all general television stations will be centralized, and half the air time reserved for the regions on Espace Musique will be cut.

Of course, programming will get hit. On French television, dramatic series will have fewer episodes, there will be fewer major productions and management intends to reduce RDI's production costs. I should also mention that proposals for specialized sports stations and children's programming will be scrapped. There has also been a lot of disruption to CBC radio.

Canada's international influence also melted like snow in the hot sun when the government axed Radio Canada International. In all, 650 people will lose their jobs by 2015, including 243 employees of the French service. When the Conservatives brought down their budget last week, they took the opportunity to further reduce the CBC's budget by cutting an additional \$42 million.

The NDP believes in a strong, independent public broadcaster funded in part through ad revenues and in part by parliamentary votes in recognition of the service it provides to Canadians in terms of sharing local information and promoting our cultural wealth.

The Conservatives' budget cuts are forcing the CBC to rely more and more on ad revenues and to operate like a commercial broadcaster. The government is asking the public broadcaster to compete with major conglomerates such as Bell Media, CTV and Quebecor, without ensuring that there is a level playing field.

I would like the sponsor of the bill to answer the following question: if his real objective is transparency, why should the CBC be the only one to have to disclose its production costs? Why not ask the same of private broadcasters, who also receive public funds?

I oppose this bill, which is a backdoor attack against the CBC, because Bill C-461 targets the capacity of the crown corporation to remain competitive and independent. What is more, this bill is unnecessary since the crown corporation has significantly improved its access to information practices since the 2006 bill on government accountability. Members will recall that it was through the collaboration of the NDP and the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre that the CBC was brought under the Access to Information Act. I want to reiterate my opposition to this bill and my support for the CBC and the work that it does.

• (1855)

[*English*]

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. members from all sides of the House who have participated in the debate regarding private member's Bill C-461.

Let me start by dispelling some of the concerns from my friends from the New Democratic Party. This bill is not an attack on the CBC. I wish they would assess the statute on its face rather than developing conspiracy theories as to why we are promoting it.

Section 68.1 of the current Access to Information Act has been determined by two courts, including the Federal Court of Appeal, to be unworkable. It creates an exclusion and then an exemption to that exclusion, which is a recipe for controversy. It led to expensive litigation and ultimately the Federal Court of Appeal and the federal trial court agreeing with the Information Commissioner that the Information Commissioner must be able to see the documents in order to determine whether disclosure is appropriate.

I listened intently to my friend from Halifax, who did actually read the bill before she spoke. She was curious as to why an exclusion is not the best way to protect the independent broadcaster. The reason is quite clear. It is section 36 of the Access to Information Act that sets out the powers of the Information Commissioner, and they are broad. She may summon and enforce the appearance of persons. She may receive affidavits, take evidence on oath, and she can compel the production of documents. More than difficult, it is borderline impossible to create an exclusion that could coexist with the broad powers of the Information Commissioner that are set out in section 36.

What is the way to balance the rights and needs of an independent public broadcaster and the law that says the Information Commissioner ought to be the one to arbitrate disputes? It is the prejudice test. I did not make up the prejudice test. The prejudice test was cited by the Information Commissioner before the access and ethics committee when she testified at its study on section 68.1. Section 68.1 is so flawed that a standing committee of Parliament did an entire study on it. The Information Commissioner recommended a prejudice test, such that if it can be shown that release of the documents would be injurious to a party's independence then disclosure is inappropriate.

It was interesting to hear the comments from the member for Winnipeg Centre. He talked about what cabinet would think about this bill if it came to committee. Then we heard from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice that the government was going to propose amendments to the bill. They do not want to disclose the salaries of DMs 1, 2, 3 and 4 or the comparable salaries of any other government appointments. If I were a member of the opposition, I would think very seriously as to why the government was going to propose amendments to this bill to exclude all income levels under and less than the DM 4 level.

With respect to this bill, my friend from New Brunswick had the most sage speech. As many members know, he was the former director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and understands very well that the concepts of transparency and openness are fundamental to democracy. We in this chamber are members of Parliament. Our job is to hold the government to account; that is, the departments, the agencies and the crown corporations. We cannot hold government to account when government institutions withhold information from us or from other agencies or from other Canadians who are requesting it. Knowledge is power and the only way we can get knowledge is if we have access to the information.

Lastly, this is far from an attack on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The salary disclosure requirements of this bill are to be applied in the entire federal public service. CBC is in no way being singled out. Transparency is not the enemy of a public institution, far from it. Transparency leads to trust. There is trust that there is proper stewardship over public resources. The people at CBC should want to disclose. They should want this legislation so that Canadians can once again have the trust that they are the proper stewards over public resources.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-461, and in an unamended form, when it goes to committee.

● (1900)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 7:04 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion 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): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 27, 2013, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

(On the Order: Concurrence in Committee Report)

February 28, 2013—That the 19th Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cyberbullying)), presented on Thursday, February 28, 2013, be concurred in.—Mr. Wallace

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2) the motion to concur in the 19th Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights (recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cyberbullying)), presented on Thursday, February 28, 2013, is deemed to be proposed.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleagues may know, the chair of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights reported back to the House of Commons recommending that Bill C-273, an act to amend the Criminal Code (cyberbullying), not proceed further. Specifically, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, the committee recommended to the House of Commons that it not proceed further with Bill C-273 on the basis that it is redundant, inconsistent with existing Criminal Code provisions and otherwise problematic.

I think we can all agree that the issues of cyberbullying and bullying affect many young Canadians. We are all too familiar with recent tragic cases. However, I think we can all agree that the issue requires a multi-pronged range of responses by all levels of government, schools and other institutions, and indeed by all Canadians. None of us should tolerate bullying. From this perspective, Bill C-273 has helped to draw attention to the issue, and for this I would like to recognize the member for Vancouver Centre for her efforts.

The committee had the opportunity to hear from a number of witnesses who are well versed in the bullying and cyberbullying problem. The vast majority of witnesses cautioned against the approach proposed by Bill C-273. They indicated, among other things, that an increased criminal law approach for the issue would not be effective, would predominantly target Canada's youth population, and might put a chill on the use of other appropriate Criminal Code offences in relation to bullying in some more serious cases. In short, Bill C-273 was not widely supported by the experts in the field. Perhaps to put it a little more strongly, Bill C-273 was rejected as an appropriate response by the majority of expert witnesses.

Routine Proceedings

In addition to these policy objections, the government has also found Bill C-273 to be problematic from a purely technical perspective. The Criminal Code already prohibits cyberbullying through a number of existing provisions, such as criminal harassment, uttering threats and defamatory libel, to name a few.

Bill C-273 proposes amendments to some of these relevant sections, namely section 264, criminal harassment, and section 298, defamation, to clarify that they can be committed over the Internet or a computer system. However, these amendments raise many issues.

The proposed amendments are problematic and redundant because the criminal law generally does not distinguish between the means or mode used to commit a crime. For example, the offence of criminal harassment, which does not refer to the use of Internet, has already been judicially interpreted to apply to conduct created through the use of the Internet.

Bill C-273's approach to the cyber dimension of bullying is also problematic because it is incomplete. Specifically, the proposed approach is incomplete because it proposes to amend only two of several offences that could be charged in the context of cyberbullying. There are many other offences, such as offences of intimidation in section 423, uttering threats in section 264.1 and personation in section 403, that could apply to criminal cyberbullying behaviour but that were not included in Bill C-273.

There is a well-established rule of statutory interpretation that says to expressly include something in one section means that its exclusion in another must be intended. In other words, if we were to make explicit that the offences of defamation and criminal harassment can be committed through the use of Internet or a computer system and not make the same clarification in other relevant offences, then this could very well lead courts to interpret the exclusion of this specification in these other offences as being intentional, i.e., that these other offences cannot be committed through the use of Internet or a computer system. This would not be the intention of Parliament.

Taking the repercussions of this proposed amendment one step further, it could also have a similar effect on non-bullying-related offences such as fraud. This could have the effect of rendering the Criminal Code offences that do not specify that they can be committed via computers and Internet ineffective in the cyber context. This amendment would have far-reaching and unintended negative consequences.

Bill C-273 is also problematic because it proposes to use terminology that is inconsistent with existing Criminal Code terminology. For example, clause 1 proposes to amend section 264, criminal harassment, to add:

(2.1) For greater certainty, paragraphs (2)(b) and (d) apply in respect of conduct that is communicated by means of a computer or a group of interconnected or related computers, including the Internet, or any similar means of communication.

● (1910)

However, the Criminal Code, in section 172.1, luring a child, already refers to new technologies as “by means of communication”, a term that is broadly defined by section 35 of the Interpretation Act. One of the advantages of this approach is that the phrase will not be

overtaken by the evolution of technology and new modes of telecommunications, as would Bill C-273's proposed amendments.

Section 35 of the Interpretation Act defines telecommunications as “the emission, transmission or reception of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, or intelligence of any nature by any wire, cable, radio, optical, or other electromagnetic or by any similar technical system.”

I agree that cyberbullying warrants responses by all levels of government, but the needed response is not necessarily criminal law reform. Consider, for example, the December 2012 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, “Cyberbullying Hurts: Respect For Rights in the Digital Age”. The committee heard over 40 witnesses, from almost as many organizations, and made six recommendations, none of which called for criminal law reform in these areas.

I would also note, for example, Nova Scotia's 2011 report, “Respectful and Responsible Relationships: There's No App for That”, also did not recommend criminal law reform in this area.

For these reasons, I would urge the House to accept the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to not further proceed with Bill C-273.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my Conservative colleague mentioned, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights recommended that the bill not proceed further, and I will explain why.

To inform Canadians, I will quote the witnesses who appeared before the committee on February 25 and 27. Their evidence was very good. I encourage anyone with Internet access to read the transcript.

Professor Shaheen Shariff had this to say:

[*English*]

I'm an academic and researcher at McGill University and I have studied legal and policy-related issues regarding cyberbullying for approximately 10 years...

Although cyberbullying is not specifically mentioned in Bill C-273, I have concerns about some of the inconsistencies in the bill, as we heard in the questions posed to [the MP for Vancouver Centre].

Cyberbullying can involve such acts as criminal harassment, threat of sexual assault, defamatory libel, extortion, identity fraud, impersonation with intent, intimidation, as well as sexting, many of which can currently be addressed under the Criminal Code.

My concern is also that there is no mention of smart phones, digital media....I'm skipping over my notes because I know I don't have a lot of time.

My biggest concern is that the code applies to everyone. It talks about everyone. I'm worried that this amendment is in response, as [the member] said, to a lot of media reports related to cyberbullying and related suicides.

Routine Proceedings

The problem here is that we should be looking at two sets of audiences. One is adults, who are mature enough to be held culpable for some of these crimes. They're old enough to know what they're doing. What we're finding in our research, though, is that young people, digital natives—these are children growing up immersed in digital technologies—quite often don't realize what they're doing.

The norms and perceptions of harm by digital natives have changed. These kids, as young as eight, are on Facebook, even though it's illegal to be on Facebook under age 13. There is a higher tolerance for insults, jokes, and pranks. There's less consideration of impact on others. There's less recognition of boundaries between public and private spaces online. There's less awareness of legal risks, which is where I would argue for improved education on legal literacy.

Perpetrators of cyberbullying are often victims as well as perpetrators. This would place them in an awkward position if this code were amended and they were ultimately charged. We might be overreacting. We might be putting the wrong kids in jail.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Then, Professor Wendy Craig said:

[*English*]

I'm Professor Craig. I'm from Queen's University. I'm a child clinical developmental psychologist.

Much of what I'm going to say is to reinforce what's been said by my colleague.

[...]

Punitive measures aren't going to provide that learning context that's going to give them the strategies to be different. I think we need to think about a different response for children and youth than we have for adults because of many of the developmental things that have been raised.

I also do research in the area of cyberbullying, and there are a couple of things in that area that make this legislation a bit problematic. We currently have no universally agreed upon definition in the area, although there has been work by the centre for disease control. I've been part of a task force to define it. There is no universally accepted definition. Part of the current definition uses intent to harm. That's a very hard and difficult thing to measure under a legal context. The current definitions are intent to harm, that there is a power imbalance, that an individual is repeatedly targeted. The more elements we have in a definition, the more the burden of proof is on the individuals who have to prosecute them to make that change.

We need a universal definition. We need to define each of the elements of that definition, such as intention to harm and harm. And we need to know when intimidation and humiliation cross the line into becoming a criminal behaviour problem. Those, I think, are very grey areas without a lot of information.

I want to talk a bit about the problem so that you understand what we're dealing with when we're building laws to address it.

[...]

We also know that online and offline behaviours overlap. Both behaviours happen in social relationships. Both types of kids are involved in both. With cyberbullying, we have children who are also more likely to aggress and be victimized. That puts us in a dilemma, because if we think about a criminal perspective on these children, we're actually revictimizing them when they've actually found a way, although inappropriate, to try to establish some power in themselves.

[...]

I have a couple of messages for you. One is that if we proceed with this, we need to have a legal definition of bullying and standards that can be supported when we enact that law. The second is that we need to have a consistent definition, and that definition has to be known to children, youth, and adults and be equally applied and be equally able to be applied across all of that. The third piece that we need in the legislation is an understanding about when we're crossing the line into criminal behaviour. When does humiliation and criminal intent occur?

The other thing we need to realize is that the majority—at least half of the youth, anyway—report that they don't tell adults about it. They're not reporting the incidents. We don't even know the true prevalence of it. They're not reporting it for fear of consequences. If we make it a legal problem, it becomes more problematic.

I do not want to take up too much of the members' time. Therefore, I will skip to another witness, Peter Jon Mitchell, from the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, who stated:

Finally, there are some serious concerns around the implementation of Bill C-273.

First, we can expect that clarifying the Criminal Code in this manner will lead to an increase in its use. Increased use of these provisions may draw more youth into the criminal justice system, many of whom would fare best if dealt with outside the justice system.

Second, the committee should consider how the increased use of the Criminal Code will impact school-based responses to bullying. Could the adversarial nature of the criminal justice process inhibit community-based responses to bullying?

Finally, it remains unclear whether legislation reduces bullying. In the United States between 2000 and 2010, over 125 pieces of legislation were passed mostly at the state level yet the problem seems to remain as persistent as ever in the U.S.

To conclude, bullying among children and youth requires a community-level approach. On some occasions cyberbullying may escalate to a point where the Criminal Code is necessary to protect victims and the community. Bill C-273 appears to be a modest modernization of existing Criminal Code provisions, but at what cost?

Consideration should be given to the possibility that the increased use of the Criminal Code will create a chill on the community-level approach, particularly by drawing more youth into the criminal justice system.

Refereeing cyberspace is a difficult task. Our best approach is to empower parents, educators, and children and teens themselves to work together.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

I support the government's leadership in the prevention of bullying, especially cyberbullying, which falls under federal jurisdiction.

I also congratulate my Liberal colleague. I believe that she had good intentions. Unfortunately, the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights told us that this was a badly written bill and that it created inconsistencies and redundancies in the Criminal Code. Unfortunately, this could create a litany of problems for our justice system.

In closing, the NDP will continue to support all good initiatives that protect our young Canadians, but motions and bills must be properly drafted. That is not what we heard from the witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak to the House this evening about bullying and cyberbullying in particular. The hon. member for Vancouver Centre is to be commended for her bill before the House. The hon. member is someone whose public and private lives have been in the service of others, particularly to those who struggle for equality and acceptance.

Tonight, we are discussing cyberbullying. This is not a discussion on the essential value technology plays in our daily lives but on the reality of bullying moving from the schoolyard or office to the online world. Facebook, Twitter and the like are relatively new means for bullies to transmit abuse and untruths and sadly to unravel the self-esteem and self-worth of others.

Routine Proceedings

When we think of bullying today, we are reminded of the young girl whose life became so dark, painful and degraded that she felt no other option but to commit suicide to escape the pain. Still, there are many others who are suffering in silence. It is very sad. No parent could imagine what it would be like to lose a child driven to suicide because they were made to feel worthless. Cyberbullying is real. On that point, we all agree.

How many young and old Canadians right now in all parts of the country are sitting alone in their rooms, terrified of what might be said or was said about them in an online post, in a tweet or on Facebook? How many young people are now, at this moment, subject to an online post calling them a homo, a fag or a dyke; called fat or ugly; or subject to abuse because they speak or look differently?

Bullying is the reality for many people. Words do matter and often those words inflict devastation on young people. We know that school can be tough, but bullying is not the exclusive domain of young people. I submit to my colleagues that we find bullying here in the chamber. We attack one another for having differing opinions. We exaggerate that which is often not worth exaggerating. We also do not always do a very good job of listening and engaging in real debates where we can learn from one another. Instead, we attack one another. We cast aspersions on others, using the pretext of democracy to legitimize such behaviour. This is, frankly, the poor example we sometimes give to the public and to young people.

Let me give another example. Just last week, we debated a bill on transgendered rights. There are many here who oppose that bill and that is, of course, completely within their rights. In the course of that debate, we heard some MPs using troubling and hurtful language to defend their opposition to extending rights to transgendered Canadians.

It is clear that for some, the transgendered bill simply did not sit right with them. To them, their opposition was expressed in their vote against the bill. They did not take to the airwaves, suggesting that transgendered people were odd or mentally ill. They did not take to Twitter to make fun. They simply voted in a way that reflected their beliefs. Others, however, opposed the bill using language and tactics that could very well be mirrored on any schoolyard in Canada. It was language meant to degrade.

Day in and day out, we had members of Parliament refer to the transgendered bill as the so-called bathroom bill. Their suggestion was not subtle at all. The bathroom reference was meant to frame the debate in a negative way and to create a profile of transgendered people as those who lurk around bathrooms late at night for illicit purposes. The problem is that none of it is true. It is an assertion wholly founded on fear, not reality or evidence.

This is a form of bullying that was extended to cyberspace and was, at times, committed by people who purport to be of faith, decency and moral rectitude. The thousands of Canadians who are transgendered certainly do not need parliamentarians telling them they are strange people lurking about bathrooms.

• (1925)

The point I seek to make is that cyberbullying occurs for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the example we set for others,

including young people in our schools. We need to do a better job in the House of setting an example of how to treat one another.

The reason we need to provide protections against cyberbullying is that while a nasty name said on a playground hurts, it will disappear. However, cyberbullying and harassment can be engraved in the public domain forever. Harassments by ex-boyfriends can lead to personal photos being posted that should not be publicized.

We need to empower the victims with tools to reclaim their identities and to protect them from harassment from people they know and from strangers who lurk online. Empowerment is what Joe Killorn, a resident of Stratford, Prince Edward Island, is trying to do after personally witnessing the effects of bullying on a family member. Joe is striving for empowerment to support those who are being bullied and empowerment to change the culture in our schools. He empowers us through the pink shirt campaign on Prince Edward Island to stand out against bullying together. The entire city council in Charlottetown stood together this year against bullying. They recognized that as community leaders we need to show a better example.

We can never legislate behaviour, but we can legislate some consequences to bad behaviour. We need tools and legislative enhancements to tackle cyberbullying, and I believe the bill is one that seeks to address some of those challenges.

While I also realize that the bill is not likely to survive passage because of Conservative opposition, it is my hope that the government will deal with the prevalence of cyberbullying. We must assure young people who feel that they are on the margins of society, who feel that they are not included or who are subject to verbal abuse at school, that they should not have their home, their personal and private space, which has always been a refuge, violated by bullies who now extend the reach of their abuse via Facebook, Twitter and the Internet.

No young person with their whole life ahead of them should have to endure online verbal abuse and attacks on their identity. These online attacks cause such deep and lasting emotional pain that some young people simply find life too much to bear.

I thank the member for her bill and my chance to speak to it. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize and thank all Canadians working on this issue, including Joe Killorn and the many volunteers back home on Prince Edward Island, for taking a stand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-273 in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver Centre. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank her for introducing the bill and giving us a chance to talk a little more about the scourge of cyberbullying.

All forms of bullying are unacceptable, including for instance, the bullying that we are often subjected to, as mentioned by the member who spoke before me. We realize that violence is not only physical, but it can also be verbal.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to put this debate in context, because the committee on which I sit adopted a report. As justice critic, I have gone through Bill C-273 very carefully. In fact, I always try to do so, for every bill that is introduced in the House and that comes before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Whether a bill introduced by my colleagues that will affect the justice system, a private member's bill from the government side, a government bill, a bill from the Senate, or one introduced by the Liberals, I examine them all the same way. When someone wants to change one or more sections of the Criminal Code, I consider whether the change is necessary, whether it really does what it is supposed to do, and so on. Anyone who is a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights with me knows this. That is how I express myself. That is how I examine each and every issue.

I cannot give preferential treatment under the pretext that the proposed bill comes from my party, the Liberals, the Green Party or the Bloc Québécois. It is important to remain unbiased.

To begin with, clearly, no one in this House would ever say they are in favour of cyberbullying—absolutely not. However, since the devil is always in the details, we had to look carefully at what was in this bill.

I give the member for Vancouver Centre full marks for her interest in this issue and her dedication to the cause. Her passion was obvious when she appeared before the committee.

The problem is that from a legal standpoint, in terms of the Criminal Code, it was redundant. Originally, Bill C-273 targeted certain sections. In order to provide a bit of context, the member sent out a letter. In it, she suggested that some sections of the Criminal Code be clarified by including “communications by means of computer” in section 264, which addresses criminal harassment; “false messages” in subsections 372(1), 372(2) and 372(3); and “defamatory libel” in section 298.

In the current Criminal Code, the section addresses all forms of communication by telephone, radio, newspaper and so on. The Criminal Code already contains a very general provision. Adding cyberbullying as such or as an offence by means of computer—defining how it happens—is like talking about murder. It does not matter if I commit murder with a gun or a knife; it is still murder. That is the problem we faced with this bill, which changed nothing. In fact, it simply added the word “computer” in its strictest sense.

I listened closely to the speech before mine. It is clear that when we talk about cyberbullying, we are all aware of the tragic cases of Marjorie Raymond, Amanda Todd, Jamie Hubley, Mitchell Wilson and Jenna Bowers-Bryanton.

However, we cannot let people believe that the situation would be different or that people who should have been charged were not because the Criminal Code is what it is today. That is not the case.

The member had no case to submit to the committee to prove that without this amendment, there would be no way to prosecute someone.

● (1930)

On the contrary, witnesses who have no connection to this file, such as police officers or others, explained that the provisions are there. Sometimes charges are not laid because people do not necessarily want to take matters further. That is one of the points I wanted to address.

Some people in committee suggested that other cases could have been added.

Why simply focus on issues involving criminal harassment, false messages and defamatory libel, when we could have added—as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice said—cases of bullying included in section 423 of the Criminal Code and cases of identity theft included in section 403? There was a list of Criminal Code provisions.

The risk remains the same, even with the Conservatives. By making piecemeal changes to the Criminal Code, we might create situations in which decision-makers, crown attorneys and defence attorneys, will use the discrepancies that exist in the Criminal Code when they are before the courts.

We received amendments in committee, and the Liberals tried somehow to make up for these deficiencies by adding clauses. Nonetheless, when we have just one hour to do our work and amendments are proposed to seven different criminal offences, it starts to feel like improvisation. We knew that all these criminal provisions would not stop charges from being laid.

In one of her rulings, Justice L'Heureux-Dubé clearly said that the people who drafted the Criminal Code did a fine job of it. Perhaps we should stop butchering it, as the Conservatives so freely do. The people who drafted it realized that society would evolve and that at some point we might have different technologies. To prevent these sections from becoming ineffective, little catch-all phrases were added to allow computer-related offences to be added.

I do not want the people watching us to think that cutting the analysis of Bill C-273 short is a setback in dealing with cyberbullying. That is absolutely not the case. This will never prevent a crown prosecutor from laying charges, if the facts are there to back the charges.

I think my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord did a very good job of proving the other point that was extremely important in committee, and that is the fact that the vast majority of witnesses heard during the two sitting days were not at all of the view that criminalizing this behaviour was the way to go.

Yes, bullying hurts. Anyone who has ever been bullied in any way, even by colleagues in the House who are not of the same opinion, knows that we owe each other respect.

Some words used may be harsh. Sometimes we see certain behaviour on the Internet or on Facebook. Yesterday I read that some young people got involved in a fight on Facebook. That shows how far it can go and how much it can hurt. However, we must not think that not proceeding represents a step backward.

Routine Proceedings

I think other approaches will be used. All the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights who took part in the study of the bill agreed that there would definitely be action to recommend.

I will simply tell my colleague who introduced the bill that even her critic, who serves on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and who made a considerable effort to have the bill amended, understood. I do not want to offer her any tips, but if she ever went back to the idea of considering aggravating factors at sentencing, where the case really concerns cyberbullying or any form of bullying, looking at sentences more specifically is part of the arsenal. That might be more appropriate. Even her colleague came to the conclusion that much more work would have been needed on the amendments and that it would virtually have been necessary to rewrite the bill in order to do what she was trying to do.

● (1935)

I will say no more about it, except that this is a question of logic for us and that we in this House will not change our logic regarding criminal law, regarding criminal justice, regardless of the party concerned.

● (1940)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that we are debating this recommendation not to proceed with Bill C-273, an act to amend the Criminal Code (cyberbullying).

This legislation was supported very strongly by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and by the Canadian Association of Police Boards, both of whom appeared as witnesses at committee. Thousands of Canadians are using the same social media now to ask people to speak to their MPs and ask them to vote against the proposal not to proceed further with the bill.

The bill was supported at second reading by the New Democratic Party. In fact, the government made a speech at first reading in which it suggested that this was a good bill and that what was wrong with it was that it did not expand to other areas of the Criminal Code. The government suggested some other areas of the Criminal Code, such as uttering threats, false identity and so on. I accepted that those could come as amendments. I expected them to come to committee as amendments.

This legislation went to second reading because the NDP supported it and also because nine members of the Conservative Party voted to send it to committee. It is a tradition in the House that when one votes to send something to committee it is because that person agrees with the principle of the bill, the person agrees with what the bill would do. The person may not agree with all of the methods by which the bill would do it, and that is why it goes to committee for amendments to change it to make it stronger. One does not say, "We do not like it", after having promised to send it to committee and having had opportunities to bring amendments and then bringing none. My own colleague on the justice committee asked for amendments, begged for amendments, was prepared to suggest amendments, but none of this happened.

The bill is inherently about cyberbullying, the means of using the Internet, electronic media and social media in order to bully or, as I said in my bill, to criminally harass in order to spread defamatory libel or false messaging. Currently the Criminal Code defines very clearly the means of communication by which one cannot do this. To suggest that this is redundant is a fallacy. It is not redundant. The modes of communication that cannot be used are clearly listed, such as newspapers, radio, television, letters, telephone. All of these give the police the ability, when looking to lay charges, to demand the names of the people who used one of these modes of communication. They can search, get private numbers, tap phones and do all of those kinds of things.

The police boards are supporting this legislation because currently, as the hon. member for the NDP said, a crown prosecutor will lay charges. A crown prosecutor cannot lay charges when the person doing the criminal activities is not known. Currently the police do not have the tools and this is why they support the bill. They do not have the tools to be able to make an Internet service provider say who the person doing the false messaging or the criminal harassment is.

I refer to the tragic case of Amanda Todd, the young woman who committed suicide. It was criminal harassment on the Internet against this woman but the police could not bring charges because they could not find out who the person was. If the person had used the media, a telephone, wrote letters, went on television or the radio and said things, the police would have those tools. They do not have the tools for the Internet. The suggestion that it is inherent in the Criminal Code and that some judges have suggested that it applies to new media is not a good enough answer. We cannot only depend on interpretation of the law, the law has to clearly state.

My bill suggests that the law should move into the digital age and clearly name digital media and computers and other things that are used to spread criminal activity such as harassment, false messaging and as the government said uttering threats, identity fraud and so on. It should therefore be clearly stated.

What is the problem when other modes of communication are clearly stated in the bill? Yet everyone believes that we cannot state the newest mode of communication, which has not been put into the Criminal Code. No one is trying to change the Criminal Code. One is clarifying it by adding a new mode of communication. It is as simple as that.

● (1945)

I am quite prepared to add other areas, but unless it is clearly stated in the Criminal Code, it is left constantly to interpretation. That is my point. It is said that many witnesses disagreed with the bill, and I would like to say I have read the proceedings of the committee extremely thoroughly. Many of the witnesses, the police boards, were there; they supported the bill and said that they actually needed those tools to find the person who was promulgating these criminal activities.

We also have the Canadian Teachers' Federation that said it is not good enough to prevent. Prevention alone does not work. There has to be some kind of punitive action in some way to deal with older young people over 16 who clearly know what they are doing.

Adjournment Proceedings

Again, nothing I am suggesting in this bill would take away the right of a judge to make a decision based on the individual facts of the case, on the age of the person or on all of those things that cause judges to make decisions and decide on sentencing. There is nothing that would prevent a judge from suggesting that looking at this issue and providing a sentence that is restorative justice cannot be done. No one is suggesting that.

There was also a discussion. I noted that most members of the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party asked people who were witnesses a very clear question, which they knew was misinformation. That was “Will this bill stop cyberbullying?”

I said, within my bill, in every speech I made in this House and at the committee, that this is only one small thing that would give the police the tools they need so that identification could be made and charges brought.

We are not just talking about children. Continually, when witnesses talked about trying to criminalize children, the committee heard me clearly say that cyberbullying is not only amongst children and amongst school children. It occurs in the workplace. It occurs in the communities. We have seen examples of this constantly. I named two, because I only had 10 minutes. I could not give an exhaustive list of examples.

Here we have all of these things that have been misrepresented. The committee had an opportunity to suggest that this is not just about children. It is also about adults. It is merely a clarification of the Criminal Code. Restorative justice and all of those things can still occur.

I am suggesting that this is not simply bullying. The thing about cyberbullying is that there is an anonymity associated with it. People can give a false name, on Twitter or whatever, and can say whatever they want. When people reach outside of calling people names, like “Oh, you’re fat” or “Oh, you’re ugly”, which is psychologically damaging, when people reach into areas where there is criminal harassment, uttering of threats, libel and false messaging, these are criminal acts.

When individuals over 16 or individuals who are adults do this, they do it because they know they cannot be found. My point in this bill is to say that we should give the police the tools to go to an ISP, just as they can tap phones, ask the newspaper to give the name of the person who wrote the letter, ask the telephone company where that telephone call from. They want to be able to do this with the ISPs. The police do not have that ability right now.

The misinformation spread around this bill is actually astounding. I do not understand. If there is a decision not to support the bill, then say so. The government should not go through listening to witnesses, allowing this kind of promulgation of misinformation to occur, not answering the questions properly and then asking everyone at the end of their testimony if they think the bill would stop cyberbullying. Of course it would not.

The bill would only give the police the tools they asked for, simply to bring a charge and, second, to identify the person who is hiding behind the anonymous mask of the Internet.

It is also very clear. I said in every speech I made here and at committee that there needs to be a national cyberbullying strategy, which must include all of the things we do in public health. This is a public health issue. Bullies and the bullied tend to suffer mental health consequences of bullying whether people bully or are bullied.

● (1950)

Therefore, public health will talk about prevention. It will talk about public education. It will talk about dealing with the mental health issues of whatever is going on among the bullies and the bullied. However, it will also talk about law enforcement. We see that in addition.

However, there are many stages and many facets to a national strategy, not simply prevention. We know it does not work alone. It is bringing all the facets together. When people suggested it, I said that I think this is what we eventually need to do.

Currently, what the bill seeks to do is to respond to the police—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

The time provided for the hon. member has finished.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion 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 yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2), the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 27, 2013, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): As the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice had been given; therefore, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

Adjournment Proceedings

The hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 1967, Israel has been colonizing the occupied Palestinian territories, doing such things as establishing colonies, creating bypass roads for the exclusive use of Jews, installing checkpoints and building a so-called security wall that crosses deep into Palestinian territory.

Since 1967, Israel has sent more than 500,000 Israeli Jews to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, an area that is set to be the future capital of the Palestinian state. Israel currently has approximately 120 recognized colonies and 100 unrecognized outposts that are illegally located on Palestinian land.

Colonies cover only 2% of occupied Palestinian land. However, including the road network for the exclusive use of Israelis, military bases and buffer zones around the colonies and on either side of the wall, which are completely inaccessible to Palestinians, more than 40% of the West Bank is under Israeli control.

It is widely acknowledged in the international community, by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, that the establishment of Israeli colonies represents an obstacle to peace and to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The construction of colonies on Palestinian land is creating a situation that is making it increasingly difficult to implement a solution in both countries, from both a political and logistic standpoint. This is a de facto strategy that allows authorities to establish illegal settlements of colonists and then say that uprooting these people would be unfair and impractical from a political and logistic standpoint.

The expansion of Israeli infrastructure and its security system from actual Israeli territory into the colonies also poses economic and political problems for Palestinians.

The colonies are illegal under various provisions of international law. Article 49, paragraph 6, of the fourth Geneva Convention, which Israel signed, stipulates that:

The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

What is more:

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) also expressly identifies the transfer of an Occupying power's own civilian population to the territory it occupies as a war crime punishable by the ICC.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice gave a formal ruling to the effect that Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, violated international law.

Many human rights reports found that Israeli colonies and their associated institutions inherently violate international law. These colonies and their related infrastructure, such as checkpoints and roads for exclusive Israeli use, severely restrict Palestinians' access to jobs, lands, schools and hospitals.

Will the government tell us why it is refusing to clearly and publicly speak out against the Israeli colonies and infrastructure in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem?

• (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening with the opportunity to once again remind the member of Canada's principled Middle East policy, which is not immoral, as he wrongly implies. In fact, Canadians can be proud of our government's principled policy and, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in his original response to the question, Canada has been and remains "...a strong supporter of the peace process".

Our position is well known, and it is the same as it has always been. We are committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East whereby two states live side by side in peace and security. We have been clear that all unilateral actions are ultimately unhelpful to the cause of peace. This of course includes the Palestinian Authority's provocative action and rhetoric at the UN General Assembly, which would obviously elicit a response from Israel.

The hon. member implies that we do not support the Palestinian society. Again, I remind him of the minister's response to this exact question. We are delivering on our commitment to provide assistance, with \$300 million geared toward supporting the security and justice sectors, sustainable economic development and humanitarian needs. This assistance has been well received not only by the Palestinian Authority but also by Israel and the United States.

Canada's position has been consistent and it has been clear. We continue to believe that the final status issues are to be resolved between the two parties. We continue to urge the two parties to return to negotiations without pre-conditions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin: Mr. Speaker, a recent statement from the Minister of Foreign Affairs was shocking, to say the least. At the most recent annual convention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee held in early March, the minister said that the Palestinian authority could face serious consequences, specifically a possible end to aid delivered by Canada, if it files a legal complaint against Israel before the International Criminal Court regarding colonies in the West Bank.

It is completely appalling that a cabinet minister would threaten to punish the weakest party in a conflict, the Palestinians, simply because they ask the ICC to examine the status of the Israeli settlements and give a ruling.

Can the government also tell us why it is threatening the Palestinian authority if it turns to the International Criminal Court—a body created by the international community to protect civilians from war crimes—on the issue of Israeli settlements?

Adjournment Proceedings

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I actually attended that conference and heard the minister's speech. I can assure the member that no such threat was made. However, I must reject the premise of the member's question.

Our government's position is clear. The only way to achieve a just and lasting peace is through direct negotiations between the parties. Unilateral actions on either side are unhelpful to the peace process, and we have conveyed this to both parties. Canada is maintaining its \$300 million in assistance to the Palestinian authority, but we will not recognize a Palestinian state prior to a negotiated peace agreement with Israel.

We continue to be committed to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East whereby two states live side by side in peace and security.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs noted in his speech to the UN General Assembly on November 29 of last year, the importance of a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and has been a consistent theme for the last 45 years.

I can assure the member that Canada remains committed to this path.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we are permitted to do during the adjournment proceedings pursuant to the Standing Orders, I have chosen to speak from the Minister of Public Safety's seat in order to share with the House what I would do if I had the honour of having the minister's job.

If I truly wanted to fight crime and help victims, as the Minister of Public Safety often says he does, I would design crime legislation accordingly. However, I would not offload the costs onto the provinces and territories. I would take on those costs. I would do the calculations to figure out the best crime laws to provide enough control over criminals and protect victims while avoiding exorbitant costs for the territories and provinces.

I would not abolish the police officer recruitment fund, a \$400-million fund that I personally created in 2008 and that I would renew on March 31, 2013, for five years, for all of Canada. I would also explain why this fund is so important. It is responsible for the creation of many specialized and joint squads.

For example, for the City of Quebec, this fund represents an investment in the fight against street gangs. In Montreal, an investment of \$37.5 million over five years, taken out of that \$400 million, helped create the Eclipse squad, which is a squad of 46 specially trained officers who combat criminal groups—such as the mafia, biker gangs and street gangs—and violent crime.

This group focuses primarily on criminal profiling, not racial profiling, of those involved in organized and violent crime. The officers work in close collaboration with investigators. They have a thorough knowledge of the city and the crime-ridden areas where

street gangs operate. Their presence alone has a major preventive impact on public safety in Montreal, particularly in the downtown core. They have built a strong relationship with bar owners. Quebec's bar owners' union is calling for the Eclipse squad to be maintained because it offers support in various areas of the city as well as to regional teams.

For example, in 2012, I would have been proud to say that Eclipse made 540 arrests, including two for murder, and carried out 42 weapons seizures. My money, the public money that I invested in public safety, made a difference. It is not surprising that the Quebec National Assembly, Montreal police, the City of Montreal and the municipalities are calling for the Police Officers Recruitment Fund to be maintained. I would never have abolished it. That would have been a very serious mistake for public safety in Canada.

I think that would have been a terrible message to send to criminals because it would be like saying it is recess time. I cut funding and they can commit their crimes.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my hon. colleague to this side of the House. It might be a foreshadowing of things to come. I am not sure about that. It might be that she is joining the good side over here.

I appreciate the member's question. However, here are the facts. Our government has consistently supported our front-line police officers and the ability they have to keep our streets and communities safer. Unfortunately, the member and her party consistently vote against our initiatives.

However, that did not stop us. One of the initiatives we took and the member referred to is the police officer recruitment fund, which our government provided to the provinces. The provinces are responsible for policing. That is a provincial jurisdiction. I would think my hon. colleague would be sensitive to that issue and would support the provincial jurisdiction that is given to the provinces with regard to policing.

Nevertheless, we believe that providing the \$400 million to the provinces to use to recruit new police officers was part of our responsibility and mandate, and a priority for our Conservative government. As we heard from Tom Stamatakis, the president of the Canadian Police Association, the chiefs of police and the provincial leaders, it was clear from the beginning that this was and is a temporary fund. Numerous provinces used it in the way they wanted. Montreal seized the opportunity and used it to create a specialized street gang unit. I would think that we could be very proud of what they did. However, when it went into this agreement they knew that it was temporary.

Our record shows we have injected funds to help prevent and fight crime. Since 2008, we have refocused on the national crime prevention strategy to ensure it would yield measurable results for Canadians. We have supported no less than 40 community-based prevention projects in Montreal. These projects represent an investment of \$23.4 million over that five-year period. The opposition and this member again voted against it.

Adjournment Proceedings

Therefore, I find it somewhat disingenuous and would ask my hon. colleague to explain why the opposition is complaining after the fact. Across the country every police organization and every province knew that the \$400 million from our Conservative government, which the opposition members did not support, was temporary. We told the provinces what it was and they used it, as is their responsibility, and we were pleased with the way they used it. It seems like the opposition is trying to make political hay out of something that nobody else is looking to have a fight about.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the invitation to join her party, but unfortunately this is just a moment in an adjournment debate, and her government would have to change many things before I agreed to join it.

That said, I want to assure the hon. member that I understand the government considered this fund temporary. Still, if I were the Minister of Public Safety, I would use my own judgment. If I were creating laws with the intent to put the maximum number of people in prison, I would expect a lot of police officers would be needed to arrest those people.

This magical thinking has to stop. Making laws, dumping the costs onto the provinces, and believing that they will be able to cover all the expenses is ridiculous.

We are the people who make the laws. If we were in the United States where each state makes its own criminal laws, I might understand. But that is not the way it is.

Thus, I invite the Conservatives to reconsider their decision. Of that \$37.5 million, four cybercrime sources made it possible to arrest Magnotta, a revolting serial killer from Quebec.

Anonymous, for example, was also being closely watched by the cyberpolice. We must not cut out the things that work.

[*English*]

Ms. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the support she is now showing for our Conservative government's initiatives, like the police officer recruitment fund. She has now realized that we have introduced and carried forward some very good initiatives to support our police officers and crime prevention to make sure that criminals are in jail and our communities and streets are safe. I would suggest that she begin to support those initiatives before the fact, not after the fact when it becomes politically expedient.

We continue to have strong support for law enforcement across the country. Our caucus is filled with former and current police officers, something that nobody in the opposition can say. The Conservative agenda has to do with keeping our communities safe.

It is great to have the support of the member after the fact. The police officer recruitment fund was temporary. We encourage her to support all of our initiatives today.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:10 p.m.)

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