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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, April 3, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 3, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation concerning its visit to Japan from May 13 to 18, 2013.

[*Translation*]

I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation concerning its visit to France from September 9 to 11, 2013.

* * *

[*English*]

VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS ACT

Hon. Rob Nicholson (for the Minister of Justice) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-32, an act to enact the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and to amend certain Acts.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation at the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, held in Paris, France, on February 10, 2014.

* * *

• (1005)

PETITIONS

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that I present this petition in regard to a tragedy

that I am sure you are aware of that happened in London, Ontario, last fall regarding a family, a tragic murder-suicide. The undersigned call upon the Government of Canada to ensure that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is properly resourced to reach decisions in regard to applications in a fair and timely manner. They also ask that immigration officials consider all factors in regard to individual applications, including humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today.

The first is on behalf of citizens who want to recognize the inherent rights of farmers, derived from thousands of years of customs and traditions, to use, save, select, and exchange all the seeds they produce.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament and the House to support Bill C-560, to require equal shared parenting to be treated as a rebuttable presumption of custody decisions, except in cases of neglect and abuse.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of petitioners from Sault Ste. Marie, Thessalon, and Wawa, who are concerned that the government is cancelling the federal funding for the Algoma Central Railway.

This railway is the sole point of access for many businesses, homes, and communities along its route. Cancelling the funding for this railway would be damaging to the economy, health and safety, and accessibility of the area.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of several residents in Lewisporte, Campbellton, Embree, Norris Arm, Birchy Bay, Boyd's Cove, Stoneville, and Brown's Arm, with respect to the oil from the sunken paper carrier, the *Manolis L*, which sank in the mid-1980s and still holds within its hull tonnes of bunker oil that is slowly leaking out. The evidence has been rampant all through the Change Islands, Twillingate area with oil on the birds being harvested and hunted. They are asking for a permanent solution, not a temporary solution, to get the oil out of that sunken boat.

Routine Proceedings

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of hundreds of Canadians who are calling on the Government of Canada to list the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt as a terrorist organization.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions today.

The first was signed by thousands of people in my riding, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. They are condemning the cuts to Canada Post and, more importantly, the privatization of services in the town of Gaspé.

People are very concerned about the fact that they may well lose a basic service. In remote areas in particular, it is essential that Canada Post's services be reliable and available.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting was signed by approximately 24,000 people from northern New Brunswick and the eastern part of my riding, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. They are speaking out against VIA Rail service cuts.

To follow up on what my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River was saying earlier, the regions need reliable service. Eastern Canada was recently pummeled by storms, and that is not uncommon in winter. They need reliable and frequent VIA Rail service. Unfortunately, there is a risk that they may lose it altogether.

I am honoured to present these two petitions, and I hope that the government will take note.

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I table today a petition from residents of Winnipeg North, who recognize that Canada Post is a national institution that provides valuable services to all Canadians. The petitioners are genuinely concerned about the future of Canada Post and they want the government to take action to reaffirm its commitment to this crown corporation well into the future.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today. The first one is dealing with farmers saving seeds.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is dealing with the extraction industry.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC TRANSIT OPERATORS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House a

petition signed by people who are calling for the creation of a specific offence regarding assaults against on-duty bus drivers and harsher penalties for criminals who attack bus drivers.

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition signed by a number of residents of Canada who are concerned about our electoral process. The petitioners are asking the House of Commons to undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act to ensure voters can cast, among other things, an equal and effective vote; be represented fairly in Parliament, regardless of political beliefs or place of residence; are governed by a fairly elected Parliament where the share of seats held by each political party closely reflects the popular vote; and finally, to live under legitimate laws approved by a majority of elected parliamentarians representing a majority of voters.

[*Translation*]

VENEZUELA

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present a petition signed by 35 Canadians, many of whom are originally from Venezuela, who are very concerned about the situation in Venezuela and are proposing a variety of courses of action for the government's consideration.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

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

The first has to do with electoral fraud during the last election, specifically regarding robocalls. The petitioners are calling on the government to launch a serious investigation into this crime.

[*English*]

If Bill C-23 goes ahead as unamended, we will have the investigation into the robocall fraud of the last election dropped and not completed. These petitioners want a full inquiry.

TAXATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents throughout my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, Brentwood Bay, Sidney. The petition is on behalf of small business owners, independent contractors, people subject to the GST, asking that the deductible be moved, in relation to real life conditions, from \$30,000 to \$50,000 under the GST exemption for small suppliers.

CANADA POST

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is pertaining to the Canada postal services.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to plant breeders' rights and Bill C-18.

CANADA POST

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions signed by thousands of Canadians across the country, including those from my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam and Port Moody.

The first petition is from Canadians who are concerned about cuts to Canada Post, the elimination of door-to-door service, the loss of up to 8,000 jobs, and the significant increase to postage.

They call on the Government of Canada to reverse these cuts and look for ways to innovate areas such as postal banking.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians who want the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure responsible conservation management of sharks.

The petitioners call on the government to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins to Canada.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to table petitions on behalf of people from Sault Ste. Marie, Echo Bay, Prince Township, Searchmont, Garden River, Hilton Beach, and Thessalon.

The petition is about the closure of the ACR line passenger services. The petitioners are extremely concerned that there has been no consultation with the stakeholders. This is the sole point of access to businesses, homes and communities, and the impact on the economy, health and safety, accessibility, and tourism is quite troubling. The petitioners are calling on the government to reinstate the funding so that this passenger service can go forward.

CANADA POST

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition, I have a petition from Kapuskasing, Moonbeam, Fauquier, Timmins, Val Rita, Hearst, Ottawa, New Brunswick, and Gatineau, with respect to Canada Post.

[*Translation*]

The petitioners are calling on the government to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post, because they are concerned about the loss of jobs and services.

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a few petitions here to table. The first is about unfair extra fees and consumer rip-offs. A number of my constituents and people in the surrounding area are calling on the government to take significant concrete steps in budget 2014 to make life more affordable for cash-strapped Canadian families.

• (1015)

DEMENTIA

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition here from some Canadians who are

Speaker's Ruling

calling on the government to develop a national dementia strategy. They are asking the Minister of Health and all members of the House to pass Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition, signed by about 175 members of my constituency and the surrounding areas. With respect to veteran's services, they are asking the government to immediately address the mental health crisis facing Canadian soldiers and veterans by hiring the appropriate mental professionals, reverse its decisions to close Veterans Affairs offices, and prioritize and conclude the over 50 outstanding boards of inquiry on military suicides so that the grieving families may have answers and closure.

CANADA POST

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, finally, I have a petition signed by a number of my constituents and people in surrounding communities calling on the government to stop cuts to our postal service.

* * *

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

RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 176—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 27, 2014, by the member for Avalon, regarding the government's response to written Question No. 176.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Avalon for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition and the hon. Minister of State for their interventions.

[*English*]

In raising the matter, the member for Avalon explained that the government's response to written Question No. 176, tabled on March 6, 2014, regarding projects approved in Avalon by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency constituted a different answer than those previously supplied to similar questions.

Speaker's Ruling

The member stated that the accuracy of the information provided was not the issue; rather, he contended that by changing the departmental process by which information was gathered and responses made, the minister was obstructing the release of information and thereby infringing on the member's ability to carry out his parliamentary functions.

In responding to the member's claim, the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued that, in fact, an answer had been provided, but without the amount of detail or exact information that the member sought. Thus, he felt that the complaint was actually a debate over the adequacy of the response. For his part, the Minister of State for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency explained in greater detail the response preparation process followed by his department over the past several years in responding to questions from the member for Avalon.

The Chair has been asked on many occasions to weigh in on issues with respect to written questions. Through these questions of privilege, the Chair has had the opportunity to confirm for all members the role of the Chair in this regard, as well as the practices and principles that govern written questions. Some of these bear repeating today.

[Translation]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, states at page 522:

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

On February 8, 2005, Speaker Milliken, at page 3234 of *Debates*, made a similar point:

Any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of this response is a matter of debate. It is not something upon which the Speaker is permitted to pass judgment.

On April 3, 2012, in my ruling on another question raised with respect to the government's response to a written question, I reaffirmed this practice.

[English]

The Chair understands that the member is not asking for a judgment on the accuracy of the answer provided. However, he is asking the Chair to judge the actions of the minister and the effect these have had on his ability to function as a member of Parliament. To do so would require the Chair to judge not only the content of answers provided, but also to delve into internal departmental processes past and present. Regardless of whether the department's internal processes on written questions have changed or not, it remains beyond the role of the Chair to undertake an investigation into any such matter or to render any judgment on it.

[Translation]

The Chair's role is limited to assessing the evidence presented in order to determine whether there has been interference in a member's ability to perform his or her parliamentary duties. In the present circumstances, the Chair can find no evidence to suggest that the member has been unable to perform his duties.

I therefore cannot find grounds to rule this matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege.

• (1020)

[English]

I thank the House for its attention.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising.

REMARKS BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I promised on Monday, I am rising to respond to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Victoria. The hon. member rose to claim in the House that the House has been intentionally misled. No such thing has happened here.

Ultimately, what we have here is simply a matter of debate. The hon. Minister of State for Finance said that the proposal by New Democrats for Canada pension plan reforms could lead to 70,000 job losses in Canada, a reckless proposal in our current economy.

The finance department's analysis of a proposal to double the so-called replacement rate of the Canada pension plan, which is at the heart of the NDP proposal, would require a 5.45% increase to the contribution rate within the current range of pensionable earnings. The department concluded that such an increase in payroll taxes could see 70,000 Canadians without work.

As I mentioned earlier, it is clear that increased payroll taxes have negative consequences for the Canadian economy. However, members should not take it from me. Let me quote a third-party expert on this. Laura Jones, the executive vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had this to say:

A mandatory CPP increase, however, is a bad idea. An increase in the CPP tax takes more money out of employees' and employers' pockets....

Worse still, small businesses report that a mandatory CPP increase would force many to lower wages and even reduce their workforce.

The hon. member for Victoria was at pains on Monday to point out that the finance department's analysis covered a one-year implementation window, not his seven-year phase-in period. In fact, the Department of Finance uses one year as a simplifying assumption adopted to compare the economic impact of various CPP expansion proposals. Shockingly, the New Democrat plan would see this economic pain spread over seven years as opposed to just one. That is not something that Canadians would appreciate, so it is no wonder the member was up on a question of privilege, trying to distract from the inconvenient truth that his party's pension policy presents.

I should note that a CFIB report on doubling the CPP replacement rate, which reflects the same phase-in period as the NDP proposes, claims that up to 235,000 jobs would be lost. That is a lot more than just 70,000. In this case, the Minister of State for Finance chooses to use the numbers provided by the Department of Finance, not the higher numbers used by the CFIB. We are not only mindful of the expert finance department analysis, but we also share the concerns of small business and the CFIB.

Citation 31(1) of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, sixth edition, aptly sums up the situation confronting us here:

Government Orders

A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

That principle has been endorsed a number of times by the Chair, including for example, Madam Speaker Sauvé in her ruling of December 3, 1980, at page 5293 of the *Debates*.

More recently, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, restates this principle at page 510:

In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

Even more succinct than that is this quotation from Mr. Speaker Fraser's ruling on December 4, 1986 at page 1792 of the *Debates*:

Differences of opinion with respect to fact and details are not infrequent in the House and do not necessarily constitute a breach of privilege.

In conclusion, this is simply a matter of debate and perspective about the walloping impact on the Canadian economy that would result from the New Democrats proposal for the Canada pension plan.

Whether these consequences for Canadians would be felt in a single year or spread over several does not change the fact that it would create serious discomfort and uncertainty for hard-working Canadians.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you can easily dispense with the complaint of the hon. member for Victoria because there is no *prima facie* case of privilege here.

• (1025)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): It is hard to know where to start, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, as happened last week, the parliamentary secretary is avoiding the real issue. It was the basis of the point of privilege raised by the member for Victoria. There is no document such as the minister attested to. Quite simply, the parliamentary secretary has reinforced the fact that the government does not have the document it has attested to having.

I will be reading the statement by the parliamentary secretary in the blues very carefully, and I will be coming back later today with a response.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed from April 2, 2014, consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has 15 minutes left to conclude his speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to limit my speech to just 15 minutes because this is a huge bill—it is over 350 pages long. It is hard to cover and explain everything in it. It is complicated and huge and fundamentally anti-democratic. I have plenty of quotes from the Prime Minister and other Conservatives who used to say that omnibus bills like this one were disastrous and tragic for Parliament.

[*English*]

We have learned to call these “ominous” budget bills because, while technically omnibus in nature, what we see in these 350 pages, with over 500 clauses and 40 laws being changed in this one act alone, is the Conservatives continuing down their very anti-democratic path of fundamentally disrespecting Parliament and the institutions. We see it in the unfair elections act, and we also see it in the next omnibus bill, Bill C-31, which contains so many aspects that it is difficult to cover in the short time we have.

Before politics, I was a small business owner. The riding I represent in northwestern British Columbia is both rural and resource sector based. I bring those experiences to bear as the finance critic for the official opposition. Therefore, my orientation toward matters of the economy, financial affairs, and the budget is based on those small and medium-sized businesses, which are at the very heart of our economy, providing more than 70% of all new jobs. At the heart of our economy lies the resource sector. Virtually 80% of the equity traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange relies on the resource sector of Canada, that natural wealth and endowment. Therefore, one wonders, while casting through the hundreds of pages in this omnibus bill, exactly what the government has done to help the resource sector, small and medium businesses, and the overall fragility of the Canadian economy.

Canada right now sits at a crossroads. Four hundred thousand manufacturing jobs have been lost and not replaced since the government took power. Three hundred thousand net jobs have been lost since it took over that have also not been replaced. Personal household debts are at record highs.

The trade deficit hitting \$45 billion is now seen as a casual event; a country like Canada having massive trade deficits with our trading partners presents no problems or concerns to the government. We are a trading nation. We are not trading well right now, and the government seems not occupied with that. The Bank of Canada, the IMF, and the former finance minister have decried the half-trillion dollars of dead money sitting in our economy that is not being used by the private sector. It is simply because, when the government hands over its corporate tax cuts, they come with no strings attached. Its ideological drive, that all tax cuts must directly and implicitly lead to job creation, has shown not to be true in this case.

Government Orders

According to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 85% of the jobs created last year alone were created in short-term, temporary, part-time jobs. These are not our numbers. These are numbers gathered by the business community in Canada. We have seen the government blow open the temporary foreign worker program. More than 300,000 temporary foreign workers went to work this morning in Canada. That has a dual effect. It replaces Canadian workers who were training to do those jobs. I had a phone call from a young woman this morning. She is fully ticketed. She has gone through all the programs, has taken out student loans, is ready to work in the resource sector, and cannot find work because the contractor working on the gas pipeline operation has hired temporary foreign workers from all over the world. She is frustrated. She is trying to pay the bills, and the government turns a blind eye. We saw it with the HD Mining case in British Columbia. Two hundred workers were needed to work in the mine. The way the company got around the small barriers that the Conservatives put up was to say workers must be fully ticketed to work in a mining operation and fluent in Mandarin. That was a requirement that was somewhat difficult to meet in the Canadian labour force market. The employer said they could not find 200 fluent Mandarin-speaking miners in Canada, so they would need a temporary foreign worker licence permit, which the government happily granted with no conditions attached, until it became public; then there was obvious backlash. Then the Prime Minister went with the ethnic media in Vancouver. We have all sorts of criticisms about the temporary foreign worker program, but just to one section of the media; it has never since repeated those criticisms out loud.

● (1030)

Royal Bank of Canada laid off workers and replaced them with temporary foreign workers. We have seen 300 welders recently laid off in Alberta and replaced with temporary foreign workers. The resource wealth that we are endowed with deserves to be respected.

Let us review the six principles of how to properly develop the oil wealth in Alberta, put forward by that lefty radical, former premier Lougheed. Let us review what this radical had to say.

The first principle is “[act] like an owner”. Is the current government doing that when it comes to resource wealth? Not at all.

Second, he said, is “[get] your fair share”. Particularly when it comes to natural resources, like oil, which cannot be replenished, one only gets to do it once. If they do not collect their fair share, it is a missed opportunity.

The third principle is “Save for a rainy day”. Can members imagine what former premier Lougheed would have said about Conservatives, who have not only accrued the largest debt in Canadian history, but they also have the record for our two largest deficits and adding to our largest national debt ever?

The fourth principle that former Premier Lougheed talked about is “[adding] value” to the resources. What do the Conservatives push? They are pushing raw bitumen pipelines. What do they allow? They allow raw log exports. What they allow for is not adding value to the mineral wealth of this country. We know that is where the greatest gain in jobs can be. For those Conservatives who represent parts of Saskatchewan and British Columbia and Alberta, one has to wonder about all those jobs that have been foregone by their policies. All of

those jobs and opportunities are lost, and all those families who could be paying the rent and helping to raise kids on those value-added jobs are lost.

Fifth, former Premier Lougheed also said “Go slow”. Why? Because we see what the boom can do; it always leads to a bust. The former MP for Fort McMurray, Brian Jean, on his way out the door of this place, said that the main problem in the oil patch in northern Alberta is that we are going too fast. We see that those are wise words and correct, if one visits Fort McMurray and talks to the workers and the municipal leaders there. It is a bit of a shame that he only found that conscience when he was leaving Parliament and the Conservative caucus. He did not say it when he was here. I know that many Conservatives also share his views.

The sixth and last thing that former premier Lougheed said was “Practice statecraft”. What do we have from the current government when it comes to developing our economy and natural resource wealth? The Conservatives encourage conflict. They yell and scream at opponents and call them enemies of this state if they do not agree with Conservative ideology. They say that they must be foreign-funded radicals. They get into their “grassy knoll” theories over there in the Conservative Party, saying that this must be the problem.

However, here is the result of all that conflict and tension among Canadians and between first nations and the Government of Canada, which the current government has exacerbated time and again. It leads to uncertainty. Whatever the sector, whether the resource sector or the banking sector, uncertainty is a serious problem. It is impossible to plan if people within companies and industries do not feel they have any certainty. What the Conservatives have ironically and tragically done through their abusive and bullying approach to the conversation in Canada has increased the level of uncertainty and conflict.

Let us look at Bill C-31. Let us deal with what is in it. I can quickly walk through some of the positive measures because there are not many of them.

The government has finally reversed its policy on charging the GST on parking when visiting a hospital. It was something that the Conservatives put in the budget. We told them to take it out, and they listened for once. The Conservatives have also extended some tax credits for families who are seeking adoption. We think this is a very positive thing. They have also introduced another proposal that we put forward to allow for a tax credit for volunteers conducting search and rescue. We think that is very important. It is a small measure, but for those who risk their lives to protect Canadians, we think it is a good measure.

Now, let us get to the bad things that are in Bill C-31.

Government Orders

Let us start with the first one, FATCA. What a great deal it is that is buried in this bill. One would think that something like a major tax treaty with our most significant trading partner would have stand-alone legislation and its own debate. That is not so with the Conservatives; they bury it. When they bury something and they release it, as they did on a Friday afternoon when they released this bill, one can anticipate that there is something they do not want to talk about. We estimate that more than one million Canadians may be affected by this tax treaty. They are Canadians who do not even know they may be implicated by this by being married to an American or former American. They are Canadians who were born to American parents. Canadians who were born here may be implicated by this.

• (1035)

What this deal would do is to tell the banks in Canada to release the private personal banking information of those Canadians to the Canada Revenue Agency, which then ably and quickly would pass it along to the IRS in the United States. Passing the private banking information of more than one million Canadians to the U.S. government somehow does not seem to bother the Conservatives. There were no consultations with the Privacy Commissioner. They told the Privacy Commissioner it was happening, but did not bother to find out if it went against privacy laws in Canada.

We do not know if this is even charter proof. Constitutional lawyers have said that this is a mistreatment of Canadian citizens and it will face a charter challenge. Again, there were no charter questions. The banks have estimated that to collect this information may cost upward of \$100 million. Some have already spent tens of millions of dollars; it is hard information to get at. We asked the government how much it would cost it to wade through these millions of documents and pieces of banking information, and the government said it had no estimate, that it does not know what it is going to cost. The banks have said it would cost upward of \$100 million per bank.

The federal government signed this treaty and did not bother to find out what it might cost the Canadian taxpayer. In addition, there is no reciprocity. There is no agreement with the U.S. to have some sort of equal treatment of Canadians. Canada is not a tax haven for American money. It has never been described as such. Why institute a tax treaty to go after tax cheats and tax havens that do not exist? Why forego the privacy of so many Canadians?

What fight did the Conservatives actually do? The Minister of Finance wrote an op-ed. He did, and it was strongly worded. He put it into a couple of papers in Washington, and that was it. Compare that with the government having spent millions of dollars toward lobbying the U.S. government on Keystone. It has spent millions on a full-scale frontal attack. The Prime Minister said that if the U.S. does not agree, this is a no-brainer, and we will wait the president out. Was this all that could be done in diplomacy?

We spent millions, and are spending millions of dollars on diplomats running around Washington trying to convince the Americans to create 40,000 jobs in the U.S. to add value to the bitumen coming out of the oil patch in Alberta. Who came up with that number? The Canadian government did, when trying to convince American legislators. Compare that full-on assault in

trying to convince people in Washington to do something, to an op-ed, when they were standing up for Canadians' rights. It is a no-brainer. This is bad policy to sell out Canadians at such a cheap level. There is so much more in this bill.

What is not in this bill is the consumer protection that the government so often talks about. The fact that people have to pay to get their bills from companies is not in this legislation; it was in the throne speech. It said it would go after payday lenders because it is extortion. It was talked about in the throne speech, but it is absent in Bill C-31.

On the passenger bill of rights, do members remember that one? The Conservatives had the industry minister talk about the passenger bill of rights. It is not in the bill. There is the small business hiring tax credit, something that New Democrats proposed in 2011 and the government incorporated into two subsequent budgets. According to small and medium-sized businesses, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, it works as an effective tax measure in creating jobs. Unlike the government's broad, blunt attacks on tax, it works, and the government left it out. When asked why, it did not respond and continued.

Last, on temporary foreign workers, there is a piece in the bill that is meant to punish employers who abuse the temporary foreign worker program. The government has a blacklist. It has had a blacklist, for two years, for employers who abuse the system. Who is on the blacklist? There is nobody, not a single employer. The Alberta government has cited over 100 employers who have abused the program, and the government cannot find one.

In summation, I will move the following amendment. However, allow me to say this. In the process that the government is using, this is fundamentally anti-democratic. It fundamentally does not help the Canadian economy, and it is more bad news for the Canadian people. I move:

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

this House decline to give second reading to Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, because it:

- (a) amends more than 60 Acts without adequate parliamentary debate and oversight;
- (b) does nothing to create quality, good-paying jobs for Canadians and fails to extend the hiring credit for small business;
- (c) fails to reverse devastating cuts to infrastructure and healthcare;
- (d) hands over private financial information of hundreds of thousands of Canadians to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service under Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act;
- (e) reduces transparency at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency;
- (f) imposes tolls on the Champlain Bridge;
- (g) jeopardizes the independence of 11 federal administrative tribunals; and
- (h) enables the government to weaken regulations affecting rail safety and the transport of dangerous goods without notifying the public.

Government Orders

●(1040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Debate will be on the amendment.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my comment is about the remarks that the member made about the intergovernmental agreement to respond to the United States Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act.

As the member mentioned, there were a couple of things that the government did not do that it should have done: first, to perhaps ask the courts whether an intergovernmental agreement that was being negotiated would violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and, second, to get an official comment from the Privacy Commissioner as it was negotiating with officials from the United States.

I think the government could have done a better job of protecting the rights of Canadians, and I would ask if my colleague would like to comment on that.

●(1045)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, do members remember that old slogan that the Conservatives used during one of the campaigns, “Stand up for Canada”? Was that the first campaign? It has been so long, I suppose, that they have forgotten what “Stand up for Canada” actually means. Both on the side of pushing back and negotiating a deal that protected Canadians’ privacy and rights, they have capitulated entirely. Canada was one of the last G7/G20 countries to sign the deal with the United States. It is always a good sign when we are last up with our most significant trading partner.

This is the “ready, fire, aim” government. It puts it in place, and then after the fact says “This is a privacy issue, and perhaps we should check with the Privacy Commissioner. We’ll do that later” or “Perhaps this might be unconstitutional. We have a whole bunch of lawyers here in Ottawa paid for by taxpayers, and they are constitutional experts”.

These guys are trying to run them out of work. They do not ask them anything, especially when dealing with something so fundamental as our constitutional rights.

“Stand up for Canada”; what a fascinating idea. They should perhaps dust off those old pamphlets from that election and actually do what they said they would do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for raising the fact that one of the larger offences in all of the last number of years of omnibus budget bills is buried in this omnibus bill. This complex piece of legislation should never be put in an omnibus bill.

I have previously mentioned to the House Peter Hogg, one of Canada’s leading constitutional experts, who warned the Minister of Finance that this bill would violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I also want to draw the attention of the House to the opinion of Allison Christians, who is the H. Heward Stikeman chair in tax law

at McGill, and Arthur Cockfield, a professor at Queen’s University. I want to put their opinion on the record:

The proposed Implementation Act and the IGA do not enhance the reciprocal tax information exchange between the United States and Canada, nor do they create a workable regime for Canada to enhance its international tax enforcement efforts going forward.

Further they state:

Instead, the Implementation Act and the IGA raise a number of serious issues ranging from likely Charter violations to violations—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We have run out of time. I know we have a 10-minute timeframe for questions and comments, but we need some time for other members.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the challenges will come, and the courts will be seized with this.

This is such a bad way to run government. The Conservatives spent a quarter of a million dollars on the Nadon appointment to the Supreme Court and then had to go back and undo it, for the first time in Canadian history.

These things matter. Things like the Constitution actually seem to matter. Lo and behold, the Conservatives are finding that. On tax treaties, privacy rights will matter and constitutional rights will matter.

I have another point that I was unable to raise in my speech: the lack of transparency. After all the tragedies we have seen involving rail safety, one would think that the government would put something in here to help. What it has done is give the minister the power to change training, equipment, and safety regulations without having to notify the public.

The government has simply, unilaterally, within cabinet, decided that it is going to change the way the trains are run across this country, without ever notifying the public or the community. We would have thought, after Lac-Mégantic, that there would have been an increase in transparency to try to bring the public into what is happening on the rails, since it can so deeply affect a community and pose such a risk. Instead, the government has gone the opposite way.

It is a shame. It is a continuation of the Conservative tendency toward insulting all measures of transparency and accountability.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his excellent speech. This is his first speech on an economic topic since he was appointed official opposition finance critic. I loved his speech.

The question I wanted to ask was already asked, in part, by my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I would like to take that one step further. She talked about the constitutional issues related to FATCA. It is becoming increasingly clear in budget bill after budget bill after budget bill that the Conservative government’s process does not include enough preparation.

Government Orders

They rush their bills through with very little discussion, and they introduce bills, like the last one, with monumental errors. We took a stand against that and warned the government, in the Standing Committee on Finance and in the House of Commons, that the provisions to change the appointment process for Supreme Court judges would not get past the Supreme Court itself. The Conservatives did not listen to us.

There are other elements, such as the Conservatives' decision not to charge GST and HST on parking fees after all, even though that was a measure they proposed. We pointed out their mistake to them.

I would like the member to comment on the growing number of increasingly serious mistakes resulting from the government's hasty approach time and time again.

● (1050)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my dear colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his question.

The problem with the process they are using now is that it costs a lot of money, it is very complicated and it is unfair. There are many provisions in this bill designed to improve situations created by previous omnibus bills passed by the Conservatives. That is the problem with this bill. The Conservatives are going to use another huge bill to solve the problems created by previous omnibus bills.

Here is a very interesting quote by the Prime Minister. He said:

[*English*]

...in the interest of democracy I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns? We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse?

Who believed that? It was the Prime Minister who used to believe that. What has this Prime Minister done? He has taken the omnibus abuses and put them on steroids. We now have omnibus bill after omnibus bill, with a kitchen sink full of measures. They are Trojan Horses that bury within them all these anti-democratic measures. The Conservatives then pretend to break it up at committee.

The process is complete sham. We need something better. We need a competent government. In 2015, we will get ourselves one.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the official opposition finance critic for his speech, which showed just how deceiving this omnibus bill is and how it will do nothing to help the Canadian economy, growth or job creation.

I would like the member to elaborate on these issues. How are this Conservative government's successive austerity bills stifling Canada's economy and causing us to fall further and further behind?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my dear colleague from LaSalle—Émard for her question.

It is interesting because everyone believes that there are some basic problems with the economy right now. A bill that is over 350 pages long should present an opportunity to improve the situation, add value and send a message to young people who are

really struggling in today's labour market as a result of both Conservative and Liberal governance.

What does this bill contain? It contains many other things. One truly dangerous example is the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada. What is that? It is the group of independent tribunals whose purpose is to defend human rights and aboriginal rights. With this bill, the government is going to change who has control over all existing tribunals, thus jeopardizing their independence. I know that the government does not really like to be criticized and it does not really like people who speak out against it, but we need these truly independent tribunals. This bill raises many concerns about what will happen in the future, since its provisions do little to help the economy and a lot to undermine democracy.

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-31. This is the Conservatives' first bill to implement budget 2014. It is again another massive omnibus budget bill. It is 359 pages in length, with almost 500 separate clauses.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

This bill includes a host of measures that have nothing to do with a budget bill in an effort to limit debate on important issues. Completely unrelated measures are grouped together in a single bill. The Conservatives chose this route in order to adopt these measures quickly and avoid having them reviewed by Parliament.

[*English*]

The inconsistency, and some would say hypocrisy, that the government is demonstrating is exemplified by the Prime Minister's own words as an opposition MP. I heard my colleague for Skeena—Bulkley Valley refer to this quotation a few minutes ago.

In 1994, the Prime Minister, as an opposition MP, said in this House:

...in the interest of democracy, I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns?

We can agree with some of the measures but oppose others. How do we express our views and the views of our constituents when the matters are so diverse?

He went on to say:

The bill contains many distinct proposals and principles and asking members to provide simple answers to such complex questions is in contradiction to the conventions and practices of the House. ... I would also ask government members...to give serious consideration to this issue of democracy....

The Liberal omnibus legislation that the then opposition member, now Prime Minister, was talking about at that time in 1994 was 21 pages in length and altered 11 pieces of legislation. That is a far cry from the 359-page document that lies before us today.

I cannot for the life of me understand how the Prime Minister, and others who were part of that Reform movement at that time, could live with themselves today when what they are doing goes far deeper against the principles that they articulated at that time.

Government Orders

The Conservatives are continuing their reckless abuse of power by using these huge omnibus bills and underhanded procedural manoeuvres to force these policies through. They are ignoring public outcry from coast to coast to coast. They are also potentially creating bad public policy, because the committees, wherein greater expertise lies and which ought to be considering and ultimately voting on these pieces of legislation, are being cut out of the discussion. Perhaps there is some level of engagement of committees when it comes to the evaluation of the legislation, but not at the critical points at which we vote at committee to pass these pieces of legislation.

We are being asked to consider measures, for instance, of compassionate leave, sickness benefits, search and rescue volunteers tax credits, expansion of the adoption expense tax credit, and medical expense tax credits. We would actually be quite supportive of many of these measures as individual measures, and it is unfortunate that these positive measures are being lumped together with some very unreasonable and harmful and regressive measures that we cannot support.

The bill also includes new rules around FATCA, the U.S. Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act. Under the bill, Canadians effectively are going to be doing the dirty work and becoming tax collectors for the IRS. Canada-U.S. dual citizens are going to be punished if they do not provide their U.S. tax number to the CRA.

If these Canadians provide their U.S. tax numbers, the Canadian government will hand over all this information, together with information on the Canadians' bank accounts, to the U.S. This will help the U.S. collect tax on registered Canadian savings accounts, including RDSPs, registered disability savings plans; RESPs, registered education savings plans; and tax free savings accounts.

The other night when we were at the briefing by the Finance Canada public servants, they could not answer a very simple question, and that was whether the contributions made to RDSPs and RESPs by the Canadian government as matching grants would be considered taxable by the Americans. They could not answer that basic question.

It was never the public policy intention of RDSPs and RESPs to subsidize the American treasury. They are for helping Canadian families with members with disabilities and for helping young Canadians get good educations. Yet the Conservatives are incapable of answering that question. They have not stood up for Canadian interests during these negotiations.

The budget bill would also change rules around rail safety, food safety, and hazardous products.

It would centralize control over regional development in my part of the country and ACOA. It would take away the authority of regional boards in ACOA. It would dissolve those boards and move all the decision-making to Ottawa. It would dissolve ECBC without real consultation with communities, again centralizing decision-making in Ottawa on matters on which Atlantic Canadians, frankly, may have greater expertise and understanding.

The bill would also change the number of federal judges. We would think the government would have learned something from the Nadon fiasco. Ultimately, one of the casualties of previous budget

implementation bills was the government's credibility when it came to the appointment of Supreme Court justices. Members will recall that it was in a previous budget implementation act that the government changed the legislation, the Supreme Court Act, with regard to the appointment of judges to try to facilitate the appointment of Justice Nadon. We know how that ended up. It did not end well. The Supreme Court refused to go along with the government on that.

That is the kind of bad public policy outcome we have when we force all these unrelated measures through the House in an omnibus budget bill of this scale.

I want to talk a little bit about what is not in Bill C-31. There is very little in this piece of legislation to address some of the most serious concerns facing Canadian families today. There is little in the bill that would actually help struggling middle-class families who are having difficulty making ends meet. Conservatives have failed to recognize that large groups within the Canadian economy and society are being left out of this so-called economic recovery.

In my part of Nova Scotia, the Annapolis Valley, Stats Canada, which tracks unemployment and employment and labour figures, gives some very telling data. I represent Hants County, Kings County, and Annapolis County. Hants, Kings, and Annapolis are represented by me and the member for West Nova.

Since the recession, residents in this part of Nova Scotia have seen good-paying, full-time jobs replaced by temporary and part-time work. That data is laid out for us by Stats Canada. We have seen part-time jobs increase by 1,700. In the same period, the region has lost 9,800 full-time jobs. The percentage of residents in the area who are of working age and have a job, which is labour market participation, has plummeted from 61.6% to 54%.

This is what is happening in my part of Nova Scotia. We are seeing it in families. We are seeing it in small businesses.

● (1100)

We are seeing real economic challenges. The government seems out of touch when it talks about this recovery as if it were a monolithic recovery that is affecting and helping people in all regions of the country, because there are groups that are simply being left behind. A lot of families are struggling just to get by.

These Canadians are tired of the uncertainty. They are tired of struggling to find work to try to make ends meet when they have lost full-time jobs and have had to replace them with part-time work. They are facing record levels of personal debt. The average household in Canada now owes a record \$1.66 for every \$1 of disposable income. Instead of using this budget to help address some of these challenging needs of middle-class families, Conservatives continue to ignore them.

Government Orders

In the previous four Conservative budgets, the Conservatives actually raised taxes on hard-working Canadian families. Budget 2013 actually raised taxes on imported goods, everything from household goods to wigs for cancer patients. Sadly, the Conservatives raised taxes because they needed the money to cover for their waste and mismanagement. They spent hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising, and millions to advertise a jobs program that did not even exist. Meanwhile, the middle class is struggling under record levels of personal debt, and the Conservatives are raising taxes on it just to support its own profligacy and wasteful spending on advertising.

Canadian youth are struggling. This bill ignores the unemployment and underemployment challenges of young Canadians. Due to Conservative inaction on youth unemployment and underemployment, we risk losing a generation of potential. We will feel the economic consequences of this disinterest in young Canadians for decades.

For young Canadians, there are 265,000 fewer jobs than there were before the downturn. TD Economics has estimated that prolonged high levels of unemployment and underemployment among young Canadians will cost the Canadian economy \$23 billion.

For those who like to argue that youth unemployment is always bad following a recession, it is time to look beyond the simple unemployment rate and examine the whole story. For example, the gap between Canada's youth unemployment and adult unemployment has recently reached an all-time high. Our young people are simply being left out of this so-called recovery.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

What is more, the unemployment rate does not reflect the fact that some young people are so discouraged that they are not even looking for work any more.

[*English*]

Students are having a harder time finding summer work. Many of them are taking unpaid internships just for work experience. A lack of paid work means that students are graduating from university with high levels of debt. The need today for government intervention and summer jobs, post-recession, is actually greater than it was before the downturn, yet the Canada summer jobs program last summer created half the number of summer jobs it did back in 2005.

The need is greater today, and the government is doing half as much to create jobs for students during the summer.

This is not just affecting young Canadians. It is affecting parents, and in many cases grandparents, who are footing the bills. According to TD Bank, more than half of baby boom parents are providing financial support to adult children who are no longer in school. It is nearly half, and 43% have allowed their adult children to live at home, rent-free, for extended periods of time.

Helping adult children make ends meet is actually leading a lot of middle-class families into greater levels of debt. They are dipping into retirement savings. It is also one of the reasons Canadian parents 55 years of age and older with children are more likely than those

without children to refinance their mortgages. Their average household debt is actually twice that of their childless peers. They are more likely to take on higher non-mortgage debt, such as higher credit card debt and lines of credit, which is one of the reasons non-mortgage debt in Canada continues to climb. The average Canadian owes \$28,000 in non-mortgage debt today. That is a record high.

There are too many young Canadians looking for work and there are too many middle-class Canadian families struggling under crushing levels of personal debt. The bill would do little to help Canadian youth or middle-class families and offers no real vision for the future.

I would like to speak again about something in this budget implementation act, and these are the measures regarding FATCA. The Conservatives want to actually turn Canadians into American tax collectors through this budget implementation bill. Earlier this year, when the Conservatives signed an intergovernmental agreement with the U.S. to implement FATCA, we had hoped that some of the concerns we had would be addressed.

Canada and the U.S. had previously achieved an agreement to exchange information on suspected tax cheats, but FATCA goes a step further than any other tax-sharing legislation has. It requires Canadian banks to give the CRA the account information of every U.S. citizen living in Canada. The CRA will then give this information to the IRS, and those U.S. persons will have to file taxes in the U.S.

The problem is that there are many U.S. citizens living in Canada, and they do not even know that they are considered Americans for tax purposes. These include any person born in the U.S. or born to an American parent, even if they have not lived in the U.S. since they were toddlers. The Canadian government has agreed to help the IRS find these individuals.

This will also affect Canadians who are not even U.S. citizens but are married to one, because their joint accounts will now be reported to the IRS. This is a remarkable breach of Canadians' privacy by their own government. Not only will the CRA provide the IRS information with tax identification information and the account balances of U.S. persons without their knowledge, it will impose a \$100 penalty for each instance of non-compliance. Why are Conservatives prepared to do Uncle Sam's work in this case and potentially penalize Canadians with dual citizenship or their Canadian spouses?

U.S. persons living in Canada would be required to report and pay taxes to the U.S. on their RDSPs and RESPs. These accounts are supposed to help Canadians pay for education or help disabled Canadians avoid poverty. The Canadian government money was not intended to be used to subsidize the U.S. treasury. Why are the Conservatives allowing this to happen, when it so clearly is inconsistent with the objectives of RDSPs and RESPs?

Government Orders

The other night, as I mentioned earlier today, we asked the public servants at the briefing whether Canadian government contributions, the matching grants to RESPs and RDSPs, would be considered taxable by the Americans, by the IRS. They could not answer the question. The idea that we would sign an agreement when we do not know something as basic as this speaks to the way the government has lost influence, power, and authority in negotiating with the Americans.

The FATCA agreement is very important, and it should be a stand-alone piece of legislation. We should be doing a more thorough evaluation of the agreement the government has signed, and it should not be part of a budget implementation bill, an omnibus bill. Constitutional law experts such as Peter Hogg have raised concerns about whether the agreement violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are real issues around this that will be given short shrift through the process by which a budget implementation act, which is such a massive omnibus bill, has been given to Parliament.

There are also provisions in this budget implement act for demutualization. I have heard from insurance providers in Nova Scotia who worry that these changes potentially will hurt rural Canadians. Even the government's own report on demutualization tells us, quote:

Concerns were expressed that demutualization could lead to consolidation, reduce competition, access to services, and weaken ties to rural communities in which most mutual companies are based.

Again, measures on demutualization are something we need to consider more thoroughly.

●(1110)

What is clear is that this tired, out-of-touch Conservative government is devoid of vision and ideas. It is not just anti-democratic; it is totally out of touch with young Canadians and struggling middle-class families. Canadians deserve better.

●(1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kings—Hants for his speech. I have the pleasure of sitting with him at the Standing Committee on Finance. We have had a number of opportunities to discuss important issues there, including one that is in this bill.

I am talking about the FATCA agreement between Canada and the United States. It has to do with the United States going through Canada to collect taxes from people it considers to be U.S. citizens. I raise this issue not just because it is important, but because we have studied the issue of tax havens and tax evasion at the Standing Committee on Finance. Some, including me, believe that we only scratched the surface, while others believe we studied the matter at length. Even though I do not feel we spent very much time on this study, it was extremely intense because the issue is quite broad and complex.

At the Standing Committee on Finance, we will be studying this budget implementation bill in its entirety, so the committee might need several weeks to get through all the complexities of the FATCA agreement. Can my colleague comment on that?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's question.

Indeed, it is important for us to take a close look at tax havens and to implement appropriate measures. I do not agree with the government's approach to the FATCA agreement with the U.S. government. According to experts, this agreement could violate our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, among other things.

I agree with my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques that we should work harder with Canadian banks to develop an approach on tax havens. The overall capacity of our banks and their presence around the world should enable us to do more and to take more leadership on this issue. However, the Conservative government does nothing to address tax havens in its approach to FATCA.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there are many complex aspects of this omnibus legislation. Certainly, even the title, FATCA, foreign accounts taxation and compliance agreement, is one of the most complex.

It certainly would, as the hon. member stated, affect people who have no idea whatsoever that they could be caught in this broad ambit of people who are considered U.S. persons, people like me who were born in the United States but have nothing to do with the United States, who in my case has never lived there as an adult, but purely as a Canadian citizen and renounced U.S. citizenship.

This could apply to me, or my daughter. Then the information is handed over to the IRS without our knowledge.

Now, I want to draw attention to the charter argument, specifically section 15 of the charter, which says "Every individual is equal before and under the law...". As my hon. colleague mentioned, the leading constitutional law experts of Canada have said that this will violate the charter.

So, as with other legislation, it will get pushed through this place. As in the case of the Nadon appointment or with some of the mandatory minimum sentence laws that were passed, we have clear evidence that we are being asked, as parliamentarians, to push through a piece of legislation that would be offensive to our fundamental rights of equality under the law, under section 15. I ask for the member's comments.

●(1120)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, this speaks to the challenge of these omnibus bills.

We were denied the opportunity at the appropriate committees to consider all aspects of these changes in a more thorough, methodical, and thoughtful way. There are legal and constitutional issues to consider.

Members of the justice committee, for instance, ought to have been more engaged on the changes to the Supreme Court Act in the last omnibus bill, but instead we ended up getting into an embarrassing fiasco around Justice Nadon's appointment. This was embarrassing not just for the Conservatives but our citizens as well.

Government Orders

There is some expertise at the finance committee studying FATCA, but there is also a need to work with other committees.

Parliament could be mobilized and engaged more thoroughly if we did not have these kinds of disparate measures lumped together in one budget omnibus bill.

I would agree with the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this bill does very little to help young Canadians find jobs. I am very concerned about the fact that if young Canadians struggle to find a job for a year or two during their youth, this will effect their earning potential and their ability to contribute to the country's economy for the rest of their lives. We see this happen to women who stay home while their children are young.

[*English*]

There will be a lifetime impact on earnings potential. If we do not do something now about all the young people who are still looking for jobs after the last recession, this sector of our economy, this cohort of young Canadians, will be hurt for the rest of their lives.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question from my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. This bill does not do anything for young people and for middle-class families. The youth unemployment rate is higher than it was before the recession. We have lost 255,000 jobs for young people since the recession. This will have a terrible long-term effect on the economy.

[*English*]

According to TD Economics there is a \$23 billion cost to the Canadian economy as a result of the scarring effect of young Canadians not getting a good start. This is leading to an unprecedented level of unpaid internships and growth in inequality of opportunity. Bill C-31 would do nothing to address the challenges faced by young Canadians or middle-class families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Kings—Hants for mentioning demutualization and the impact it would have, especially on certain regions of Nova Scotia. However, the bill does not indicate exactly what this government's intentions are in terms of demutualization. The Canadian Association of Mutual Insurance Companies stated that these companies do not want the government to create a framework that would include incentives for demutualization.

I would like the hon. member to speak more about the potentially negative impact of demutualization, not just for certain regions, but for people who have invested in mutual companies, especially the members, because they are the ones who invest in them.

• (1125)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, clearly mutual companies are against demutualization. The government's intentions with this bill are not clear. We hope that when we discuss this bill in committee, we will get a better understanding of the direction the government wants to take. This is another case where, with omnibus bills, the

government is making it difficult for us to do our jobs and assess bills responsibly.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-31, economic action plan 2014, no. 1.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

As the bill's short title would indicate, this piece of legislation would implement some of the measures passed in economic action plan 2014.

I have noted through the years that my opposition colleagues take exception to the term “economic action plan”. They are welcome to. While they are concerned with titles and labels, we on this side of the House are concerned with action on jobs, long-term growth, and continued prosperity for all Canadians. We have focused on reducing taxes for all Canadians; lowering government debt; increasing competition in the Canadian marketplace; creating the best educated, most highly skilled, and flexible workforce in the world; and building the modern infrastructure that we need to compete abroad and enjoy living in livable communities at home.

These priorities were outlined in our first mandate in a document I would encourage all MPs to read. All Canadians would benefit from doing so. It is called “Advantage Canada”. It is available on the Department of Finance website. That document was written in better times, before the global recession. While times have changed, our priorities have not.

In the intervening years we have weathered the worst global economic downturn since the Great Depression, but we stuck to our priorities, the priorities that Canadians elected us to address. Our commitment to that course has paid dividends for Canada. In every way that Canadians pay taxes, whether sales tax, income tax, or customs and tariffs, this government has lowered them.

We are now poised to return to a surplus fiscal position. I cannot over-emphasize how important it is that we return to this balanced budget and reduce our long-term debt charges.

We have reduced unnecessary regulations. We have made progress in cutting red tape. We have concluded major free trade agreements. We have invested an unprecedented amount in our post-secondary institutions and the skilled trades. Right across this great country, Canadians have seen their local infrastructure renewed, from wastewater facilities to community centres. Locally, this has meant unprecedented investments in Wilfrid Laurier University, my alma mater, as well as the world-renowned University of Waterloo and Canada's top polytechnic institute, Conestoga College.

Government Orders

New computer science and engineering facilities provide students the best environment to learn. Many of these students will become graduates who want to start one of the high-tech businesses for which Waterloo region is so well known. When they do, they can take advantage of the federally supported new Communtech Hub, which offers the latest technologies for their use as experts in building high-tech businesses.

When we talk about high-tech businesses, what we will build is beyond our imagination. Quantum computing and nanotechnology are just two of the bleeding-edge fields now being pursued thanks to significant support from this government. When I say it is beyond our ability to imagine, I clearly remember, when I was a school board trustee back in 1978, that the computer housed in the school board offices was huge. It occupied almost a full room. Today we can compute far more than that on these little devices we hold in our hands, which each one of us in the House is privileged to use. Not only will those kinds of technology advancements from 1978 increase again, but they may also possibly double or triple in quantity.

Community centres from St. Clements to Kitchener have been built or renovated. Highway 8, our connection to Highway 401, has had its capacity increased to handle the increased volume that comes with our region's explosive growth.

We have done all of this during the worst times the world has seen since World War II, while reducing taxes for Canadians, and without cutting support for health care or education like the previous government did.

Canada has outperformed every other G7 country in job creation thanks to this government's commitment to long-term prosperity, as identified in the five priorities I listed earlier. Canadians have also experienced the strongest real per capita growth in the G7.

• (1130)

As chair of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, I am especially proud of the key investments our government has made to protect and preserve our natural habitats. This government has invested over \$17 billion in clean transportation initiatives, renewable fuels, clean air, clean energy, energy efficiency, and green infrastructure. This bill would build on that legacy, making it easier and more affordable for Canadians to donate ecologically sensitive lands for preservation.

As I mentioned earlier, this budget would put us within a hair's breadth of a return to surplus. In our party, this is important. The leader of the third party claimed that budgets will simply balance themselves. While Canadians of a certain generation will remember that Pierre Trudeau had a similarly cavalier attitude toward budgets, many more Canadians will remember the painful actions it took to clean up the mess that Trudeau left. The truth is that it took decades for Canada to dig itself out of the hole that Trudeau left. If budgets balance themselves, why is the United States unable to do so; why is the Wynne government in my home province of Ontario unable to balance its books? Deficits and debts out of control, that is Pierre Trudeau's fiscal legacy.

Now, the leader of the third party wants to bring us back to that. We on this side of the House are preparing for a brighter future, not a

return to the dark days of deficits and debts spiralling out of control. Not only were they spiralling out of control, but they were also followed by very drastic cuts to health care and education, which many people in this room and many, especially in Ontario, will still remember with a great deal of pain.

On this side of the House, and among a few members on that side—not today but usually—we believe in fiscal discipline. A balanced budget allows us to spend more of the tax dollars that we collect to serve Canadians, and means less for the bankers and bondholders who fund that debt. When the government borrows less, interest rates drop for Canadians who are seeking to borrow for a home or a car, and for provincial governments like my own that seem addicted to spending the money they do not have. That is our vision. Unlike the third party, we will not mortgage our children's and grandchildren's future in a vote-buying exercise.

We focus instead on the fundamentals. This act would make it easier for small businesses to grow and hire by reducing the amount of time and resources they must devote to administrivia, allowing them instead to focus on their business.

This act would make life a little easier for Canadians struggling with health issues, by making the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act more flexible for employees, and allowing compassionate care leave for employees with critically ill children.

As well, this act addresses an issue that has so infuriated Canadians of late. We have seen senators accused of serious irregularities being suspended by their peers. They have no staff, no offices, no responsibility, but they are still accumulating pensionable service. To average Canadians, the middle-class Canadians the third party struggles so hard to define, this does not reflect any reality they have ever experienced.

In my home of Waterloo Region, business people tell me that they cannot access the talent they need. This act would make it easier for Canadians to pursue a skilled trade by offering financial assistance to apprentices. These business people also tell me that the current system of training is broken, focused on filling seats and not on producing results. I was especially pleased when members of the Ontario government finally agreed to participate in the Canada jobs grant program.

We are focused on jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity. The budget this act would implement will move us further toward those goals. By every measure, under this government Canada's economy has outperformed the world.

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I know that the members opposite are screaming from the rooftops that this budget is the end of the world. They have been sticking to that Chicken Little routine every budget since Canadians first gave us the responsibility of governing, but they have been wrong every year and are wrong again. They are again wrong this time, and the evidence is that our approach is working. I ask the members opposite, especially those who have served more than one term, to listen to themselves, review what they predicted about previous budgets, and then review what happened, to see how wrong they have been year after year. I do not have time to go into all of the evidence, but maybe during the questions I will.

Under this government, Canada has led the world. That may be an uncomfortable fact for the opposition members, but it is a fact they cannot deny.

• (1135)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the lecture that the hon. member has given us. Unfortunately, the Conservatives like to ignore what they are doing and especially what they are not doing.

Looking at budget 2013, we see that there were numerous tax increases, either because of the removal of the provincial tariff exemptions or because the government applied GST on many items, such as parking at hospitals. I would like to know where the hon. member actually was when the Conservatives decided to impose the GST on parking at hospitals, a measure that was so bad they have now chosen to remove it with budget 2014 and this BIA.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, this gives me a chance to add some material that I did not have time to do earlier. It is important for all members of the House and all Canadians to realize that it is on this side of the House, in this government, that we are working to reduce the tax burden on Canadian families. In fact, the average Canadian family currently pays \$3,400 less in taxes than it did in 2006 when we took office.

There are a number of other facts I would like to clear up because they were misinterpreted earlier. Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada, and over 85% of those are full time and 80% are in the private sector.

I could go on, but I have to give someone else a chance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for his speech, which targeted the Liberal Party. I appreciated it a great deal, because we are working to oppose this government.

[*English*]

My Conservative colleague talked about the environment and some of the things the government is trying to do. Why did it not bring back the ecoENERGY retrofit homes program?

This was a program that encouraged people to make homes more energy efficient in order to save them money when living in their homes. It was for everyone, and also helped to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It was really a win-win situation. It helped local businesses, saved energy, saved money, and reduced Canada's greenhouse gas footprint.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that my colleague drew attention to the fact that I did target the Liberal government. In fact, it was the previous Liberal government that actually nudged me out of my complacency and to get involved in politics in the first place, because of some of the mismanagement I saw there.

Specifically, we have invested, since 2006, more than \$17 billion in support of the environment.

The member references the ecoENERGY program. Well, all of us in the House knew it was a time-limited plan. When we established it, it was a time-limited plan. It was a Conservative plan. However, the funny thing is that these people voted against it when we implemented it and now are asking us why we are not continuing it.

Greenhouse gases in this country have decreased by 8% since 2005 during a time when the economy grew by over 8%. Under the so-called Kyoto accord, greenhouse gases did not go down like they were supposed to, but actually increased by 30%. So, on the environment, I am proud of the record of our government.

• (1140)

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, specifically following up on the environment, I just want to say that the government recently announced \$4.4 million of support, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, for 743 hectares of land just outside of the Oliver-Osoyoos area in the South Okanagan Similkameen.

This is a major effort by the government to conserve, and I will quote Linda Hannah, B.C. regional vice-president of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, who says:

This is one of the most significant conservation projects we have undertaken here in B.C. This project will benefit not only the many rare species that rely on this habitat, but also the people who live in and visit this beautiful valley and want to see it remain ecologically vibrant.

Obviously, government has a role to make sure that these valuable lands are conserved, but the member mentioned in his speech that government can also get out of the way and encourage people to donate their own land. I would like him to comment on that.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for drawing attention to the parks. Under this government, we have increased the area of our national parks by 58%. The square-mileage of our parks has increased.

Regarding the donation of ecologically sensitive land, this is an important aspect. When people do have these prized possessions, many of which are like the lands Ducks Unlimited Canada is currently administering and creating, it is important that they be allowed to donate these without a huge tax burden.

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Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to highlight several features of budget 2014. Each year we bring out a new budget with new particulars but with the same steady principles and long-term priorities. We have looked at our economic circumstances and listened to Canadians and we know that they support our government's continued efforts to secure jobs, economic growth, and long-term prosperity.

This government is proud to serve Canadians in both domestic and international affairs. On the domestic side, I would like to speak to specific job-creating and economic measures as well as our low-tax plan on the road to balance. Moving to international issues, I hope to address economic immigration, free trade agreements, and Canada's relationship with the United States.

Allow me to start with an issue that is near and dear to all Canadians: jobs. Our government knows that Canadians are willing to work hard to get ahead, but we recognize the gap between the demand for skilled work positions and our current graduates and trainees. We are taking action to address these challenges. We would encourage students to enter the skilled trades by making interest-free loans available for Red Seal apprentice programs. Apprentices would be able to get interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per technical training period.

Our government is committed to workers who have lost their jobs and those who need retraining. Economic action plan 2013 introduced the Canada job grant to address this very issue. The grant would go toward training Canadians for jobs in high-demand fields and will be fully implemented in fiscal year 2017. The plan is to invest \$300 million in the new program from the existing \$500 million labour market agreements with the provinces. Budget 2014 would continue this implementation process.

In addition to training Canadians for available jobs, we are making it easier for businesses to hire them. As a member of the Red Tape Reduction Commission, I am pleased to say that this government would now implement another one of its recommendations. We would cut the administrative burden on more than 50,000 employers by reducing the maximum number of required payments on account of source deductions.

Despite these and other measures, the Canadian economy will experience periodic labour force gaps. Companies can address these gaps with temporary foreign workers if there are no Canadians available to do the work. Our government sees the value of the foreign worker program and its ability to help businesses in need, but we strongly believe that Canadians should always get the first shot at available jobs. To that end, we would commit \$11 million over two years and \$3.5 million each year going forward in reforming the labour market opinion process.

In addition to training, cutting red tape, and filling labour gaps, our government continues the trend of keeping corporate taxes low. Low taxes encourage more start-ups and attract more international companies to move here. Our steady course on corporate taxes works nicely with our reduction in personal taxes, but I will speak more on that later. To supplement these direct measures, budget 2014 includes several less direct approaches that would encourage economic activity by creating a more conducive climate.

New inventions, ideas, and methods give Canada an economic edge over international competitors. Our government helps to foster these innovations and discoveries by funding research and development projects throughout the country. In 2014, we would continue the trend of increasing annual R and D funding, with the total proposed spending now at \$1.6 billion over five years.

We all know that sometimes brilliant ideas come from surprising sources and that the Internet is the single greatest advance in knowledge sharing in generations. Getting more people online increases the chances of new ideas coming to the fore. Budget 2014 proposes to spend \$305 million over five years to extend and enhance high-speed broadband access to roughly 280,000 households in rural and northern Canada.

Of course, information flowing online is not the only thing that needs to move in Canada. People and goods require quality roads and rails to navigate our vast country. We have set aside \$53 billion for the building Canada plan. Among other things, this plan would fund transfers to provinces and municipalities and would accept applications for the building Canada fund. It would also renew the P3 Canada fund to find new ways for state and private actors to cooperate on projects. It would contribute to on-reserve infrastructure, and much more.

• (1145)

Canadians know that governments pay for these kinds of infrastructure projects through taxes. However, if taxes get too high, it can actually slow the economy down. With that in mind, since 2006, we have introduced over 160 tax-cutting measures. The average family of four's yearly taxes are now around \$3,400 lower.

Building on that solid record, budget 2014 includes many individual cuts. For example, we propose increasing the GST exemption measures, such as exempting training in coping tactics for people with disorders and disabilities. One of my personal favourites, due to the exciting technology element, is the exemption for eyewear specifically designed to electronically enhance the vision of people with impairments. Along with a host of other cuts, these measures would continue to make life just that much easier for Canadians.

Governance is about trade-offs, such as tax relief versus deficit elimination. Our government is doing both, which brings me to my personal favourite part of budget 2014: staying on track to balanced books and surplus.

Government Orders

Canadians trust our government to protect the nation's finances, to tax wisely, to rein in spending, and to respond to crises. Responding to the great recession of 2008 took a heavy toll on the budget. However, I can proudly say that the budget is on track to balance for the next fiscal year, and the sooner the better. As a small businessman, I can say first-hand that I understand the occasional need for borrowing, but I also understand the immense joy and relief of being in surplus again.

We are eliminating the deficit in two ways: by increasing revenue and by cutting spending. By fostering a healthy economic climate, our government has helped the GDP rise, which increases tax revenue without raising taxes. Unlike what the inexperienced Liberal leader thinks, budgets do not just balance themselves. Unlike what the reckless New Democrats may hope, a carbon tax on everything depresses GDP and lowers tax revenue.

The second way we are tackling the deficit is by making concerted efforts to reduce the size of government through attrition and modernization.

Growth in GDP and population brings me back to the matter of immigration I introduced when speaking of the LMOs earlier.

Along with most Canadians, our government believes that our immigration system should benefit Canada. As such, we have taken several important steps to reform the system, including proposing replacement of the immigrant investor program by the immigrant investor venture capital fund. The new program would ensure that this class of immigrants would make substantial contributions to our economy.

Immigration is just one way that we interact with the wider world. Canada also trades extensively, and trade is good for economic growth.

As I mentioned, we have managed to grow GDP without raising taxes; in fact, we have grown our GDP by cutting taxes over 160 times.

Increasing resource development and increasing trade are two of the best ways to increase our GDP. With the signing of the Canada-European trade agreement late last year and the Canada-Korea trade agreement a few weeks ago, Canada has secured new opportunities for growth.

Of course, trade requires goods and services to exchange. Canada is blessed with abundant natural resources, fertile soil, and the workforce needed to translate those assets into exports. I am particularly pleased to note that budget 2014 continues funding for agricultural development through the Growing Forward 2 framework. I also appreciate the proposed expansions to the types of livestock qualifying for tax deferral on sale by farmers dealing with drought or excessive rain.

Measures like these clearly show that our government is pursuing a sound strategy of diversifying our economy through developing our resources, opening new markets with new partners, and drawing closer to old friends and allies.

The great thing about trade is that it is not a zero sum game. Seeking out new trade opportunities in the Asia-Pacific zone and in Europe does not diminish our existing trade with the United States.

The fact is that the United States is, and will continue to be, our closest ally and greatest trading partner. Our government is determined to increase that trade through improved cross-border infrastructure, such as the new international trade crossing between Windsor and Detroit. Budget 2014 proposes to provide \$470 million over two years on a cash basis for the procurement and project delivery parts of the new bridge project. Since the Windsor-Detroit corridor handles 30% of Canada-US trade by truck, and since that trade is forecast to increase, expanding our infrastructure is an obvious choice.

Whether it is implementing direct job-related measures, cultivating a high-growth economic climate, cutting taxes while balancing the budget, or launching new trade initiatives, our government is taking solid steps for the good of the country. All Canadians can benefit from the sound governance budget 2014 demonstrates and from the prosperity to which it contributes. That is why I am looking forward to seeing the budget implemented.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the member who just spoke achieved something quite remarkable. We have before us a 350-page bill that will change, create and amend over 50 pieces of legislation. The member managed to speak for 10 minutes without even addressing one single aspect of the bill we are discussing in the House.

I know that the member's riding is close to the United States. One item in particular is important in this bill, and that is FATCA. Many people in his riding who are Canadian citizens and do not consider themselves American could be targeted by the U.S. revenue service, according to which they might owe thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars because the U.S. government sees them as American citizens. Those people's files could be transferred to the revenue service without their knowing it and could ultimately be subject to claims. Should that happen, those people will go to the member in question.

I would like to know what the member will tell the people targeted by the U.S. intelligence and revenue services about the fact that they might owe thousands of dollars that they do not think they owe to the U.S. government.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to point out is that as we look at this budget, we are looking at a balanced way of approaching things.

Government Orders

What I mentioned in my speech was the fact that it is not just one thing that is going to make a difference in this country. Just cutting corporate taxes or any other of a number of issues is not going to be what makes the difference. It is a combination of things that we do, including reducing spending, which I talked about in terms of government spending. I talked as well about reducing taxes, about immigration, about trade deals. There is a whole host of issues that we need to continue to work on in order to make our economy strong and to prosper.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the other side today that the government is focused on growth and that on every measure it is outperforming other countries.

However, I would like the Conservatives to reconsider their statements. This week's issue of *The Economist* shows that Canada's economy is predicted to grow by just 2.3% in 2014. This is well behind the U.S., which is slated to grow at 2.8%, and Britain, at 2.9%, and Australia, at 2.6%.

I wonder if the member will revise these statements and admit that Canada's growth is beginning to lag behind our partners.

• (1155)

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have noticed in my role as chair of the foreign affairs committee is the number of individuals from other countries who approach me, whether they are ambassadors or the like, to talk about some of the amazing things that have been going on here in Canada.

If we look at what has happened since the economic downturn in 2008, we understand that many countries did not fare nearly as well and as a matter of fact were absolutely crippled by what happened during that downturn.

One of the things that is constantly raised to me by these ambassadors and other individuals is that there is more and more desire on the part of parliamentarians from other parts of the world to come to Canada to talk about the successes we have.

We continue to move forward. I know that if we look at the debt to GDP ratio, we see that ours remains the lowest in the G7 by quite a bit. I know we will continue to move forward as we implement our action plan over the coming years.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his great speech.

I would like to thank our previous finance minister, the Hon. Jim Flaherty, for the excellent position he has put our country in, and for this budget. I wish my new colleague all the best as well.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. He talked about the debt to GDP ratio. I would like him to establish how that affects debt servicing payments and how returning to a balanced budget will affect debt-servicing payments and leave more of our taxpayers' money to provide services. Could the member expand on how positive that would be as well?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I will briefly remind members that the former finance minister is still a member of the House. We usually try to avoid using members' names.

Mr. Dean Allison: Mr. Speaker, obviously, reducing the amount of the debt that we have to service frees up more dollars for other programs.

One of the things I did not get a chance to mention is that I am particularly proud of this government and finance minister for introducing the adoption expense tax credit. It is something that I believe is very important. It further recognizes the unique costs that families incur as they adopt children, and the kinds of one-time expenses they have. Of course, there will also be ongoing expenses, but this is particularly important.

As the member mentioned, as we continue to reduce the debt, it continues to free up dollars and we can look at additional programs and tax incentives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-31. This is the fourth budget implementation bill that I have had the opportunity to discuss and debate in my tenure as deputy critic for finance and international trade for the official opposition.

A fairly obvious trend has emerged with these budget bills that I have debated. There is a pattern or a modus operandi, if you will.

I am going to do something that the government rarely does when debating the budget bill: I am going to discuss the budget bill. The last two speakers did not talk about it. In fact, they used the precious time of this House to talk about the budget and initiatives and also to pat themselves on the back, while ignoring the most negative aspects and this government's often poor record on the economy.

I was saying that there is a trend that has emerged with these budget implementation bills. I have noticed that the government routinely adheres to eight criteria when it introduces such bills.

The first concerns size. Budget bills are always mammoth affairs. As my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley mentioned, the English version of the bill is 350 pages long, and the French version is even longer, at 380 pages.

Not only is the size—380 pages—absolutely incredible, but what the bill covers is absolutely incredible because it talks about a lot of things.

Size is one of the criteria. There are 380 pages in the French version. In the past, some bills have been 700 to 800 pages in length. One budget bill even reached 920 pages, if I am not mistaken. That seems to be one of the government's criteria in its attempt to confuse and expedite a complex process. It wants to get through it as quickly as possible and with as much confusion as possible. However, the government should tread carefully in this process.

The government's second criterion is that a budget implementation bill should create, eliminate or amend at least 10 laws. In this case, more than 50 laws are amended or created with a single bill.

At the end of the process, the House will vote on a series of measures. We can give only a single yes or no, not including the votes that took place at the reading stages or during committee work, which I will touch on later.

Government Orders

The third criterion that the government seems to adhere to in drafting its budget bills is that the bill must include several elements that have nothing to do with the budget or fiscal matters. For example, this bill will amend the Judges Act and add four judges to the Quebec Superior Court and an extra one in Alberta. All of that is in a budget bill. Why does the government not want to introduce a bill to amend that act on its own, so that it can be studied independently? That is not the case here.

Using budget bills as a catch-all seems to be one of this government's tactics and a criterion for drafting such bills. People have spoken out against it. Many opposition speeches in the House quoted comments the Prime Minister made when he was in opposition and he strongly criticized the approach that he is now using on a regular basis.

The fourth criterion is that not only must the bill include several elements that have nothing to do with fiscal matters or the budget tabled, it must also create, not amend, laws that have nothing to do with the budget or fiscal issues. For example, the last three divisions of part 6 of the bill create three different laws, including one about the Champlain Bridge and one about the management of administrative tribunals. Those are extremely important elements that should, if we are talking about creating a law, be studied separately from a budget implementation bill.

•(1200)

The government seems to be favouring a fifth criterion. We have seen this a number of times in previous bills, and we are seeing it again here. The government thinks that a budget bill should put and concentrate new powers in the hands of various ministers. Last year, we saw bills that gave unprecedented powers to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to the Minister of Finance, and to various ministers, in fact.

This time is no exception. Indeed, in the Hazardous Products Act amended by this bill, derivatives in securities will be amended by giving much more discretion to the ministers in question. Obviously, we can only engage in minimal discussion on the matter, because the bill is 350 pages long, and the government will push it through as quickly as possible. If the government stays on trend, which it usually does, it will start with a time allocation motion that is likely to come some time today or maybe tomorrow.

The government is using a sixth criterion. Actually, criteria 6, 7 and 8 are a lot alike. According to this sixth criterion, at least one legislative amendment should be in a bill like this one to restrict the rights of workers. This was systematic in previous bills and it is this time, too, since changes are being made to the Hazardous Products Act. The bill will amend features relating to occupational health and safety, as in previous bills that also restricted the rights of workers. These bills not only restrict the rights of workers, but they restrict the rights of immigrants as well.

Two specific clauses in this bill will affect them significantly by taking away rights and things that immigrants in Canada have access to. Those clauses will therefore limit access to social programs—or the restrictions may even be related to eligibility issues.

Finally, there is an eighth and final criterion. It seems that this budget bill, like previous budget bills, absolutely must contain at

least one measure related to the government's so-called law and order agenda. Why is such a measure being included in a budget bill? The reason is that the government thinks it can get away with including this measure without providing any real reasons for doing so.

The government does not take the role of the House seriously. I do not think that it takes the essential democratic nature of the House seriously. It has never done so and continues to disregard it. As I mentioned, the Conservatives plan to move a time allocation motion. They have done so systematically with every other budget bill and with all of the legislation they introduce. The Conservatives seem to think that debate in the House is a trivial matter. Right now, they have a majority and they can do what they want. They can vote how they want and use their majority to pass the various bills that they, as a government, have deemed to be a priority. What is left for us as the opposition in the House? What remains of the role of the House if the government ignores the specific nature of the House of Commons when debating bills?

The specific role that MPs play, regardless of whether there is a minority or majority government, is to debate the essence of the government's bills and proposals. That is the real value of the House. We do not debate for the fun of it or to fill the pages of *Hansard* but to determine what the strengths and weaknesses of the government's proposals are. We do not debate bills just so that we, as MPs, can get informed but so that the government can learn about any inherent weaknesses in its bills. It is only natural that there will be problems, since we are all human. The people who propose and draft bills are human. Some factors may have been overlooked or may not have been considered.

It is our role as the official opposition and as MPs on the other side of the House to point these things out to the government, whether it be through debates in the House or through the discussions that take place at meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance, which is where budget implementation bills go to be examined.

•(1205)

The government is bypassing the entire process. At second reading, instead of allowing many members to participate in the debate, the government is limiting the number of speeches to 15 to 20 members, depending on the government's time allocation motion, or the gag order, as it is known in Quebec. The government is doing itself a disservice. With this approach, the government is hurting itself and the good governance of the country.

I still do not understand why it systematically acts in this way. Since it was elected in 2011, the government has imposed some 60 gag orders during the study of various bills. Why? What is the danger? We can debate those bills and find shortcomings, whether at second reading, at report stage or at third reading. This is an opportunity to rectify the situation and to prevent the government from doing itself a disservice.

Government Orders

The latest problems facing the government in its implementation of the provisions of the budget implementation bill are indicative of the weak position in which the government puts itself.

This budget implementation bill contains a major correction to a measure that we had denounced at the time and brought to the government's attention. Why did budget 2013 have to impose the GST on the parking revenue of hospitals? Hospitals were excluded from that measure. In 2013, when the government brought it in, we said that it was a mistake.

The government should not try to tax hospitals, since they play a specific role and parking is a source of revenue for them, but certainly not a source of profit. However, the government turned a deaf ear and decided to impose the GST on the parking revenue of hospitals. Then the Conservatives realized that we were right and they were wrong. Budget 2014 and this bill are reversing that measure. They once again exempt hospitals from GST on their parking revenue.

Not only are the Conservatives backtracking after ignoring the opposition's recommendations, but they are also trying to hide their mistake, claiming that this is a new tax cut. However, this is a tax that they themselves imposed.

Let us be honest and recognize that no party in the House has a monopoly on truth; no party can claim never to have made a mistake. Let us recognize that we should work together to improve bills. We can disagree on the government's agenda for the economy. We have made no secret of that; we talk about it and debate it all the time. However, when it comes to implementing specific measures that affect all Canadians, we should take our role much more seriously.

I would like to give another example of something that happened in budget 2013 and subsequent implementation bills to show that the government does not learn from its mistakes. My colleague mentioned this, and it is worth bringing up again. I am talking about the rules for appointing Quebec judges to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court ruled on the appointment of Marc Nadon. The government tried to change the rules retroactively in a section of its last budget implementation bill, which we talked about. Over and over in the House and the Standing Committee on Finance, we told them that, first of all, it had nothing to do with the budget and should be studied separately, and second, that they could not change the rules retroactively, that they got themselves in trouble and that they should fix the problem without resorting to the budget or trying to pass retroactive legislation that would have no impact. We were right, and the Supreme Court agreed. We predicted the Supreme Court's reaction.

Are those the only elements? No. Other mistakes have happened because the government forces us to study such huge, complicated bills so quickly. Last year, the government passed a measure to eliminate an exemption for credit unions and caisses populaires.

• (1210)

This involved a lower tax rate for not-for-profit credit unions, which were benefiting from a special tax exemption. Although they were being taxed at 11%, the government wanted to tax them at the overall corporate tax rate, 15%. However, the bill and the wording of the amendment were so botched that in the end, the government did

not take certain details into account that would have brought the tax rate for these credit unions and caisses populaires not to 15%, but to 28%. They would have paid 13% more than chartered banks whose primary objective is to make a profit and pay dividends to their investors and shareholders.

That was the result of a process that completely ignores the role of the House and our role as parliamentarians, MPs and representatives of our constituents. We must act in their best interest, always taking into account the common good and all the consequences our actions can have for laws and regulations.

I will take the few minutes I have left to talk about a final point that, I think, demonstrates this government's blatant disregard for the process. We often hear about a democratic process. The government should adopt a process of good governance specifically with respect to budget bills. I would like to talk about how these issues are dealt with in committee.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Finance. When we have to conduct certain important studies, we take our time in order to do them properly. That committee is currently examining the highly problematic issue of youth employment. We will be dedicating 10 committee meetings to it. Last year, we dedicated 12 committee meetings to the issue of tax credits for charitable organizations, to determine whether we could improve the process and enhance Canadians' contributions to charitable organizations.

When a bill of 350, 400 or 500 pages that amends 40, 50 or 60 laws comes to the Standing Committee on Finance, we may have four or five meetings at most, including meetings with the people responsible and with government representatives. Four or five meetings to discuss complex issues, such as FATCA, which could violate the privacy of thousands—if not tens of thousands—of Canadians who could be considered by the U.S. government as American citizens who owe taxes. These people could have their personal file handed over to the U.S. government without their knowledge, and they could end up owing a considerable amount of money, even though they no longer consider themselves to be American, even though they were in the past.

This issue alone should take at least four, five or six meetings. We spent six to eight meetings discussing tax havens, and FATCA, which I just mentioned, was a key part of the debate we had at the Standing Committee on Finance. However, this will be just one of many dozens and dozens of issues we will have to discuss in that committee.

Government Orders

The very first time the government introduced an omnibus bill, we called on the government to separate the bill into parts so that the parts could be discussed in the relevant committees. The government separated the bill, but it sent the parts to the committees—such as the immigration, public safety or justice committees—for one meeting. These committees do not even have the right to propose amendments that could then go back to the Standing Committee on Finance.

This made the whole process a farce, and the budget implementation bill, regardless of what this government says, is also a farce. I urge the government to take these issues seriously, not only for the House, but also for all Canadians, whom we represent. They have the right to a competent and transparent government. The government has always claimed to be that kind of government, so it should demonstrate that right now by separating this budget into different parts to ensure that it can be carefully studied by the committees responsible for these issues.

•(1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his speech. I always find him to be a very reasonable person, so I was quite happy to hear his views as the deputy critic for finance for the official opposition.

My question is very specific. He mentioned some of his concerns regarding the regulation, particularly to this budget implementation act, of derivatives. Derivatives are very complex formulas or algorithms that are used to calculate, particularly in the banking industry. Canada's banks are some of the world's most secure and obviously we want to keep them secure.

He said that he had specific criticism of it. What specific criticism would he have of the proposals in this budget implementation act and, if he has time, what would he give as an alternative proposition?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his question, which was actually very pertinent. The issue of derivatives is a very complex one. We have seen, among other things, the role played by derivatives, especially non-bank asset-backed commercial paper, in the 2008-09 financial crisis, not just in North America but around the world. Derivatives should therefore be studied carefully.

I am not criticizing the regulations which, although not perfect, were more stringent in Canada than in many other countries. Such organizations as the Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec were affected rather negatively, along with many others, by the abuse of toxic derivatives they purchased.

My objection or my concern about this budget implementation bill as it pertains to derivatives is that it gives the Minister of Finance the power to make regulations for derivatives. With something like this, we must be able to see the consequences of this concentration of power, which permanently takes away the power of Parliament to act.

This is an important issue and it should require a specific study. Unfortunately, it will be studied along with all the measures in this budget bill.

•(1220)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about what is not in this bill. This bill does little to help young people find work. At this stage in a young Canadian's life, failing to find work will have a negative impact on the rest of his life.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is a good question because the Standing Committee on Finance has looked at the issue of youth employment and is still studying it today. Since at least the beginning of the financial crisis and therefore the economic crisis of 2008, the youth unemployment rate has consistently been roughly twice that of the general population. It is around 14% to 15%.

I think it is good that the committee is meeting to discuss this. What is more, the NDP moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Finance to study the issue of youth employment and to come up with solutions; however, those solutions are missing from this budget implementation bill.

There are solutions out there. I know that the NDP is looking at a number of possibilities for creating incentives for hiring young people, including tax incentives. It has worked for countries like Germany. We have to be able to take the best practices and try to incorporate them as much as possible to deal with the issue directly, but the budget implementation bill does not do that.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too rise in the House to express my opposition to this omnibus process that is clearly calling into question the ability of parliamentarians to properly represent their constituents through informed debate on very specific issues. Instead, everything is thrown into an omnibus bill.

I would like to ask my esteemed colleague the following. The government could have done a lot of things in this bill. I believe with all my heart that the future of this country, and probably the future of all the industrialized countries of the world, depends on the creation of new, clean technologies in order to meet our energy needs. The eco-energy program could have been brought back, for example.

Could my esteemed colleague enlighten us by explaining what other similar measures could have been put in this bill in order to help future generations?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Pontiac is quite right.

Government Orders

Regardless of what government members may propose in the speeches we are about to hear, judging by the two speeches we have heard this morning, there will be no mention of the opportunities that the government has missed, such as moving to the energy transition that we will have to make eventually or genuinely stimulating the economy in a productive fashion. The eco-energy program is an excellent initiative.

The government always forgets about tax multipliers. Investments are not all equal. Investments in infrastructure and in low-income Canadians, through employment insurance, have a much greater impact on the economy than cuts to income and sales taxes for companies and individuals.

The government should consider its own recommendations, recommendations made by its own finance department, in order to come up with measures that will really help the Canadian economy and not the measures we find here.

● (1225)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague and those who elected him to Parliament. He does an exceptional job.

I would like him to comment for us on the tax credit that has not been renewed in the Bill C-31. This is the tax credit the NDP proposed in 2011 that stimulates job creation by helping small business with hiring. As the Conservatives should know, when small businesses in Canada do well, Canada does well.

Can my colleague tell us the consequences for small business if this tax credit is not renewed?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that is an issue that I could have addressed, but we are only given so much time for our speeches.

People call this measure a tax credit but it is actually an EI premium credit that was granted to SMEs for each person they hired. SMEs are the biggest driver of job creation in this country. For two years, the government gave SMEs a holiday from paying employment insurance premiums for creating new jobs.

This measure was renewed each year until now. We were very much in favour of this measure. We supported the government and we even included this measure in our 2011 platform. This credit did great things. We even wanted to take this one step further by proposing a second credit, not only for job creation, but also for job retention.

The government must consider such initiatives and support them. However, instead, it quietly decided to discontinue this tax credit. Nevertheless, many organizations found it useful, including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as did the members on this side of the House. We have always supported SMEs in their efforts to grow and level the playing field so that they can prosper. We are very disappointed. The government is on the wrong track, and the answers that are being given by the Minister of Finance are not at all reassuring for Canadians or the economic community.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to discuss the bill on economic action plan 2014. I will be sharing my time with the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

It is a great honour for me to speak in favour of the economic action plan and its implementation.

As a chartered accountant, I am very impressed by the contents of the plan and the opportunities it creates for Canada's economy. As a mother, I appreciate that it makes Canadian families a priority, and as the member for Winnipeg South Centre, I am proud of the means it makes available to communities to improve infrastructure and services.

As everyone knows, our Conservative government is working to create jobs, ensure economic growth and secure long-term prosperity for all Canadians—not just our generation, but all future generations.

Our economic action plan 2014 includes numerous measures to promote our country's economic growth. I would like to talk about some of those measures.

[*English*]

For example, we are going to be connecting Canadians with available jobs, training people for jobs that actually exist, and providing new graduates with real opportunities. We are going to have more paid internships for young Canadians, investing \$55 million to create paid internships for recent graduates in both small and medium-sized business and high-demand fields. We are going to be supporting job creation and innovation.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

We will support job creation, innovation and trade.

Over the next decade, we will invest \$1.5 billion in post-secondary research through the Canada first research excellence fund.

We will promote Canadian-made products, develop a “Made in Canada” campaign to promote high-quality Canadian products here and around the world, and work with our partners to reduce internal barriers to trade.

We want to ensure responsible resource development, conserve Canada's natural heritage and invest in infrastructure and transportation, specifically through the conservation of recreational fisheries and further investment in infrastructure.

We want to expand tax relief for health-related items and services, cap wholesale wireless rates to make telecommunications services more affordable, crack down on cross-border price discrimination, and much more.

We will establish a \$200-million national disaster mitigation program to help communities prepare for natural disasters.

The economic action plan looks to return to a balanced budget in 2015. As a chartered accountant and the member for Winnipeg South Centre, I am proud to be a member of the government that has made this commitment to taxpayers. Unlike previous governments, we will not do it at just any price. That is a very important point. We respect taxpayers.

Government Orders

For example, major transfers to the provinces for health care, education and other services that Canadians depend on will also continue to increase to record levels. While we are controlling departmental spending, federal support to Canadians, such as seniors' benefits, will continue to grow.

Our Conservative government is squarely focused on what matters to Canadians: job creation, economic growth and Canada's long-term prosperity. With the help of Canada's economic action plan, the Canadian economy has seen the best economic performance among all G7 countries in recent years, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery. In addition, Canada is the only G7 country that has received the highest possible rating—AAA—from all major credit rating agencies.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is, by far, the lowest in the G7. For the sixth straight year, the World Economic Forum has deemed Canada's banking system to be the most stable in the world.

[English]

For example, the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, have both projected that Canada will have among the strongest economic growth among all G7 countries in the years to come. That is a remarkable accomplishment.

•(1235)

[Translation]

Since the end of the recession in July 2009, over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada. Over 85% of them are full-time jobs, and close to 80% are in the private sector.

Unlike the high-tax NDP and Liberals, our Conservative government believes in low taxes and leaving money where it belongs: in the pockets of hard-working Canadian families and job-creating businesses. We are cutting every kind of tax: personal, consumption, business, excise and more. I have many examples of how we are doing that, but I do not think I have time to share them.

[English]

It is important that the people of Canada recognize that we are here for all Canadians. We are doing things for young Canadians and older Canadians. For example, the youth employment strategy, the YES program, would help young Canadians get the skills and work experience they need to transition to the workplace. It is an important investment of \$330 million per year. To streamline and modernize the Canada student loans program, we are investing \$123 million. This is among other previously established initiatives to support our young people.

It is also important to recognize what we have done to help senior citizens. They are the beneficiaries of our historic and landmark creation, the tax-free savings account, TFSA. It has been beneficial to senior citizens, as neither income earned in a TFSA nor withdrawals from a TFSA affect their federal income-tested benefits and credits, such as the guaranteed income supplement.

I am proud of this legislation. I am proud of our economic action plan 2014.

I look forward to taking any questions from my colleagues on this important budget.

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre for her speech. We are both members of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

I want to talk about something that directly affects my constituents in Beauport—Limoilou. I asked a question about this issue on Tuesday. A committee called Vigilance train Limoilou was created and launched a Facebook page yesterday. Tomorrow it will hold a press conference. One of the clauses in this monstrous bill will allow cabinet's decisions on changes to safety standards for the transportation of dangerous goods be kept secret.

My colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques was right to conclude his speech by talking about the government's lack of transparency. I would like to ask my colleague how she can condone enshrining this secret cult in law?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague on the other side of the House needs to understand that our government is focused on job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity. These are the goals of economic action plan 2014.

[English]

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the high, in fact record level of personal debt. It is now \$1.66 for every \$1 of annual income. This is the debt that individuals in Canada owe.

For all the talk of the Conservatives about how many jobs have been created since the very depths of the recession, which they always use as the starting point, the individual debt has increased. At the same time, the government's debt has increased under the Conservative government, and across the country, in the personal accounts of Canadians.

Why did the budget not try to tackle the personal debt issue that has been increasing over the last several years?

•(1240)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, this question is terrifyingly misguided. The Conservative government is placing money in the pockets of Canadians because it believes in Canadians and their competency and capacity to make the right decisions for themselves and their families. That is unlike the previous government, which balanced the budget on the backs of our children and seniors. Our children's education transfer payments were cut and our seniors' health transfers were cut.

We are balancing the budget responsibly, as every family has to.

It is absolutely crucial that the hon. member understands the difference of approach. We have put \$3,400 in the pockets of each family. We do not want to have concerns like this.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for her wonderful speech. I find her to be a great colleague to work with.

Government Orders

My question is very short, due to time. In this budget implementation act, there is a provision that would allow the automatic entry of people who would receive an HST or GST cheque into the program, so that people with low incomes, or seniors and pensioners, no longer have to apply. We are cutting red tape here. We are making sure that the people who deserve the support get it.

I know that the member has a lot of seniors in her riding. I would like to hear her comments.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. The members of my constituency are absolutely delighted. They are also delighted that the Conservative Government of Canada has taken 380,000 seniors off the tax rolls.

The concern in my province in particular is that our province has not matched that generosity, but it certainly is a help for seniors. I concur with the red tape reduction. The example I used in my remarks to the House is that TFSA earnings do not in any way impinge on GIS payments.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-31, the economic action plan 2014 act, no. 1. It is not often that I rise during debates on legislation, but I want to share a few thoughts on this particular bill. That is because I believe this bill and our recent budget, which it would implement, are of particular importance to my constituents in York—Simcoe.

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, our government has stayed true to our commitment to strengthen the economy for all Canadians and has remained determined to see our plan through.

Last Friday, I was proud to introduce this bill on behalf of the Minister of Finance. It constitutes our latest initiative, focusing on our key priorities: creating jobs and economic growth, supporting and protecting families, and returning to balanced budgets in 2015. This bill would implement initiatives to connect my constituents with available jobs, invest in infrastructure, and expand our focus on trade and responsible resource development.

My constituents are pleased to see action connecting them with available jobs and fostering job creation. York—Simcoe is a hard-working riding. People are proud to work with their hands to do real things to see a positive result at the end of a day of hard work. This is a budget for them and for their children.

Apprenticeship training plays an important role in Canada's education system, and is a key provider of the vital skills and knowledge necessary to power and grow the Canadian economy. Recognizing this, economic action plan 2014 no. 1 would provide apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades with access to interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 for a period of technical training. I want to ensure that my young constituents are given real opportunities to find jobs and build careers. Many are doing so, getting jobs in Ontario or courageously striking out and moving west for opportunity. In either case, I want them to be given that chance.

In York—Simcoe, we are experienced with the use of temporary foreign workers. The country's most valuable market gardening in our fertile Holland Marsh muck soils depends heavily on temporary foreign workers from abroad who fill tasks that are impossible to get filled locally, but that has always been done carefully. Unfortunately,

in recent years we have seen failures in the temporary foreign workers program elsewhere in Canada, where officials have approved foreign workers despite the ready availability of Canadians qualified and willing to do the work. Some of my constituents have been affected by this situation.

It is not acceptable. Our government remains committed to a temporary foreign worker program that operates in the national interest, so included in this bill are measures to ensure that Canadians would be given the first opportunity at available jobs by strengthening the labour market opinion process.

The bill also would continue our commitment to support families like those in York—Simcoe. In last year's Speech from the Throne, we committed to lower prices and greater competition in the telecommunications market. In this bill, we would make significant progress by capping wholesale domestic wireless roaming rates. Further support for families is included through a proposed increase, to \$15,000, of the maximum amount of the adoption expense tax credit to help make adoption more affordable for families.

We would also make changes to ensure the tax system reflects the evolving nature of the health care system and the health care needs of Canadians. This includes exempting naturopathic doctors and acupuncturist services from the goods and services tax, or the harmonized sales tax, as it is in Ontario now. In York—Simcoe, my constituents increasingly rely on alternative health care providers, and this measure would help them in real and tangible ways.

•(1245)

[*Translation*]

The measures set out in economic action plan 2014 have one very important element in common with all of our previous budgets: they will produce results for Canadians and their economy.

In 2009, after the worst global economic downturn since the Great Depression, our government introduced its first economic action plan. Since then, the economic policies that we have put in place through our economic action plans have been extraordinarily successful. The reality is that Canada is an economic leader among the major developed countries of the G7. While economic uncertainty is still a reality for many developed economies, our economic action plans have enabled Canada to recoup all of the jobs lost during the recession, and more.

Since our first economic action plan, our government has created more than a million net new jobs. That is the strongest job growth performance of all the G7 countries during the recovery. Nearly all of the jobs created since 2009 have been full-time positions, 85% are in the private sector and over two-thirds are in high-paying industries.

Government Orders

[English]

As well, Canada's real gross domestic product is significantly above pre-recession levels, the best performance in the G7 again.

Despite all of these accomplishments and despite what is obviously a plan that works for Canadians and their economy, the opposition continues to oppose our important economic initiatives at every opportunity.

Most important to York—Simcoe is the fact that this budget bill has us on track to eliminate the deficit and balance the budget in 2015. That matters to them because they understand that government debt is their debt, and they understand that when the opposition opposes our measures, it is because the opposition wants bigger government, higher spending, higher taxes, more deficits, and deeper debt. This is not what York—Simcoe residents want from Ottawa.

From my time as the Minister of International Trade, I can tell the House that our government's ability to propose concrete measures to complement our already sound framework and to steer them through Parliament in a timely manner makes Canada stand out among developed economies.

In contrast, in many other countries saw political paralysis rein and governments collapse. All the while those other domestic economies cried out for help. People abroad would say to me that they had confidence in Canada's government. Contrasting us with the U.S. and much of Europe, they would say that at least we can get things done in Canada.

Getting things done has been an important hallmark of this government. We have actively worked to facilitate a hard-working, orderly, and productive House of Commons. In York—Simcoe, constituents usually ask me why it takes so long to get things done in Parliament. They tell me that they elected us to make decisions.

• (1250)

BILL C-31—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) Mr. Speaker, with my hard-working, results-oriented constituents in mind, to facilitate the certainty of being able to come to a decision on this bill, I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, not more than three further sitting days after the day on which this Order is adopted shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

that, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the third day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion is in order. Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who may wish to ask questions to rise in their places now so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

Thank you. We will proceed in a fashion similar to a normal question and comment period. Members will have about a minute or

a minute and 15 seconds to put a question and also for the government to respond.

Questions, the hon. minister for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. We are not ministers yet, but it is certainly coming, especially after this quite despicable act. It is coming. On October 19, 2015, you will be calling many of the folks on the NDP side as ministers, so we appreciate your getting the practice in right now.

We had the government House leader, soon to be opposition House leader, rise in this House and speak to the budget. This is a rare thing. He has not done this very often.

The problem with time allocation is that he is now shutting out most members of Parliament from being able to speak to this budget bill. Most members of the opposition, but also dozens of Conservatives, have not spoken to a single government bill since the beginning of the session. They are being told by the government House leader that their constituents do not have the right to be represented in the House of Commons. If their constituents do not have the right to have them stand up on their behalf and speak to this bill, most members of the opposition and most members of government are being disenfranchised. That is appalling. It is over 60 times now that the government has shut down debate. Hundreds of members of Parliament will be disenfranchised by this action.

The simple question is this: given how low the credibility of the current government is with the Canadian public, how does it have the nerve to cut hundreds of members of Parliament out of the budgetary process?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, Canadians gave our government a very strong mandate to govern and to focus on the economy. At the point of the last election, all Canadians knew that with the economy in the midst of a global downturn, there was only one party they had faith in to take control of Canada's economy and help build and create jobs.

Canadians expect their government and the opposition to move this type of legislation forward. They expect the government to take decisions and to take action on the commitments that we have already brought forward in the budget. That is what our government has done in the House of Commons over the years that we have served as the Government of Canada.

Our government has faced continued attempts by the opposition, as we saw again this morning, to delay and obstruct these important bills with amendments that are really just calling for the shutdown of the entire budget package. We have seen the opposition filibuster.

We certainly look forward to continued debate here in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

• (1255)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with absolute astonishment that I saw the head of the Conservative Party stand up and move time allocation on something so big and so complicated as a bill that would have such an enormous impact on this country of ours as we move forward. Does the member have any shame at all that his party can sit back and allow this to go forward without having proper debate?

I would ask the member this. How many different bills are in the bill we are talking about? There must be 50 or 60, if not more, changes of significance to major things that are going on in our country. Does he not have any shame or concern about the impact that would have on Canadians?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, many of us still remember 2005, the last time the member had the opportunity to sit in government. That Liberal government's last budget implementation bill did much the same. It amended many different bills, dozens of different pieces of legislation.

Let us be clear. It is not the size of the budget legislation that the opposition cares about. It is not about which bills are in or which are not. We have had much larger budget implementation acts or bills in the past. It is that the opposition wants to stop the necessary and vital economic reforms that are in this bill.

Even though the opposition likes to suggest otherwise, it has been common practice to include various measures in a bill and in the subsequent budget implementation bill. That has been common practice. This is nothing new or groundbreaking. The opposition would have the Canadian public believe that these are extraordinary measures that have never been implemented in the past. Budget implementation bills often deal with legislation from different departments, with monies and so forth, so it is nothing that is new or groundbreaking. It simply reflects the central role of a budget to a government's agenda.

That is what this implementation act does. It brings forward the mandate and the agenda that we have to continue to bring forward positive policy that will help create jobs and build prosperity for all Canadians in a very fragile recovery.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I understand the minister of state's argument, it is that the Conservatives are just like the former Liberal government, only on steroids. Is that his argument in defence of this action?

This omnibus budget implementation act, which follows a long series of similar bills, is over 350 pages and almost 500 clauses in length, and contains so many changes that have never been brought forward in a budget bill. I just want to highlight two that are of particular concern to so many of my constituents in Parkdale—High Park, and I am sure members are hearing this across the country.

First of all, with the changes around FATCA, a totally new bill is housed within Bill C-31 that would affect so many people who happen to hold Canadian-American citizenship, and is doing so without answering vital questions around privacy and what it would mean to people's private banking information. We need to have a thorough debate on that.

A second change is to rail safety. My riding is bounded by three railway lines, and people are very concerned about rail safety. When I read in the bill that the government would be able to change and repeal a wide variety of railway safety regulations without even telling the public, I think Canadians deserve a debate on that.

My question for the minister of state is how can he justify suppressing the democratic right to debate such fundamental changes the Conservative government would make?

• (1300)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, again, we did have the opportunity to listen to a number of speeches this morning from the government and the opposition sides. With all due respect, the opposition brought forward concerns regarding the FATCA agreement, which this member has talked about, and there are many people across Canada who are questioning exactly what FATCA is. Let me say that the agreement addresses those concerns.

The agreement addresses the concerns that Canadians had when the United States imposed certain regulations based on the treaties it has with many different countries. Consequently, this government responded very quickly and negotiated a very solid intergovernmental agreement, or IGA, with the Americans. It is an agreement that relies on the existing tax framework under the Canada-U.S. tax treaty.

CRA will not assist the Americans, it will not assist the IRS, in collecting U.S. taxes. Also, there are no new taxes being implemented through FATCA, and no new taxes that Canadians need to worry about. In our negotiations, we obtained a number of significant concessions that would not normally have been included, such as not including RRSFs in disclosure, not including RDSPs, not including tax-free savings accounts, and many others.

Again, FATCA is a policy that is here basically to safeguard Canadians.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found it odd in several respects as this debate started that the member for York—Simcoe mentioned that people in his riding told him that they just wanted things done. If I lived in his riding, I would tell him, quite frankly, that he does not get out much, because what we are looking at here is something that is getting done, but not in a way that people feel is right for the country. I think it is irresponsible for the Conservatives to say that they just want to get it done quickly by using things such as this omnibus legislation.

The minister of state talked about the practices back in 2005 when the Liberals were in power. I remember that time and was here when the Conservatives took particular issue with the fact that the Atlantic accords were within the budget legislation. The Conservatives wanted these as a separate vote, and they got their way because of the Conservative members from Newfoundland Labrador. Things have changed. One, there are no Conservative members from Newfoundland and Labrador, among other things.

So, if the Conservatives did not like it then, when will they start practising what they used to preach?

Government Orders

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, we very much look forward to the next election when we will have members from Newfoundland and Labrador sitting in the Conservative caucus again so that Newfoundland and Labrador can have a voice not only in the caucus but also in cabinet. I think that member has recognized the problem that Newfoundland and Labrador does not have those opportunities. That said, we have many very strong members of Parliament from Atlantic Canada and across the country who are standing up and talking about the issues that are affecting Newfoundland and Labrador.

We look forward and anticipate, after the next election, Conservative members of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like our Conservative, tax-cutting heroes—who have allegedly liberated taxpayers—to tell us about the 125,000 workers who use the Champlain Bridge each day.

What will those workers do when they wake up to find that they have to pay a tax to get to work and another to get back home at night?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, Canadians now have a government that has brought forward the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history. The infrastructure being implemented across this country will serve Canada well for decades and decades. Many years ago, it was not the role of the federal government to be as active in federal infrastructure spending. This is a very positive measure that we brought forward to help create jobs and grow our economy in the downturn. However, the opportunities in the future are going to be immense.

In Montreal and other places, bridges are being constructed. We need those pieces of infrastructure to move people and produce. More and more, Canadians are realizing that we need access to other markets. The hon. member talked about the toll for the Champlain Bridge. Many of the programs we are doing are called P3 programs. Part of the commitment for that bridge was that it would be a toll bridge, and we have others like it across the country. If there were to be the bridge, there would be a toll.

● (1305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I regret very much that the hon. government House leader decided to shut down debate. He made a speech and then, well I cannot remark on where he might be, questions are being taken by the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. government House leader had the gall to tell the House, on behalf of his constituents, that the government did not believe in big government. What is not “big government” about it asking the banks to root through the private information of Canadian citizens and turn that information, without their knowledge or consent, over to a foreign government? That is not just big government, that is big brother government. This measure deserves treatment in something other than an omnibus bill that has limited debate time.

I will not be able to speak a full 10 minutes because with time allocation, debate never comes around to the smaller parties. This is both an affront to democracy and a violation of the charter, as well as further abuse of our parliamentary system.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern of the member that I am answering questions. I believe it is an honour to stand in the House and promote the budget implementation act of 2014.

On this FATCA, without an agreement in place our financial institutions would still have had to comply with FATCA. That is the problem. It is not whether or not our financial institutions would have had to comply with the rule of law dealing with those American citizens who are abiding here in Canada. Every financial institution in Canada, except the very small ones, would have had to comply with the Americans, and if they did not, there would have been huge consequences to their being involved in the United States, to their activity in the United States. It would have required banks to report information to the IRS. Canadian banks would have been reporting to the IRS.

The agreement we were able to negotiate says that those financial institutions can disclose information on American citizens living in Canada and their finances to the Canada Revenue Agency, which is then responsible for moving the information forward.

If that had not happened, banks would have had to deny basic banking services to clients. That is one of the major concerns that banks had, that they would in effect have to say no to American citizens or those who may be dual citizens, saying that they could not do business in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, closure prevents us from discussing the financial insecurity of Canadian families.

We will not be able to discuss credit card interest rates, which destroy the financial capacity of Canadian households.

We will not be able to discuss “pay to pay”, the practice whereby companies charge additional fees to people who pay by Canada Post. Despite this government's throne speech, nothing is being done about this.

Lastly, as for pensions, it is the same story about the grasshopper and the ant. I would like someone to explain to me how not saving now will give us an income in the winter of our lives.

● (1310)

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I had a hard time following the member's question initially because he was speaking about the dire circumstances of Canadians as a result of interest rates being too low. Does that mean that the New Democratic Party is proposing that interest rates dramatically increase? Does it believe that a big increase in interest rates would help to drive the economy? Does it believe that high interest rates are going to encourage small and medium-size businesses to hire more employees? Does it believe that high interest rates would build our economy?

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Giguère: Mr. Speaker, he is stating the very opposite of what I said. The answer must reflect the question. I was speaking about high credit card interest rates—

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

The hon. minister of state.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, the other concern he had was in regard to retirement. I wish I had more time. We have three very strong pillars to retirement in Canada: the OAS, GIS, and CPP. We also have the pillar of all the other incentives for Canadians that our government has brought forward, incentives like the pooled registered pension plan and the tax-free savings account. All of these were brought in because we are focused on the retirement security of Canadian seniors. When I travelled the country during the prebudget consultations and after the budget rollout, Canadians thanked us for the measures the government had brought forward. We are looking out for the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, any economist would tell us that if we want to see manufacturers export more, we need to have a strong system of both intellectual property and international trade agreements. Our government has had a very strong record of taking action to strengthen Canada's intellectual property system. Trade-marks help protect a company's brand and reputation, and ensures that consumers have confidence that the products they buy are legitimate.

The existing framework for protecting intellectual property is not currently aligned with international practices, creating unnecessary costs for businesses. International treaties, like the Madrid protocol, the Singapore treaty, and the Nice classification, recognize trade-marks and make it easier for companies to do business. I know that under these treaties Canadian companies could benefit from promoting their brand, both at home and abroad.

Could the Minister of State for Finance please tell the House what the government is doing to assist Canadian businesses with regard to trademarks and branding?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, our government is known for reducing red tape. We brought forward commissions that would help reduce red tape. We are focused on what we can do to help small, medium, and all businesses succeed. That means reduced red tape. That is part of our effort to protect the interests of the Canadian workforce. That is what we are here to do.

I am pleased to tell the member that the legislation we are here to debate today, economic action plan 2014 act no. 1, would implement all three of those international trademark treaties. This would reduce red tape for Canadian businesses and support our trade agenda. These measures would aid in streamlining the granting and protection of intellectual property rights in Canada and around the

world. Harmonizing Canada's intellectual property regime would help Canadian businesses access new markets, lower costs, and draw foreign investment to Canada, while reducing the regulatory burden and red tape.

Our trade minister, our agriculture minister, and many other ministers and members of Parliament have travelled the world trying to gain access to new markets. One of the stumbling blocks has been that we have not been signatories to some of the treaties, like the Madrid one and others. This would help implement that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to questions and comments, I want to remind all hon. members that you ought to stand when questions and comments are called, not just stand for an extended period hoping to be recognized many minutes before there is an opportunity.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, considering that this is the 61st gag order that the government has imposed since winning the 2011 election, it is clear that the government does not care about democracy. It wants to once again limit the debate on a fundamental issue, especially considering that the number of proposed amendments in this omnibus bill means that we will not have the time to properly debate them, which would have allowed us to really get to the heart of the matter. There are so many issues in this bill, issues that need a much more thorough debate. Consider, for example, the creation of a national securities commission, the Champlain Bridge and apprenticeship grants. There are many other potentially volatile areas that could really affect the economy. We are also wondering why the bill includes funding for the automotive industry in Ontario. There is also funding for fishers in Newfoundland, but there is no compensation for Quebec's cheese and dairy producers following the free trade agreement with the European Union. For the Quebec economy, there are many things that are not found in this bill, and we will not have time to debate it because, once again, the government is limiting the time, which is a complete affront to democracy.

• (1315)

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I am not certain exactly what the question was. I can tell the hon. member that the Canada-European Union trade agreement is an agreement that would give us access to 500 million people. It is going to be a huge benefit to Canada's economy. Certainly when we meet with manufacturers, with the agricultural industry, and with many others, they understand the importance of that free trade agreement, and all the free trade agreements we have, to our country.

Canada leads the G7 with more than one million jobs created since the depth of the global economic recession, but we are not immune from the challenges from beyond our borders. We cannot afford to become complacent. For that reason, we stepped forward with free trade agreements, as the hon. member mentioned here today. We have brought forward agreements that will help employment in Canada and the economy in Canada. They will help all Canadians.

I would encourage the member to meet with Canadians in different sectors and find out about the importance. He mentioned dairy producers. It is going to be good for all of agriculture. It was specifically mentioned that there are certain measures in place to protect.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the original purpose of this debate, which concerns why debate on this legislation should be limited. We are debating time allocation.

In this omnibus bill, there are corrections to mistakes in previous omnibus bills. It seems as if every omnibus bill has to correct every previous omnibus bill. All of these bills have had debate limited and have been pushed through faster than they really should have been. They have contained a lot of different material unrelated to the budget.

My question for the parliamentary secretary is this: if this is a pattern that each of these bills has to correct the previous one, why do we not just do it right for once? Why do we not just take our time and get it right?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, Canadians got it right in 2006. Canadians got it right in 2008. Canadians got it right in 2011 when they asked this government to be the government to shepherd or take the economy through a very difficult economic time. Canadians got it right.

Even as I travelled across this country, from one coast to the other, in the pre-budget consultation, we heard from industry, from moms and dads, from academics, and from manufacturers. We heard different groups come forward to say what they would like in the budget. They understood. They understood that this government was the government that can help build jobs, help create jobs, and help save jobs and that wanted to see the economy move ahead quickly.

Everything in the bill supports our low-tax plan for Canadians. It supports our low-tax plan for jobs and growth. What the opposition is not talking about today is that Canada's economy grew much more in January than members opposite ever expected it would or that the economists expected it would. That is what members want to stifle.

• (1320)

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that since the depths of the recession, Canada has had the best job creation in the G7 under this government's leadership. Over one million net new jobs have been created since July 2009, overwhelmingly full-time, well-paying jobs in the private sector. Private sector employers across Canada say that the biggest challenge they are facing is a lack of skilled workers. This is particularly problematic in certain sectors and regions, where thousands of jobs are going unfilled, because not enough skilled workers are available to fill them.

Government Orders

Given this government's success in previous years in job creation and in connecting Canadians with available jobs, would the Minister of State (Finance) please tell this House about the measures in the bill that would contribute to this aspect of the economy?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank that member of Parliament for the very important and strong work he is doing, first, on the Ukraine file, as he was undoubtedly the most supportive in bringing that issue forward.

I also want to thank him for hosting me as we went across the country on a pre-budget consultation. He brought a group of businessmen and chambers together, and they, again, shared what they hoped would be in the budget.

In response to his question, I would like to highlight a couple of important initiatives found in this budget.

First, it would invest \$11 million over two years and \$3.5 million per year ongoing to strengthen the labour market opinion process. All of us understand the need there as we meet with constituents. This would help ensure that Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs.

We would also provide \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing toward the successful implementation of an expression of interest economic immigration system. This, again, would help support Canada's labour market needs.

Budget 2014 is a budget that would equip apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades with access to interest-free loans of up to \$4,000 per period of technical training.

Last, we would help reduce red tape. We want to see red tape cut for more than 50,000 employers by reducing the maximum number of required payments on account of source deductions.

There is much in this budget. Those are just a number of the points that would help with job creation and would help strengthen our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

• (1400)

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

(Division No. 97)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McLeod	Menegakis
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Ohrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Williamson	Young (Oakville)
Yelich	
Zimmer— 133	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Ashton	Aubin
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brison	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Christopherson	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassania	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote— 117	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I understand that there have been discussions and that the House would like to have a full round of statements. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our 2011 campaign platform we committed to being here for law-abiding Canadians.

Canadians want to know that their streets are safe and that their children are protected from predators. They believe in supporting the rehabilitation of offenders but also that the punishment fit the crime. Canadians also agree that the justice system should not put the rights of criminals ahead of the rights of victims. They believe that one victim is one victim too many.

Today, with the introduction of the victims bill of rights, we will entrench the rights of victims into legislation at the federal level. The bill addresses the needs most often noted by victims: the right to information; the right to be protected; the right to participation; and the right to restitution and financial assistance.

This legislation is long overdue.

Under the leadership of our Conservative Prime Minister and our Conservative government, we will always stand on the side of victims.

* * *

[Translation]

DEBT

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I took part in a few community events over the past two weekends. Many of my constituents told me that they are very concerned about the lack of available jobs and the increased cost of living.

What really got my attention is that some of them spoke about a drop in their credit rating. These people are deep in debt. They are unemployed students, people who cannot find a better paying job, part-time and low-wage workers, and victims of fraud. Canadians who are in debt are not necessarily potential thieves or fraudsters. On the contrary, most reported frauds are committed by people taking advantage of high credit ratings.

These people are caught up in the maze of bureaucracy and a business philosophy that advocates increased premiums and interest rates for the most vulnerable.

* * *

•(1405)

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week our government introduced the fair rail for grain farmers act to address the rail capacity challenges currently affecting western Canada, especially farmers.

This week, the agriculture committee has been hearing testimony from all members of the supply chain on this decisive legislation. We are pleased that so many stakeholders are reacting positively to what this legislation seeks to accomplish. According to the Canadian

Statements by Members

Canola Growers Association, “The measures announced in [last week's] Bill, along with other efforts recently implemented demonstrate the Government is listening to farmers concerns”.

We could not agree more. The opposition has committed to moving this legislation forward without delay and we sincerely hope that the opposition keeps its promise. We look forward to a constructive clause-by-clause review and passage of this important legislation next week.

Farmers are counting on us.

* * *

CHARLOTTETOWN

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2014 marks the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference, the event that hosted our Fathers of Confederation.

This week, Charlottetown hosts the East Coast Music Awards. Although Atlantic Canada is famous for its fiddle music and kitchen parties, Charlottetown will experience all genres of music this week. Rock, pop, R&B, folk, jazz, blues and more will be on full display at the numerous venues around the city.

The East Coast Music Association is over 1,000 members strong and provides an invaluable local community for emerging and established artists from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and my province of Prince Edward Island. P.E.I. alone boasts artists like Meaghan Blanchard, Tim Chaisson, Paper Lions, Irish Mythen and more.

I wish to thank the East Coast Music Association for recognizing the value of Charlottetown's history, venues, hotels, restaurants and, most importantly, its people. We are proud to welcome such a regionally important event to Prince Edward Island's capital city.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to inform the House that Hades has frozen over.

My dad has retired after 51 years as the president of C.D. Armstrong Insurance Limited. My dad graduated from Acadia University. After a very successful career and three years as a starter in the varsity basketball program, he took over the family business. My dad got married and raised four children with the proceeds from that business. At 74 years young, he has finally made the decision to retire.

I want to thank my dad personally for all the years of hard work and effort he put in so that I and my three sisters Ann, Martha, and Sarah could go on to university and do the things we wanted to do. My dad put in many years of hard work and effort.

Statements by Members

Dads all across the country and moms all across the country make sacrifices so their children can do better. My dad did that for us, as did my mother Tilly.

I also want to pass on my condolences to my mom Tilly, who now has to put up with my dad 24/7.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FESTIVAL DU DOCUMENTEUR

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for some time now, the people in my riding have been dealing with a serious situation, a polar bear invasion.

This invasion has led to 15 attacks so far and has caused many accidents on the highways, since the polar bears tend to blend in with our snow-covered roads.

What is more, mating between these polar bears and our black bears has produced offspring that look exactly like panda bears. This is bringing in unprecedented waves of tourists that we are unable to accommodate because our infrastructure is not designed to handle 25,000 tourists a day. I invite every expert in the matter to join me for DocuMenteur, a unique fake documentary festival being held this week in Rouyn-Noranda, a festival where truth and lies have been meeting for 10 years now.

I would like to congratulate the many volunteers and commend the co-founders of Festival du DocuMenteur: Carol Courchesne, Émilie Villeneuve and Ariane Gélinas.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just received notice that Agrium's Carseland fertilizer facility has gone down due to mechanical failure. Agrium's Redwater, Alberta, nitrogen facility is expected to go down in mid-May, partway through spring seeding. Prices have already skyrocketed in the last few months, and it is not obvious why this has happened.

As well, grain companies across Canada have driven down the price they are paying farmers for their grains and oilseeds. This is not due to a drop in world prices, but has only been possible because of the slow grain movement by CN and CP.

There seems to be a common thread here. It seems to me that these types of cost increases for farm inputs are only possible because of a lack of competition, and the lower grain prices are only possible because of a lack of competition in that sector. This is always hard to prove, but I doubt we would see these issues, which are so difficult for farmers to deal with, if there were more competition. Any further reduction in competition should not be allowed, at least until companies prove they can do the job.

MAY COURT CLUB OF BROCKVILLE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a service club in my riding that recently received a Prime Minister's Volunteer Award under the social innovator category. Two weeks ago, I hosted a function in Brockville, Ontario, in my riding of Leeds—Grenville, where I, MPP Steve Clark, and Brockville mayor David Henderson, recognized the achievement by this hard-working club.

The May Court Club is a small service organization of about 150 women that was formed in 1959. The members of the club are committed to enriching their community by providing financial and volunteer support to individuals and organizations. In doing so, they enhance the lives of many members of their community. Funds are raised in a variety of ways, and their work includes such items as a breakfast program in schools, the construction of accessible playground structures, and support for several local hospital programs.

The May Court Club of Brockville has made a huge long-term impact in Brockville, and I am proud to salute all of the volunteers and all of their efforts.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAILWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Sana Hassainia (Verchères—Les Patriotes, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recently discovered that 60 tank cars containing 30,000 barrels of oil from the oil sands will probably be running on the tracks of Boucherville, Varennes, Verchères and Contrecoeur, which are all cities in my riding. This is worrisome and the government has not yet imposed a deadline for the complete elimination of DOT-111 tank cars. This issue was raised many times by the public and the mayors I met during the public consultations on rail safety that I held in Verchères together with my colleague from Brossard—La Prairie. People across the country have mobilized to condemn this government's inaction and to share their concerns with us.

Worst of all, we have learned that there are more things hiding in a new omnibus bill. The Conservatives are now dismantling safety standards for the transportation of hazardous goods. That is unacceptable and, in terms of transparency, the government could not have a worse track record. Canadians are worried. It is the government's duty to protect public safety and to ensure that rail safety is key. I hope that, for once, the Conservatives will be responsible enough to forget about partisanship and think of Canadians' safety.

* * *

[*English*]

FIREARMS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know where the Liberal Party stands on firearms. After all, it was former Liberal attorney general Allan Rock who said that he came to Ottawa firmly of the view that only the police and military should have firearms. This attitude was a slap in the face to hunters, farmers, and sport shooters.

However, the Liberals have now topped that out-of-touch statement. Michael Bryant, former Liberal attorney general in Ontario, said that only police have the skill set to determine if a gun should be prohibited and that members of Parliament are the least qualified to make these decisions. This Liberal then went on to say that the thousands of gun owners who were upset by the arbitrary and unfair reclassification of firearms by the Canadian firearms program was simply a “tantrum”.

Conservatives disagree. Canadians sent members of Parliament to Ottawa to make decisions, not hide behind unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats. The Liberals cannot hide their deep-seated resentment of law-abiding gun owners. Only Conservatives will stand up and defend the interests of farmers, hunters, and sport shooters.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC SAINTS

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we received confirmation this morning that Marie de l'Incarnation and Monsignor de Laval will be canonized. As I speak, Cardinal Gérard Cyprien Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec City, Sister Louise Gosselin, Superior General of the Ursulines of the Canadian Union, and Father Jacques Roberge, Superior General of the Séminaire de Québec, are holding a press conference to celebrate this announcement.

The announcement in the paper by the diocese of Quebec City says that Saint François de Laval was the first bishop of Quebec City and the founder of Quebec City's seminary. He was also the founder of the Notre-Dame parish of Quebec City, which celebrates its 350th anniversary this year. Sainte Marie de l'Incarnation founded the Ursuline convent of Quebec City and the first girls' school in North America 375 years ago this year. Both of them left their mark on the history of Quebec. After the opening of the Holy Door and after Monsignor Gérard Cyprien Lacroix was elevated to the rank of cardinal, the diocese is once again celebrating with the Église catholique de Québec a great event.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

LORAN SCHOLAR

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to recognize one of this year's Loran Scholars, Mr. Sachin Pasricha.

After 25 years, the Loran Scholar program is Canada's largest and most unconventional merit award, recognizing a mix of academic achievement, extracurricular activity, and leadership potential.

This year, 30 Loran scholars were selected from an initial pool of nearly 3,500 applicants, for their integrity, determination, entrepreneurial spirit, and overall leadership promise.

A student at Upper Canada College and a proud resident of Don Valley West, Sachin was recognized for his character, service, and leadership potential.

Statements by Members

Sachin has chaired Ontario Model Parliament for two years, and previously co-founded a student-run publication for the program. He is also the news editor for his school newspaper and captain of the cross-country team. In the summer, he works as a special needs counsellor.

Well done, Sachin.

* * *

SOUTH SUDAN

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations fears that South Sudan is imploding, but with so many competing crises around the world, it is getting scant media attention.

Political divisions within South Sudan have resulted in heavy fighting and mass atrocities, committed by rival pro-government and anti-government forces. Ethnic mobilization threatens wider inter-communal violence. Communities face horrendous suffering, including disease and malnutrition.

With the rainy season imminent, the desperate situation will only get worse. Life-saving supplies must be deployed to the hardest to reach in order to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. Air drops are taking place now, and famine is probable.

The international community has a special obligation to South Sudan, as it is a new and young country. I urge this House to come together to encourage the international community to work toward a successful peace and reconciliation process and respond to the changing humanitarian needs in South Sudan.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SAINTS IN QUEBEC

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to pay tribute to two important people in Quebec history who have been canonized by the Vatican.

On Thursday, Pope Francis signed a decree that allows for the canonization of Marie de l'Incarnation and François de Montmorency-Laval. These two French missionaries were actively involved in the evangelical movement in North America.

Marie de l'Incarnation was one of the founders of the *Monsastère des Ursulines* in Quebec City, and François de Laval is the founding bishop of the diocese in the province's capital. Both of them are buried in Quebec City, and the faithful can visit the tombs of the saints today and tomorrow.

I am proud that there will now be a St. Marie de l'Incarnation and St. François de Montmorency de Laval. It is a privilege for me to leave evidence of that in the heritage of our Canadian Parliament.

*Oral Questions***CONSERVATIVE MANAGEMENT**

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sandwiched between the fiascos of their unfair elections act and nomination meetings—where the enterprising Dimitri is blinded by his love for his lady—we find the grain transportation debacle, the dismantling of Canada Post, the closure of service offices for our veterans, leniency towards railway companies that transport dangerous goods a stone's throw from our schools, and systematic denial of environmental issues.

However, that mismanagement sandwich would not be complete without mention of the sad existence of an unelected, undemocratic Senate, which is being asked to hastily approve an equally undemocratic reform cooked up by the party in power, for the party in power.

That is almost as scandalous as a botched car wash at an Ottawa gas station. Canadians deserve better. They deserve a government that governs for them, not just to stay in power through voter suppression tactics reminiscent of the Republicans. Luckily, Canadians can choose the NDP, a party that will consult them, represent them and put policies in place that reflect their beliefs.

* * *

• (1420)

[English]

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to standing up for victims of crime and giving them a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

Today the Prime Minister announced legislation to create the Canadian victims bill of rights. This is an historic first for our country. We are acting to entrench the rights of victims into legislation at the federal level. This will significantly transform our criminal justice system by creating clear statutory rights for the victims of crime.

This builds on our government's strong record of putting the rights of victims first. We have already established the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, created the federal victims fund, and passed over 30 justice and public safety measures to keep our streets and communities safe.

It also stands in stark contrast to the Liberal Party, who not only instituted a faint hope clause for convicted murderers, but also essentially ignored the pleas of victims who, for 13 years, asked for it to be repealed.

The fact is that the Conservative Party is the only party in this House that puts the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Conservatives have come to power, the number of refugees admitted into Canada has dropped by 30%. Khurshid Awan was taking sanctuary in a Montreal church six months ago. Her husband has been shot by radicals in Pakistan. Doctors fear for her life. She had a near fatal heart attack when they tried to deport her the first time. Her daughter has been given asylum in Canada, but Mrs. Awan has not. The Anglican bishop of Montreal has spoken out on her behalf and asked the minister for a meeting, but he has simply refused. Why the heartless treatment?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, refugee cases, asylum cases, are heard by a very professional, independent Immigration and Refugee Board. Our government is enormously proud of the steps we take to focus our asylum system on the needs of real refugees.

We have reduced, by 87%, the number of asylum seekers coming from safe countries. The number of refugees being processed from Syria has risen to 1,700, and we are processing all of the 200 refugees referred to us so far by the UNHCR from Syria. That is a record to be proud of.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is proud of deporting a woman who doctors say will die. It is his decision. He can take it and save her life. Why so heartless? That is the real question.

[Translation]

Ti-Anna Wang has been working for 10 years to obtain her father's release from a Chinese prison. He earned a degree in medicine in Montreal and was working for democracy in China before he was arrested and thrown into prison for life.

The government is going to build a monument in memory of the victims of regimes like that.

Why is it doing nothing to help real victims today, in cases like that of Dr. Wang?

[English]

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to be a beacon of hope for dissidents, for the persecuted, for refugees around the world. We will take no lessons from the NDP, which has opposed our asylum reforms at every turn, reforms that were aiming to focus Canada's resources on those who need it most. We are proud of the fact that one in 10 refugees settled by UNHCR around the world continues to come to Canada. We are going to make sure that continues to be the case.

*Oral Questions***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is proud of doing nothing for Bingzhang Wang.

Yesterday, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform claimed that there were regular reports of Canadians voting multiple times that could be found on Elections Canada's website. The only problem is, it is just not true.

The only case that the minister can actually cite is a skit from a comedy show. The minister is spinning the same tall tales as his colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville, who was caught making things up a few weeks ago and had to apologize. What will it take for Conservatives to see the abject failure of this minister and withdraw this anti-democratic bill?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I said was absolutely accurate. In fact, there are documented cases where people received multiple voter information cards. I gave the example, which was documented by the French CBC, where two Montrealers each received two voter information cards and therefore each voted twice. The fact that a comedy show was able to carry this out right under the noses of Elections Canada is yet more evidence that these cards cannot be relied upon. One in six of them have errors. We are not going to be allowing them to be ID.

• (1425)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is delusional.

[*Translation*]

Let us look at this minister's real record. He tried to use the Neufeld report, but Mr. Neufeld himself came here to say that the Conservatives were completely distorting his report.

The Chief Electoral Officer has said that this reform is going to silence Elections Canada; investigators are saying that this reform is going to prevent them from investigating; and today, we learned that the former auditor general, Sheila Fraser, is adding her voice to the group of experts stating clearly that this bill is anti-democratic.

Will he finally admit that the one and only goal of the bill is to help the Conservative Party?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act will help to establish new rules. For example, there will be a registry for all robocalls. The authorities will be able to monitor those calls to make sure that Canadians no longer receive calls containing misleading information. It will also protect Canadians from big money and the undue influence of money, as well as requiring voters to bring a piece of identification when they vote.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives have written to families of Canadian Forces members killed in Afghanistan asking them to pay their own travel costs to attend a national memorial in Ottawa on May 9. Now the

minister is trying to shift the blame, claiming that he is not responsible for the note sent out by his own office.

Enough with the excuses. These families have already paid a greater price than most of us can even imagine. Will the Minister of National Defence take responsibility for this latest insult and guarantee that the expenses of the families of fallen soldiers will be taken care of completely by the government?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Colonel Blais' letter was premature, incorrect, and containing false information, as event plans have still not been finalized. The government's position is that expenses will be covered.

Our government is proud to commemorate our military mission in Afghanistan on May 9 with a national day of honour. I encourage all Canadians to participate. This day will give Canadians an opportunity to reflect on the courage and sacrifices made by our brave men and women.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the government seems unusually interested in statistical definitions this week, let us talk about a simple concept, the median household income. The most recent StatsCan data shows that the annual median household income has only increased by a paltry \$100 since the Conservatives came to power. As for the bottom 20%, their income has fallen by \$500 a year.

Do the Conservatives have a plan to help these clearly middle class Canadian families?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, StatsCan has confirmed that families are better off today under the Conservative government than under previous Liberal governments, without question.

The very same statistics indicate that median net worth of Canadian families has increased by 44% since 2005. Again, after-tax disposable income has risen by over 10% across all levels of income since 2006.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government to consider a few more simple, yet worrying, statistics. The percentage of working age Canadians who today hold jobs is lower than when the government took office. Youth unemployment is at 14%, more than 2% higher than when the Conservatives came to power. Meanwhile, the number of adults working for the minimum wage has risen by 50%. What is the government's plan, apart from denial, to create better opportunities for these Canadians?

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, even though the global economy remains fragile—it is a fragile recovery, especially in the United States and Europe—our economic policies have helped protect Canadians. Over a million net new jobs have been created since July 2005, with over 85% of those being full time and over 80% in the private sector. That is the best job creation record in the G7 by far. Under the action taken by the Conservative government, Canada will continue to have one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the G7.

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party has been asking the Conservatives to help the middle class for a long time. Yesterday, we learned why they have done nothing. The Prime Minister himself, in a reply he gave yesterday, showed that he had understood nothing and that he did not know the definition of middle class.

Statistics Canada has shown that, since the Conservatives came to power, the average household income has increased by only \$100 per year.

When will the Conservatives begin to show some concern for the middle class?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has no idea what it is like to be in the middle class.

He has voted against our tax cuts. He has voted against the budgets that were there to create jobs and protect jobs. He has voted against middle class families on every vote on budgets.

The Liberal leader has threatened dangerous new deficit spending that would take Canada down the same roads as Detroit and Greece.

I am not surprised that someone who believes that “the budget will balance itself” would also believe that we can spend our way to prosperity.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Sheila Fraser, Canada's former auditor general, who exposed the Liberals' schemes in the sponsorship scandal, says that Bill C-23 is an attack on Canada's democracy.

Ms. Fraser, who currently co-chairs an advisory board on the electoral system, laments the fact that Bill C-23 would disenfranchise thousands of voters, undercut the independence of the Commissioner of Canada Elections, and impede investigations into wrongdoing.

Will the government listen to Sheila Fraser, withdraw its bill and go back to the drawing board?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not agree with Elections Canada on this.

We believe that the commissioner should be independent from the Chief Electoral Officer. This is a good decision that will allow the commissioner to make his own decisions and avoid being dismissed without justification. He will also be able to conduct his own investigations, which is not possible under the current legislation. This is a major improvement that we continue to support.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the so-called minister of so-called democratic reform claimed that the experts who are against his electoral reform are so-called experts.

The only problem is that the current and former Chief Electoral Officers, the current and former Commissioners of Canada Elections, and provincial elections officials are against this reform. Today, it was Sheila Fraser who talked about Bill C-23 as an attack on our democracy.

Is Sheila Fraser going to be treated like all the other officers of Parliament and experts who have criticized this reform?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have rejected the NDP's arguments.

The NDP says that Canadians should be able to vote without any ID. Canadians think that is ridiculous, and they support us when we say that Canadians can bring identification to vote. It is a reasonable position that is consistent with practices in other aspects of society. We will continue to support it.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the Minister of State for Democratic Reform ignore Sheila Fraser's serious warning, and I just cannot get over it, especially coming from the man who used the name of the former auditor general 65 times in the House to bash the Liberals, and rightly so.

If I understand the minister's logic correctly, when Sheila Fraser uncovers the Liberals' schemes, she is quite credible, but when she criticizes the Conservatives' electoral reform, then all of a sudden she is no longer reliable.

Could there be better proof of the bad faith and crass partisanship of this government and this minister?

● (1435)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we are aware of Elections Canada's views on these issues. We just happen to disagree with the agency. In a democracy, we have a right to do that.

We are a democratically elected government, and we will take all of these arguments to the Canadian people, who believe that our common sense reforms are in fact merited.

The Canadian people support us when we bring in a registry to track robocalls to ensure that they are accurate and honest. They believe there should be penalties for rogue callers. They believe it is reasonable to expect that somebody bring one of 39 different pieces of identity when they go to vote.

These are reasonable, common sense changes, and we will continue to support them.

Oral Questions

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Assembly of First Nations has added its voice to the chorus of Canadians speaking out against the Conservatives' unfair elections act.

Today's testimony revealed that urban aboriginals and those living in rural communities will all be negatively impacted by this bill. These are communities where voter participation is already very low.

Why is the minister ignoring first nations' testimony and stubbornly moving forward with changes that will disenfranchise so many Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians, I think, would agree that it is reasonable that, when one crosses the border, one should be asked to bring ID; that when one gets on an airplane, one should be asked to bring ID.

I heard somebody claim that it is not a constitutional right, but in fact, mobility rights are in the Constitution. Crossing the border is a basic right, but when one exercises that right, one has to provide identification so that our Canadian authorities know who one is.

The very same is true for voting. It is a reasonable position and Canadians support it.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is just not convincing.

The reality is that people started talking about changing election laws after widespread voter suppression calls during the last election. The calls were traced back to the Conservative central database. Yet the minister's changes not only do not improve oversight of live calling; they effectively deregulate it.

This clearly is not about saving single moms from red tape. Why are they changing the law to make it harder for election authorities to track the Conservatives' live calling?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to point to the section in the bill that deregulates automated calls, or live calls for that matter.

Live calls are not regulated currently. We are bringing in a registry for every single live call campaign that is purchased by a political party or candidate from a call centre.

Now, if NDP members believe that volunteers like grandmothers or stay-at-home moms who are volunteering at a campaign office should be forced to register with a national regulator, I am sorry; I just disagree with them on that.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the minister go back to the charter, because that is not exactly what they were talking about with mobility rights.

Conservatives have such a casual relationship with facts that it is no wonder that virtually every expert in the entire country is lined up against this fatally flawed bill.

If one has a visual impairment, the voting rules are challenging enough under the current rules, but the minister's unfair changes would make that process even more difficult.

Considering the fact that the bill would make it harder for people with a visual impairment to vote, does the minister still stand by his statement that everything in this bill is terrific?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind card is an eligible form of ID.

The CEO of Elections Canada has the ability to designate different forms of ID. He has so far chosen 39 different options, and among them is this card. Now he has allowed it to be used to identify who people are, but I believe that, where the card has the address of CNIB members, they should be able to use it to identify their residence as well.

I saw one such card of a member of that association this week, and it did have an address on it; so I would encourage the CEO to allow that as a proof of address as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, the minister went to discuss the electoral “deform” bill with his friends in the Senate and said that he would be willing to amend his bill, as needed.

However, yesterday, here in the House, he said that amending the electoral deform bill was out of the question.

Can the minister tell us when he was telling the truth, before the Senate or in the House?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I said exactly the same thing in both places.

The reality is that there are no amendments to consider, because the committee will not examine any amendments until April 25. Once we see the amendments, we will consider them.

However, Canadians support the common sense reforms in the fair elections act, and we will continue to move forward.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first the Minister of State for Democratic Reform misinterpreted the Neufeld report. Then he ignored all the advice that was offered. Then yesterday he criticized my colleague for quoting the “so-called” experts.

I have a simple question for the minister. If Harry Neufeld, William Corbett, Richard Hasen and Sheila Fraser are “so-called” experts, how can he himself claim to have sufficient knowledge of the subject?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to refer to his colleague's question from yesterday, she was referring to an American professor who apparently had made some kind of comparison between Canadian ID laws and American ones. If the member understood those laws, he would know that in Canada we do not require photo ID. In the United States, south of the border, states across the American system require photo ID. In Canada, we do not, and under the fair elections action, we would not.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the list of those opposing the bill is growing and growing: chief electoral officers, electoral commissioners, experts of every political stripe, and now, Sheila Fraser. Yes, the same person the Conservatives once praised for exposing the Liberal sponsorship scandal is calling out this bill as an “attack on our democracy”.

Would the minister listen to her, Sheila Fraser, or will he act like the Liberals did and start attacking Ms. Fraser for telling the truth?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already said that we were aware of Elections Canada's position on these issues. We just happen to disagree. We believe that it is fair to have Canadians arrive with a piece of ID in order to demonstrate who they are and where they live. That is what the fair elections act requires.

We also think it is fair that if someone wants to make a mass automated call or hire a telemarketing firm, they should have to register those calls. We think that there should be an end to the dead donor's loophole that has allowed the NDP to collect hundreds of thousands of dollars from donations that were left in wills, vastly in excess of the donation limit.

These are common-sense, reasonable reforms, and Canadians support them.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that sent a letter to a grieving military family demanding the refund of a pension payment. It mailed another family a one-cent cheque. Now the families who lost a member in Afghanistan have received a letter telling them, “pay your own way to the May 9 commemoration in Ottawa”.

Last time, the defence minister promised to take action to make sure this kind of slap in the face never happens again. He failed to deliver on that.

Rather than blame his staff, as he did in public today, when will he stand in this House and apologize?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, when we were at committee earlier today, the minister was very clear that the letter was supposed to go out to inform family members of fallen soldiers that there was going to be a commemoration day and to save the date, May 9, to attend. As he said, it was a premature and incorrect letter and contained false information, and this government's position is that expenses will be covered and people will be notified as soon as the event plans have been finalized.

Our government continues to be proud to commemorate the huge sacrifices made in Afghanistan by our brave men and women in uniform.

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[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a proud legacy when it comes to welcoming refugees, such as the 36,000 Hungarian refugees who came to Canada in Diefenbaker's time.

This minister is lagging far behind in his commitment to welcome 1,300 Syrian refugees. Sweden has already taken in 17,000 refugees and Germany has taken in 10,000. Meanwhile, the minister has admitted that fewer than 10 refugees—not 10,000—have arrived in Canada.

What would Diefenbaker say about this minister's pathetic performance?

● (1445)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do have a very proud legacy when it comes to protecting refugees. It dates back to the time of Diefenbaker, but was interrupted during the Liberal years, when abuse of the system began to run rampant. We are in the process of cleaning up that mess. We are in the process of getting the refugee system back on track. We have already exceeded our objectives when it comes to Syrian refugees; 1,700 applications are already being processed.

Two hundred refugees have been referred to the government and welcomed by the high commission. Yes, we are going to do more—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

[English]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Progressive Conservative John Diefenbaker would be absolutely ashamed of the disgusting performance on refugees by a successor government. Absolutely ashamed.

Last week, the minister caved to Liberal pressure on his Orwellian plan to subject spouses to language testing before they come to Canada, but the government was also considering education and income tests for spouses.

Will the minister do another U-turn and confirm that he will not impose tests for languages or income or education on spouses who come to this country?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, will the member opposite agree that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister has the floor. Members will come to order.

The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Oral Questions

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, will the member opposite agree that women in Canada deserve protection from violence, and just as they deserve protection from violence in Canada, they deserve protection from violence in our immigration programs? That is what our discussion is about, and we will do everything in our power to make sure that those protections are strengthened.

Diefenbaker would be proud of our legacy today. He would not have been proud of the Liberal legacy of promoting abuse, of taking asylum seekers from the European Union, from the United—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's 86 richest families and individuals are richer than the country's poorest 11 million people combined. The government should be concerned about the growing gap between rich and poor. Unfortunately, Conservative policies are doing nothing to fix a problem that is really hurting Canada's social fabric. Conservative inaction on youth unemployment and backward policies such as income splitting will not fix anything.

When will the Conservatives take social and economic inequality issues seriously and give the middle class a bit of a break?

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, all the measures this government has brought forward, cutting taxes 160 times—the average Canadian family of four is saving over \$3,400 per year in taxes—every time the opposition members have voted against. They are voting against every job-creation measure. They are voting against youth employment measures we brought forward, investing \$330 million per year through the youth employment strategy. They vote against supporting paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates. They vote against helping young entrepreneurs. They vote against—

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats vote against any budget that makes income inequality worse in this country, and Conservatives have done it time and time again.

Eighty-six of the richest Canadian families are worth more than the poorest 11 million families in this country, and Conservative policies are only making a bad situation worse. The average middle-class family has not seen a raise in 35 years, but instead of addressing this difficult reality, the Conservatives are doubling down on their \$5-billion income-splitting scheme that will not help 86% of Canadians.

Why give \$5 billion more to families who simply do not need it?

• (1450)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget we brought forward is a budget that is going to help create jobs. It is a budget that is saying that we are going to help

with the skills development of all Canadians, young and old. This budget also says that we are going to come to balance in 2015.

What statistics has Stats Canada come forward with? Because of the policies this government has brought forward, the median net worth of Canadian families has increased by 44% since 2005, and New Democrats keep voting against these measures. Shame.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, western grain producers are losing \$140 million a week as the grain transport crisis drags on. Testimony at committee revealed a critical lack of coordination in the supply chain and a vacuum in federal leadership. The government still has not committed to compensating western producers for their mounting losses, and the bill must be amended to actually get more grain moving than the order in council already did.

Will the minister work with us to make the changes that so many western Canadians really need?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome any help from opposition members. Generally they just vote against anything we bring forward when it comes to helping Canadian farmers, especially western Canadian farmers. Marketing freedom has been an overwhelming success. We are starting to give more oversight powers to Quorum, out of Edmonton, so that they have the information we need to watch corridor by corridor with the specificity we need to make sure that all commodities get to the marketplace that they desire.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, marketing freedom enables farmers to see the biggest basis spread they have ever seen in their entire lives. Over \$140 million a week is going out of the pockets of farmers into the grain companies' coffers and the elevator system, and the minister says that the farmers are winners. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, farmers are not winners. Farmers are losers in this game, and it is time the government stood up for them.

Will the minister amend the bill, and will he work with us? I have heard the story before from the minister. He says, "Just bring us your good ideas". The last time we brought Conservatives our good ideas, they voted against every single one of them. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, we have good ideas. I hope the minister and his committee will actually listen to them.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the panels ended last night, with representation from across the spectrum out there, predominantly from western Canada, where they are facing the backlog.

Oral Questions

We continue to work forward. I know that the clerk is putting together the report that will come back. Amendments are due tomorrow morning, I understand, at 10:30 a.m., and we will see what comes forward.

I have a quote from Norm Hall, the president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, who is a good friend of the member for Wascana. Listen to this:

Agriculture, in relative terms, is doing well. Even with the rail backlog, we've had a number of decent years with decent prices behind us. So we're not hurting like we were in the '80s and '90s.

That was under their stewardship.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are increasingly concerned about what they see as an imbalance in our justice system. For too long, the rights of offenders were given precedence over the rights of victims. Today the Prime Minister announced Canada's first ever victims' bill of rights.

To the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, please inform the House how these historic measures will provide victims with a stronger voice in Canada's justice system.

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Red Deer for his question, and of course for his great work on his private member's bill amending the Criminal Code in relation to the impersonation of peace officers. Good job.

Ever since we were first elected, our government has put victims first. Today the Prime Minister announced new measures, which will transform our justice system. We will enshrine clear statutory rights at the federal level for victims of crime. This includes the right to information, protection, participation, and restitution. This builds on our government's solid track record of putting victims first and stands in stark contrast to the Liberals, who systematically ignored the rights of victims for 13 long years.

Law-abiding Canadians know that they can count on this government to stand up—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to complaints about airline services in Canada, nobody has ever complained about having too many flight attendants aboard. At least, that is what the Conservatives seem to think. Transport Canada wants to allow airlines to operate with one flight attendant per 50 passengers. To ensure passenger safety, there should always be one flight attendant per emergency exit.

Why does the Minister of Transport want to eliminate such an important regulation?

• (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the rule as it is currently in Canada is one flight attendant per 40 passengers. What is being proposed is that we move to one flight attendant to 50 seats. The difference is just standardization with an international norm.

What should be noted is that when U.S. carriers and international carriers fly in Canadian airspace, that is exactly the standard they are adhering to.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is simply no justification for this change, and the government knows it. Canada's major airlines are profitable. There is no excuse for allowing anyone to cut corners, especially when passenger safety is at stake. If something goes wrong on a flight, these rules would reduce by 25% the flight attendant ratio.

Will the minister commit to studying the safety impact of this change instead of just rubber-stamping it?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated, this is a standard that is in place internationally and in the United States. We are taking a look at it right now, as the hon. member is aware.

I would also say that it is the ratio that is recognized by ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization. It clearly says that regardless of the standard, it provides the same level of safety.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, keeping people safe is the first job of any government, whether it is airlines or drug safety. Why can the Conservatives not understand that?

Conservatives are keeping Canadians in the dark about drug safety reviews. Last year the minister promised that reviews would be published, quote, "transparently", but it turns out that Health Canada is keeping over 80% of the reviews totally secret, and even then, the published reviews will only be very brief summaries.

Why did the minister break her promise to be transparent with Canadians about drug safety? She said that. She is not being transparent anymore.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has asked Health Canada to take steps to begin posting drug reviews to ensure that needed information is available. Health Canada experts always monitor the latest science on drugs, and we expect them to take action as needed.

We have also launched the plain language labelling initiative, which aims to improve the safe use of drugs by making drug labels easier to read and understand.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is obviously trying to take people for fools. In the past, the minister clearly stated that drug safety reviews would be made public. Now she is planning to keep a significant amount of the information that people are entitled to secret. Doctors count on that information to make informed decisions that have a significant impact on the health of Canadians.

How will keeping 80% of the reviews secret enhance patient safety?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous. As I have said, the minister has asked Health Canada to take steps to begin posting drug reviews to ensure that needed information is available.

While I am on my feet, I just want to thank my colleague from Oakville who last week gave one of the best speeches I have ever heard in the House. We introduced a law that he was so important in helping to put forward. It is a government bill to introduce Vanessa's law, which will help identify potentially dangerous drugs and ensure the quick recall of unsafe drugs. We are looking to have support across the House.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today two ferries were stuck in the ice, this time off the coast of Cape Breton. The ferry between Newfoundland and Labrador, the *Sir Robert Bond*, is still hampered by ice.

The Coast Guard exceeded its budget this fiscal year and no additional employees were called in. Additionally, the largest icebreaker in Atlantic Canada, the *Louis S. St-Laurent*, has been on refit in Halifax.

I ask the government why it is jeopardizing the lives of people and the economy by operating the Atlantic fleet understaffed and undercapacity in one of the worst ice seasons we have seen in this country?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that both ferries are now free and on their way to Port aux Basques and North Sydney.

The Canadian Coast Guard is working around the clock to deal with extraordinary ice conditions seen almost everywhere this year. I want to salute our men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard for a job well done keeping Canadians safe and keeping traffic moving.

Thankfully, our government has been making the investments required to keep our icebreakers operating effectively, because when the Liberals were in power, the ships were often tied to the wharf, rusting and out of gas.

● (1500)

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the U.S. banned generic OxyContin in favour of the tamper-proof OxyNEO. Provincial health officers, provincial health ministers, and the U.S. attorney general asked the current government to do the same thing. Instead, it gave the production okay to six companies.

Oxy addiction is the fastest-growing opioid addiction in North American. Increased border traffic of OxyContin has prompted U.S. senators to renew their appeal to the current government.

Will the new Minister of Health undo the damage and ban Canadian production of OxyContin?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that prescription drug abuse is a growing problem here in Canada. We are looking at tamper resistance as a way to address prescription drug abuse.

Economic action plan 2014 delivers nearly \$45 million to expand the focus of the national anti-drug strategy to include prescription drug abuse in Canada, including education, enhancing prevention and treatment services in first nation communities, and improving surveillance data on abuse. I would like to point out that this member voted against that.

We will continue to work with all of our partners, including the United States, to combat this issue together and ensure that we make the right decisions—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the members of the Kitsoo First Nation have been fishing Kitsoo Bay for thousands of years. They know how to manage their stocks and have told the minister loud and clear, “No herring fishing in that bay. The stocks need more time to recover.” Yet the minister ignored these warnings, ignored experts in her own department, and has directed commercial fishermen into the bay, creating a potential confrontation.

Why will the minister not listen to science, listen to the first nations, and protect Kitsoo Bay?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision to reopen the fishery in the three previously closed areas was based on the department's scientific advice. For the west coast of Vancouver Island, DFO scientists said there was 7,000 tonnes more than what would be a safe reopening of the fishery.

Oral Questions

As with any fishery's opening, we consulted with local stakeholders, including first nations. This first nations group also protested the closure of the commercial fishery back in 2006.

We do stand strongly against any violence on the water and expect all parties to respect the rule of law.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the minister who has gutted the Fisheries Act, muzzled scientists, and ignored experts from her own department.

Now she is turning her back on first nations, too. She is provoking unnecessary conflict and confrontation. Conservative mismanagement of our fisheries has British Columbians just shaking their heads.

The government is putting the herring fishery at risk. Why is the minister refusing to listen to the Kitasoo, and why is she refusing to protect Kitasoo Bay?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, for the west coast of Vancouver Island, DFO scientists said there was 7,000 tonnes more than what would be safe for the reopening of this fishery. It is a very precautionary approach to the opening of the fishery. There is only a 10% fishery happening. We have consulted local stakeholders, along with the first nations.

Obviously, it would be an inappropriate time to comment further on this issue, as some of these openings are currently before the courts.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families, and parents especially, are always on the look out for healthy food options for their children. However, these choices are not always easy. As a parent, I find food labels lacking the information I need to make the right choices for my family. Serving sizes are unclear, and the terminology used can be complex.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister please update the House on the work that our government is doing to improve the quality of nutritional labelling for Canadian families?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Oakville for the incredible work he has done since 2008, helping to turn back the billions of dollars in health care cuts that were, of course, the hallmark of the Liberal time in office.

As members may know, I am the father of two beautiful young girls. As a father I try to make healthy food choices for my family.

Our Minister of Health has been doing some excellent work on this file. Part of that work has been hosting consultations with mothers and fathers across this country so that we can do our best to improve labelling. The minister's consultations will be a major part in meeting our throne speech commitment to making sure parents have the knowledge they need to make the right choices.

●(1505)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at committee the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said she was not aware of any applications for longliners to be used in the Gulf tuna fishery. In fact, I have copies of the applications. I would hope that the minister is aware of the value of the sustainable hook and line tuna fishery in the Gulf.

Will the minister commit to the tuna fishers that she will not allow longliners into the Gulf under the pretense of research, and that if any work is to be done, it is to be done with the perfectly capable hook and line vessels?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not work in front-line management at DFO, so if an application has come in, I was not aware of it.

There is an advisory process for bluefin tuna. Any requests for changes would go through this advisory process before it would come to my desk.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's approach to drug shortages is not working. At present, companies voluntarily record drug shortages in a database managed by the industry. Often it is too late, as we just saw in the case of Ritalin, which was just added. However, the media have been talking about it for three weeks.

Instead of waiting for a new crisis, why is the government not working on finding real solutions?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, drug shortages are a global problem that our government takes very seriously. We are working with drug companies and the provinces and territories as part of a pan-Canadian strategy to manage and prevent shortages and to reduce their impact.

As a result, companies are providing advance notice of shortages online, including information on alternative treatments. We continue to monitor this issue very closely and are open to considering a mandatory approach, if it is required.

*Business of the House***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent IMF study of energy development confirms that greater investment in exports in Canada's energy sector will further improve Canada's economy. In fact, it notes that investment in exports have increased by approximately 10% since the year 2000.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on the impact of our energy sector on the Canadian economy?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint John for his objective reflections on this study and for this timely, pertinent question. He knows that the energy sector has the potential to grow Canada's GDP substantially over the next decade and that while the New Democrats continue to attack our natural resource sector, our government is focused on responsible resource development, environmental protection, creating jobs and economic prosperity. That holds great potential for New Brunswickers and great potential for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Conservative tax of 58% on stamps, the 37¢ increase is higher than the cost of sending a post card in the United States. Furthermore, it now costs almost \$19 to send a parcel from Lachine to Toronto, whereas it costs \$2.50 to ship a parcel across the U.S. It has gotten to the point where it would be less expensive for me to get in my car, go to the United States and send my mail from there. Why is the minister insisting on reducing services for Canadians while the 23 senior executives at Canada Post pocket \$20 million.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that in 2012 Canada Post delivered one billion fewer pieces of mail than it did in 2006. We know that this trend is going to continue in the future as people use email far more than they use letter mail.

In order to deal with this reality, Canada Post has developed a five-point plan. One part of its plan is to increase the price of stamps. That is what happened on April 1. We support Canada Post in this plan because we want to ensure that it is not the taxpayer at the end of the day who is responsible for a \$1 billion-a-year shortfall.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unimaginable that, in 2014, there are still tens of thousands of Quebecers who cannot assert their right to work in French. In federal institutions, such as banks, airline companies, some trucking companies, and even telecommunications companies, workers still cannot enjoy the protections of Bill 101, which guarantees respect for their national

language. Will the Minister for La Francophonie recognize that Bill 101 should apply to federal institutions in Quebec since it is a law of general application in that province?

• (1510)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague that the report on language of work in federally regulated businesses in Quebec was tabled last year. The report was prepared by senior officials with expertise in the field. The report clearly concludes that francophones can work in the language of their choice in federally regulated businesses in Quebec. We are proud to promote both official languages in Canada. We are proud to promote the French fact. We are proud to play an active role in la Francophonie.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Tunisia, led by His Excellency Dr. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, Speaker of the National Constituent Assembly.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that it has been a tough week for the government.

Ms. Sheila Fraser, who is a personal hero to many Canadians for standing up and speaking the truth, has condemned the unfair elections act as an attack on democracy. Her voice is joined with those of current and former chief electoral officers, current and former elections commissioners, many witnesses, and Canadians who are speaking internationally as well. These individuals are all speaking out against this attack on democracy, Bill C-23.

[Translation]

The government's reaction is to try to impose the bill on the House. They have done this about 60 times. It is a sad track record, if not the worst track record in the entire history of all the governments in the country.

[English]

Unfortunately, as members know, the government's legislative agenda has been unravelling in the last two weeks. Two bills have been rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada because they simply were not drafted correctly.

In light of the government's unravelling legislative agenda, on behalf of the NDP official opposition caucus I would like to ask the government House leader what he will put forward next week to start to restore the confidence that Canadians have lost in the Conservative government.

Business of the House

[Translation]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the House is currently focusing on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity by debating Bill C-31, the Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 1, at second reading.

This debate will continue tomorrow, Monday and Tuesday, with members of Parliament having an opportunity that night to vote on this bill to enact key measures of our low-tax plan for jobs and growth in the Canadian economy.

[English]

I am currently setting aside next Wednesday and Friday for debate on Bill C-32, the victims bill of rights. This important and much needed piece of legislation would give victims their rightful place in our justice system: at its heart. The Conservative Party has long stood alone in putting the rights and interests of victims ahead of those of criminals.

Also, I would like to note that Bill C-30, the fair rail for grain farmers act, has been making good progress in committee this week. Should that bill be reported back to the House next week, I will make time for its consideration if we are able to enjoy the same level of co-operation that we saw at second reading last Friday, when it was passed by the House after we heard from a speaker from each party.

Finally, Thursday, April 10, shall be the second allotted day. I understand that we will debate a Liberal motion on that day. Perhaps the hon. member for Papineau will ask the House to debate his definition of middle class. In fact, it appears he could have a vigorous debate on that issue with himself that would fill the entire day. I eagerly await to see if his newest definition of the middle class will still include the CEOs of the big banks. I am confident that his caucus will stand ready to move an amendment to that motion if, during the course of the day, his definition changes yet again.

I noticed today in question period that we heard yet another definition of middle class. It is that one magical person who happens to make the median income in Canada. At least that way the middle class is easily defined and the number of people who are middle class is unlikely to change. It is one person, and that is a number that I know the member for Papineau will be able to grasp. He will be able to remember the number one. It is easier than remembering the thousands of billions number that he is also fond of.

I am also confident that he will not choose as the subject of debate the matter of eliminating the budget deficit. After all, he says the budget will balance itself.

● (1515)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, the debate on Bill C-31 began this morning. However, because of the scope of the provisions, which cover not only budgetary and fiscal matters, but also justice and immigration, I believe it is clear and appropriate that the bill should be divided at some point, so that it can be carefully studied.

For that reason, I ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion:

[English]

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures be amended by removing the following clauses: a) clauses 99 to 101 related to the implementation of the Canada-U.S. intergovernmental agreement on the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act; b) clauses 102 to 107 related to compensation for Canadian veterans; c) clauses 110 to 162 related to changes to the Hazardous Products Act;

[Translation]

d) clauses 175 to 192, related to changes to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Act and the Enterprise Cape Beton Corporation; e) clauses 206 to 209, related to Nordion and Theratronics, referring to ownership restrictions; f) clauses 212 to 233, related to regulatory changes to motor vehicle safety and rail safety; g) clauses 234 to 237, related to regulatory changes to food safety;

[English]

h) clauses 239 to 241 related to the capping of wireless roaming rates; i) clauses 299 to 307 related to changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the temporary foreign workers program; j) clauses 308 to 310 related to the definition of “essential services” under the Public Service Labour Relations Agreement; k) clauses 317 to 370 related to changes to the Trademarks Act and Registrar of Trademarks; l) clauses 371 to 374 related to restrictions of admissibility for immigrants to the guaranteed income supplement; m) clause 375 related to the replacement of the Champlain Bridge; n) clauses 376 to 482 related to the consolidation of staffing for all administrative tribunals in the federal public administration;

that the clauses mentioned in section a) of this motion do compose Bill C-33; that Bill C-33 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Finance; that the clauses mentioned in section b) of this motion do compose Bill C-34; that Bill C-34 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs; that the clauses mentioned in section c) of this motion do compose Bill C-35; that Bill C-35 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology;

that the clauses mentioned in section d) of this motion do compose Bill C-36; that Bill C-36 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that the clauses mentioned in section e) of this motion do compose Bill C-37; that Bill C-37 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that the clauses mentioned in section f) of this motion do compose Bill C-38; that Bill C-38 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities;

that the clauses mentioned in section g) of this motion do compose Bill C-39; that Bill C-39 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Health; that the clauses mentioned in section h) of this motion do compose Bill C-40; that Bill C-40 be deemed read the first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that the clauses mentioned in section i) of this motion do compose Bill C-41; that Bill C-41 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration;

that the clauses mentioned in section j) of this motion do compose Bill C-42; that Bill C-42 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates; that the clauses mentioned in section k) of this motion do compose Bill C-43; that Bill C-43 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; that the clauses mentioned in section l) of this motion do compose Bill C-44; that Bill C-44 be deemed read a first time and be printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities;

that the clauses mentioned in section m) of this motion do compose Bill C-45; that Bill C-45 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Community; that the clauses mentioned in section n) of this motion do compose Bill C-46; that Bill C-46 be deemed read a first time and printed; that the order for second reading of the said bill provide for the referral to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights;

and that Bill C-31 retain the status on the order paper that it had prior to the adoption of this order; that Bill C-31 be reprinted as amended; and that the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel be authorized to make any technical changes or corrections as may be necessary to give effect to this motion.

Government Orders

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the Official Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the government House leader stood up and gave a speech, one of the few from the government side, and then promptly shut down debate for most of the government and most of the opposition members by putting in place time allocation measures, which means that most Conservatives and most opposition members will not have an opportunity to speak on the bill.

We might ask why, when it is a Conservative budget bill, the Conservatives would want to shut down debate on it. Here is one of the reasons: the foreign account tax compliance act, which is something that has been protested by a million Canadians of American origin in this country, Canadians upon whom penalties are being imposed unilaterally by the IRS.

The Conservatives said that they would stand up against this kind of unilateral action by the American government. In fact, I went to see the American ambassador myself, along with a number of NDP MPs, and we advocated strongly for those one million Canadians.

This Conservative government has sold them out. Basically it is shipping that information to the United States, even though there are constitutional issues and privacy issues.

My question to the hon. government House leader is simply this: is that why the Conservatives want to shut down debate? Is it because they are afraid of those one million Canadians finding out that they were sold out on FATCA?

Government Orders

• (1525)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I keep struggling with this issue, because it seems some folks have still not yet grasped our rules. Of course, time allocation is not used by this government to shut down debate, because here we are debating, which we will be doing tomorrow, Monday, and Tuesday. It is used as a scheduling device so that all members of this House can have certainty and confidence about when the debate will occur, and more importantly, about when the vote will occur and when the decision will ultimately be made. That is very important.

This is reflected in *Beauchesne's* at page 162. I have referred to this point before, but the opposition House leader seems not to have grasped it yet. It is at paragraph 533:

Time allocation is a device for planning the use of time during the various stages of consideration of a bill rather than bringing the debate to an immediate conclusion.

There we have it in black and white, from one of those important green books that we rely on that tells us what the rules are.

There was an interesting observation today from one of the more knowledgeable observers of parliamentary procedure, who said this:

...the...bill will get a total of five days of second reading debate, which is pretty reasonable.

We have provided for ample debate, more debate than has often happened on many bills of this type historically, and I am very pleased to see that we are doing it in a fashion that allows full debate, but more importantly, lets decisions get made. That is what is important: that we make decisions, get things done, and do the job that people sent us here to do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the government House leader's distortion of reality, which is in fact what we just witnessed.

At the end of the day, we need to recognize that the budget bill before us takes into consideration the passing of numerous amendments, numerous clauses, that would affect dozens of laws. These are laws that should have been brought in individually, as stand-alone pieces of legislation. The member is using the back door of a budget debate and then putting on time allocation, which prevents all members of the House from participating and getting engaged in the debate, in order to pass a series of what should have been a number of pieces of legislation.

The Conservative/Reform majority government has a terrible record in terms of respecting due process and democracy in Canada, whether it is the budget bill or the unfair elections act.

My question to the government House leader is, when can we anticipate that there will be more democracy inside this chamber? When is the government going to take that crutch of time allocation away? It clearly denies the ability of members of Parliament to hold government accountable, and the government House leader knows that.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be young, or young enough that he would not have been around in 1861, when in the British Parliament, our mother Parliament, they reverted to what was the earlier practice of taking all major financial

measures as one. The chancellor thus got the paper duty provisions through as part of the finance bill.

The business of implementing a budget through one budget implementation bill goes back some 150 years. It is nothing new under this government.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me indicate at the beginning that I will be sharing my time. Unfortunately, I do not have much of it, but being a team player, I am sharing my time with the member for Gatineau.

Let me say how disappointed I am that once again debate on this important measure has been limited. We may get 10 hours altogether in debate at second reading on the bill, which means that the vast majority, two-thirds of the members in the House, will not have an opportunity to stand and represent their constituencies. It is shameful.

We are talking about a budget implementation bill of 350 pages, almost 500 clauses, and it amends dozens of bills. The budget for the department that I am the shadow critic for, Fisheries and Oceans, has a budget of \$1.6 billion, and I am being given 10 minutes in the House.

The other day we had the opportunity to talk to the minister at committee on the main estimates, and I had 10 minutes that I had to divide among my colleagues in our caucus. The level of accountability by the government is absolutely shocking, frankly. We continue to see it.

One of the things that the Conservatives are changing is something that affects the region I am from, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Not only are they getting rid of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation altogether, which is losing that voice, that on the ground voice, but they are getting rid of the board of ACOA. They are taking away the requirement that the CEO of ACOA is to report on the progress of that organization in contributing to economic development in the region every five years.

Talk about removing accountability at every step along the way. It seems interesting that ECBC, for example, is being disbanded, at a time when there is an investigation under way by the Auditor General into wrongdoings in the ECBC's decision to provide \$4 million in new funding for a new marina at Ben Eoin. One might say that sounds familiar; it sounds a lot like what is happening under Bill C-23, the unfair elections act. Conservatives are getting rid of the provisions that would allow Elections Canada to press forward with charges against some of the Conservative members who have been under investigation for flouting the rules in the way they have prosecuted their own elections.

Again, it is a pattern by the government. It does not seem to give a hoot about democracy and things like fair elections, or about accountability. As I said, for a \$1.6 billion budget at Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we get an hour altogether, and most of that is taken up by government in discussion with the minister. It is not good enough, as far as I am concerned, and as far as the constituents that I represent from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Government Orders

I have very few minutes, but I want to talk about some of the things that the government could have done. There are a lot of things that it did that I do not agree with. Some things I do agree with. However, there is a lot that the government did not take the opportunity to do. These are things like investing in innovation, economic development, and high-quality middle-class jobs. We had hoped that Conservatives would continue to build on an existing job creation tax credit for small and medium-size businesses. They decided not to do that.

• (1530)

We wanted them to develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with persistent structural youth unemployment and under-employment throughout this country, to create and help businesses create jobs for young Canadians, and to crack down on the abuse of unpaid internships to ensure young people are paid for the work that they perform.

There is a serious problem occurring in this country, where young people, whether getting out of high school or out of university, are having a terrible time trying to find jobs to match their skills. They are having a terrible time finding jobs to develop experience and pay their own way forward, whether it be supporting a family or going on to post-secondary education. The jobs are not there, and the Conservatives have not come up with a plan to help deal with that, other than the Canada jobs plan which does not help students. It was announced last year, and it is only now being agreed to by some of the provinces. It attacks labour market agreements that provide funding for the most vulnerable Canadians, literacy training and job-readiness training in my province of Nova Scotia and throughout the country.

Provinces were forced, frankly at gunpoint, to sign this deal, knowing they were going to be losing funding that they had already committed for these labour market agreements, supporting organizations like the Dartmouth Learning Network and others throughout my province, and programs throughout the country. It is extraordinarily short-sighted, and an example of the lack of appreciation that the Conservatives have for the complexities of job training in this country.

We had hoped that the government would provide explicit transparent criteria for the net benefit to Canada test in the Investment Canada Act, with an emphasis on assessing the impact of foreign investment on communities, jobs, pensions, and new capital investments. I have heard a lot of employers in my constituency asking me why the Americans can protect jobs in their country but Canada does not seem to care what happens to jobs in this country. People are extraordinarily frustrated that companies that compete in the United States are prohibited from doing that, while at the same time American companies come up and displace Canadian companies.

Finally, we had hoped there would be a study conducted into the methods to encourage value-added domestic production in the energy sector.

There is a long list of things, but one of the things I am particularly concerned about is the fact that the Conservatives failed to restore the ecoENERGY home retrofit program. It was an initiative that worked well and was an investment into the renewable

energy sector. It was an investment in Canadians actually taking control of the amount of energy they use and it was a good way forward. In their lack of judgment, the Conservatives have decided not to move in that direction again.

Let me finish by saying how disappointed I am as a member of this House of Commons, the representative from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, that I participate in debate after debate where the current government is shutting down our democracy. It is taking away my rights as a member of Parliament to examine legislation, to examine budgets, to give voice to the concerns of my constituents on these issues every single day. The Conservatives have been doing it repeatedly.

I am hearing from the people in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour that it is not good enough. They want to ensure that every time I have the opportunity I send that message because they are going to be sending their own message in 2015.

• (1540)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would grant that the member is misinformed about the Canada job grant and its impact on the labour market agreement, which is \$500 million in annual federal transfers to provinces and territories for skills development and job training for individuals who have been unemployed long term or who have never been employed.

In fact, the Canada job grant agreements that we have signed in principle with all 13 provinces and territories permit the provinces and territories to fund their portion, the public portion of the job grant, from any source of funds. The source of funding is not restricted to the labour market agreement, which the Conservative government introduced in 2007, I remind the member. There was zero LMA funding and zero programming of that nature prior to the government's creation of that program.

It would be nice to hear a little thanks from the member if he thinks those are good programs, and also recognition that they are completely unaffected by the Canada job grant agreement, which seeks to increase the private sector investment in skills training.

I am with the unions on this. I am where the NDP should be, which is thinking we have to find ways to get employers to put more skin in the game in training. That is what the job grant does, by leveraging more investment from private sector employers.

Does the member not agree that it is a good objective? Does he not also agree that it is a good idea to try to get employers to nominate people for training where they are offering them a guaranteed job at the end of it? Surely he is willing to admit that there has been too much training for jobs that do not exist and training for the sake of training, and that we need some reforms in this area.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that employers in Canada have not put enough skin in the game, as the member says.

Government Orders

I was around in 2007 in Nova Scotia and involved in the training field. We were devastated when the federal government pulled out of the national program that existed and dumped all of the responsibility on the backs of the provinces. It was complete chaos and it took a couple of years for the Province of Nova Scotia and other provinces to develop their own programs, infrastructure, and skills.

Now that they have done that and they are producing good skills and providing training for all levels, including the most vulnerable, the government comes along and says it thinks it will take it back because it has seen a political use for those dollars. What the government has done, despite what the minister claims, is put the funding in serious jeopardy that went to these labour market agreements and supported training for the most vulnerable.

That is the shame about the direction in which the government has gone. It has forced provinces to agree to take the money that was already on the table or lose it all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that one of the largest, most significant shortcomings of the Conservative budget is the fact that there is absolutely nothing in terms of recognition of what Canadians hold very dear to their hearts, which is the health care accord.

The health care accord is something that just expired at midnight on March 31. If we ask Canadians from coast to coast to coast, we will find that health care is a very important issue to them; yet the government has failed in developing a replacement accord that would provide the types of assurances that Canadians want to see going into the future.

I wonder if the member might want to provide comment about how important it was for the Government of Canada to have renegotiated a new accord for the next decade?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a great point. The government says it is increasing health transfers by 6%, but that is in the total pot and it is being distributed on the basis of per capita. As a result, Nova Scotia is not going to get a 6% increase; it is going to get a 2% increase at a time when health costs are increasing by 5%.

Alberta is going to get an increase of \$1 billion. Nova Scotia, where there is a high percentage of the aging population, which requires more health care dollars, is going to get less money from the government.

That is simply wrong.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again

[*English*]

Hon. Jason Kenney: Albertans are worth less?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: No, Nova Scotians are not worth less.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: That is a fascinating conversation, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Would the two members take their debate outside? The member for Gatineau has the floor now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure they will stop talking soon because what I have to tell them is very important.

First, this is another week where I must rise in the House to talk about a bill that is subject to a time allocation motion. That is unfortunate, but not surprising. We are starting to get used to it. I think that time allocation has been imposed more than 60 times. I do not know whether the Conservatives have set a goal to reach 100, but if so, they are off to a good start. That is unfortunate for democracy.

It is even more unfortunate when we are dealing with a bill such as this. It is 359 pages long. What is more, the Conservatives are trying to sneak provisions into this budget implementation bill that, in my opinion, do not belong in a document of this nature. Why? Because each part of this bill deserves to be closely examined. Perhaps the different parts are good and perhaps they are not, but they should all be analyzed by the committee that specializes in the subject in question, not by the Standing Committee on Finance, which will examine the over 350-page document, likely at lightning speed.

If we do not have the right to debate the bill in the House, more than 200 MPs will not have any opportunity to express their views.

I consider myself extremely lucky to be able to rise today in the House to speak about this bill, because I am very concerned about some parts of it. I want to send a clear message to the people who will examine it in committee, because we should not let this bill go through like a letter in the mail. By the way, it is now very expensive to send a letter in the mail.

That being said, I would first like to talk about a positive aspect of this bill. I am extremely pleased to see that the government listened to the call from the governments of Quebec and Alberta for more judges. That is confirmed in clauses 164 and 165 of division 5. The New Democratic Party certainly has no objections to these two clauses. We have been calling for this for a long time. On several occasions, we asked the Minister of Justice in the House to heed the call from the justice ministers of these provinces.

Considering the many pieces of legislation related to justice that this government introduces and the serious problems that exist regarding access to justice, there is no doubt that the system really needs resources. This is definitely good news in that sense.

However, we must not give them too many compliments. In Quebec this means four additional judges on the Superior Court, but seven other positions remain vacant. This means that this government is either dragging its feet or seeking partisan appointments, but having a hard time finding people. That is why it is taking a while to fill the vacant positions.

Government Orders

I cross paths with judges as part of my duties in my role as justice critic for the NDP. Judges tell me very clearly that some criminal trials can take longer. Victims of crime often have serious problems with the justice system, and one such problem is how slow the system is. When resources are lacking, including crown prosecutors and judges, that certainly does not help.

The two clauses in question are fine, but those two clauses make up barely a dozen lines in a document that is over 350 pages long.

I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Justice about the part that really worries me, but he just skated around the issue. All the experts are wondering what the Conservatives were doing putting division 29 in a budget bill. Division 29, on page 263, contains many clauses. The document practically ends with that division.

I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues, including my Conservative colleagues, to division 29. I cannot believe they do not do the same thing we do, which is examine these provisions. They accuse us of not reading them. It is not that we do not read them, but the Conservatives want us to comment on them 30 seconds after the bill is introduced, when they have had the advantage of examining everything already, even in caucus. They often examine bills before we even see them, and they expect us to be familiar with the content of over 350 pages in 30 seconds.

● (1550)

The official opposition takes things a little more seriously than that. We take the time to read the provisions. Did they think we were so complacent that we would not notice division 29, or that it would go through because it was a little too complex and technical?

Division 29 creates the administrative tribunals support service of Canada. The Minister of Justice says that the government simply wants to be more efficient and save money. Our constituents all across Canada, not just those in Conservative ridings, will surely agree with that. They really like it when they are told that the government will save money. However, that is coming from a Conservative government that, since coming to power, has increased the national debt by \$123.5 billion. That is not peanuts.

In the 1990s, progress was made by dint of Canadians' hard work and cuts to our social programs, which are still struggling to recover. However, this government does not care in the least, because the Conservatives, these so-called economic geniuses, have added \$123.5 billion to the debt. Future generations will have to deal with that.

After countless budget deficits and no budget surpluses, the government is proud to announce that next year, an election year, they will finally post their first budget surplus, as though by magic. There is really nothing to be proud of on the Conservative benches.

They spent almost \$113 million to advertise things that do not even work. It is quite shocking to see how they claim to be great economists.

It makes me think of a certain program we debated in the House. At a number of press conferences, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and a senator working for victims said that they were taking care of victims and, thanks to this program, the parents of

murdered or abducted children would be able to get employment insurance benefits.

Only 12 files have been opened. It is appalling. It has helped 12 people. Some media people asked me to explain that record. My reply was that if the Conservatives had made as many commercials to announce this program, perhaps it would have been a bit more successful. If they had set less strict criteria, instead of holding press conferences to give the impression that they were solving all the problems, perhaps it would have been successful. Basically, for the benefit of those watching us, when a Conservative tells us that he is solving a problem, you have to stop and think about it. As a general rule, that is not the case at all.

This division 29 puts under the same umbrella the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board, the Review Tribunal, the Canadian Industrial Relations Board, which the Conservative government just adores, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which it adores even more, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, the Transportation Appeal Tribunal of Canada, the Competition Tribunal, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal, which was supposed to be very strong, according to this government, the Social Security Tribunal, which affects a lot of people, the Specific Claims Tribunal, and so on.

This will all be in the hands of a deputy minister who will report to the Minister of Justice and who will be appointed by the cabinet. This is another partisan, five-year appointment. That person will hold the purse strings. Then they tell us not to be afraid in the slightest, that there is no problem with the independence of the new tribunal and that everything is above board. This is a con, and the New Democratic Party is not falling for it.

● (1555)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her very important speech.

They are sneaking these things in, as she said. This omnibus bill includes a lot of changes.

I especially appreciated her analysis of division 29, because that is one of the divisions that I have not yet read.

I have just one question for the member. How can we handle a bill as big as this one when we are facing such a quick process, which flies in the face of true democracy?

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I would not have a problem with examining a bill quickly if the Conservative government had even a tiny bit of respect for democracy and if it stopped laughing at people and trying to shove bills down our throats with their time allocation motions. We often try to be accommodating, even at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Privilege

I think the smart thing to do would be to separate each of the parts, as I mentioned in my speech, and to send each of those parts to their respective committees. I do not think they should do what they did last year with Bill C-38. The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights received some clauses and we were told that we could make recommendations but that we would not be making any decisions about the bill.

I am starting to get fed up with being part of the Conservative government's anti-democratic process, and I think Canadians are too. We are hearing that more and more in our communities. Maybe I should not wake up the Conservatives. They should continue with their anti-democratic ways. People are getting sick of it. They tell us about it, and I cannot believe that the members opposite do not hear about it in their ridings. Either they are not listening to anyone or they are not getting out.

[*English*]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House over the past few days' debate of this bill, and the opposition have taken more time complaining about their lack of time to debate the bill than actually debating the bill itself. The reality is that just at second reading alone, we have five days of debate. In committee there will be days and hours of debate. Then it comes back to the House again for third reading. That is just in the House of Commons. It then goes to the Senate for the same process over again. Yet the opposition members spend precious little time actually talking about what is in the bill, what they agree with and do not agree with, and spend in some cases more time talking about not having enough time. That does not make any sense. It will not wash with Canadians.

That is just a comment. I really do not have a question.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I will gladly comment on his comment because the hon. member has to make up his mind: we are either not talking about the bill or we are talking about the bill. He just said that we talk about the parts of the bill that we like. That is very important. I will stand proudly to say that this is not good, this is not the way to proceed. It is important to me that it be quite clear that I am not voting against the two or four judges in Alberta. Rather, I am voting against section 29, which is a dangerous part. Maybe by hearing me, other members in the House will be curious to read page 263 and schedule 6 and realize that it is not the kind of pink sky their finance minister or whoever said it is. They keep saying that the opposition does not read. I think the Conservatives do not.

● (1600)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I understand that the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is rising in response to a question of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

REMARKS BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will not take too much time, but I want to respond to the government's response to the question of privilege raised by the member for Victoria earlier this week. Having consulted the blues—and I hope this will be part of your decision-making process over the

next few days—I can say that very little of what the government actually raised is relevant or pertinent to the question of privilege that was raised by the member for Victoria.

The Conservatives cited some studies that they say purport to reinforce what the Minister of State for Finance might have said, but the reality is that we are dealing with a matter of grave importance, and it is the right of parliamentarians to base our decision-making on sound evidence provided by members from all sides of the House. That is of paramount importance.

There was precedent cited by the member for Victoria that is clear on the point of the importance and the right of parliamentarians to have sound evidence provided by ministers. What we heard from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, aside from citing a few procedural citations, does not in any way conclusively provide a rebuttal to that point.

The reality is that when there is a matter of debate—for example, the citation of studies that draw different conclusions—it is true that there is no role for the Chair to arbitrate. The parliamentary secretary's evidence on the CPP in this morning's intervention might fall into that category. He cited a report that we may disagree with, but it is fair for him to cite that report.

That is not what the Minister of State for Finance did, and the member for Victoria stated this. The minister clearly misstated the findings of the report done by his own department, and from the access to information request that was concluded, and cited by my colleague from Victoria, it is clear that he did so. The Minister of State for Finance clearly misstated the findings in the knowledge and with the intent to mislead his fellow parliamentarians.

We have not heard an explanation from the minister of state himself as to how he could have been so completely off the mark in citing the study that he did, and because we have not heard that response, I do not think we can reasonably dispose of this matter in any other way besides holding a hearing at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Minister of State for Finance could come back to the House and say he was not briefed on the file properly and that is why he misled the House, or that he mixed up the facts, or even that he did not understand the conclusions of the report done by his department. It happens sometimes that the members opposite on the government side misstate facts. He could have stated that in the House. He has not done that. Therefore, the intervention this morning by the parliamentary secretary citing numbers from another report simply does not change the fact that the Minister of State for Finance stood in the House and deliberately tried to mislead it in citing a report that simply does not provide the conclusions he stated.

Government Orders

The government may not like the fact that the finance department study confirms the NDP's position that, "In the long run, expanding the CPP would bring economic benefits". The Conservatives are stuck with that. Just like the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, as members will recall, could not get away with presenting false evidence to support the government's agenda, neither can the Minister of State for Finance do the same. The minister misled the House intentionally. The ATI request proves that fact and despite the intervention by the parliamentary secretary this morning, the reality is that New Democrats believe a prima facie case of breach of privilege exists.

The Deputy Speaker: The argument and position of the NDP will be taken into account, along with those of the other members who have made comments on this question of privilege, and the Speaker will get back to the chamber fairly shortly with a ruling.

* * *

• (1605)

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hard-working member for Don Valley West.

I rise today to show my support for Bill C-31, Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 1. I am pleased to see our government continue to focus so squarely on the economic challenges facing our citizens, our communities, and our country as a whole.

Bill C-31 will implement key measures of the economic action plan 2014 to help create jobs and opportunities for Canadians, and to return our nation's finances to balanced budgets.

Through the steady leadership of our Prime Minister, Canada's economy has seen the best economic performance among all G7 countries in recent years, both during the global recession and throughout the recovery.

Here are the facts. Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada since the end of the recession in July 2009, of which 85% are full-time and nearly 80% in the private sector. Over that period, that has been the strongest job growth in the entire G7 by far. Canadians have also enjoyed the strongest income growth in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have more than fully recovered its business investment lost during the recession.

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

For the sixth straight year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world. Moreover, Canada leapt from sixth to second place in the Bloomberg ranking of the most attractive countries for businesses to grow.

Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have a rock solid AAA rating and a stable outlook from all major credit rating agencies, Moody's, Fitch, and Standard & Poor's. Canada's net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far. It is an impressive track record.

Throughout the year, I am always having discussions and consultations in my riding, the City of Barrie, talking to stakeholders about what they believe is in the best interests of Canada and what we can do to continue to spur economic growth.

I feel that the concerns in Barrie are pretty similar to those we see across the country in small communities. What is important in Barrie is that we focus on ensuring that good jobs are available, that taxes are kept low, and that sensible investments continue to be made to achieve our common goals of long-term growth and prosperity.

There have been many positive investments in communities across Canada in previous budgets. This budget does just that and continues that track record of strategic, smart investments.

I would like to give a few local examples. Federal investments in companies like IBM, with their university partnership, created over 100 jobs in my community; TNR Industrial Doors had a major expansion because of the support of the regional economic development agency; and Wolf Steel, which builds high-efficiency furnaces, doubled in size because of a partnership with the federal government, creating high-tech, high-paying jobs. Furthermore, my favourite local story, Southmedic, was able to move their factory from China back to Barrie. That was certainly a positive sign.

We have learned from these success stories that we must continue to work towards generating more manufacturing jobs in Barrie and across Canada, and that is achievable. Economic action plan 2014 is keeping us on that path to success.

Our Minister of International Trade attended as the keynote guest and spoke about how expanding our trade relationships can create a greater audience for manufacturers to sell their products and create jobs locally. It was a great summit. I know there was a lot of support at the summit for the economic action plan we have built because they recognize that it helps businesses in a meaningful way.

Many of the businesses at this manufacturing summit were small to medium-size businesses. They appreciated the government's commitment to further cut red tape for operations by eliminating the requirement for payroll remittances, and to support made-in-Canada products.

Companies, big and small, were all elated that we were reducing trade barriers within Canada and across the globe for the sale of their products. These stakeholders understand that these measures grow their businesses and allow them to hire more Canadians.

It is not just the manufacturing community that was pleased with our budget, but young people as well.

Government Orders

•(1610)

I am pleased to see that economic action plan 2014 confirmed our government's support for youth employment by investing \$40 million for up to 3,000 internships in high-demand fields and \$15 million for up to 1,000 internships in small and medium-size businesses. We are once again demonstrating our commitment to help our youth make a successful transition from school to work.

Each year, Barrie welcomes thousands of new students at Georgian College. I know they were very pleased with this budget and what it would do to help students.

Economic action plan also continues to support our seniors with an additional \$5 million for the new horizons for seniors program so that more seniors can actively participate in their communities. I have seen firsthand how well this program works. I know about 30 new horizons grants that have occurred in Barrie over the last eight years and they are huge successes.

I think of the Tollendale seniors home where new horizons grants helped to finance a computer lab to connect seniors with relatives all over the world and actually trained seniors at Tollendale on computers. It was an absolute hit. At the IOOF seniors home, there was an art for the ages program. There were people who were struggling with early onset dementia, and having an active lifestyle, including things like painting, actually helps delay the onset. That was another fantastic new horizons investment. To see this program grow, I think, is a wonderful thing for Canadian seniors.

Economic action plan 2014 did something else, since I just touched upon Alzheimer's, that I want to highlight.

The economic action plan included a \$15 million commitment to a neurodegeneration consortium on aging. This reminds me of a conversation I had with one of my constituents, Ed Harper, who was actually a member of Parliament from 1993–97.

Just a few months ago, Ed lost his wife, Rosemary, and I attended the funeral. He told me that he was writing a letter to our Prime Minister. He tremendously believed in our Prime Minister and knows what a great job he is doing for the country. However, he wrote a letter to talk about the need for more coordination on Alzheimer's funding and neurodegenerative research.

I know that he was one of the many Canadians who were so pleased to see that \$15 million allocated. I think Mr. Ed Harper's comments highlight a feeling that many Canadians have.

There are so many positive initiatives in this budget that it is difficult to touch upon all of them in the short time we have allotted to us. This is a budget that supports our commercial sectors. It supports our workers, seniors, and families across Canada.

I want to stress what I think is most important about this budget, and something that is tremendously appreciated in Barrie, which is that it puts us on an immediate track for balanced budgets. That is very impressive, given the global economic recession that took every country in the world off course. I think it is really a feather in the cap for our former Minister of Finance who did such an incredible job of shepherding the Canadian economy. I know that our new Minister of Finance and his team are going to do an incredible job in laying out the vision that was put forward in Bill C-31.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member mention Wolfgang Schroeter and his successful company in Barrie. Certainly, I would also like to applaud the success that Mr. Schroeter has had since 1976. His company was very innovative. There were 20 to 30 years where he was innovating on fireplaces, and we applaud that. Maybe he could teach the current government something about innovation because it tends to be falling behind.

My question touches more on mid-sized cities such as Barrie.

In 2013, the Conference Board, in its mid-sized cities report, found that almost 50% of mid-sized cities had still not recovered from the recession of 2008–12. Most of these cities have not regenerated the jobs they lost during the recession. This is the 300,000 or more people who are still without a job, the 300,000 fewer people employed than before the recession.

Would the member agree with us to reverse cuts of \$5.8 billion to local infrastructure enacted in this last budget? Would he support reversing those cuts and create jobs in our mid-sized cities?

•(1615)

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to correct the mistakes that were highlighted by the member opposite.

First, it is an absolute error to say that there were cuts in infrastructure. This government is responsible for the largest investment in infrastructure in Canadian history, and we are seeing that go forward in the next decade. It is a rock-solid commitment to municipalities.

I served on a city council for two terms. At the time, there was no support for municipalities. There was no audience, in Ottawa, for municipalities. The fact that we have had such an incredible investment in infrastructure has allowed municipalities, like the one I represent, to invest significantly in real and meaningful projects.

I would note that the member opposite said that unemployment has gone up and that we did not get those jobs back. The member is incorrect. I look at my own community. We had unemployment of 11.9% after the recession and we are down to 7% today. These are successful numbers. Progress is being made. If the NDP chose to support this economic progress, it would see, I think, more support in the polls.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the speaking notes from the Prime Minister's Office are really out of touch with reality when it comes to infrastructure.

The government likes to give the impression that it is giving huge increases in infrastructure dollars.

Mr. James Lunney: More than ever.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the one member from across the way heckles more than ever.

The reality is that there is an 80% or higher cut to infrastructure, which means 80%-plus taken off what was budgeted last year. That is what is in the budget this year for infrastructure spending. The government refuses to acknowledge that fact.

All it needs to do is read its own budget. It is not a disputable fact. It is in the government's own budget. This year, there is a decrease in the budgeted amount from the previous year.

Has the member read the budget and will he not confirm that this is in fact what is printed in the budget?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I recall when I was a city councillor, the Liberal government of the day had not a penny to support municipalities like mine in Barrie. We asked for funding to expand the GO train. Nothing.

However, when the Conservatives were elected, we expanded the GO train, built two new stations and, across our city, we have seen infrastructure investments, whether it is the expansion of the Georgian College, with the new campus, whether it is the new bridge at Duckworth Street, whether it is the expansion of the regional airport, whether it is the refurbishing of Eastview Arena. There are dozens of projects. I can tell members it is a stark contrast to what happened under the Liberals, where they did not care about infrastructure.

We have made a commitment that is a record investment in infrastructure. I am proud of that commitment to support Canadian municipalities. I am glad we have not continued the Liberal policy of doing nothing.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today in support of Bill C-31.

We Canadians are tremendously privileged to live in a country with such an abundance of natural resources. So much so, in fact, that the harnessing of those resources has had a direct link to our nation's prosperity.

Canada's manufacturing sector will be the focus of my speech today in support of economic action plan 2014 act, no. 1. It is but one example of a sector that has benefited tremendously from our land's abundance of natural resources. Manufacturing in Canada began with the production of simple items in small volumes. This was due primarily to our geographic diversity and to the absence of large consumer markets. Confederation in 1867 dramatically changed this sporadic consumer landscape, stimulating growth not only in Canada's manufacturing sector, but indeed in Canada's entire economy.

Following Confederation came the Canadian Pacific Railway, which led to new settlements and further increased our nation's population, skills, and capital. In 1871, a group dedicated to promoting the growth of manufacturing in Canada came together to establish the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. Eight years later, Sir John A. Macdonald's national policy introduced high tariffs on imported manufactured items in order to protect Canada's manufacturing sector. This policy was instrumental not only to the

development of Canada's manufacturing sector but also in creating a unified nation, independent of the United States.

The horrors of World War I brought about drastic diversification to manufacturing in Canada, as developments in the steel, shipbuilding, and pulp and paper industries reached unfathomable heights. By 1920, manufacturing directly employed about 17% of Canada's total labour force.

World War II brought about even more expansion and diversification to Canada's manufacturing sector, including to the automotive, aircraft, armaments, shipbuilding, and steel industries. By the mid-40s, more than a quarter of Canada's labour force was directly employed in the manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing also contributed significantly to the economic well-being and prosperity of all Canadians in the 20th century, accounting for a high of 24% and a low of 15% of Canada's GDP between 1945 and 1999.

The 21st century, unfortunately, has not been so kind to Canada's—and indeed the global—manufacturing sector. In fact, between 2004 and 2008, about one in seven manufacturing jobs disappeared across Canada, with similar declines experienced in the majority of OECD member countries. Contributing factors included production moving to countries such as China, an aging population, tariff reduction and, of course, the 2008 financial crisis.

Despite this downward trend, manufacturing is still a major contributor to the Canadian economy, accounting for almost 11% of Canada's GDP and employing over 1.7 million Canadians, with more than 95% of them being full-time, high-quality, well-paying jobs.

While manufacturing is centred on the production of goods, most Canadians do not realize that most high-value growth opportunities lie in the area of services, in such activities as research, engineering, design, marketing, and logistics. As such, manufacturing is an important source of innovation and global competitiveness for Canada, accounting for almost half of total business R & D expenditures. Incidentally, advanced manufacturing and strong knowledge-intensive industrial clusters continue to drive innovation and productivity across Canada.

The manufacturing sector employs a healthy mix of highly skilled Canadians in engineering, design, skilled trades, and research positions. In fact, the sector employed more than 58,000 R & D personnel in 2011, or 41% of all research personnel in Canada. Incidentally, the new Canada job grant will better align training and labour market needs by encouraging greater employer participation in skills training decisions and ensuring that training is better aligned with job opportunities, particularly in sectors facing skills mismatches and labour shortages, in sectors like manufacturing.

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•(1620)

Along with the Canada job grant, our government has introduced a number of measures to continue strengthening the competitiveness of our manufacturing sector. These include reducing the corporate income tax rate to 15% from 22%, extending the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for two years, eliminating tariffs on machinery, simplifying and streamlining the SR&ED tax incentive program, and doubling the IRAP program to an additional \$110 million per year.

Economic action plan 2014 outlines a number of new measures that would do even more to assist this vital sector. These include building on the work of the red tape reduction commission by reducing the tax compliance and regulatory burden for small and medium-sized businesses; providing an additional \$500 million over two years to the automotive innovation fund to support significant new strategic research and development projects and long-term investments in the Canadian automotive sector; moving forward with the new Windsor-Detroit international crossing; investing in federal bridges in Montreal to support the movement of goods, to create construction jobs, and to strengthen the manufacturing sector; creating the new Canada first research excellence fund, with \$1.5 billion in funding over the next decade, available to all post-secondary institutions striving to excel globally in research areas that create long-term economic advantages for Canada; and finally, creating the Canada apprentice loan by expanding the Canada student loans program to help registered apprentices in Red Seal trades.

The manufacturing sector is responsible for 64% of total Canadian merchandise exports and is the number one sector for foreign direct investment in Canada. It accounted for 29% of total FDI in 2012. That is why our government is committed to opening new markets through our ambitious trade agenda. The comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union, agreed to in principle on October 18, 2013, and the free trade agreement with South Korea, which concluded negotiations on March 11 of this year, are but two of the most recent examples.

Combined, these agreements open markets to hundreds of millions of consumers globally and are expected to boost Canada's economy by \$13.7 billion. Put another way, this is the economic equivalent of adding over \$1,000 to the average Canadian family's income or around 80,000 new jobs to the Canadian economy.

Incidentally, since taking office in 2006, our government has signed and entered into force five free trade agreements. These include the free trade agreement between Canada and the countries of the European Free Trade Association: Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. It also includes agreements with Peru, Colombia, Jordan, and Panama. In addition, Canada signed an agreement with Honduras on November 5, 2013, but this has yet to enter into force. All of these agreements have included the lowering and elimination of tariffs on various Canadian exports, which significantly benefits Canada's manufacturing sector.

Canada's automotive industry is a key component of Canada's manufacturing sector. It employs about 480,000 Canadians directly and indirectly and represents 10% of manufacturing GDP. Our government is committed to ensuring that Canada's world-class

automotive sector continues to have the right conditions for growth, not only in sales and jobs but also in cutting-edge technology, research, and development. The automotive innovation fund will create and maintain well-paying, good-quality jobs by supporting private sector investment in the Canadian automotive sector, increasing Canada's competitive advantage in the global marketplace. In total, the renewed fund will provide \$750 million over five years, 2013 to 2018, to automotive companies in Canada in support of strategic large-scale research and development projects.

While Canada's manufacturing sector is going through some tough times, it will remain a critical component of Canada's economy. The production, sale, and distribution of finished products will continue to contribute to consumer and labour markets and to secure Canada's position as an economic leader among developed nations.

•(1625)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member mentioned the new bridge in Montreal. It was thanks to four months of pressure from the NDP that the government finally came around and announced that the bridge would be built. Unfortunately, it bungled the file by not consulting with the province or the people who will use this bridge. It continues to approach this bridge in an ideological manner. We still have open questions about it.

Talking about bungled files, if we look at manufacturing, and the member tends to boast about the Conservative record, three names come to mind: Aveos, U.S. Steel, and Electro-Motive Diesel. The Conservative government was asleep at the wheel on these three files when it came to manufacturing. Even with the generous tax breaks the government gave these companies, they moved out. The government just let them go, with all the innovation and technology. As I mentioned before, when it comes to trade and innovation, the Conservatives are a bunch of boy scouts.

Why should Canadians trust the Conservatives now after so much bungling in the past three years?

•(1630)

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague missed the point of my speech. I talked about some of the successes this country is having and enjoying in manufacturing and the importance of the manufacturing sector to this country. Quite simply, it is a sector we have to work harder at developing and ensuring future success for. I spoke about the automotive innovation fund as an example.

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More importantly, the member asked about trust. Let me talk about trust. Over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada since the end of the recession in July 2009, over 85% of them full-time and nearly 80% in the private sector. That is the strongest job growth in the entire G7, by far. Canadians have also enjoyed the strongest income growth in the G7. Canada is the only G7 country to have more than fully recovered business investment lost during the recession.

When it comes to trust, it is about growth and prosperity for Canadians. This government is getting the job done. I would encourage my hon. colleague to join us in this venture.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is also important, given the member's remarks, that he look at the overall manufacturing industry, which has been hit hard in the last number of years. Tens of thousands of good-quality jobs have never been replaced. This is a national government that does not seem to give the attention necessary to our manufacturing industry, which is really important to all of Canada. The hit has been especially hard in the province of Ontario.

My question to the member is related to a question the Liberal Party put earlier today in question period through the member for Toronto Centre. It was with regard to the fact that the number of adults working today for minimum wage has increased by 50%.

I wonder if the member would provide comment on that issue. We have thousands more adults working for minimum wage, which is a huge increase of 50% overall. How does the government justify the lacklustre performance on that issue?

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Speaker, I referenced in my presentation that manufacturing has had a tough go in the last 10 years. There is no doubt about it. The recession of 2008-09 was the worst we have seen in a generation. There is no question that we lost jobs and companies. We went through a difficult time.

However, let us look at the flip side of that discussion, which is the recovery and what this government has done in rebuilding the confidence of Canadians as we have come out of that with job growth and economic prosperity.

When we talk about the jobs we have created, it is important that we acknowledge that, for example, in my province of Ontario, energy costs have been a difficult challenge and are driving business away. I do not for a minute doubt that manufacturers and companies in my province are having a difficult challenge. However, this government's lowest tax rate for businesses in the G7 is stimulating growth, creating incentives, and creating opportunity for Canadians. Frankly, we are getting the job done on our side of the House.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for York South—Weston, Employment.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for York South—Weston.

I will use my time today to express my general disagreement with yet another omnibus bill, now the trademark of the Conservatives,

unfortunately. I will talk specifically about some provisions in the bill that are particularly worrisome and disappointing to the people in my riding of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

First of all, I would like to loudly and clearly denounce much of the content of the bill and the process used by the Conservatives to make radical legislative changes at lightning speed. Not only does the budget implementation bill contain no real job creation measures, but Parliament cannot do its job, given that the Conservatives introduce omnibus bills and use gag orders to excess.

How can Canadians expect us to do our jobs thoroughly and be able to measure up to their expectations if the government is constantly cutting off the debates we are supposed to have here in the House? Why has the Conservative government imposed gag orders 60 times since the beginning of this Parliament, if not to muzzle parliamentarians and Canadians, in addition to setting the sad record of having the highest number of gag orders in Canadian history? How can we look our constituents in the eye when they know that it is impossible to thoroughly examine the changes that the government is imposing because it is burying them in bills that are more than 350 pages long and amend over 500 sections and dozens of acts?

Once again, the bill is about to drastically change the face of Canadian legislation, and it deserves to be studied carefully by parliamentarians, together with civil society and experts who must be consulted. This is something the government seems to ignore every time it introduces a new bill. In addition to omnibus bills, the second trademark of the Conservatives seems to be imposing unilateral decisions, without consulting anyone other than perhaps Kijiji when the time comes to justify their misguided economic policies.

That said, in recent weeks, I have spent a lot of time in my riding taking the pulse of the constituents and finding out what their real concerns are. The first of their real concerns is that the government continues to impose radical austerity measures, simply because the Conservatives want to balance the budget on the backs of taxpayers and the provinces just in time for the next election. My constituents know very well that all the cuts and the austerity measures are basically all about electioneering and do nothing to improve our standard of living in the long run.

The constituents of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles are also concerned about employment, health and the economy. In my constituency, many small businesses are struggling to grow, be profitable and contribute to the economy of our community. However, the government is not renewing the hiring tax credit for small business that the NDP first proposed in 2011. Moreover, the Conservatives still have no strategy to propose that will help the 1.3 million Canadians who are currently without jobs.

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The government can blow its own horn about being a champion of economic policies, but the figures are clear. We have 6.3 unemployed Canadians for each available job; in the Atlantic provinces, that figure rises to 10 for each available job.

My constituents want good, full-time jobs with salaries that can provide a decent standard of living. However, from what I hear in the street, they are having more and more difficulty making ends meet. They often have to turn to credit so that they can make it to the end of the month, because their salaries are stagnant, their costs are going up, and they are not able to provide themselves with a cushion in case of unforeseen expenses.

The debt-to-GDP ratio has climbed by almost 10% since 1999. During that time, credit card and car loan debt has doubled, and debt held in lines of credit has quadrupled. The government just twiddles its thumbs, though. Why has it not adopted the measures proposed by the NDP, designed to make life more affordable and to reduce household debt by means of solid regulations that will put a stop to the abusive practices of banks, money lenders and credit card companies?

The budget implementation bill also unfortunately highlights the fact that the Conservatives have grasped nothing and have learned no lessons from the tragic accident in Lac-Mégantic last summer. Whole families were shattered forever and the community had to endure one of the worst railway disasters that Canada has ever seen.

● (1635)

Instead of enhancing rail safety measures, the government is now allowing many rail safety regulations to be changed or repealed without public notice. This might involve engineering standards, employee training, hours of work, maintenance or performance.

Worse yet, cabinet decisions on changing safety standards for the transportation of dangerous goods will be kept secret from now on. This might involve the classification of dangerous goods, inspector skills and training, or rules on importing and exporting such goods.

From now on, with these changes, the public will not be informed when the Conservatives water down safety measures, and experts will not be able to provide their opinion to the department before the changes come into effect.

This change is rather ironic considering that at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, of which I am a member, we are currently studying ways of improving access to government data in order to promote economic development. In my opinion, this is a rather underhanded way of applying a double standard on data sharing. From what I understand, the government wants more transparency when that suits its agenda, but it is tightening its grip on information that should be available to the public. After all, it is their safety we are talking about.

Still with the dangerous goods registry, this bill makes substantial amendments to the Hazardous Products Act, in order to harmonize it with American laws and apply only some of the new international standards in the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. I think consumers and workers have the right to know what is in the products that they use every day. I cannot imagine why the government is refusing to apply the strictest international standards.

All these changes are in Bill C-31, and they do not meet the needs of the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. My constituents are also exasperated with other measures being introduced by this government, such as the electoral “deform”, which is grossly undermining our democracy, the senseless cuts to Canada Post, and the Conservatives' inaction on important issues such as the Quebec Bridge, the environment, and the tax havens where well-off Canadians are hiding their money.

Let us not forget the \$36 billion in cuts to health, which will have a huge impact on the quality of the services provided to individuals and our seniors.

All these things combined are causing the public to become disillusioned with our role as parliamentarians and with our institutions. Unfortunately, this is creating cynicism that only the Conservatives can take pride in fuelling.

Before I finish my speech, I would like to repeat what the NDP thinks makes sense in terms of public policy and, at the same time, what should be in a budget when Canada is facing the kind of economic, environmental and social challenges we are facing today. Unfortunately, our recommendations fell on deaf ears during the budget consultations.

In the NDP, we believe that the government needs to invest in innovation, economic development and high-quality jobs for the middle class. It needs to work with the private sector to help Canadian businesses grow, create jobs and increase their exports. It should continue to use the current job creation credit for SMEs.

Canada should also work with the provinces to develop a comprehensive strategy to tackle unemployment and recurring structural underemployment among young people and strengthen sectors where labour shortages are anticipated.

In terms of energy, Canada would benefit from doing a study on ways to increase value-added domestic production. The government would also do well to reintroduce the eco-energy retrofit—homes program, which was very popular and helped homeowners save money while protecting the environment.

With respect to workers at the end of their career, the retirement age needs to be brought back to 65. People who have worked hard all their lives need to be given access to old age security benefits and the guaranteed income supplement so that they can have a decent retirement.

Once again, is the government going to listen to Canadians and agree to what they are asking for? I wonder. In the meantime, I can only fiercely oppose this bill, which offers nothing that will help the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles prosper and improve their situation.

● (1640)

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

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She said that she had talked to her constituents. The Conservative government has gotten into the habit of introducing massive bills and throwing other measures in with the budget. Moreover, the government blatantly refuses to discuss these measures. We saw that earlier when my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques suggested that we create a budget bill and that all the other measures be removed from the bill.

I would like to ask my colleague what her constituents have to say about the whole idea of massive bills. Do they like that the government chooses to proceed in this way? What do they think?

• (1645)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

People are not happy that the government is hiding all kinds of sub-measures in a massive bill, so that they do not know what the effects will be. The Conservatives do not give the public enough information, so the public cannot take action.

For example, SMEs will lose the hiring credit, but they will have no way of knowing because the government will not make a big announcement about that. The government is taking away that subsidy, but has hidden that in a bill.

This massive bill eliminates all kinds of measures that helped SMEs, local and regional development, and Canadian society.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, this budget is rather disappointing because it does not present a vision of society. Does my colleague agree with me?

For example, in the Quebec City region, we have Université Laval, and the lack of investment in research and development, especially in basic research, is causing us to lose ground within the OECD, particularly in the area of research practices.

What does my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles think about investments in research and development?

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, we know how research and development can aid a society's development, as well as the development of small, medium and large businesses.

We see this in very specific sectors like health and education. It is very important for chemical discoveries and the development of new projects.

Our universities must be better subsidized when it comes to research and development. Education is under provincial jurisdiction and the government looks after higher education, but investments are crucial to research and development. We cannot abandon the regions as the Conservative government is doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing I am finding interesting is that we are hearing about issues over and over again from the Conservatives regarding this budget, but we are not hearing enough about what they are going to do for small businesses. What they have done, I should mention, is get rid of the small business tax credit. They wrote about merchant fees in the budget back in March, but in the BIA they did not talk about them. Small business owners are having to pay up to \$20,000—even

higher in some cases—to the big banks and credit card companies because of all of the extra hidden fees costing them money, and the government chooses not to act on that.

I know my hon. colleague has a lot of small businesses in her riding. I would like to know from my hon. colleague what those small businesses are saying in relation to how they are struggling to get by, with the government refusing to pick up the mantle and support small businesses.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, cancelling the hiring tax credit is bad for businesses. Not putting a cap on credit card interest rates is also bad for retail businesses. Furthermore, the government's excise tax increases in recent budgets are bad for our businesses, too.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on the bill. It is just unfortunate that the bill is what it is. We have seen yet another giant omnibus budget bill arrive from the Conservative government, which really does nothing to correct the major flaws that the government has imposed upon Canada and Canadians since taking office.

As for the major flaws, I have just written a few of them. We have seen a reduction in many of the things that we think of as part of what Canada holds dear, the things we treasure as part of Canada. The Conservative government has systematically dismantled or reduced things like VIA Rail, Canada Post, the CBC, Veterans Affairs, EI, and Service Canada behind it. All of those things have lost something since the government took office.

In health care, there is a new reduction in the amount of money the provinces will get. The Canadian Wheat Board is gone. The gun registry is gone. Elections Canada is now having its powers taken back, and voting will be more difficult for many Canadians under the Conservative government, if not impossible.

The environment took a huge hit under the Conservative government with the first of these mammoth budget bills when the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act was eviscerated. That was two years ago, and the regulations for that act have still not been published, so we still do not know how an environmental assessment will deal with human health.

Rivers in this country have lost their protection. Almost all of them across the country—rivers, lakes, and streams—are no longer covered by environmental protection. We think that is because the government wants the pipeline companies to transport oil across them more easily.

Rail safety has taken a big hit under the Conservative government. One only has to think about the tragedy that befell Lac-Mégantic and the fact that, when that train was operating, it was operating with a one-person crew that was authorized by the Minister of Transport.

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Food safety has taken a hit under the government. In addition to the listeriosis outbreak, we also had the largest ever recall of meat in Canada after many hundreds of people were made sick by the government's inaction.

Regarding airline safety, we heard today that the government is suggesting there will not be flight attendants for every door on a plane. Does that mean that, when I get on a plane, I am going to be told which door will not have somebody to help me out? Will I get a discount if I take an unsafe seat on an airline? It makes no sense, and we cannot continue to allow this kind of reduction by the government in what we hold dear as Canadians.

The OAS, or old age security system, has been reduced by the government. People will now have to work until they are 67. The Canada pension plan disability has had its definitions changed again. The new regulations have never been promulgated, so we still do not know exactly how that is going to work, but there is a gap between the Canada pension plan disability and OAS that the government has not yet filled. People are going to go for two years without any income.

The government has defunded or taken away money from such organizations as CIDA, KAIROS, and women's groups in this country, which used to have government funding to help them express themselves and take legal action where necessary.

Drug safety has taken a hit with the government's refusal to make sure that the OxyContin-like drugs are as safe as they can be.

Transparency and accountability have taken a big hit under the Conservative government. The Parliamentary Budget Officer had to go to court to get the government to tell us what the budget really means in terms of how many cuts there will be.

The national childcare program was, of course, the first thing the government tore down. Affordable housing is taking a hit every day as the amount of money the government is spending on affordable housing—of which my riding is in dire need—is dwindling as time goes on, every day and every week. Of course, the government voted against the Jack Layton budget that would have put in some money for affordable housing. That money is going to disappear.

We have a situation in my riding of York South—Weston where 90% of the people who live in the concrete apartment buildings that were put up in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—and there are a lot of them—are in precarious housing. They have some kind of precariousness about them. That is an enormous number, and about 60% of the people in my riding live in them. They are not receiving government subsidies. There is no government amount that is going to disappear, but they are already in need.

• (1655)

There are 33% of those individuals who are in critical need and are an eyelash away from being homeless. That is thousands of Canadians in my riding of York South—Weston. This budget has absolutely nothing for that critical need of many Canadians.

This budget and this budget implementation bill is another big mess of things that have nothing to do with the things that Canadians need to have happen.

In fact, several of the things that the government promised, in this budget and in the last, have never been implemented. For example, in 2013, the former finance minister stood in this House and promised that whenever the government spent money on infrastructure, it would incorporate apprenticeships into that infrastructure spending. I thought, "Great. We've been pushing for this for a long time. Let's look for it in the budget implementation bill".

One budget came along, and it was not there. Another one came along, and it was not there. This one came along, and there is still nothing to tie infrastructure spending—the government does spend some money on infrastructure—to training and development of the youth in need in this country.

We have a promise that was made by the government in this budget speech to do something about pay-to-pay billing. It is not there. It is not in the budget implementation bill. Phone companies, cellphone companies, and Internet companies are still going to be able to charge extra money for people to get their bill in the mail. To add insult to injury, those individuals, when they get their bill in the mail, are going to have to walk several blocks to get it because mail delivery to their homes is going to be stopped.

We have the Minister of State for Democratic Reform suggesting that persons can take a utility bill, a phone company bill, and use that to prove their identity. They cannot do that if it is from the Internet, though, because Elections Canada has already ruled that is inadmissible.

We have the government suggesting that people will be able to get their bills for free in the mail, which it did not provide for in this budget implementation bill, and at the same time suggesting they can use that same utility bill to prove their identity in an election. The government is being hypocritical in its suggestion that one thing can do one thing and one thing can do another. It does not make sense.

The government has also promised transparency and accountability. Where have we seen that? Nowhere.

One of the things that is most frightening about this budget implementation bill is the attachment to FATCA. For those who do not know FATCA, it is the way that the U.S. government is going to tax some Canadian citizens, about a million of them. Some of them are accidental Canadian citizens, who have never lived in the United States in their lives. They were born in Canada, lived in Canada all their lives, and now are being told that they are somehow American citizens because of their parents.

The government has in this bill suggested that it will now be all right, without notice to the individuals, for the banks to give information about the RRSPs, RDSPs, RESPs, and other assets that individuals have, to CRA, for the purpose of giving that information to another country. One assumes that the reason they are giving that information is so that somebody can come and take that money out of their bank accounts.

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This is outrageous. We are a sovereign nation. Canada is a country unto itself. The ability of this country to protect its citizens should include the ability against another country coming after those citizens' money. I am talking about Canadian citizens here, not persons who are living in the United States and who are American citizens. Let the U.S. government come after them, but not Canadian citizens. We should not be assisting another government to manufacture a reason to come into a Canadian citizen's bank and take that money. That is not something we should be doing, and it should not be in this budget implementation bill.

If we need to have that discussion, let us have that discussion, but let us not do it in a budget implementation bill.

● (1700)

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what about what the member is not saying? He is not telling the rest of the story here, about the moves our government made to negotiate with the United States to ensure it was not able to impose the sanctions it was looking at imposing, which would have been highly detrimental to all Canadians with dual citizenship. If it were not for our government's intervention and action on this, the consequences to Canadian banks and to Canadians with money in American banks would have been tremendous.

However, the member is not saying that. He is not talking about the intervention by the Canadian government to save a lot of dual citizens a lot of grief. The United States of America has the ability to create its own legislation and to oppose those things as it wants. The damage done to dual citizens would have been astronomical if our government had not taken the steps it took, and had it not been prepared to take these immediate measures that we are putting in this budget.

The hon. member needs to tell the rest of the story when he stands up and talks about that because the consequences he has not outlined would have been dire.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of what went on behind closed doors in the negotiations with the Americans. All I am aware of is what is in this bill. If somebody wants to say it could have been a lot worse, well, there are lots of things that could have been a lot worse.

The problem is that this bill imposes an obligation on Canadian banks to eventually disclose to American authorities Canadian assets, Canadian dollars in Canadian banks. That is deserving of a much fuller discussion than this bill is ever going to get.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on that particular point in terms of the additional discussion that is necessary.

When we take a look at this massive budget bill, as I said earlier, the government is making changes to dozens of pieces of legislation through the back door by passing it through a budget implementation bill, when in fact it should be stand-alone legislation.

Some of that stand-alone legislation, for example, deals with rail safety, which is a very important, very topical issue. There needs to be a lot more discussion on that aspect of this bill. There are other things, including dealing with food safety.

I am wondering if the member could provide comment in terms of how he feels that the bundling of all that legislation, and then bringing it in under the budget bill, will have a negative impact in terms of giving due diligence on legislation that should be debated and have consultations with Canadians. Through committee work, we can hear stakeholders. Many opportunities have been lost because we have bundled all that legislation into one budget bill.

This seems to be the Conservative norm since it has had a majority. It bundles in as much legislation as possible in order to avoid true accountability on the wide and varied important issues facing Canada.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that the member talks about rail safety immediately after the discussion about FATCA.

The minister has suggested that the reason for the change is to make it quicker for her to change Canada's rail safety regime, and to change it without consultation and discussion, to harmonize it with the U.S.

We live in Canada; we do not live in the United States. It is true that the rail networks cross the border, but I would like to think that the Canadian government would want to protect its citizens in a way that is at least as good as they are doing today, not water it down to make it amenable with some U.S. regulation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation is serious. Our families are carrying too much debt, and the Conservatives laugh and heckle during question period when we talk about the decline in the manufacturing industry or when we talk about the middle class.

Could my colleague tell us whether we should not be taking care of the middle class and the manufacturing industry in this country in order to create jobs?

● (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it is good that my hon. colleague raised that issue. In my riding of York South—Weston, the middle class used to be supported by manufacturing jobs. There used to be good manufacturing jobs, tens of thousands of them. They are all gone. Where did they go? They went to other countries. They went out of the riding.

The people who used to be supported by those jobs are now supported by part-time, temporary, minimum wage jobs, if they have a job at all. They cannot get EI because they have not worked long enough.

It is a dire situation, and there is nothing in this budget to help recreate the kind of middle class that we used to enjoy, particularly in the city of Toronto.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise here today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

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I enjoy listening to the debate in the House of Commons, and I like to hear the different points of view, but I would like to point out one observation that I have made over the last nearly six years. If we are here that long, we find that we hear everything at least twice or three times.

I think back to 2009, at the height of the economic downturn. Some of the New Democrats used to sit down here. I can remember the member for Halifax at the time, when we were debating a bill and talking about the home renovation tax credit. The NDP was totally against it, at least at that point in the debate, and hon. members can check the blues from that day.

I remember the NDP member's comment about the home renovation tax credit, saying we were giving people a bunch of money to build a bunch of decking for homes. However, that program and that tax credit was one of the single largest reasons why we came through the downturn as well as we did.

I have heard other comments here today about the size of the bill and what is in the bill. I think back to at least last year, or the year before, when we were talking about environmental screening and whether we would need to do an environmental screening in a national park if we were installing a cedar bench. That is what we used to have to do. The opposition fought tooth and nail to keep that in.

The world has not come to an end, and the environment is probably much better. Municipalities have more money, and certainly civil servants have a lot more time to do more important work than doing environmental screenings on cedar benches.

My only comment to the opposition members would be for them not to get so wound up. Things are going in the right direction, and I will get into the direction that this country is taking in a few moments.

Where is Canada relative to G7 nations, debt to GDP, for example, deficit to GDP, job growth, employment insurance, some of the key drivers, key indicators, of an economy's health? If we look at debt to GDP, obviously in G7 countries, Canada is far and away the best. With regard to deficit to GDP, we are absolutely the best, with a near balance this year and a surplus next year. No other country in the G7 can even come close to that. In fact, most of them are in structural deficit positions at this point.

On employment and records, and I am not a partisan person, I can assure hon. members of that, the opposition has failed to recognize there has been over a million new jobs created since July 2009. Those are the indisputable facts.

It is the leadership of this government, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister and the members of caucus, who have led us to this point. We should not forget the economic downturn in 2007, 2008, and 2009. We should not forget the budget that was delivered in 2009, which saved the day, in my opinion, for this country. We need to focus on that.

What have we done? People say that we have ridden the coattails of the U.S. out of the recovery. That is not true. We came out of it much sooner than the U.S., and in much better condition. What have we done? Long before I came to this House, we lowered taxes for

businesses, families, and individuals. That has allowed people to keep more of their own money. A dollar in the hands of business, or a dollar in an individual's or a family's hands, is far more productive than it is going through the inner workings of government.

We have the lowest corporate tax rate of any other developed country. We have expanded trade. We cannot point to one trade deal that saved the day; we have trade deals with 43 countries. They are not all fully implemented, but regarding the ones that we have fully implemented and the ones that will be implemented, for example, Canada-Korea, the benefits of these will be felt for decades. Long after I am gone from this House, the impacts and the benefits will be felt.

• (1710)

Let us take, for example, tariffs. I live in a rural riding. The tariffs on pork products, the tariffs on beef products, the tariffs on identity-protected soybeans, adzuki beans, navy beans, white beans, et cetera, are all over 400%. The tariffs on pork products are over 30% or 40%. The tariffs on beef products are in that same range.

The U.S. and the European Union have signed agreements with Korea that are being implemented now, being phased in, and what has happened? Our trade with Korea has dropped 30%. That is not good. Some of these tariffs would come right off immediately, and over the next number of years tariffs would be reduced. This is going to help our economy.

This is not creating fake economies through quantitative easing or by injecting money into frivolous things. This is making investments, reducing tariffs, and letting business do what it does best, which is create jobs and economic prosperity.

What else have we done? We have invested in innovation. When I first came to the House, the member for Cambridge was the minister for FedDev and science and technology. Look what took place in southern Ontario. There were investments from one end of the province to the other that made a difference. There were investments in universities from coast to coast. The universities are still very appreciative of those investments because the investments made them more competitive. They are more attractive to international students when those students know there are world-class campuses right here in this country.

Let us take a look at the member for Brant from Brantford. Wilfrid Laurier University has a campus there. Look at what that has done to the downtown of Brantford. I used to work in Brantford.

Through the auto innovation fund, we have invested in the auto sector. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in increased productivity, capacity, and performance in auto assembly plants here in this country, in spite of my good friend Ken Lewenza.

Border perimeter agreements with the United States are another one. Years from now, when we look back at how we got to such a favourable position with the world, this will be another one. Rules and regulations that cause burden, red tape, and encumbrances on business are being improved and streamlined to allow products to cross our border each and every day at lower cost and with less labour and less burden.

Government Orders

Just wait until the bridge is built in Windsor. That will make a big difference, as I know the Speaker will attest to. We have reduced red tape. I have already announced some of our initiatives to reduce red tape, but we are continuing on.

For example, in the budget this year alone, we are talking about payroll deductions, such as Canada pension and employment insurance deductions, that come off at source. The employer or an employee has to take time out of the day to do these deductions from the payroll. We intend to raise those limits, those thresholds, so that CPP and EI remittances would not have to be sent in every two weeks. Now it would be every month.

I want to talk about what a decade will do. Let us take a look at what a decade in Ontario has done to the Ontario economy. An Ontario Liberal government has absolutely destroyed the economy in Ontario. That is the truth. What has a Conservative government done in Canada in the last eight years? We have set this country up for economic success and prosperity for, I am guessing, probably 40 or 50 years. It is the clearest example I can give. It is why I entered politics, and I am sure it is why most of my colleagues have. I am sure that 40 years from now our grandchildren will have great jobs because of what this government has done.

● (1715)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member asked what a decade will do. If we look, we see that the health care accord has expired after 10 years, with nothing in its place. The member's constituents are asking questions about this situation. Mary Straus of Walton, one of his constituents, is asking about it. With the absence of a health care accord, she is concerned that there will be increased privatization.

She cannot receive an answer from the member because she says he toes the party line. Therefore, I am asking for her, in her place, in the House of Commons, what the government will do about health care. Will our children be better off 10 years down the road without a health care accord that has guaranteed funding to health care for the past 10 years?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I know Mary, and not surprisingly, Mary is a member of the retired CAW union. Therefore, we will take that in context.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: She is your constituent.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I know she is a constituent. I am telling the House her background. I talk to Mary all the time by email. The member can be assured that if she has any questions on health, she can come into my office anytime.

However, let me tell you what we have done. We have increased health care transfers every year by 6% per year. Look it up. You will be very interested to read about it. I will also tell you that there was hardly a comment from the provinces about the funding. Why is that? What do they want? They want stable funding that applies to the five principles of the Canada Health Act. It is pretty straightforward. I am not surprised.

I will tell you one thing you could do. You could tell people like Ken—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Huron—Bruce must address his comments to the Chair and not to other members.

I do not know if he wants to complete his answer, which he has time to do.

Mr. Ben Lobb: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

What I was going to say is you can talk to people like Ken Lewenza and tell them to stop wasting money on organizations like Leadnow and actually protect the union workers.

I am going to tell you a story. I have gone to bat for the CAWs in my riding. I have gone to Kitchener with them, fighting for them for WSIB. Guess what national members like Ken Lewenza said? They said to hire a lawyer. That is what they said.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the member. In his speech, he gave us an entire history; he talked about 40 or 50 years from now, but we are talking about a budget that has been tabled. I would like to hear what he has to say about this budget.

In his view, what in this budget will help individuals in my riding, middle-class individuals, immigrants and newcomers? I had the same question for the Minister of Finance. Does he feel comfortable with this omnibus bill, a catch-all that includes everything from the Champlain Bridge to measures with the United States, hiding the economic importance of the economic plan that Canada needs to have?

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, to answer the member's question, one of them is skilled trades. We have this huge skilled trades deficit in our country, particularly in Ontario. I would suggest that the Ontario Liberal government is at the root of that problem.

However, we have \$100 million in this BIA, which the opposition will vote against, that would help young men and women who want to get into the trades to have interest-free loans.

He asked about things in the budget, so I will give you one item from the budget: rural broadband. I am from a rural riding. In order for rural businesses to conduct their business in the year 2014 and beyond, we need rural broadband.

There are two examples in about 15 seconds. I could go on for 45 minutes. I do not think you are going to let me do that.

● (1720)

The Deputy Speaker: The member is correct.

Resuming debate, the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague from Huron—Bruce for sharing his time with me and for his very informative and well-researched speech. It was very good.

Government Orders

I am honoured to add my voice in support of today's debate on Bill C-31, which proposes to legislate key elements of economic action plan 2014.

Economic action plan 2014 would play a key role in strengthening Canada's economy now and in the future, with positive measures that would advance economic progress and prosperity. Today I would like to highlight some of the act's key measures that target the financial sector.

Canadians should be proud of our financial services sector. It plays a fundamental role, transforming savings into productive investment in the economy; facilitating the efficient management of risk; and providing the payment infrastructure necessary for the exchange of goods, services, and financial assets.

Canada's financial system is widely considered one of the most resilient and best-regulated in the world. For the sixth year in a row, the World Economic Forum has recognized our banking system as the soundest in the world. Moreover, five Canadian financial institutions were among the top 20 in Bloomberg's most recent list of the world's strongest financial institutions, which is more than any other country.

Since the start of the global financial crisis, the government has implemented a number of measures to maintain Canada's financial sector advantage. These measures are designed to reinforce the stability of the sector and to encourage competition. Today's legislation proposes new initiatives that would build on Canada's financial sector advantage.

We have Canada's anti-money-laundering and anti-terrorist-financing regime. This measure, as I have just said, concerns strengthening Canada's anti-money-laundering and anti-terrorist-financing regime. Our government is committed to a strong and comprehensive regime that is at the forefront of the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing and that safeguards the integrity of Canada's financial system and the safety and security of Canadians. Canada's regime remains strong and effective and is consistent with international standards. However, it is important to continually improve Canada's regime to address emerging risks, including virtual currencies, such as Bitcoin, to strengthen Canada's international leadership in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing.

Following an extensive multi-year review process, our government is proposing various updates, including enhancing the ability of the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, to disclose to federal partners threats to the security of Canada, consistent with the government's response to the Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182. This measure would help keep Canadians safe and would strengthen our financial institutions against white-collar crime.

Next, let us talk about the co-operative capital markets regulator. While Canada's financial system has been rated one of the soundest in the world, we have a capital markets regulatory system that can and must be improved. At a time when talented people and sought-after capital are flowing across borders as never before, competition in financial markets today is fierce. If we want Canadians to succeed in the global marketplace, we need to continually improve our

system. Critics of the current system believe that it is overly complex, inefficient, and a barrier to foreign investment in Canada, and they are right. That is why, last September, our government and the Governments of British Columbia and Ontario agreed to establish a co-operative capital markets regulator. In fact, Terry Campbell, president of the Canadian Bankers Association, applauded today's move by the Governments of Canada, British Columbia, and Ontario to establish a co-operative capital markets regulator, which would offer improved investor protection and greater efficiencies in capital markets in participating provinces.

● (1725)

He further stated that:

We appreciate the federal government's perseverance and leadership on this important economic issue as Canada's current fragmented system puts us out of step with other countries around the world. Today's announcement by these three governments is a significant first step and we encourage other provinces to participate in the proposed system.

Today's legislation includes authority for payments to eligible provinces and territories for costs related to the transition to the co-operative capital markets regulatory system. The co-operative regulator will better protect investors, enhance Canada's financial services sector, support more efficient capital markets, and more effectively manage systemic risk in national capital markets.

Along with British Columbia and Ontario, our government continues to invite all other provinces and territories to participate in the implementation of the co-operative system.

In recent budgets, the government has introduced a number of measures to strengthen Canada's regulatory regime for over-the-counter derivatives consistent with its G20 commitments. Canada's major banks, the largest participants in this market, are subject to effective prudential supervision by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions on their over-the-counter derivatives transactions. Major jurisdictions are deciding whether to let foreign banks transact over-the-counter derivatives in their markets based on Canadian rules or their own rules.

Bill C-31 would amend the Bank Act to create an explicit regulation-making power for banks regarding over-the-counter derivatives. This would facilitate the integration and consolidation of over-the-counter derivatives regulations with the co-operative capital markets regulator when it becomes operational. It would also make it easier for foreign regulators to assess the Canadian regulatory framework in their equivalency determinations, which would benefit Canadian banks when transacting with foreign counterparties.

Our government has taken significant steps to make our financial system more stable, reduce systemic risks, and ensure we have the flexibility and power to support financial institutions during a crisis.

For example, in budget 2008, our government modernized the authorities of the Bank of Canada to support the stability of the financial system. The bank used these enhanced powers to redistribute liquidity to financial institutions, a key element in preserving the flow of credit to Canadians and businesses during the so-called “credit crunch”.

Bill C-31 builds on initiatives such as this by proposing amendments to permit the Bank of Canada to provide banking and custodial services to the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation.

Lastly, I want to briefly highlight how our government is making Canada an even better place to create and expand a business. For example, promoting the exploration of Canada's rich mineral resources by junior mining companies offers important benefits in terms of job creation and economic development right across the country, including rural and northern communities.

Economic action plan 2014 is building on the responsible resource development plan launched in economic action plan 2012 with new and renewed measures to support further investments in Canada's natural resource sectors. For example, the 15% mineral exploration tax credit helps junior mineral exploration companies raise capital by providing an incentive to investors in flow-through shares issued to finance mineral exploration.

The Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia noted that it is pleased to see the return of the mineral exploration tax credit in the budget: “Many of our members are having difficulty raising capital in these financially challenging times, and the renewal is much appreciated”.

To conclude, our government will remain focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs and economic growth. Ensuring Canada's economic advantage today will translate into the long-term prosperity of tomorrow.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton will have five minutes of questions and comments when we return to this debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CONFLICT MINERALS ACT

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP) moved that 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, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be standing here today to launch debate on the conflict minerals act, Bill C-486.

Private Members' Business

The journey to here began five years ago.

[*Translation*]

Five years ago, I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country equally beautiful and sad. For more than 15 years, Congolese government forces, rebel groups and private militias have been fighting to control the land and the abundant natural resources that have been the cause of this country's misfortune.

[*English*]

I spoke with Congolese government officials to see what was being done to enable a future of peace and sustainable development. The most striking response was not an answer but my question returned back to me. I was asked what I was doing. It was a fair question, because the truth is that the tragedy of the Congo is not merely a Congolese or an African problem. It is our problem, and the reason is in our phones and in our jewellery.

Many people are simply shocked to learn of the scale of the crimes in the Congo and the connection between consumers and the conflict. For the record, here are some of the facts.

[*Translation*]

The conflict that has been raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1998 is the deadliest conflict since World War II. In 2011, the number of rapes was estimated at 48, not per year, per month or per day, but per hour. Rape is used as a weapon of war. In 2012, 2 million people were displaced. That is approximately the equivalent of the combined population of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

Conflict minerals generate \$180 million per year for armed groups, literally keeping some militias in business.

Up to 40% of those working in the mines are children. These children, who are exploited and abused, are then prime targets for recruitment by armed groups.

The lack of public awareness about this issue might seem like a cause for despair, but for me it is a cause for hope, because when people do learn about the connection between minerals and conflict, they are connected directly themselves. Once they are personally connected to this issue, they cannot help but care.

Since my time in the Congo, I have made it a personal priority to use my role as a legislator to help connect Canadians to this issue and curtail the presence of conflict minerals in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Last March, I introduced the bill on conflict minerals in the House of Commons.

Private Members' Business

• (1735)

[English]

The drafting process was comprehensive, with many months of positive and fruitful consultations with industry and civil society representatives in Canada and abroad.

The bill was introduced at a time of international action on conflict minerals, and the pace has only picked up since last year.

[Translation]

In May 2011, the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, published guidance and made a recommendation on exercising due diligence in this regard. Then, in August 2012, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission announced a new regulation requiring businesses to exercise due diligence in using tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold.

[English]

The European Union is introducing its own regulations following consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. At last year's G8 summit in Scotland, Canada joined other countries in making important commitments to extractive sector transparency.

In the G8 communiqué, the government specifically pledged to support conflict-free mineral sourcing. I want to read a section of that pledge tonight from section 40 of the communiqué. It states:

As part of our commitment to extractives transparency, we continue to support responsible, conflict-free sourcing of minerals from conflict-affected regions, including gold, diamonds and other precious stones. We will promote positive economic development and responsible sourcing in the artisanal mining sector, particularly from conflict and high-risk areas. We reaffirm our continued support for the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Regional Certification Mechanism as part of global multilateral, multi-stakeholder efforts to combat the trade in conflict minerals through certification, responsible business conduct and respect for human rights.

This bill implements the OECD guidelines mentioned in this communiqué. It is simply a matter of keeping our promise.

[Translation]

Practically every major technology firm, including BlackBerry, Microsoft, Apple and Nokia, is now trying to avoid using conflict minerals in its products.

[English]

We have recently seen path-breaking, game-changing commitments to source conflict-free minerals. In January, Intel announced that its microprocessors would be conflict-free, and in February, Apple committed to sourcing the minerals in its products responsibly. Apple has already followed through on this commitment for tantalum and is also doing so for tin, tungsten, and gold. These industry leaders are showing that a better supply chain is possible, and so is a better world.

These companies also realize that in today's market, accountable companies have a competitive advantage. This was the message I received in consultations with Canadian industry representatives. Companies are ready to get on board with regulations so long as the regulations are clear and emphasize the competitive advantage of social responsibility. The private sector will accept clear rules for

transparency and accountability. Government needs to be responsible as well. My bill would implement the OECD guidelines in Canada.

[Translation]

The bill requires Canadian companies that use minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa to exercise due diligence to ensure that no armed groups engaged in illegal activities benefit from the extraction, processing or use of those minerals.

[English]

Companies would have to publish their findings on their websites and in documents filed with the Canadian government. The government would then share the report with the producing countries. This would support local efforts to manage and reform the mining industry, supporting action from the ground up. The bill recognizes that stopping the conflict mineral trade requires collaboration between governments in both developed and developing countries, as well as with civil society and industry. Working together is the only way that lasting results can be achieved.

Collaboration requires leadership. I would like to see that initiative coming from Canada. It is a role that Canada can and should play. Canadian mining companies are market leaders. It is time Canada became a corporate social responsibility leader as well. Canada and Canadian companies should be diligent, accountable, and transparent in their operations overseas, but this is as much about consumer rights as corporate responsibility.

[Translation]

My bill will allow Canadians to know whether the minerals in the technology products they purchase may have funded or fuelled war. Consumers will be in a position to make informed choices.

• (1740)

[English]

I believe that consumers, if given the necessary information, will hold companies accountable for their sourcing choices. To complement this legislative effort, I also launched the just minerals campaign. It is a grassroots initiative to support action on conflict minerals. We have partnered with a wide variety of groups, from students to environmental campaigns, to Congolese associations, to fair trade advocates. Across the country, online and offline, the campaign is under way and gathering steam. More than 3,000 Canadians have already signed a petition supporting the bill.

[Translation]

This is not about right- or left-leaning politics. It is about what is right and wrong. Together, we have the ability to make the world a better place. It is up to us to take action.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Other countries have recognized this. In the U.S., the Dodd-Frank Act that brought in similar requirements got bipartisan support.

I also believe that change is possible because we have done this before.

The blood diamonds campaign is a fantastic example of how the world, and Canada, can make real improvements in the sourcing of consumer goods. The illegal trade in diamonds was providing substantial funding to warlords and rebels in Africa throughout the 1990s. Separate and joint meetings of diamond producing countries, international organizations, global civil society, and extractive companies led to the Kimberley Process for certifying rough diamond exports.

Today, Kimberley Process members account for nearly all of the global production of rough diamonds. Illegal exports are largely prevented, and legal trade is fostered by the increased consumer confidence provided by certification.

[Translation]

This legal and responsible trade contributes to sustainable economic and social development. We now have the opportunity to similarly transform the trade in the minerals at the root of the conflict in central Africa.

[English]

Just as it was the case with blood diamonds, conflict minerals have been attracting ever greater levels of attention from extractive corporations, local governments, and international NGOs.

[Translation]

Corporate interest in social and environmental responsibility is growing.

[English]

Local leadership in central Africa is growing. Although my bill would be the first to implement the OECD due diligence guidelines in an OECD country, they have already been enshrined in law in the DRC and Rwanda.

Some exciting projects are now under way to bag and tag mineral exports in the same way that diamonds are now traced. Partnership Africa Canada, for example, a civil society leader in implementing the Kimberley Process, is doing just that right now. Internationally, last year's G8 communiqué reiterated support for responsible conflict-free mineral sourcing and cited the OECD guidelines.

The time is right for significant change.

[Translation]

Minerals are found everywhere in the world, but they need not be blood-stained. Together, we must prevent the war in the Congo from entering our homes.

[English]

I sincerely hope we can work together on this bill, demonstrating the co-operation Canadians want and the world needs. Together, let us take conflict out of Canadian homes.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his concern over this issue and the intent of the bill. We will have our chance in a few minutes to speak to it, but I wanted to ask him two questions.

The first is: Why did he make such a broad application in terms of the application to the companies? With Dodd-Frank, the application of the act was primarily to manufacturing, the refining and smelting areas. His is much broader and requires too much. It is too broad, and we will talk about this in a few minutes.

The second question is: Why has he been so narrow in the focus of the countries that have been involved? Some of the consequences of Dodd-Frank have been that countries that just do not have the ability to put the reporting mechanisms in place have found themselves with their local area being affected really badly because they just cannot provide that information and so are being punished.

I just wonder if he could address those issues.

• (1745)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question, because it is an excellent question. Because of our consultations with the industry, civil society, and the people in the States—I consulted with them about Dodd-Frank—we actually changed the bill to reflect those concerns about Dodd-Frank.

One of the things I mentioned in my speech, which is in the bill, is that the reporting is done not just for us here in Canada. We would share that with the source countries. That is to address his concern, which is an important concern, about when Dodd-Frank was first implemented that there was no capacity on the ground.

The second part of that, which I mentioned in my speech, is that there are people now working on the ground to source conflict-free minerals. That has changed as well, and it came from consultations.

The other part I want to mention from his question is about the broad oversight of this in terms of where we would require a supply chain. It was actually through working with and talking to industry, particularly mining companies. They did not want to have to be the ones to source the supply chain. They thought it made sense for the end producers to do that, the Apples, Nokias, and others. Why? It is because they are already complying with it in many cases; in the States they are already doing that. This would simply have us come in line.

I hope that, as we go through this debate, we will be able to open up some of these other issues, and I thank the member for the question.

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would my colleague be able to elaborate on what is being done by our partners in the area of conflict minerals? What is being done to help develop a clean supply chain? Which of the initiatives would be good ideas for Canada to be inspired by and for us to implement in our own legislation?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, if I may just build on that, last August I was invited to Los Angeles to take part in a conference on conflict-free minerals.

It was actually a conference that was set up by industry. It was looking at the implementation of the Dodd-Frank Act in the States. One of the things that is very exciting about this is that it is doing this.

It looked at some of the problems that my friend from the other side talked about, about implementation but also about how to support people on the ground. Two very concrete things that are happening and that we can support more are helping develop a clean supply chain on the ground and identifying it, and also identifying a clean supply chain here in Canada.

There are Canadian producers who are very excited and who are supporting my initiatives. They have a clean supply chain, and they would like to take advantage of this opportunity.

Finally, when it comes to what we are doing and what others are doing, the Americans have already done this. This is not about our doing something that is groundbreaking. This is about doing something that the Americans have done; and it is being done, implemented, and looked at in the European Union. This is just a matter of our getting in line.

If we want to take the money away from these militias that are, right now as we speak, committing horrific human rights abuses to women, particularly, and children, this is an opportunity to do that.

We have an opportunity to make a difference, if we want to work together with our friends in other jurisdictions.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be able to rise to speak to the issue of conflict minerals and the role Canada is playing on the international stage to address this problem.

First, I want to thank the hon. member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre for drawing attention to this important issue.

As outlined in the preamble to his bill, the Government of Canada has been active for many years in advancing initiatives designed to address that nexus between natural resources and conflict. One of his colleagues asked a few minutes ago about the role that Canada has played. One of the places we have played an important role is at the OECD with its due diligence guidance document, which has been put in place and is now gaining international acceptance.

I am pleased to say that this government agrees wholeheartedly with the hon. member that further engagement by Canada is warranted to find effective and efficient ways to address the issue of conflict minerals. However, I have to say that we do not agree that Bill C-486 would bring us closer to this goal.

He talks about establishing clear roles for transparency and accountability in his speech. We do not believe that would be the result of this bill.

Before I outline some of our concerns with the present bill, I would like to talk a bit more about how minerals have been linked to conflict and what is being done about this already.

I am sure that many members are familiar with the Kimberley process on conflict diamonds, developed in response to the use of diamonds to fund violence and conflict in such countries as Liberia and Angola in the late 1990s. Canada was a founding member of the Kimberley process. As a leading diamond producer and exporter, we continue to play an active role in the initiative.

While it is not perfect, the Kimberley process has helped to deprive criminals and armed groups of easy access to capital. However, the illicit use of minerals to fund violence, which is what is meant by the term “conflict minerals”, did not end with the establishment of the Kimberley process. While it is not perfect, it has had an impact in its area.

A new generation of conflict minerals, however, has emerged since, including gold and the so-called 3Ts: tin, tungsten, and tantalum. These minerals are used in a variety of industrial sectors, including the aerospace, automotive and, perhaps most notably, the electronics industries. Indeed, these minerals are present in all of those gadgets that we love so much.

Unfortunately, in some contexts, the illicit trade in these minerals is contributing to violence and conflict. The problem is particularly acute in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC. The lack of state control in that part of the country benefits various armed groups that illegally control mining sites by taxing miners and trafficking in illegally sourced minerals.

Fortunately, the international community is taking action, and Canada is playing a leading role. The OECD, in co-operation with international partners, has developed a due diligence framework, which I mentioned, to foster responsible mineral supply chains. The purpose of that framework, known as the OECD due diligence guidance, is to help companies that are operating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas to identify and mitigate against risks related to their sourcing decisions and practices and to avoid contributing to human rights abuses and conflicts.

The Canadian government actively participated in the negotiation of the guidance, which includes mineral-specific supplements on gold and the 3Ts. We continue to be engaged in its promotion and implementation, and we currently chair the multi-stakeholder steering group that serves as the management committee for this forum.

What is more, several Canadian companies have been at the forefront of efforts to combat conflict minerals and have incorporated the guidance into their management systems. Others are implementing industry-led initiatives pertaining to conflict minerals that are consistent with and build upon these guidelines. For example, the members of the World Gold Council, which includes several Canadian companies, adhere to the conflict-free gold standard. The standard establishes a common approach by which gold producers can assess and provide assurance that their gold has been extracted in a responsible manner.

Several Canadian gold refiners have also been certified under the conflict-free smelter program, which was set up by the electronics industry. I should note here that smelters and refiners have been identified as the critical junction in the mineral supply chain, as traceability becomes extremely difficult after that point.

I would like to emphasize that all of these activities and initiatives are international in scope, because the mineral supply chain is global in nature. In other words, conflict minerals are an international problem, requiring international solutions to bring all the relevant actors—government, companies, and civil society—to the table.

Unfortunately, we do not believe that Bill C-486 aligns with this approach.

The genesis of the bill is clear. In its intent, it mirrors section 1502 of the U.S. Dodd-Frank Act by requiring companies to undertake due diligence activities and to report annually on these activities.

●(1750)

However, in contrast to the U.S. legislation, which, as I mentioned earlier, is focused on manufacturing companies, Bill C-486 is broad. It is not focused. It implicates every stage of the complex mineral supply chain.

Moreover, in contrast with the OECD guidance, which recommends targeted audits of due diligence practices at those key points that I have mentioned, Bill C-486 would require each and every report produced to be audited by an independent third party. The House can see the incredible bureaucracy that would build around this requirement.

What is the anticipated result of the implementation of this bill? It would certainly make a whole lot of companies pay for a whole lot of reports. We would also have some very happy auditors. However, do we think that anything on the ground would change as a result? Would Bill C-486 stop conflict minerals from entering international markets or put an end to the protracted and complex conflict in the DRC, which happens to be the primary focus of the member's campaign against conflict minerals? We do not believe so. The bureaucratic weight and complexity that is required by this bill would make it impossible to realize his goals.

What about the unintended consequences of focusing exclusively on the Great Lakes region of Africa? It has been a huge problem and concern with U.S. legislation that numerous countries have simply chosen to source these minerals from elsewhere, not because there is necessarily conflict where they head their operations but because the countries did not have the capacity to set up the structures that were required to do the reporting. Depriving developing economies of much needed investment and local communities of much needed empowerment would not solve the conflict minerals problem. Rather, it may exacerbate it.

There is no doubt that the ongoing conflict in the DRC has had a devastating impact on the lives of civilians, especially women and children. The prevalence of serious human rights violations in the eastern region of the DRC in particular, including continued acts of sexual violence and alleged crimes against humanity, are of huge concern to our government.

Private Members' Business

Our efforts in developing peace support operations in the DRC have included funding projects on enhancing the effectiveness of security institutions, strengthening the capacity of Congolese authorities to curtail the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and mediating and preventing conflict.

In October of 2012, our Prime Minister announced a Canadian commitment of \$18.5 million over five years to provide legal, medical, and emotional support to victims of sexual violence in the DRC and to assist law enforcement agencies in bringing perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

We have also called for concerted efforts to implement concrete solutions to the conflict and advocated for the engagement of regional actors in particular to protect civilians, including women and children, and to pave the way for peace and stability in that region.

With all due respect to the concerns of the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, a complex situation like the one in the DRC cannot be solved with more red tape for these countries.

I should point out that Dodd-Frank touches specifically on manufacturing. This bill is much broader and would force companies to report at every sector, meaning the extraction sector, the transportation sector, the refining sector, the processing sector, the manufacturing sector, the retail sector, and even recycling. Those products would all require reports to be filed and then audited by third parties. We believe that is an onerous burden that does not achieve the result the member opposite would like to see.

Making progress in the fight against conflict minerals need not come at the expense of responsible investment in affected areas. For example, as I mentioned earlier, smelters and refiners have been identified as a critical juncture in the mineral supply chain. More work can be done to encourage these actors to participate in certification initiatives.

As the member mentioned earlier, this voluntary approach seems to be working. Companies such as Apple and Intel were mentioned by him as companies that have taken this seriously and are applying it.

There is no doubt that further international efforts are required to tackle the problem of conflict minerals, but pursuing a mandatory initiative such as the member has presented is not an approach this government can endorse.

●(1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to address what I think is a very important piece of legislation. I appreciate that the member has been very diligent in terms of working over the years to ultimately see it surface here this evening. The idea of further engagement and initiatives by Canada in this whole area is something that would be wonderful to see, and at the end of the day we would like to see the bill pass to committee stage.

Private Members' Business

If amended, we believe the bill could play a very important role in providing leadership at the international level. We would recommend that this be allowed, and at the very least that it pass second reading so that members of the public and stakeholders can contribute to a wider debate. That is quite easily achievable.

The Liberal Party believes that companies must have a social and financial responsibility to our communities. To that end, this legislation could further that social responsibility. As such, with certain amendments brought forward, we would be very supportive of the bill going to committee.

I had an opportunity to get a better understanding of the issue at hand. The first time I was invited to a classroom after being elected in the last federal election, this was the issue that students had chosen to talk about. They were aware of the member for Ottawa Centre's bill and also aware of the member for Scarborough—Guildwood's bill, which is the sunshine bill.

They wanted to ask what I thought about it. At the time, I did not know too much about the bill, so I did more listening than talking in regard to this legislation. After the discussion, they indicated they were doing petitions and asked if I would be prepared to present petitions on their behalf. Of course, I was more than happy to do so, and I have tabled petitions on both pieces of legislation that are before the House today.

I raise that because I do not believe that it is just members of the House who understand and appreciate the importance of this issue. There are individuals of all generations who recognize that what is taking place is wrong and that there is a great deal of merit for us to move forward.

That is why I was a little discouraged to see from the government, what seems to be an unwillingness to see the bill going to committee. My understanding is that the New Democratic Party is open to amendments. Based on that, it would be a mistake for us not to allow it to go to committee. I understand that it is all about money, greed, corruption, violence, murder, and human rights tragedies that have occurred. It has all occurred because of the exploitation of minerals. It has had a very profound impact on a number of countries that circle the African Great Lakes.

I looked up some of the countries we are referring to. There is Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is really the heart of the matter of the bill. I understand it is the eastern portion of it. We have Kenya and Rwanda, which is a country that has had a great deal of this sort of exploitation. Tanzania and Uganda are the countries that circle the African Great Lakes.

I recall watching a documentary on these Great Lakes, which are a massive area. I believe that Lake Victoria is one of the top three or four, in terms of size, magnitude, and beauty for a lake.

● (1800)

The potential is great in that region of the world. Yet we have a number of organizations, governments, and I want to be careful how I put this, rebels, warring factions, and private security forces that over the years have taken advantage of the minerals there. We call them conflict minerals. These minerals ultimately end up in consumer products. The minerals and the money made from them

sadly have not only enriched very few but have propelled the continual violence in many of those regions.

That is why I believe Canada has a role to play. We can send a strong message. The message at the core of this legislation is the corporate responsibility to recognize that by our standards, there are some things that are just not acceptable. We need to ensure that there is corporate responsibility. It is not good to make money from human tragedy to the degree we have seen around the African Great Lakes, in particular in the Congo area. To obligate corporate responsibility through legislation is a step in the right direction.

I indicated that we have some concerns. For example, the definition of "company" is overly broad and would affect everything from a major mining company in Zambia to a local jewellery store here in Canada. That is due to the bill's general nature. Instead of targeting companies on the ground, it takes a grab at all companies.

The lack of consequences or punishment for failure to implement due diligence or to submit an annual report raises some concerns.

At the end of the day, we can bring forward some amendments that would change the bill to target primary source companies. Those are the companies that first handle the minerals. An amendment of that nature would be of great benefit.

It could make more explicit and consistent references to "OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas" throughout the bill. We should specify terms for the audit for an annual report.

There is some merit in looking at other developing countries. Perhaps we could look at expanding the list of countries to include developing countries, as defined by the UN.

There is something we can do. We should be doing it, because I believe, as no doubt the member for Ottawa Centre and all members do, that we would like to see Canada play a more significant role.

When I go back to the classroom discussion we had, they talked a lot about consumer products. The ones that come to mind are the ones they were using. It is the laptops, the cell phones, and the MP3 players. There is so much in terms of electronics. We should listen to what our youth are saying.

We see the bill as a positive step forward. We should at the very least allow it to go to committee, where it can be enhanced and can demonstrate that Canada can play a stronger leadership role on this issue.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-486 regarding conflict minerals from the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

It is important to point out that, for years now, the NDP has been advocating for an extractive sector that is not only transparent, but also socially and environmentally responsible, both here and abroad.

I wish to commend my colleague from Ottawa Centre for all his hard work on this issue. He has been leading this fight for several years on behalf of those who have been suffering because of this appalling situation. Therefore, on behalf of those people and the NDP, I would simply like to thank him for working so tirelessly on this issue for so many years.

The conflicts plaguing the Great Lakes Region are beyond horrific; they are both a human and a humanitarian tragedy. These conflicts have displaced over 2 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo alone. We are not even talking about the countries bordering the Great Lakes Region. Some 5.4 million people have been killed. It is very serious. Millions of women and children have become victims of sexual violence as a result of these conflicts. According to reports, 48 rapes are committed every hour.

When I first came to Parliament, I moved a motion at the Subcommittee on International Human Rights to examine the use of rape as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. That report should be finished soon. According to the evidence I heard, the situation is catastrophic.

This human tragedy is not new; it has been going on since the 1990s. The conflicts began in 1998. The UN has adopted a number of resolutions, including resolution 1493, adopted in 2003, which allowed it to increase the military strength of the peacekeeping mission that was created in the late 1990s to protect the civilian population of the Democratic Republic of Congo. There is also resolution 1596, adopted in 2005, which expanded the arms embargo to include all of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The conflict is so serious that the African Union and the UN have had to adopt resolutions. Therefore, the least Canada can do is get involved, along with our allies, to put an end to this tragedy.

When I say that this is a human tragedy, I am not talking about just the deaths and rapes, but also about the instability and food insecurity. The war is completely destroying the land and the crops.

The Interim Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, released on May 22, 2002, by a panel of experts commissioned by the UN Security Council, stresses the terrible human impact on the population of these practices, which have humanitarian consequences.

There are terrible conditions marked by rape, violence and death, but there is also food insecurity. Thus, it is both a human and a humanitarian tragedy. It is time for Canada to take action. It is often said that Canada wants to take action on matters of international co-operation, but this is a humanitarian tragedy.

• (1810)

These are armed conflicts, but most of the victims are women and children. It is a humanitarian tragedy. We should do everything we can to prevent these conflicts from creating any more victims.

Private Members' Business

The illegal mining and sale of minerals are the main source of instability, both political and humanitarian, and also the main source of funding for these conflicts. The exploitation of resources in this region is so problematic that it is important for people to open their eyes. So, too, should the government, civil society and the corporate world. It is very important to realize that we cannot do business in such a vulnerable and unstable region without adopting very strict guidelines to ensure that there are no consequences for the people.

My colleague from Ottawa Centre mentioned that we are talking about \$140 million to \$225 million in illegal revenue. That is a lot. It accounts for 95% of the revenue of the armed rebel groups that unfortunately continue to commit atrocities.

Half of the mines in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo are controlled by armed groups. All of the big mines are, except one. That is important to know. Since the people in the Great Lakes Region of Africa rely on mining operations, we need to ensure that they can earn a living in spite of the conflict. These mines need to be operated by the people, for the people, and not to fund conflicts that have absolutely nothing to do with civil society or the Congolese people.

There is certainly no chance for fair trade in a region like this one unless some extremely strict guidelines are adopted. That is what companies are trying to do right now. As my colleague already mentioned, BlackBerry, Microsoft, Apple and Nokia have already adopted measures to avoid using conflict minerals. However, it is important for Canada, as a country that participates in these peacekeeping missions, to send a clear message that we understand the problem, we care about it and we will do everything we can do help the people of the Great Lakes Region.

Canadians want to be able to have confidence in their products, and they also want to have confidence in companies. This is about people having the freedom to benefit from their own resources. They have been suffering for years. Canadians need to be able to have confidence in their products and know that their cellphones have not funded the death of thousands of people. It is only natural. Canadians and companies understand that. It is time for the government to reach out.

By the way, I would like to mention that my colleague from Ottawa Centre introduced Bill C-486 and, following his example, I introduced Bill C-584, which would create an ombudsman for the corporate social responsibility of extractive corporations. The NDP truly wishes to ensure that companies that extract mineral resources in developing countries are both socially and environmentally responsible.

• (1815)

[English]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Bill C-486 put forward by my colleague from Ottawa Centre.

Private Members' Business

I have been working with the member opposite since 2006 in various capacities, on the foreign affairs committee and everywhere. He is extremely passionate about this issue and has been standing up and fighting for a way to stop this conflict. In principle we all agree with him. We agree that the mineral conflict is absolutely atrocious. It is so atrocious that it is unbelievable, and this is the right approach to take. Therefore, his passion for this issue is to be commended.

However, my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands indicated why this particular bill is a problem.

Let me take one step back and tell the House why I agree with the member for Ottawa Centre as to the need to address this issue.

A few years ago, I went to the Great Lakes Region in the DRC. I was leading the friends of the Great Lakes Region who were working toward bringing development into the process.

I landed in Goma in the evening by way of a small aircraft. Goma is in the eastern province where all of the fighting is taking place. Due to the volcanic explosion, the runway was cut in half; it was not cleared and so it was very small. Early the next morning I met with the civil society. I was not far away from the airport, and every 10 minutes I could hear an airplane taking off. Having been an air traffic controller myself prior to coming here, I had to wonder where all these aircraft were going. Half the runway was not there; no commercial flights were coming into that airport. These aircraft were smuggling the minerals out of DRC, what we now know as conflict minerals. They were constantly going out of that country.

I have seen first-hand what a devastating impact this can make to a country's economy. It is up to the international community to settle this issue because of the armed conflicts we have talked about and the horrendous human rights abuses that have taken place in the DRC area a result of armed gangs that are making money out of this illegal business, in co-operation with others over there. Of course we saw that and so we brought in the Kimberley Process as one way of addressing this issue.

We must continue, because the business of conflict minerals still carries on. It has not stopped. Groups use these minerals for money for funding. In Afghanistan, the Taliban use drugs to buy arms, which are creating havoc there. In Colombia, the FARC regime does the same thing. Wherever there is armed conflict, funds are obtained illegally. In this case, the funds are obtained through illegal mining. Henceforth, it is everyone's responsibility.

As my colleague has said, the bill presents a problem for us. Canada has recognized that this was one of the key things that are part of the Kimberley Process. We went ahead and brought in reporting procedures. We worked with the international community and brought in the office of the ombudsman on a voluntary basis. We tell our own companies about their corporate social responsibility. In turn, Canada has a very good record.

● (1820)

How do we address this issue? We address this issue by working together with all the international communities to stop it, but we must also be very careful that our actions do not harm the areas we are trying to help. In this case the bill has the potential to harm the DRC, because its focus on the DRC will stop investment from coming there.

What is important is to try to help the DRC to build capacity, to build a mining industry that is beneficial to their own citizens, as Canada and other countries have said. It is very difficult at this stage, due to armed conflict and regional issues, but as we know, Canada is working with the regional countries, with Uganda and Rwanda as well as the United Nations and the ICC, to stop the war in that part of the region, and there have been many successes.

We are very happy to see that the African Union and the countries of the region have taken dramatic steps by providing soldiers and resources to stop this warring, as well as by working with the United Nations to bring those who are responsible for leading the conflict in those areas to justice before the international tribunal court and through other means.

This is one aspect that we are working on. Once we bring peace into that region, the Government of Canada's role over there is to help these countries build their capacity for their own citizens.

Of course, that does not mean that we will close our eyes and say we will wait until that happens. Of course, we have to do something, and our government has been very clear about what we have done. For example, we have brought in more voluntary approaches through several Canadian companies that are members of the World Gold Council.

We have already taken strong action in DRC by establishing five mineral trading centres in eastern DRC where they can sell the gems. The NGO that came in is working very hard for those miners who are working legitimately. There are small-scale miners in DRC who are legitimately mining over there. We want to help them go through this whole process. We do not want to create a reporting process where this year miners would be penalized.

We are taking these kinds of steps to help them out. We are working with OECD. We are stakeholders, and we will continue supporting this whole process.

I want to say to my friends that yes, we have to do something about it. Yes, we must bring something there. Yes, attention needs to be paid. However, we must also be sure that when bills do come forward, they take the right approach. My good friend bringing this bill has brought out the American side here, but we are still not yet very sure, because the reporting process has not yet been done, whether that is the right approach. However, let us work together on these things.

Although we do not agree on the bill for the reasons mentioned by my colleague, I can assure him that in principle we stand with him in making sure that the mining is done for the benefit of the local people, and not for the armed conflict that brings horrendous damage.

● (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 27 I asked the Minister of Employment and Social Development whether he would consider providing bridge funding for groups that assisted disabled individuals to become ready, willing, and able to become part of the workforce. In particular, we were concerned about the Collaborative Partnership Network and the fact that 200 people with disabilities would be forced out of work if an agreement was not reached.

I will read from my question:

Will the minister commit today, at the very least, to providing this network with the bridge funding it needs to continue its work?

The answer:

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth.

I am not sure what that means, but there was no offer of bridge funding for this organization.

My colleague, the member for Montcalm, asked a similar question immediately afterward, and again there was no positive answer from the government.

The deadline, of course, was March 31, and in fact there was no agreement and there was no continuation of funding on March 31 for this group, the Collaborative Partnership Network. However, since that time, the Province of Nova Scotia has stepped in where the federal government refused and has provided funding for 60 of the 375 groups that had expired labour market agreements.

The network was one of the fortunate 60, but the money is limited to wages only and will expire in four to six weeks.

Today we understand that the province has announced that it has reached an agreement in principle with the federal government, and what that apparently means is that they will continue to negotiate. There are no details. There is no actual agreement. It is just an agreement to continue talking.

More concerning, though, is the nature of the changes to the way the money will be spent and the nature of the changes the government is dictating to those groups in Nova Scotia. In the past the money was provided to groups and organizations that assisted people who did not have jobs and who needed assistance to enter or re-enter the workforce. In particular, this money was spent in some cases to help organizations provide assistance and counselling and in some cases workplace accommodation to persons with disabilities.

The effects of this spending were felt by many in the province. Hundreds of persons who were unemployed or unemployable were mentored, coached, and assisted until they were ready, willing, and able to join the workforce. They were not already in the workforce.

After they joined the workforce, the assistance continued, allowing them to stay gainfully employed. The 200 persons who were and still are at risk of losing their jobs are contributing between

\$3 million and \$4 million a year to the economy, rather than being a net drain of \$2 million to \$3 million in disability income supports.

However, the federal government's new design of the Canada job grant would not have room for such a system. The grant system is really designed for the big companies to get access to federal money to train and retrain their existing employees. The grants would assist those who are already employed rather than those who are not. It is a little counterintuitive.

It would also be of little or no use to small and medium-sized enterprises. Those employers would find it difficult, if not impossible, to find the necessary funding to access the Canada job grants. They would not be able to spend the money to attract and keep disabled employees. It is not designed to do that.

We are disappointed that the federal government could not be counted upon to provide the transitional funding to keep the 315 groups that have lost out. The little bit of temporary funding that the province came up with for 60 groups is a welcome respite for some, but the problem of the design of the program and the failure to reach agreement with the province does not bode well for the remaining groups, nor for the 60 whose existence hangs in the balance, including the Collaborative Partnership Network.

• (1830)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not intending to reply, as my very able parliamentary secretary was prepared to do so, but when I heard that ridiculous and counterfactual intervention, I felt an obligation to set the record straight.

First, let me say that I will be charitable in assuming that the member opposite did not write that speech but that a staffer did, who perhaps should be put on probation or replaced, because the majority of what he just said is completely not factual. First of all, no groups in Nova Scotia or anywhere else had their funding jeopardized.

Let me be clear about this. The Government of Canada transfers \$100 million a year to Nova Scotia through four skills development and job training transfer programs. One of the four is the labour market agreement, which accounts for a relatively small portion of that. The offer that the federal government made to provinces several weeks ago was for them to source the funds for the Canada job grant out of any source, any one of those four labour market development transfers or any other source of funds. There was no—I repeat, absolutely no—requirement that they fund the Canada job grant out of the labour market agreement transfer, which is the source of funds for the groups to which he has referred.

Even there, in the first year of the implementation of the job grant, the Province of Nova Scotia would only be required to invest \$2 million in the Canada job grant, to be matched by \$1 million from employers. At full implementation in year four, Nova Scotia would be asked to invest \$8 million in the Canada job grant, being matched by \$4 million from the private sector.

Adjournment Proceedings

To be clear, the amount of funding that the job grant agreement would require Nova Scotia to invest would be 2% of the total federal skills transfer to Nova Scotia in year one, and then 8% of the total federal skills transfer to Nova Scotia in year four, leaving fully intact 92%, 98% in year one, of federal transfers to Nova Scotia for skills development with the job grant agreement.

I do not blame the member himself because I think he was probably basing his inaccurate question and assertions on inaccurate information given by the Government of Nova Scotia for reasons that, as I said to the premier in a letter, I find inexplicable. I think it was inexplicable and, worse yet, irresponsible of the Government of Nova Scotia to create unnecessary fear and anxiety among non-profit and charitable service-providing organizations delivering labour market agreement-funded programs because the government told them that they would be losing their funding on April 1, earlier this week, and nothing could be further from the truth.

Again, only \$2 million out of \$100 million in federal transfers going to Nova Scotia would have to be redirected in fiscal year 2014–15 to the Canada job grant. Therefore, why in the world would the province have notified these groups that their funding was ending when it was not, when an unconditional transfer was continuing? My only charitable inference is that it simply did not understand what every other province and territory did understand. We finally received a letter which constitutes an agreement in principle from the Government of Nova Scotia the other day.

Finally, let me say that in addition to all of this, we make record investments, specifically in skills development for persons with disabilities, including the \$8 million transfer for the labour market agreement for persons with disabilities to Nova Scotia, our own opportunities fund, and the \$15 million announced in this year's budget for the ready, willing and able initiative. No government has done more for job training and skills development for persons with disabilities. We are proud of that record.

• (1835)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister himself for answering the question. It is heartening to know that he is as engaged in the file as much as he is.

The problem still exists, and I recognize that it is a problem between two governments, the federal and provincial governments,

and the provincial government is blaming the federal government and the federal government is blaming the provincial government. Unfortunately, in the middle is the collaborative partnership network consisting of 375 groups altogether, but 315 had their funding stopped on the basis of this disagreement. Whether that is the federal government's fault or the provincial government's fault, only time will tell at some point in the future about whether the money has continued to flow to the province in spite of the fact that there is no agreement or whether the money was held up until there was an agreement. I do not know the answer to that question and maybe the minister does.

In any event, I am hopeful that in very short order this can be sorted out between the federal and provincial governments and that there can be continued funding for these groups.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's constructive response, and he is quite right that the charitable and non-profit service providing organizations are not to blame for this misapprehension. They were told by the Government of Nova Scotia that their labour market agreement-funded programs were ending on April 1.

I have to say, very bluntly, that I find it irresponsible and disturbing that the Government of Nova Scotia would have, frankly, frightened these organizations with elimination of their LMA funding when there was no possibility of that happening. The Government of Nova Scotia had on its table, like all of the other provinces and territories, an agreement clearly saying that LMA funding was not being jeopardized as a result of the job grant.

I am glad that the Government of Nova Scotia has moved beyond that. Perhaps it could issue an apology to these organizations for having created unnecessary anxiety in the first place.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a. m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:39 p.m.)

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