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Monday, November 17, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 17, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)
[English]

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP)
moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should work in collaboration with the provinces, territories and First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to eradicate child poverty in Canada by developing a national poverty reduction plan that includes: (a) making housing more affordable for lower income Canadians; (b) ensuring accessible and affordable child care; (c) addressing childhood nutrition; (d) improving economic security of families; (e) measures that specifically address the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities; and (f) measurable targets and timelines.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today on the eve of the 25th anniversary, I am honoured and privileged to stand and present my Motion No. 534, to reiterate our commitment to eradicating child poverty in Canada.

A quarter of a century ago, in 1989, a similar motion was introduced by former NDP leader Ed Broadbent to eradicate child poverty by 2000. That motion received unanimous consent in the House. Here we are 25 years later, and not much has changed.

I do not want to make accusations to any of the successive Liberal or Conservative governments for not taking proper actions to eliminate child poverty since the House made the promise and commitment to do so. However, I also cannot keep quiet and pretend that poverty rates among children have improved compared to 25 years ago, or that Canada is poverty-free.

For 25 consecutive years, Canadian children and their families who live in poverty have been left behind and marginalized on the agendas of successive governments. Twenty-five years is a long time. It makes me wonder why almost one million Canadian children are living in poverty today and why successive governments have allowed the rate of poverty to increase compared to 25 years ago. It makes me wonder whether the Liberal and Conservative governments over the last 25 years have felt that the opinions of the impoverished do not matter.

What went wrong? Why was a promise to our country's children broken? If we did not keep the promise to our children, then that is fine; it is perhaps that the governments of the day felt that children do not vote and so they are not a huge priority.

However, how about the promise that Canada made to the rest of the world when we ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1991? We agreed to uphold international principles, values, and standards. According to article 27.1:

States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

The section then continues and holds states more responsible by obliging them to do the following:

[...] take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

My motion deals with all of those, but specifically nutrition, housing, and child care.

As a state that is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Canada is not meeting its commitment globally today.

This past week, I spent a lot of time with children in our schools in Scarborough, and many of them found it difficult to imagine that there are children and families who go hungry and cannot afford to have their daily meals. The reality is that it is happening right here, in one of the world's richest countries, our great Canada.

In its November 7, 2013, report, Campaign 2000 stated:

Food security among families is highly critical with 1.1 million children experiencing food insecurity, a situation of inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints, and children represent 36% of food bank users in Canada.

According to another recent article in the *Huffington Post*, on November 4, 2014, there are 375,000 people in Ontario who use food banks, of whom 36% are children.

Health Canada's report entitled "Household Food Insecurity in Select Provinces and Territories 2009-2010" showed that Nunavut, in Canada's north, has the highest number of households in Canada that are food insecure, which is 28.8%. That is more than double the number in the Yukon, which holds second place at 11%.

Another question that one might think to ask is what the current government has done to lower the levels of poverty in Canada. When we pose questions in question period, the government says that it has lowered the levels. Let us look at some details.

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The reality is that not much has been done. Some cabinet ministers have even demonstrated quite embarrassing hospitality when the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food was in Canada. It was quite a shame.

The United Nations has also described housing and homelessness in Canada as a national emergency. An estimated 250,000 people are homeless, with another 1.1 million living in inadequate housing, and more than 500,000 are facing a serious financial burden which threatens their housing security. Over 10% of those identified as homeless are youth aged 16 to 18.

• (1110)

In its first universal periodic review, a number of members of the UN Human Rights Council expressed significant concerns about poverty and housing in Canada. A number of recommendations were made to enhance the catastrophic situations of housing, for which we as a nation were heavily criticized. Despite the original denial from the government, it involuntarily, and under pressure, accepted some of the recommendations from the member states.

Canada agreed to consider taking on board the recommendation of the UN special rapporteur on adequate housing, specifically to extend and enhance the national homelessness program and the residential rehabilitation assistance program. Canada also committed to double its efforts to better ensure the right to adequate housing, especially for vulnerable groups and low-income families.

However, just when we thought there might be improvements, the current Conservative government voted against Bill C-400, an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians. It did not stop there. In the June 2012 budget, it also defunded and closed down the former National Council of Welfare, the NCW, which was an organization that highlighted poverty and warned policy-makers of the consequences of neglecting those in need. By eliminating the role of the NCW, the government officially shut down the source of reports and information that depicted the depth and breadth of poverty in Canada. Instead of eliminating the problem of poverty, it eliminated the messenger, the NCW.

It is something like the metaphor where the cat thinks that if it closes its eyes and drinks milk that nobody around can see it.

We have heard the parliamentary secretary stating that we do not have much of a poverty problem in Canada. The truth is that we do not have a national information centre, the NCW, to do the research and present any reports to us. The government does not understand that affordable and adequate housing does not only offer shelter but also offers individuals and families a sense of stability, security, and motivation. The children I met with last week knew that. They know that ensuring that they have a roof over their houses means safety and security for them.

We need a comprehensive plan to tackle this issue and save more money for Canadians and the national revenue. According to a study conducted by homelessness Canada, each year it costs the system approximately \$55,000 to leave a homeless person on the street, while providing adequate housing and support services would cost only \$37,000.

Another report by the Canadian Medical Association, in 2013, concluded that child poverty is at the core of socio-economic

problems. Over 20% of health-care related expenditure is derived from inadequate housing and the consequences of low-income conditions.

By implementing what is being introduced today through my private member's motion, Canadians will benefit on many levels. First, we will do the right thing; that is, removing homeless Canadians from the streets. Second, that will save Canadians more than \$15 billion dollars annually—that is five from removing the homeless, and ten from savings on health care from inadequate housing—which could be used in other areas that could benefit Canadians in various tax benefits and could finance a national child care program, which is the third piece of the motion.

On many occasions when the government was asked about child poverty rates in Canada, there were no clear reasons as to why the rate of child poverty had increased over the last 25 years. On October 28, UNICEF issued its annual report card, and on November 3, it had a symposium entitled “Children in the Wake of the Great Recession”, which was dedicated to child poverty. Neither in the report nor during the seminar was anything positive said about the current and previous federal governments' serious engagement and commitment to eradicating child poverty. Even though the current government and ministers may avoid the facts, poverty is a reality for far too many of Canada's children. If these irresponsible policies continue, that will continue to be the reality for even more of our children.

The government likes to acknowledge that 180,000 children were pulled out of poverty due to its great efforts, which it likes to celebrate. However, it is in denial of the truth, that poverty exists and Canada has a high percentage of child poverty.

On several occasions, the Minister of State for Social Development and the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism have referred to the UNICEF report and quoted only the favourable parts from it.

• (1115)

I would like to bring to their attention that on November 3, I was present at UNICEF Canada's annual symposium to hear from other experts about report card 12. The government did not even bother to send a representative there to hear from experts on the ground.

The conclusion from the day was that children are worse off today than when the crisis began in 2008, and much worse off than they were 25 years ago. Here is some of what the spokesperson of UNICEF Canada had to say on the day that report card 12 was released:

...what disturbs us is that the relative poverty rate hasn't budged for many years. As a wealthy country we are not doing well enough for our children.

That was from Lisa Wolff, the director of UNICEF Canada.

I have another quote from Tiffany Baggetta, the spokesperson for UNICEF Canada at the symposium. She said:

Overall, child poverty in Canada has decreased but children who were the most poor to begin with have slipped further into poverty.

This means we are not really helping the most vulnerable people in our country: our children.

We can see that the government has a trend of doing things in its own way. We know that it does not like to have much consultation and it does not like to listen to experts or people in the field. It is true that during the recession years, Canada's child poverty rate did decrease from a shameful 23% to 21%. However, 25 years ago, when Parliament made the commitment to end poverty among our children, the rate was only 13%. Successive governments have contributed to the child poverty rate increasing from 13% to 23%. The Conservative government is celebrating that it is now at 21%, which is a significant increase from the 13% it was at when we committed to eradicating poverty in this country.

Let us compare our country with Scandinavian countries and the U.K. These countries have actually done a great job in reducing their child poverty rates. The child poverty rate in Nordic countries is below 6%. It is not 21%, as it is in Canada.

What have we done in the past 25 years in this regard? We can go in circles and have the Liberals and the Conservatives blame and accuse each other for irresponsible governing, but those excuses and accusations will not feed the poor or the children in our country, nor will they provide them with adequate housing, security, or child care.

Again, let me return to parts of the UNICEF report. The government quotes frequently from this report. The quotes lead the government into believing that it has accomplished the mission of eradicating child poverty by pulling 180,000 children out of poverty. According to Statistics Canada, in every year since 1989, on average, 180,000 to 250,000 children are removed from the category of being poor children. Regardless of these numbers, the child poverty rate has continued to increase, despite the fact that the fertility rate has not increased in the same time period. Therefore, it is not that we are having more children: the number of children being removed from poverty remains the same because they are aging out, and our poverty rates continue to grow.

None of the previous governments has done enough. Many factors have contributed in removing these 180,000 children from poverty. Around 12% to 15% of those children who were 17 years of age became 18 years of age and were removed from the count of child poverty. Basically, we removed them statistically from child poverty to make them adults living in poverty, and more than 23,000 of them are now homeless.

Over 70% of those children and their families were lifted above the poverty line through the efforts of provincial governments, private corporations, NGOs, charities, and other social agencies, such as food banks and shelters.

Mr. Speaker, you are giving me the one-minute warning, and I have so much more to say.

Poverty is also racialized in our country, and I will give members some statistics from the GTA before I conclude. Among the broad ethno-racial groups in the GTA, the rates of child poverty were about one in ten in global European groups; one in five for east Asian groups; one in four for aboriginal, south Asian, and Caribbean

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groups; one in three for children of Arab and west Asian groups; and one in two for children of African groups. Today the GTA has 79% of Ontario's immigrants and 81% of Ontario's visible minorities. This means that far too many of our racialized people living in the GTA are living in poverty.

I would like to conclude by saying that implementing a national strategy to eradicate poverty would have a positive impact on our Canadian economy in both the short and long run. High levels of child poverty generate very significant and growing human and fiscal costs to society and to the economy in the long run.

● (1120)

This motion calls for the eradication of child poverty by investing in affordable and accessible housing, child care, and child nutrition programs. Those are the three social determinants of poverty among our children, and it is our responsibility as the lawmakers of this country to ensure that we are investing in the most vulnerable people in society, our country's children.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the motion, which speaks to a number of aspirations, hopes, and goals that a number of us in the House share.

I note that neither the member nor I was a member of Parliament back in 2005-06 when a budget was presented that gave the House the opportunity to invest \$2.4 billion in public housing and to move forward with a provincially approved deal on a national daycare program that was signed, sealed, delivered, and ready to be executed. That budget also included the Kelowna accord, which would have been a massive step forward in the defence and promotion of the rights and responsibilities of indigenous people and first nations.

I have a question specific to the member's riding. Right now there is a motion in front of city council that governs the area of Toronto known as Scarborough. It calls for rooming houses to be licensed and legalized in that community. We know that rooming houses are an extraordinarily important part of the housing continuum. Rooming houses are part of human rights and we cannot zone against people. I am wondering if her party supports licensing and legalizing rooming houses in Scarborough.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments and his question on municipal issues in the city of Toronto. I want to remind him that my motion calls for the creation of a national poverty elimination strategy that includes investing in affordable housing. It would ensure that we are looking into all options of affordable housing, not just in Scarborough or Toronto, and making sure that we are investing in affordable housing across the country.

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Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for bringing forward this motion and allowing us to have this debate, although I wish we did not have to debate this issue at all. It should have been resolved by now.

We often hear what the Liberals would, could, or should have done, even though in 15 years in government they did not take the steps that they should have. It was the people of Canada who sent them to that corner, and not anybody in Parliament.

My question for my colleague is this. Knowing that no child chooses to be born into poverty, if we are going to address child poverty, what are some key issues that we have to address federally in order for it to happen?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her very clear and direct question, because it was exactly the same question that I asked children ranging from grades three to eight when I visited last week when I was in my constituency. The children were very intelligent and had pretty simple answers, which, if we as legislators would listen to them, would actually solve the problem. They said they want to make sure that all children have somewhere to live and have roofs over their heads, meaning that they are protected from the environment and have shelter. That would mean investing in housing.

They said they want to make sure that all children can eat. I represent Scarborough—Rouge River, where there were children in classrooms that I visited who went to school that day without having breakfast. There were children who said they need to make sure they can all focus in class and have access to universal education at the primary and secondary levels and, in order to ensure that they are getting the best out of their education system and are learning, have food in their bellies. That means making sure they have a good nutrition program.

Third, they said that after school, when they and their baby brothers or sisters in grade one have to go home and their parents are not there, they have to walk around the community or wait around wherever they can, such as with their neighbours, before they can go home, and they do not feel safe and secure. I talked to them about having access to regulated child care facilities and investing in child care, and they said that would make life so much better for them.

I know there are adults here who value the opinions of our children. The three things that children know are housing, nutrition, and child care programs.

• (1125)

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today and speak to this NDP motion regarding child poverty. This represents a great opportunity to inform the House of the many things our government is doing to reduce child poverty.

As everyone knows, our government's top priority is the economy, and this means that we all want Canadians to have long-term prosperity, especially those who currently find themselves with a low income. In order for us to achieve this, we must be able to improve the lives of many Canadians who find themselves struggling.

I am pleased that under our Conservative government, we have the lowest rate of child poverty in the history of this great nation. Indeed, our approach to reducing poverty, which emphasizes collaboration with the provinces and territories to invest in targeted programs, reduce taxes, and create opportunities for good-paying jobs, is working.

To help make this a reality, the government invests in a wide range of programs and policies that support Canadians on the road to prosperity.

This approach includes, for example, funding for student loans and grants so that more people have access to a good education. It includes support for training programs to help people get specific skills they need for the workforce. It includes support for apprenticeship programs so that Canadians can pursue a variety of trades. It includes transfers to the provincial governments to support post-secondary education.

It also includes support for aboriginal communities so that first nations, Métis, and Inuit Canadians have a better chance to have a good job and secure their future. It includes support for those with disabilities so that they can find greater success in the workforce. It includes support for new Canadians to help them fully participate in the economy, and it includes constantly refining and improving supports for individuals who face particularly difficult barriers to participation in the workforce.

To help ensure that people are better off working, in 2007 our Conservative government brought in the working income tax benefit to supplement the earnings of low-income working families. This benefit gives people in these situations a supplement to their wages so that families on social assistance will always be better off when they are working. The program works very well.

In 2009, the government doubled its commitment to \$1.1 billion to help people get off welfare and into the job market. By 2011, upwards of 1.5 million working Canadian families were receiving support through this program, and it is estimated to have lifted some 110,000 parents, children, and single people out of low income.

Let us dwell on that number for a moment. The working income tax benefit, just one of our government's measures, has lifted approximately the population of the city of Guelph, Ontario, out of poverty. This is quite remarkable, and it is proof that our plan is working.

The federal government works with provincial and territorial governments on the national child benefit and provides direct funding to parents through the universal child care benefit. It also helps to ensure that enhanced benefits and services continue when parents move from welfare to paid employment. This has had a significant impact on reducing the number of children living in poverty.

In 2011, the rate of children living in low-income families was 1.8% lower as a direct result of the national child benefit. That translates into approximately 118,000 fewer children living in low-income families because of this benefit.

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Another example is the Canada social transfer to the provincial and territorial governments. In fiscal year 2013-14, this transfer provided over \$12 billion to provincial and territorial governments, an increase of \$4 billion since the Liberals were in office. This transfer continues to increase at the rate of 3% per year.

This funding supports provincial initiatives in early child development, early learning, child care, and post-secondary education. As well, it supports social assistance and other social services for low-income families with children.

Other initiatives in support of families with children include the universal child care benefit, which we have recently announced will now be about \$2,000 per year for each kid under six and \$700 per year for kids six and over, helping families with the costs of whatever form of child care they choose. Families are making their own choices.

This benefit is credited with lifting some 41,000 children in 19,000 families out of low-income situations, and this will dramatically increase with our recent top-ups.

The child care expense deduction, which we have just announced we will be expanding, is another example. It lets families deduct the cost of child care from their taxable income, and in 2013 it reduced taxes payable by families by about \$1 billion.

• (1130)

There was also the child tax credit of \$2,255 for each child under 18, which reduces the parents' income tax payable by about \$340 for each child.

The government has also supported the creation of over 8,500 daycare spaces in over 400 first nations and Inuit communities to encourage more aboriginal Canadians with children to join the workforce.

In total, the government is providing over \$15 billion in benefits for families with children through programs and tax measures, such as the Canada child tax benefit, the national child benefit supplement, the child disability benefit, the universal child care benefit, and finally the child tax credit. The vast majority of this investment goes to low and modest income families with children.

One must also consider all the federal investments being made to make housing more affordable for lower income Canadians. Since 2006, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the government has invested more than \$16.5 billion in housing. Working with its partners, CMHC has helped nearly 915,000 Canadian households, including low-income families with children, find adequate and affordable housing.

The programs I have mentioned are showing results. The incidence of children living in low-income households has dropped to all-time lows. That translates into about 730,000 fewer children living in poverty. In fact, there has been a decline in the low-income rate for single female-parent homes of over 20% since 2002.

As well as providing targeted support for those most in need, the government has also cut taxes for Canadian families and individuals by upwards of \$160 billion. The greatest benefit has been for low and middle income Canadians. Personal income taxes are now 10%

lower and more than one million low-income Canadians have been taken off the tax rolls altogether. That is like taking the entire population of Calgary off the tax rolls completely.

The proof of our government's action is in the numbers, and our plan is working. That is why I am pleased to support this motion, because it recognizes all of the good work our Conservative government has done to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

I thank the hon. member for her motion, and I urge all my hon. colleagues to support it.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to joining this debate and putting some comments on the record with regard to the motion before us today.

I remain astounded that the government is supporting the motion and patting itself on the back for taking great measures. I will refer to a number of measures within the body of my speech here telling us that we have not been doing a good job. Certainly poverty is a complex issue. It is an incredibly difficult issue to deal with, and I do not think the government does a good job on complex issues. If they cannot fit it on a bumper sticker, the Conservatives do not do a good job. "No tax is a good tax" is the one they like to refer to.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I get some "hear, hear"s from the government benches. That would be like saying "no hospital is a good hospital" or "no highway is a good highway". It is just asinine.

The Conservatives say that the best approach to poverty is for everyone to have a job. Having a job is a big part of it for them. However, it is tough having a job if people do not have a roof over their head., if they do not know where their next meal is coming from, or if they do not know what is going to happen with their children when they go to work at that job. It is tough to have a quality job if they do not have access to post-secondary education or some type of training. If people do not have that security around themselves, then it is difficult to have that job.

That is part of our effort to address the complex issues that weigh on us as to why it is such a great challenge and why there has to be a concerted effort and a plan to address poverty in this nation and to bring those numbers down. It is unbelievable that it is the 25th anniversary of the unanimous motion by this chamber in 1989. However, the fact is that there are still almost one million children who live in poverty in this country. Almost one in seven children continues to live in poverty in Canada.

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It is important for the government to have a plan in place and then to work that plan. A plan would give focus to the issue. It would also allow federal agencies to go about their business and be able to view whatever initiatives they might be taking through a lens of wanting to address the issue of poverty. It would refocus our ability to work with the provinces, some of whom have had very successful and worthwhile initiatives. To have the federal government there as a partner and in support would be of great benefit. I do not think any Canadians take a great deal of pride in the fact that a nation as rich as Canada remains 20th in child poverty among the 41 wealthiest countries in the world. I do not think any Canadian thinks that is right and, obviously, we believe that we are better as a nation than to be 20th out of 41 nations.

Depending on what measurement we use, relative or absolute poverty, whatever the measurement might be, poverty rates or the number of Canadians being poor ranges from about 8.5% to 12.5% according to statistics from 2011. That is between three million and five million Canadians, including almost one million children. Research has shown that children from low-income families score lower than children from high-income families on various measures of school readiness, cognitive development, and school achievement, and that this gap increases over time with children of low-income families being less likely to attend post-secondary education and gain meaningful employment.

In the House last week, we talked about unpaid internships and how those are tilted toward wealthier families. There are children who have the support of their parents and have access to some type of support to take on an internship. However, the field is being tilted to the haves and the have-mores, as opposed to those who are struggling to make ends meet, who cannot afford to take those internships, so they miss a great training opportunity.

• (1135)

Children living in poverty have more behavioural problems later in life, such as drug abuse, early pregnancy, and increased criminality. Economic hardship in childhood has been linked to premature mortality and chronic disease in adulthood.

The depth of the problem with poverty is reflected in income, food, and housing insecurity. Addressing these factors will be key to reducing child poverty.

If will make some comments on income security. Children obviously remain poor when their parents remain poor. Income does matter. That means that any solution for child poverty must include efforts to increase the income, as well as employment opportunities, of parents, in particular single parents.

The current Conservative government loves to boast that the best plan for poverty is jobs, as I said earlier. However, the jobs being created are increasingly low-paying, low-quality jobs that hinder, not help, people from escaping the cycle of poverty. Forty-four per cent of poor households in Canada had at least one member working in 2011. That is, forty-four percent of those living in poverty had jobs. That could partly be attributed to the rise in precarious low-wage employment. Temporary employment continues to increase while high-quality, full-time jobs are becoming increasingly scarce.

Since the current government took office—and I have said this in the House before—there has been a 66% increase in the number of Canadians working for minimum wage. Canada has the third-highest proportion of low-paying jobs among the world's wealthiest countries, according to a recent Morgan Stanley report. Food Bank Canada's annual study, entitled "HungerCount 2014", found that one in six households using food banks is working or recently just lost their jobs.

Affordable child care allowing parents to be active participants in the workforce is an essential component of a child poverty reduction plan. If a parent cannot secure it, it is unlikely he or she could sustain sufficient or meaningful employment.

Food security is also essential. Almost 850,000 people used food banks in 2014. That is a 25% increase since 2008.

In the recent study tabled, "HungerCount 2014", 37% or almost 300,000 people helped by food banks are children, and 45% of households that use food banks are families with children, with nearly half of those being two-parent families. First nations, Métis, and Inuit account for 4% of the population and make up 14% of those who use food banks.

Wrapping up, I will reference the human resources committee study tabled in 2010, "Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership towards Reducing Poverty in Canada", which recommended:

...that the federal government immediately commit to a federal action plan to reduce poverty in Canada that would see, during its first phase, the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

It is a complex issue, but it is one that we as a nation as wealthy as Canada have to work toward.

There are so many components to it, but it is essential that the current government—and if not the current government, the next government—must be seized with this issue so that we can help lift Canadians out of poverty and break that cycle.

• (1140)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as official opposition critic for Employment and Social Development, I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for bringing this important motion forward, especially because this debate falls just a day away from the 25th anniversary of the all-party motion to eradicate child poverty.

At the end of last week, I had the privilege of attending a phenomenal conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which addressed a large component of this motion: affordable and accessible child care. The NDP was the only federal party whose leader was in attendance. I want to take a moment to personally thank the leader of the official opposition for making it his priority to be in attendance.

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I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the important announcement made by the leader of the official opposition last month. An NDP government would see no parent in our country paying more than \$15 a day for child care and would create one million new child care spaces. That announcement cuts to the very heart of the child care crisis in Canada right now. It cuts to the very heart of child poverty and to the eradication of poverty.

Right now in our country, two parents, working full-time at minimum wage, would struggle to pay for a full-time daycare spot. In Winnipeg last week, the leader of the official opposition said that this was not okay, that it should be no more than \$15 a day for accessible, quality daycare. The NDP has also called for a \$15 an hour minimum wage for federally regulated employment.

No parent should have to choose between affordability and safety. In 2014, in a beautiful developed country like Canada, one of the top in the G7, it is absolutely flabbergasting that we have child poverty. Unfortunately, eradication of poverty is not a given. Canada ranks 23rd among the countries in the OECD, despite the fact that we like to see ourselves as part of the G20 and the G7.

Not only that, but when it comes to public spending on early learning and child care, Canada ranks dead last among comparable countries. We can do better. Simply put, we do not prioritize our young people and that will have a significant consequence on the future of our country if we do not turn things around.

Currently 900,000 children in Canada are in need of affordable, quality daycare spots. The government promised the creation of 125,000 new spaces in 2006. Where are those spots? Not a single new spot was created.

The importance of quality early childhood education in the development of children cannot be understated. It prevents social exclusion and ensures that every child has an opportunity to develop into a contributing member of our society. Studies suggest that growing up in a household that lacks adequate financial resources for basic family needs has long-term negative impacts.

According to research by Pierre Fortin, Quebec's model of child care has a positive effect on the economy, and we know how much the Conservative government likes to believe it is a good economic manager. More than 70,000 mothers were able to join the workforce and generate a return of \$1.75 for every dollar spent on child care.

In 1989, my friend, Ed Broadbent, introduced a motion that was unanimously passed in the House. All parliamentarians in this place came together and committed to eradicating child poverty, because all of them could agree that one child living in poverty in our country was one child too many, yet here we are. One in seven children currently live in poverty. When we look at aboriginal children, the numbers are bleaker. Two in five aboriginal children live in poverty.

On these numbers alone, I implore all members of the House to stand and support my colleague's motion, but words are not enough. We need to take action. Let us all come together again in a renewed commitment for the betterment of all Canadian children. Surely all members in the House still agree that one child living in poverty is one too many. Surely, with all of the divisions that exist within these walls, we can agree on that.

●(1145)

I want to take a moment to thank a mentor of mine, Laurel Rothman, who has dedicated her career to eradicating child poverty in Canada. I have the deepest respect for her tenacity and dedication. In our short time working together, I have learned so much from her, both factually and ethically. She is my hero in countless ways, and I wish her the very best in her retirement. Laurel is an inspiration and I am a better person and member of Parliament for having worked with her. From the bottom of my heart, I thank her.

The Conservative government has led the country into such a housing crisis that one in four Canadian families spends more than one-third of its overall income on housing. Housing prices in Vancouver, and outskirts like Surrey and Delta, are sky high, yet Canada is still the only country in the G8 without a national housing strategy. I am devastated by that. Housing costs are among the top concerns of my constituents in Surrey, and I am sure the same holds true for the constituents of many members in the House.

The NDP proposed Bill C-400, an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians. Unfortunately, it was rejected by the government. Had it passed, it would have addressed the plight of 300,000 homeless Canadians and approximately 1.5 million households, many with children, that could not access a decent, affordable home.

For the NDP, a housing strategy that establishes a structured coordination between the federal and provincial levels of government, as well as with other relevant organizations, is of fundamental importance.

The eradication of poverty will only be possible when the national housing crisis is addressed. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is pleading with the Conservative government to invest in long-term funding for affordable and sustainable housing. Due to cuts from the Conservative government, many low-income renters are in a state of panic.

Since the 1970s, low-income renters have received federal subsidies, but the government claws them back and people are left without a solution. In first nations communities, the situation is even more dire.

This motion is not asking for too much. Quite simply, we are asking the Conservative government to make the elimination of child poverty a priority, not just in words but in real actions, and to develop a poverty reduction plan with timelines and measurable benchmarks that would include components to address children's poverty. That would involve taking action on the crisis of poverty for indigenous children, making housing more affordable for lower income Canadians, creating a national early childhood education and child care program, addressing childhood nutrition, and improving economic security for families.

Private Members' Business

Children are poor because their parents are poor. No child chooses to be born into poverty. Because of that, it means addressing poverty in a comprehensive way is essential to addressing childhood poverty and to ensure the future of our country. Poverty affects three million Canadians. Three million children, seniors, indigenous people, persons living with disabilities, single parents and recent immigrants are all more likely to live in poverty.

Over 967,000 children live in poverty, and 22,000 adults under age 25 are homeless. Canada ranks 15th out of 17 among peer countries when it comes to child poverty rates, and B.C. has the ignominious privilege, if I can call it that, of having the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

Thirty-eight per cent of children living with single parents live in poverty and forty per cent of indigenous children live in poverty. I said it already, and I will say it again, that collectively we can do better. As members of Parliament, we can stand together in the House and recommit to eliminating child poverty. What more meaningful way to mark the 25th anniversary of the unanimous motion passed in the House with an objective we have yet to achieve.

I ask all my colleagues to support the motion, because no one should be left behind and, mostly, no child. Let me remind the House, no child chooses to be born in poverty. It behooves each and every one of us to address this stigma on our country right away.

● (1150)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate on the private member's Motion No. 534, which was introduced by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. I would like to thank her for tabling this motion, because it allows me to speak to the important things the government is doing to reduce child poverty in Canada.

We know that the best way to tackle child poverty is to improve the economic well-being of Canadians, especially those who are in poverty. Our approach is working. We are collaborating with the provinces and territories. We know we are at an all-time low. In fact, 225,000 fewer children are now in poverty than when we took office in 2006.

Our universal child care benefit is specifically aimed at supporting families with children. As the Minister of Finance just recently announced, an enhancement of that plan will benefit all families with children. Members might be aware that we are increasing the universal child care benefit, the UCCB, for children under the age of six. As of January 1, 2015, those parents will receive \$160 a month for each child up until the age of 6. That is up from the \$100 that is currently exists. That works out to \$1,920 a year, which is a huge impact for those with low incomes.

We are also expanding the UCC benefit to children aged 6 to 17. Again, as of January 1, 2015, the expanded UCC benefit will see \$60 per month for children aged 6 to 17. That works out to about \$720 a year. This is a brand new addition to a very important program that, again, will help families with low incomes.

We are also increasing the child care expense deduction dollar limits by \$1,000, effective for the 2015 tax year. The maximum amounts that can be claimed will go up from \$7,000 to \$8,000 for children under 7, from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for children aged 7 to 16, and from \$10,000 to \$11,000 for children who are eligible for the disability tax credit.

Our plan recognizes that there is no one size that fits all for child care for Canadian families. We are delivering real results.

I was in the child care licensing field for a short time. I recognized that in our rural communities, our shift workers needed many different options in how they responded to child care services. We have a plan that will deliver.

Another thing the NDP regularly forgets to mention is that families with low incomes in the provinces receive significant subsidies for their child care through provincial programs. This is regularly not spoken about. The NDP talks about what it costs, and it certainly a significant number of dollars, but what it does not talk about is how much the provinces subsidize those costs for the low-income families.

Our Canada social transfer is providing an all-time high of \$12.6 billion in 2014-15 to the provinces and territories. That is up from \$8.4 billion under the last year of the Liberals. We are continuing to increase these transfers by 3% a year. This gives the provinces and territories the flexibility to address the elements of this motion that are in their constitutional jurisdiction. I have already alluded to the fact that every province provides significant support to low-income families for their child care.

We also provide billions of dollars in benefits to families with children through the Canada disability benefit, the national child benefit supplement and the child tax credit. In budget 2012, we introduced measures to support the well-being of our most vulnerable children, including supports and services for first nations schools and students, as well as proposed enhancements to the registered disability savings plans for the families of children with severe disabilities.

While the opposition is focused on trying to create more bureaucracy, we have actually been reducing child poverty to all-time lows. That said, we agree that the child poverty rate remains too high. However, our policies are working, especially the working income tax benefit.

● (1155)

Everyone in the House wants to tackle the issue. Our government is tackling this issue in a solid and sensible way, and we are making a real difference, rather than creating a significant bureaucracy, which perhaps the NDP is looking at.

The working income tax benefit is an incentive for low-income Canadians to get over the welfare wall. It encourages them to work by providing them with benefits the more they earn. The proof is in the numbers, which show that 1.5 million Canadians benefit. This has brought thousands of Canadians out of poverty.

We are working on many fronts to reduce poverty in this country.

I would now like to put some emphasis on the significant investments we have been making to facilitate access to affordable housing for low-income families.

We have been working in co-operation with our partners, the provinces and territories, to improve access to affordable housing. For example, since 2006, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, better known as CMHC, has invested more than \$16.5 billion in housing. It is working with its partners.

We have helped 915,000 Canadians and their families, including Canadians with disabilities, recent immigrants, aboriginal people, and low-income families with children. Over the last few years, many facilities for families have opened in my own riding, providing important support.

Over the next five years, our government is going to continue to invest another \$10.2 billion in housing to reduce the number of Canadian families who are in need of housing. These investments include \$1.25 billion for a five-year extension of the investment in affordable housing agreement. CMHC is working with the provinces and territories on this.

There is another area in which we significantly differ. Our government knows how critical it is to work with the provinces and territories rather than to have a large federal government perspective. Every province and community is different in terms of their needs and what is going to work best for them. We work with a partnership strategy and look at local and regionally tailored housing solutions.

Our poverty reduction plan has been recognized throughout the world as one that works. The recent UNICEF report said that child poverty decreased during the last recession by 180,000. The president of UNICEF Canada had this to say about Canada's performance:

Canada is faring far better than other western countries. It is due to measures that are favourable to families, like tax credits, fiscal measures, and benefits that have been maintained or put in place to counter the effects of the global crisis.

We are proud that our plan is working, but we are not done until no children in Canada are living in poverty.

My hon. colleagues know that reducing poverty is not the responsibility solely of the federal government. It is a shared responsibility that requires the participation of multiple levels. That is why I mentioned that we are working hand-in-hand with the provinces with the significant Canada social transfer.

I am pleased to support today's motion, because as I have outlined, our government has a plan, a plan that is working. The proof is that fewer children are living in poverty today than when we took office.

Our comprehensive approach to addressing poverty works by increasing opportunities to get into the labour market and by contributing to strong, healthy Canadian families and communities. Strong economic stewardship is essential to Canada's success and to the welfare of our citizens, including our children.

Privilege

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

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

* * *

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am rising to ask that you find that a prima facie case of privilege exists with respect to the government's contempt for the House of Commons and its members.

Last Wednesday the Minister of Finance delivered the government's official update on economic and fiscal projections not to the House, as he should have done and as is custom, but to a private audience of bankers and finance professionals who paid \$800 a table to hear this important information.

[*Translation*]

As legislators, members must have access to this critical information in order to do their jobs. We must be able to analyze the state of the country's finances.

The fact that the minister obstructed our access to this information and disregarded the democratic principle whereby elected members should have access to this information before representatives from banks and investment firms do illustrates his contempt for the House.

[*English*]

This is crucial information for legislators and is a core piece of our ability to do our jobs. We need to understand the state of our country's finances. This obstruction of our access to that information, and the minister's affront to the democratic principle that elected officials should have that information before representatives from banks and investment firms, clearly illustrates contempt of this House.

Page 63 of Erskine May's 22nd edition states:

...ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and to be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments...; it is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament

I must reiterate that in front of an \$800-a-table group of Bay Street elites, the Minister of Finance is not held to the same standards of truthfulness as he is in this place. For him to choose to deliver such an important economic update when we as parliamentarians cannot ask questions on behalf of those we represent, cannot examine the information in the presence of the minister and finance officials, and are forced to rely on a press release and media coverage is simply outrageous.

Privilege

In previous cases of privilege similar to this one, the importance of the information a minister is presenting has come into question. A similar complaint raised to Speaker Jerome on March 18, 1977, found the Speaker unsure of how to decide if the documents publicly released, not in the House, were “major policy statement[s]”. I would submit that a budget update containing a \$4.5 billion swing in projected versus actual government surpluses is major and that other taxation measures he announced were clearly also major policy announcements.

However, we do not have to look as far back as 1977. On December 3, 1998, an unhappy member of Parliament raised a question very similar to the one I am raising today, stating:

Ministers seem to take great pride in avoiding interaction with this House... The House of Commons is the place where the government is most answerable to the people who elected the members of this Chamber.

The member then went on to say:

“[the House’s] right to be informed of government action and policy decisions has been superseded by default by government to the news releases....”

It is time for the House to draw a line in this regard. I think that everyone in this place would agree.

If members would like to know if the member in question still believes this, they can ask the Minister of Justice, who said these very words in this place when it was a Liberal government making very similar announcements outside Parliament, not here in Parliament.

• (1205)

[Translation]

There is no doubt that this is a case of contempt. On page 82 of the second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by O’Brien and Bosc, it is established that contempt is an affront against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges and that the House claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which obstructs or impedes the House in the performance of its functions.

[English]

That this \$800-a-table event to table crucially important annual fiscal documents the Minister of Finance is charged with was first announced by a press secretary in a tweet to Canadians is simply adding insult to injury.

Therefore, I submit that the actions of the minister are clearly an example of contempt of Parliament, if not a direct breach of all our privileges in this place.

A look at the critical nature of the finance minister’s update is important to this very question of privilege. The fall economic update acknowledges a couple of important things. One is falling world oil prices. As a result, the finance department has cut its GDP estimation for 2014 by \$3 billion, with a further \$16-billion-a-year downgrade from the year 2015 onward. The department also acknowledges that the drop will translate into a \$500-million loss in royalties for 2014-15 alone and will amount to a \$2.5 billion loss per year over the 2015-19 period.

The minister also announced that the personal income tax as a percentage of GDP is expected to rise to 7.1% next year, up from 6.9% this year, and to further increase to 7.3% in 2019-20.

Therefore, the percentage Canadians will be paying into the GDP will rise over these years, and the minister saw fit to make this announcement on Bay Street, not in Canada’s Parliament.

These are important realities facing the Canadian people and the Canadian economy. It is Canadians and the members of Parliament they elect to this place who are entitled to this information, not those paying \$800 for an exclusive lunch on Bay Street. By contrast, just today, the Ontario finance minister will update Queen’s Park on the state of Ontario’s finances. It is a wonder that our finance minister here could not extend the same courtesy to members of Parliament.

I would like to end with one final quote from Speaker Parent on a similar question raised in the House. He stated:

This dismissive view of the legislative process, repeated often enough, makes a mockery of our parliamentary conventions and practices. That it is the Department of Finance that is complained of once again has not gone unnoticed.

That was said November 6, 1997.

The finances of our country are of the utmost importance to our ability to understand and perform our function as members of Parliament. That is why I present this clear case of contempt to you today, Mr. Speaker. Of course, should you rule that a prima facie case of privilege exists, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1210)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not have notice of this motion, so I will provide some preliminary comments and reserve the opportunity, I trust, to come back.

I would state, first of all, that the fall economic and fiscal update is not a budget. The budget, of course, is contemplated by the Standing Orders and is provided for in those orders. There is a debate that takes place pursuant to those Standing Orders in the House on the question of the budget, and the House votes on it.

The economic and fiscal update does not fit that measure at all. In fact, going back to the very start, it has very often not been something that has necessarily been tabled in the House. Sometimes it has occurred before a finance committee, sometimes it has been done by news release, and sometimes it has been done out across Canada in order to bring the message to Canadians in their various communities, in places as diverse as Mississauga, Calgary, Fredericton, Edmonton, and Victoria. This has been a long-standing practice.

Of course, there has never been a question of the privileges of the House being offended, and that is because it is not a budget. It is not a ways and means motion. In fact, there are no ways and means motions, as I understand it, flowing out of this fall economic and fiscal update. It is not appropriations, it is not a matter of supply for this House, which is normally dealt with by the House. That is not part of the fall economic and fiscal update.

I would note that this has been the subject of many rulings by Speakers over time in this House. However, it has been a long-standing practice that the government does have the ability to make announcements outside of this chamber.

Announcements can be made about the entire range of policy issues and the status of the government outside of this chamber. In fact, when it comes to matters of finance, the Department of Finance issues information every month on a wide range of issues updating Canadians on the status of our economic and fiscal circumstances. Every month, there is new information provided to Canadians, not through the House, a fall fiscal update or a budget, but simply on an ongoing basis, for example, on the status of the deficit, government revenues, and government spending. This kind of information is updated and provided on a regular basis, as of course are all kinds of other related announcements by the Department of Finance.

I would simply put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a question of whether or not there is any impropriety in having a fall fiscal and economic update presented outside of the House. It is quite settled, quite clear, that it is a long-standing practice that this certainly can be done outside of the House. As a result, there really is no prima facie question of privilege.

This government continues to respond every day in question period in answer to any questions that arise. The Minister of Finance is here on a regular basis, or the Minister of State for Finance, or the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to answer questions on the state of finances and the government's fiscal position.

I know that we do not get that many questions about the fiscal position because it is very good under this government. However, we know that if it were a question of what the New Democrats were doing, it would be for higher spending and higher deficits. NDP members do not want to shine a light on the fact that we have had very good fiscal management, which is also perhaps why they do not want this communication to happen outside of Ottawa. They would like this to be communicated only here. They do not want communicated to Canadians outside of Ottawa how strong the government's fiscal position is and the fact that we are on the way to balancing the budget in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, I do reserve the right to come back to you and provide a more formal submission after I have had an opportunity to prepare some research. However, off the top of my head, these are some preliminary reasons why there is really no basis for any argument of privilege in this case.

● (1215)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in rebuttal to my colleague, the government House leader, much of what he said is actually irrelevant to the point that was raised by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

One point that the government House leader did not raise and that he should have, although it is perhaps not relevant to this particular issue, is the fact that the ministry of finance over the last 20 years has said consistently that the administrations that govern the use of money most effectively in this country are NDP governments. That is something that the ministry of finance has been saying for 20 years.

However, on the points raised by the government House leader, I would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to pay particular attention to the interpretation of Speaker Jerome and Speaker Parent, which was raised by my colleague for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Government Orders

This economic and fiscal update is simply not in the same category of much of what the government House leader has raised as examples of how the government tries to update Canadians on finances.

The arguments raised by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley are absolutely legitimate and relevant. We hope that you will take them under due consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair will take this under advisement and get back to the House as soon as possible. I would ask the government House leader to advise us at as early a date as possible as to whether he is going to make further representations.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There is a ruling on Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

There are 56 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-18. Motions Nos. 1 to 56 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 56 to the House.

● (1220)

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 2.

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 4.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-18, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing line 4 on page 7 with the following:

“—the right referred to in paragraph 5(1)(g) cannot be modified by regulation and do”

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 7.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

Motion No. 10

Government Orders

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 9.
Motion No. 11

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 10.
Motion No. 12

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 11.
Motion No. 13

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 12.
Motion No. 14

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 13.
Motion No. 15

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 14.
Motion No. 16

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 15.
Motion No. 17

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 16.
Motion No. 18

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 17.
Motion No. 19

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 18.
Motion No. 20

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 19.
Motion No. 21

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 20.
Motion No. 22

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 21.
Motion No. 23

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 22.
Motion No. 24

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 23.
Motion No. 25

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 24.
Motion No. 26

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 25.
Motion No. 27

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 26.
Motion No. 28

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 27.
Motion No. 29

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 28.
Motion No. 30

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 29.
Motion No. 31

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 30.
Motion No. 32

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 31.
Motion No. 33

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 32.
Motion No. 34

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 33.
Motion No. 35

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 34.
Motion No. 36

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 35.
Motion No. 37

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 36.
Motion No. 38

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 37.
Motion No. 39

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 38.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 39.
Motion No. 41

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 40.
Motion No. 42

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 41.
Motion No. 43

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 42.
Motion No. 44

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 43.
Motion No. 45

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 44.
Motion No. 46

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 45.
Motion No. 47

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 46.
Motion No. 48

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 47.
Motion No. 49

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 48.
Motion No. 50

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 49.
Motion No. 51

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 50.
Motion No. 52

That Bill C-18 be amended by deleting Clause 51.

● (1225)

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me say congratulations to you. I realize I should have told you ahead of time I might say this. Taking a risk of perhaps embarrassing you and of you then asking why I did this to you, I am going to take the risk anyway. I saw that you were awarded the Charlie Brooks Award last week in your hometown of Windsor and I want to congratulate you in the House on behalf of members in your party and all members here.

For those who do not know of Charlie Brooks, he has been gone now for a number of years but was a great trade unionist in the city of Windsor. He clearly set a standard that is extremely high. To be given such a distinguished award is a credit to you, sir, for the hard work you have done on behalf of your constituents, on behalf of Ontarians, and, indeed, on behalf of Canadians across this land. To you I say congratulations and thanks for your hard work.

I will return now to the matter at hand, the amendments on Bill C-18.

Bill C-18 is clearly an agricultural bill that the government has brought forward. New Democrats had great hope for the bill initially. Even though we saw some things in it that we did not like or believed needed to be done differently, we, in a spirit of co-operation, voted for it at second reading to get it to committee because we wanted to talk about it.

To be fair, the chair of the agriculture committee did a great job of making sure there was a balance of witnesses. That is to be commended. Every chair should try to do that. He did an excellent job.

What the committee heard from a preponderance of witnesses—in fact, a majority of them—is that there needed to be amendments to Bill C-18. Many of the amendments were not identical to what New Democrats proposed, but they were certainly very close. The majority fell into one class, for the most part, under what is called in the act “farmers’ privilege”.

We know in this place that words are very meaningful, because we write legislation with words. They have a great deal of meaning and carry a great deal of weight because they enact laws, and from the get-go, the idea of a farmer’s “privilege” to save his or her own seed struck New Democrats as the wrong terminology. We thought it should be a farmer’s “right” to save seed. It should not be a privilege, because one can earn a privilege or lose a privilege. What we see in this act is that through the Governor in Council farmers could indeed lose what the government has now decided to call their privilege. We find that unfortunate.

As we looked through the act, we discussed things with witnesses and gleaned from them opportunities to make amendments. We made a number of them. I have to admit that the minister came to the committee and recognized that under farmers’ privilege, farmers were not getting much of a privilege and needed to be given a little more. We clearly said, as many stakeholders across the country said, especially farmers, that although we were giving farmers the privilege to save seeds, they could not clean them, they could not store them, and they certainly could not resell them.

There was some minor tweaking, even though the minister said the government was going to come back with very substantive changes and amendments to the bill.

There was indeed one hugely substantive piece near the end, which had to do with how to pay back what is called the advance payments program. If I remember correctly, I believe the amendment that the government brought forward was six pages long. It was about how to get the advance payments back if a farmer went bankrupt. It was a very technical clarification, and the good folks in the agriculture department explained it all. They said that if people could not quite understand it, they should think of how to repay student debt. It was actually taken from the student debt handbook on how to deal with the debt if it could not actually be paid back. I had these really awful, vivid flashes in my mind of all the students who have horrendous amounts of debt and saw that we would be giving farmers the same options that students have, which is being almost bankrupt.

In any case, that was the major amendment.

● (1230)

It is under what we call UPOV '91, which is really about intellectual property of seeds. A company that does a great deal of research and development of a new variety of a seed, whether it be wheat, canola, or some other seed, can then reap a reward, basically a dividend, from its investment.

Fundamentally, we do not disagree with that. A private corporation goes into the business of producing that variety, it has taken the time and effort to go through the process, has put the money in, and then it decides it will charge whatever it happens to be for that seed. We do not disagree, and UPOV '91 speaks to that.

Government Orders

We are a signatory to UPOV '91. The “91” signifies that it was in 1991 that the agreement came about. This House has been challenged by UPOV '91 on a number of occasions. It started with the previous Conservative government, and it became part of a Liberal government issue. Now it is back to the Conservatives again.

Clearly there is an opportunity here. Many countries have signed on to UPOV '91. A great thing about it, in my view, is that it can be amended to suit the needs of a country and still fall within the framework. Countries do not have to accept *carte blanche* everything in UPOV '91; they can take pieces of it. Countries can fundamentally accept pieces and move pieces out. They can do that. A number of countries that have accepted UPOV '91 have actually done that. Many countries have stayed with the UPOV of 1978, which in the eyes of investors who develop seeds is actually more onerous for them to make a profit.

The whole idea was that they would lose out on research and development if they did not get UPOV '91. We understand that. The dilemma is in how to balance the interest of those who want to go into the research and development, which is a multi-billion dollar enterprise. This is expensive research, which means that the money invested deserves some kind of a return, unless of course it is done in the public sphere. We have seen with the government that it has actually taken money from the public sphere, public research.

Competitors for the big industries on the block are becoming fewer all the time. In fact, in this legislation one of the recommendations from one of the stakeholders was a question around balance, so that the small seed producers would not be swallowed up or disappear. We proposed an amendment to the legislation, but unfortunately at committee my friends across the way decided they did not like the amendment and it was defeated. In that regard, balance has not been attained.

What we see at this point is that the government has decided it is going to take UPOV '91 *carte blanche*, making no changes to it of any significance. We would end up simply taking it as is. Farmers across the country and those in the industry are all asking for a way to balance it out. They want a Canadian farmers’ solution to UPOV '91.

One of the things we tried to explain, and the agriculture department was in agreement, was around the fact that there are a variety of seeds that right now are compulsory licensed and on the market. Farmers may like it, but the company that has the licence can decide to go to CFIA to withdraw the licence. There is a process. The licence cannot just be withdrawn. There is a process, as the agriculture department and the CFIA talked about, to deregister the licence.

Once the licence is deregistered, it is gone from the marketplace. Normally it happens when farmers no longer want the product. It is deregistered because no one wants it anymore. It is not available, and it is deregistered.

Government Orders

However, if the company that owns the registration develops a new one, under UPOV '91 it can exact a greater amount of money and greater royalty from it because it is new. There is nothing to stop them from asking for the other one to be deregistered. In fact, the department said that is absolutely right; there is nothing to stop them. They can apply, and if the process is followed correctly, it could disappear.

Even more than that, the legislation allows those companies to then appeal to CFIA when they develop a new seed to ask that it not have a compulsory licence. That means it could be taken off the market if it does not make any money for the company, even though farmers might actually like the seed.

Ultimately, with the lack of competition, we will be stuck with markets that are driven by a handful of large companies rather than having a multitude of choices across the country as farmers have today. That would not be helpful for farmers nor for the marketplace in general. If we were stuck in a place because of intellectual property and get rid of those who might compete—the small seed producers and the government, which used to do public research for the public good that farmers could then utilize down the road—it would not be helpful.

• (1235)

It is unfortunate that the government did not hear us on the amendments and chose not to accept them. Hopefully, it has a second chance through you, Mr. Speaker. You read the amendments out earlier. The government has a second opportunity to correct what it did wrong the first time. It can vote for the amendments this time, and not against them.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a hard time understanding why my colleague does not want to support this bill.

As far as the recent changes he proposed in the House are concerned, the vast majority, 60% of them, are technical amendments that have to do with the French translation of this bill. These amendments will be reviewed in due course. Nonetheless, the body of the bill is very important for farmers. The members across the way do not seem to be taking that into consideration.

On behalf of my government, I would like to take a few minutes to explain the benefits of this bill. We believe we are responding to the demands of farmers, who are calling for Bill C-18 to stimulate agricultural and economic growth here in Canada.

That is why it is important to vote in favour of this bill. I still do not understand why the opposition is against it.

[*English*]

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I can explain to my hon. colleague across the way why we are against it, but I will do my best.

The reality is that it is not what farmers asked for. They simply said, “No, thanks. We'd like to see some amendments.” We did not pull them out of the sky. We took what folks gave to us and got some good help from folks who know how to craft legislation and how to craft amendments. Based upon what farmers told us, we did that, and

then presented it back. Even the government's own minister said, “We got it wrong. We are going to have to make amendments.” I think there were five or six amendments, because the Conservatives rushed in with an omnibus bill. Instead of simply working on UPOV '91, they jammed a bunch of other stuff in with it. They simply said, “We have made a few mistakes here. We are going to have to make some changes.” Even on the farmers' privilege aspect, the minister said, “We didn't quite get it right.”

The problem is that the government did not quite listen to exactly what farmers were saying. Farmers said more than what the minister finally came back with as his amendments. That is why we are against it.

If the government is not going to listen to the folks it is writing the legislation for, why on earth would we support it? Why would we support legislation when the government has a deaf ear when it comes to listening to what folks have to say? If it is not going to listen to them, then I guess we have to tell the government again, in this House of Commons, “This is what they said, and you are getting it wrong”, and vote against it. There is no other way to do it.

• (1240)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the member for Welland's passion, because I know that he probably spoke with a lot of people in the farm community in arriving at the position that he laid out.

In his remarks he said that the market is driven by a handful of large corporations. He also talked about intellectual property and the rights over that intellectual property

I might say to the member that I do not think he should expect the government to listen any more to amendments in here than it does at committee. This is a government that does its own thing, regardless of whether the amendments make sense or not. However, that is just a side note.

My question is a fairly simple one. What would the bill do, especially with regard to the comments the member made with respect to intellectual property and large companies, to the power relationship between the large corporate multinational sector that operates on a global basis and our smaller family farms—or even if they are not small, as there are some fairly large family farms in the country now?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, the member has asked an interesting question. The power relationship tips because of the size that they are and the amount of money that goes into research. That is what happens. There are some pieces in the legislation that would allow someone to take intellectual property up to a certain level and use it and work on it. The problem is that when public dollars go out, then one of the competitors is gone. The next piece is when small seed producers leave and just a handful are left.

Government Orders

Where is the royalty? Farmers want to know. They want to know if it is when they buy a bag of seed, at the end, or both. They want to know where it is. The bill does not say anything about that. Some farmers will say that an end-point royalty is okay, because if they buy lousy seed and they have a lousy crop, they will pay a lousy price for it. The problem is that if farmers pay a decent price for a lousy bag of seed and then receive an end-point royalty, they have paid a lot for stuff that was lousy in the first place.

That is the problem. The bill would not allow folks to fight that off. In our view, it would unbalance what we thought could be a balance between those large corporations that come in with intellectual property rights and those that are smaller and do not have them. The amendments would allow them to succeed in the marketplace.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak today on the subject of Bill C-18. My NDP colleague said that farmers and the agri-food industry do not support this bill, but nothing could be further from the truth.

I would like to begin by quoting William Van Tassel, first vice-president of the Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec. He has made his position clear, and he supports our bill. I would like to quote from his testimony before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The federation supports those changes, which would make the PBRA consistent with the 1991 convention of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants...which governs breeders' rights and protects the intellectual property resulting from research into the development of new crop varieties. This harmonization is necessary in an environment where research collaboration is increasingly global and no longer restricted by geographical borders.

Our position is also evident in our commitment to Partners in Innovation, which brings together 20 groups and represents most of the agricultural producers in Canada. Moreover, all partners welcome the update to the regulatory environment.

Once more, for my NDP colleague:

Moreover, all partners welcome the update to the regulatory environment.

He goes on to say that:

The federation believes that protecting intellectual property can only encourage investment in research by various stakeholders in the grain industry, which will offset the reduction in public efforts in scientific agricultural research. It is also an incentive for researchers from different countries to make their research findings available to Canada, thereby promoting the diversity of genetic resources and the availability of varieties for Canadian and Quebec grain growers. With a diverse range of genetic resources, the industry can be more responsive to market needs and maintain farm competitiveness.

It is quite clear that Canada's agricultural producers and farmers support these changes to the legislation. That is why it is so disappointing that the opposition parties have proposed amendments—which you quoted earlier, Mr. Speaker—in an attempt to undo and water down this bill until it no longer addresses the concerns of farmers.

Before I go into the details of the bill and how it will modernize various aspects of Canada's regulatory regime, I would like to remind the House what agriculture means to Canada and what Canadian agriculture means to the rest of the world.

If we just look at a map of the world, we see right away just how huge Canada's land mass is. Canadian farmland covers 75 million

acres of our vast territory. On average, Canada exports about half of its agricultural products. We are one of the world's top exporters of wheat, grain and coarse grains, as well as pork and beef, of course. Wheat is considered a food staple, and Canada consistently ranks among the world's top three exporters of wheat.

We heard the testimony of Mr. Tassel, a representative from the Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec, who speaks very highly of our bill. It is therefore disappointing to hear the opposition members say this morning that farmers do not support this bill.

Protecting plant breeders' rights is a key point in this bill, which also includes many other principles. What we think is most important here is that this bill will boost and capitalize on Canada's competitive advantages around the world.

• (1245)

However, as we know, to succeed in international markets and reach consumers throughout the world, we must work within increasingly modern frameworks, trade agreements, standards and conventions that are in line with the latest trade agreements. That is the purpose of this bill.

The bill before us today will harmonize Canadian legislation through such trade agreements, standards and conventions. Bill C-18 will strengthen and protect our agricultural sector, while increasing its export potential. The bill will also allow us to continue to succeed in international markets, remain at the forefront of food science and help solve problems related to food production.

It is not surprising that the overall demand for world-class food produced by our farmers is increasing. The world's population is expected to reach 9.3 billion by 2050. To respond to this increasing demand, we need productive, competent farmers. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, world food production will need to be 60% higher. That is a major challenge for our farmers and farmers throughout the world. That is why the improvements in safety, efficacy and productivity set out in this bill are so important for farmers.

The agricultural growth act seeks to modernize nine laws. Seven of those laws are used by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to regulate Canada's agricultural sector, and two of them are enforced by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Here are some examples of improvements that the bill makes in the feed and fertilizer industries. Under the existing system, animal feed and fertilizer are registered on a product-by-product basis. Bill C-18 will allow the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to license and register fertilizer and animal feed operators and facilities that import or sell products across provincial and international borders.

Government Orders

Licensing or registration of facilities and operators will make it faster and easier to verify whether agricultural products meet Canadian safety standards.

This approach will not only enhance food safety in Canada but also further align our regulatory practices with those of our trading partners.

We will continue to work with the United States and the European Union on implementing more comprehensive animal feed regulatory systems that include hazard analysis, preventive controls, licensing, and the enforcement of international standards such as best practices in feeding. We will continue to work in close co-operation with all our trade partners.

I did not touch on every benefit in this bill. I hope to have the opportunity to talk about it with my opposition colleagues in other forums. I hope they will come around and support our bill, which farmers have asked for and which meets with the approval of Canada's agricultural community.

•(1250)

[English]

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister has asked why can we not support the bill. If there were individual bills instead of an omnibus bill, we probably would have supported the vast majority of it. During committee stage, quite often there was agreement around certain sections, whether it was the fertilizer piece, or some other pieces. We have problems with one side of it and we do not get to vote on it separately, which I do not think is allowable, so we end up with this.

On farmers' privilege, the government recognized it had it wrong and suggested it needed to come back with substantive changes. However, it came back with a minor tweak. If the government recognized that this was not the correct way to go, that farmers would not be placed in a position of equality with the intellectual property holders, that they would be in a lesser position when came from the sense of saving seed, why does the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture think it is all right for big business to swamp out what ostensibly is a small business? Some farms are large, but most of them are small. Why does the minister not say that we need a sense of balance so that people with small farms who develop their own seeds do not end up being wiped out by large multinationals, which have the power to take them to court and the farmers will not have the power or resources to defend themselves?

•(1255)

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that today's farmers are large farmers. They are not small farmers, as my colleague likes to characterize them. Nonetheless, before becoming large farm operators, they were small farm operators. They grew and were able to become major providers thanks to increased productivity. The same is true right now for small farms or people who want to benefit from market opportunities. This bill will allow them to seize market opportunities and hope to become major producers who will one day supply the world.

[English]

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill for agriculture across Canada, but there many problems with it. The member from Quebec was not at committee, but I am sure he was briefed. Mr. Van Tassel was very right in saying that the bill was good for Quebec in many ways, especially when he talked about seeds and certified seeds. However, other farmers, small farmers, organic farmers, farmers who have certain niche products from Quebec, were very concerned about the bill. There is not enough in the bill to help small farmers.

What does the member see in the bill that will help small farmers in Quebec and others across the country? I would like the member to state what is in the bill for small start-up farmers. Conservatives made this a large bill, but they could have had a lot more in it to help farmers.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of state has roughly one minute remaining.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for me to give my colleague a detailed answer in one minute. The most important thing is that I can tell him that I come from Beauce, which is a rural region. There are many farmers and agricultural operators in that area. I would like to point out that they are very much in favour of this bill because they think it will guarantee their future and give them a market. In fact, this bill will ensure that Canadian regulations will be in line with world regulations, and that products exported will be recognized as Canadian. With international recognition of Canada, the bill provides guarantees for food safety and future markets and, lastly, it ensures that our products will be welcome in other countries without tariff and non-tariff barriers. That is important to small producers in Beauce. They are very pleased that I am supporting this bill on their behalf. These entrepreneurs will become major agricultural entrepreneurs one day thanks to the improvements made to our laws, which will allow them to grow their businesses.

[English]

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the bill. It is very important, whatever we do in the House, that we listen to farmers and food groups, those people who produce food for us. We should not only listen to them in the House or at committee; we should get out there and listen to farmers.

Government Orders

Recently, I had the great pleasure of going with the member for Papineau to an international ploughing match. Yes, he did a great job of turning over the soil. More important, that day we held a round table with farmers from across Ontario. They had concerns about what the Conservative government was or was not doing. It is great sometimes to sit down with farmers, whether it is out there or in committee, and listen to them. Sometimes our bureaucratic system puts things forward that it thinks is good for the people who produce our food, but it is not always.

Overall, this is not a bad bill. I have a kind of love-hate relationship with it. There are parts in it that I think farmers need, and there are parts of it that could have been changed. During committee, we put many amendments forward, but they did not get much recognition from the government side. That being said, our party will vote for the bill because we cannot deny the good stuff in it for the farmers who need it.

The bill has quite a bit in it, as I mentioned before.

One of the most contentious parts of this was UPOV '91. There is no doubt it is an international code that is being used out there. Many other countries, in Europe and elsewhere, are using this system and it has worked well for them. However, just because it has worked well for those other countries and just because it was set up years ago does not mean we could have had more of a made in Canada approach to it. We could have put some things in there that would have helped small farmers and ensured them they could store or reproduce their seed.

I do not think any of the smaller growers that came forward had any intention of reselling the seed. It was not their intention, but they did not want someone to come in, like the big government, and take away their seed that they could reuse on their farm. It all came down to that.

I think the government knew it was wrong and it did not have clarification, but it put in an amendment, which I do not think went as far as the Liberal Party or even the NDP. Our language was stronger. However, it was one of the biggest issues that was brought up quite a bit throughout the committee.

When we look at the bill, there is so much in it. I guess it will be a “wait and see” bill. We will wait and see how farmers will deal with it, especially smaller farms, and their grain. There were so many other people coming forward and recommending UPOV '91. Many people who produced seed said that it could give Canada a big advantage. With this new legislation, we could develop more varieties in Canada and we could sell them to the United States. There is a good side of it, but we could have both.

Imagine, some of the varieties we have developed with spring wheat and canola all came from research in Canada. However, the researchers or whoever was producing that product had to be protected. Part of this bill is there for that.

As we go forward, with climate change and various changes in consumer tastes, we will have to be on the leading edge to ensure we have the right varieties and products out there. It is important, but the government should step up to the plate and do more research. We can say that they will be protected and that we will produce more and better varieties for small and large growers alike, but the problem is

the government sometimes does not have the money for the research to do that as we move forward.

• (1300)

We had some amendments because we had some problems with the bill. All we can do is to hope that the smaller producer is not going to be penalized and have to go to lawyers to protect themselves when they have that bit of seed in their bins. We have been reassured of that, but I think we still could have had stronger language for when the time comes.

We listened to the different groups who came forward on what is happening in agriculture, which is that farms are getting bigger, and that for those that may not be getting bigger, they are becoming more intense with higher costs. The costs have doubled for fertilizer, seed, or whatever farmers use. At the end of the day, of course, they are dealing with more money.

Many times we see that the couple of hundreds dollars that used to get a farmer through is just not enough any more. If a farmer has a couple of thousands acres, that farmer needs a minimum of half a million dollars to get through. Therefore, one of the big parts of the bill was the advance payments, and here is where the government could have stepped up to the plate.

It was a nice gesture by the government to increase the advance payments to \$400,000, but after hearing many witnesses tell us about the size of their farms, what they were dealing with, and the amount of cash they needed to get through, it is not enough. For instance, we had representatives from the Canadian Canola Growers Association come forward. They said in a letter that there should be an amendment to Bill C-18 aimed at streamlining the program and that it is important the government consider an increase in the maximum advance limit. The letter states that:

Farmers have indicated that an increase to the current limit would better reflect their financing requirements and make the program more valuable to their farming operation. We believe doubling the limit...

Indeed, they even went so far as to say “doubling the limit”. Therefore, I think the government missed the mark on this, and it could have done a little more consultation. I also think that the Conservatives had the opportunity at committee to sit down and listen to the farmers and to the numbers.

This is not free money here; we are not talking about giving farmers money. This is an advance payment. It is a loan. When farmers are putting in their canola, soya beans, or whatever, these are expensive crops, as well as all the inputs. By the time they see a return, it could be a year down the road. They could be seeding in May but they may not get a cheque for that crop until the following May. They are dealing with a lot of money, and it was shown very clearly at committee that the \$400,000 was not enough.

Sometimes government has to step back and consider. The Conservatives did not do wrong with the \$400,000, but just did not hit the right mark. I think they had an opportunity to increase the amount.

Government Orders

As I said, this is not money that is given to farmers. This is an advance payment that the farmers pay back. It is money in and money out. Therefore, I believe that this was another opportunity where the government could have made some amendments to reflect the amount of acreage that farmers have and the size of farms out there today.

We can look at the amounts that were brought forward and the defaults on these advance payments and consider how Canadian farmers are really good at producing food and at managing their finances. The default was at a very low percentage. The defaults could be due to some catastrophe on the farm or to the weather. However, the Canadian taxpayers are not going to be on the hook here because farmers have such a good track record of paying back those advance payments.

Therefore, it would have been a no-brainer for the government to increase that number even more. Down the road, I think the Conservatives will find out that they will have to do this. They are looking at history, but there is the reality of the amount of money that farmers are dealing with in agriculture now.

My colleague from Manitoba and I went to visit some farms and it is unbelievable what they put into the farms and the size of the tractors. We were all through Manitoba.

My last point is on the penalties. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association is also really concerned about these penalties. For instance, if someone is packing carrots on a farm and did not have a hair net on, which I know is not right, the farmer could be fined \$5,000. I do not know where the Conservatives came up with these penalties.

As the Canadian Cattlemen said, they need the government to be a coach, not a referee, to help them produce better, safer food. They want government to come in and help them, show them how to do it, but not come in with a hammer and say, "Okay, you didn't have a hair net on or you didn't do this, and you're going to be fined \$5,000."

● (1305)

That is a big problem with the bill. I do not know where the government comes up with these big penalties, but the money should be spent helping farmers and operators produce better quality food instead of just coming in with a hammer. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has stated that in its presentation.

I am open to any questions from members.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member for Sydney—Victoria. I know that he works very hard on our agriculture committee.

One of the things he spoke about was the advance payments and the maximums that are given. As he is aware, it was a small number of people who actually reached the \$400,000 during a time when they were being encouraged to do so but who realized that perhaps selling into some depressed markets would hurt their bottom line, so when making statements about the costs in agriculture, if members first looked at the size of the farm one would have to have in order to reach the \$400,000 maximum, I think they would be quite surprised.

If we are looking at groups of people, even the smaller farmers might not reach more than the \$100,000 that is interest free in this particular program. Moreover, those who are in that type of framework would already have their financing available.

When there are such a small number of farmers who have reached the limits, does the member think we should put it into legislation when we have the opportunity to deal with this as far as regulations are concerned?

● (1310)

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is such a great contributor at committee. One of the great things about our committee is that we have farmers on that committee who know what it is all about and know what the expenses or the challenges of growing are. I commend him for his contribution and his question.

Thirty years ago my wife and I borrowed for our vegetable farm. At that time, the maximum that could be borrowed from Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board was \$150,000. We cannot buy a tractor for \$150,000 now. My point is this: If we are going to do all of this work to put legislation in place we need numbers that would be realistic down the road. If my children were to borrow now for the same farm, it would maybe be \$500,000 or \$1 million, which would not even touch it if we look at the history and where we are at now. We are not saying that farms will all get bigger, but just that it is inevitable that the costs or inputs and what they would get would increase. That is why I could not figure out why the government would give that more flexibility. We could have certain criteria attached to it, such as how much acreage each farm has, or the like. However, it is just a visionary thing and the government has to see that it is what it is. It will be a more expensive business with more money involved. I think the presenters stated that, and they should have that money available to them.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues is that a number of changes were made that mentioned the CFIA becoming the regulatory body, in the sense that it would oversee it. One of the things we do know is that if we look at the line items in the budget, those that were announced here—not announced to the bankers at that \$800 a table event—we can see that there has been a decline overall in the budget if we look at the budget forecasting.

The government has added additional things for the CFIA to do. Is my friend not concerned that if the resources continue to contract and if the CFIA does not have the ability to do what it is specified to do under the legislation, everything will become backed up? Will that not throw a wrench into situations and approvals will not come forward and things will slow down, and the so-called red tape reduction team will have simply gummed the works up, not with red tape but with inaction?

Government Orders

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. That issue was not brought up a lot at our committee but is very important when dealing with the violations. Let us say there is a 100-kilometre stretch and there are two RCMP officers on that 100 kilometres who are dealing with safety and various issues. Say they then decide to have only one RCMP officer for 500 kilometres and have big fines, so that if the one officer catches just one person once in a while, they will just be whacked. There would be no such thing as helping communities.

What I see this legislation doing is cutting our resources so that officials can just drive through and if they see people doing something wrong, they can just whack them. They will not have resources available to help them with their operations, but rather will go in and hit them with big fines, as if that is going to make things better. However, farmers will go out of business as a result, because some of these farms do not have \$5,000 to pay as a penalty. Rather, the CFIA should have the resources to come in and help these farmers move forward, or to help these food processors. That is not what is in place. I think it is just a cop-out from all the cuts the government has made to just adding big fines and it figures that will solve the problem.

• (1315)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to explain why I support the agricultural growth act, Bill C-18.

We heard a lot of excellent, positive feedback at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food about this legislation. The further amendments that we already put forward have made it even stronger and more necessary.

The key factor in my decision to endorse the proposed legislation has more to do with the financial realities of many Canadian producers. The legislation proposes to make it easier for farmers to finance their operations and to make the most of existing and emerging opportunities in domestic and foreign markets.

To fully appreciate the potential impact of Bill C-18 on farm finances, one must first understand the dramatic changes that have occurred in recent years.

Today, Canadian farms must operate like big businesses. While many farmers see their career as a calling, because they love to be out on the land and produce food for people around the world, if they hope to succeed they must also be savvy entrepreneurs. They must constantly keep an eye on the bottom line to make sure that today's expenses do not exceed tomorrow's revenues.

This can be quite a challenge because most expenses are incurred long before revenues start to flow. It costs quite a bit of money to plant and to grow and harvest a crop and then get it to market. In most cases, however, farmers do not receive any revenue until they sell that crop and the prices farmers get are not guaranteed, as they usually vary from year to year.

To meet these challenges many producers take out loans that they repay when they sell their crops. This means that along with other expenses such as the cost of seed, feed, fertilizer and fuel, producers must also consider the cost of borrowing money. They must try to

get the best terms possible, including the most favourable interest rates.

Given that farmers' ability to feed Canadians is in the national interest, the Government of Canada has long administered programs that help farmers gain access to the capital they need to operate successfully. One of these programs is the advance payment program, or the APP.

The APP enables eligible producers to borrow the cash they need to grow agricultural products at a reasonable interest rate. Once their crops sell, they repay these loans. Each year, more than 23,000 Canadian producers access approximately \$2 billion of cash advances under the program to help them finance their operations, and this number continues to grow. The advance payments program is a critical risk management tool to help bridge farmers through high cashflow periods like planting and harvesting until they market their products.

Third-party organizations, usually producer groups, play a central role in the APP. These groups essentially administer the program. They distribute capital and collect loan repayments through agreements involving financial institutions, farmers, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The Government of Canada guarantees the loans. The guarantee promotes the lowest possible interest rates, which helps keep costs down for everyone. As a result, all Canadians benefit because they gain steady access to Canadian food at reasonable prices. The APP helps crop and livestock producers meet their short-term financial obligations by providing them with cash advances to a pre-set maximum.

Mr. Rick Bergmann, vice-chair of the Canadian Pork Council, said at our SCAA meetings:

Canadian hog producers see value in the advance payments program and view the changes to the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act as an improvement. Steps that can reduce the administrative burden and cut costs for participating can make a difference, and we encourage that to continue. The availability of the program assisted many producers with their cashflow during a very difficult period in the industry.

Mr. Bergmann also said that his organization encourages a review of the loan limits. The maximum amount is \$400,000. The first \$100,000 is interest-free for eligible producers. Those amounts remain. If in future the amounts ever needed to be raised, this could be done by the Governor in Council through the regulations.

• (1320)

The legislation now before us proposes to improve the APP and make it even more effective. Many of the improvements came to light in November 2012, when a review of the program was tabled in this House. Under the terms of the legislation that governs the APP, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, in consultation with the Minister of Finance, must review the program every five years. The last review covered the five-year period of 2006-2011.

Government Orders

The review found that the APP did help producers access low-cost financing, particularly producers who did not qualify for conventional financing at affordable rates. In fact, about two-thirds of Canadian producers under the age of 35 participated in the program during the period studied. Further, loans obtained through the APP typically had more favourable terms and conditions than those offered through the private sector, which contributed to the program's objectives.

The review also found that the APP helped participating producers negotiate better prices. In fact, 74% of those surveyed as part of the review process agreed that the program helped them market their products. In some cases, this is because the loans enabled farmers to hold off on selling their products until prices improved.

However, the review also identified several specific weaknesses in the APP that Bill C-18 proposes to address. Overall, the proposed improvements would reduce red tape and make the program more flexible and accessible. One of the key improvements proposed in the legislation before us would foster multi-year advance guarantees and repayment agreements with administrators. What this would really mean is a reduced administrative burden for producers, making the application process simpler and less time-consuming.

Another proposed change would provide additional ways for producers to secure the loans, which would give producers much more flexibility. They would be better able to access the capital they needed to take advantage of current market conditions.

Bill C-18 also proposes to adjust the rules related to the repayment of advances, producers in default, default penalties, and stays of default. The proposed legislation would also streamline the process between the APP and the Farm Debt Mediation Act and help farmers reach agreements with their creditors and resolve their financial difficulties.

The changes proposed in Bill C-18 are the result of extensive consultation with producers and industry representatives across Canada. The changes would help our agricultural entrepreneurs harness innovation, add value, and create jobs and growth right across Canada. Canadian producers operate in an increasingly complex and competitive global industry. To continue to grow and succeed, they must have access to the modern tools and methods that many other businesses already have used. Canada must continue to support the strong, stable agricultural sector. The agricultural growth act proposes to help producers manage their business risks proactively. There is no doubt that all Canadians stand to benefit.

Now let me address the amendments proposed by the opposition at report stage. As indicated earlier, our committee did a very thorough job and made well-reasoned amendments to Bill C-18. I am afraid that what the opposition is doing here is trying to undo all that great work and certainly the discussion on UPOV '91. Earlier the minister of state indicated the situation as far as Quebec farmers are concerned and the great support they have given. It is significant to recognize that there is great support for UPOV '91. There is also great support for issues such as the advance payments program.

I am hoping that we will be able to move forward and recognize the situation that is in front of us and that all parliamentarians can support Bill C-18 as it stands.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Red Deer gave a great account of the advance payment program in Bill C-18. To be perfectly blunt, I do not think there is much I could quibble with on that particular aspect. The member did a great job at committee in helping us understand how it works, for those of us who have never taken advanced payments, maybe because we do not own farms. He has done it again here in the House, and I want to thank him for that.

It is important. That is a piece of the omnibus bill. As it stood, with a little tweaking, it was a six-page amendment, but it was a technical piece. I get that piece. In fact, the department needed six pages to actually tell us how to technically amend it, but at least it got it right. We could have voted for that, if it had been separated out. However, the government did not do that.

We go back to the issue of UPOV '91, which is really about intellectual property. One of the things we try to do as the opposition is suggest amendments. The amendment should be about making sure that when going to a court of law, there has been an infringement. In other words, it should not have a chill effect, as it is called in class action lawsuits, where a farmer who inadvertently ends up with material in his field ends up in a lawsuit. We wanted to try to stiffen that so that this would not happen to farmers.

Could my friend from Red Deer comment on why we did not want to strengthen that and left that alone? If someone actually tries to take someone else's property, that is wrong, full stop. That is not the issue. The issue is what happens if there is a chill effect, because we have seen that in other instances.

• (1325)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we heard in committee, as producers came to talk to us, was that the most expensive seed is the one that is picked up first. After that is gone, people start to look at the seed that is a little cheaper. What they are looking for are the best varieties possible.

We have great plant breeders here in Canada who are doing an exceptional job. I think the key component is to try to bring more of that type of industry into Canada. Some of the discussions we heard, certainly when we talked to producers from Quebec, was that this is a great opportunity.

Government Orders

We are also looking at some of the plant breeders who were saying that these are opportunities for them to move their technology into other places as well. The organic producers when they first came said they were a little concerned about the wording. When challenged about how they could take their skills and move them outside of Canada, many looked at it as a positive, as something they would be able to handle, and they were excited about it. That is what we started to see.

As for staying back with UPOV '78, there is actually more protection now with UPOV '91.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was great to hear the member for Red Deer expanding on the advance payments program, which, I am sure he would know, was a good Liberal program, started when the Hon. Eugene Whelan was minister.

When it was originally started, it was there as a marketing tool to provide farmers with some income so they did not dump their harvest on the market quickly to pay their operating costs for the harvest. The problem now is that it has become, to a great extent, another loan program. It is a good loan program, but it is a loan program. I would just raise that as a concern.

My question really relates more to the bill in total and the plant breeders' rights aspect. I agreed with the member when he said there is opportunity here for Canadian plant breeders. However, there is also a danger. We have seen this in other industries, in intellectual property, in the telecommunications field, etcetera.

Is there not a danger that we would actually lose control over seed supply and that some of those plant breeders would be bought out? Farmers would end up paying the price. Does the member have any idea how we can control that and ensure that there is a proper balance of power with those global seed companies, which will buy out those plant breeders and charge those farmers too much in royalties? How do we effect that?

• (1330)

Mr. Earl Dreessen: Mr. Speaker, to address the point on the advanced payments as a marketing tool, I certainly agree. That was definitely something we saw last fall and winter when people were encouraged not to dump their grain when they were unable to move it. Of course, that was why the margins were so large and the difficulties existed. That is important.

There were discussions about how much people were losing because of the fact that the markets were down. People only lose when they are selling into it. If they have contracts and are not selling until that particular point, then certainly there is an advantage.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am going to speak to Bill C-18.

As with all of the government's other omnibus bills, I have a bittersweet relationship with this bill. There are some parts I like and some parts that really concern me. Our committee worked very hard to study this highly complex bill. A number of stakeholders came to testify as part of our study.

However, sadly, the amendments made do not reflect the majority of the requests made by these witnesses. My position is clear: the amendments made to Bill C-18 in no way reflect the requests of these witnesses. We are right back where we started. This bill raises a number of problems and concerns for both us and our agricultural partners, and I will go into more detail about this in my speech.

First, I will explain the implications of this bill; second, I will talk about the requests made by the witnesses and the work my party has done to try to counter the negative effects of this bill; and then I will conclude by listing the many problems that remain in this bill and that make me very concerned and bitter about the fact that it was passed.

I remind members that this bill would amend nine federal acts: the Plant Breeders' Rights Act, the Feeds Act, the Fertilizers Act, the Seeds Act, the Health of Animals Act, the Plant Protection Act, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act, the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act and the Farm Debt Mediation Act, which is under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

This bill appears to be the most significant change to agriculture and agri-food in our country's history. This bill amends many existing acts, and these amendments affect nearly everyone involved in the agricultural sector as well as their relationships with each other. That is why we must be cautious, to ensure that the bill does not create uncertainty or confusion.

This bill also has the advantage of protecting intellectual property, promoting innovation and potentially supporting foreign investment. These are all aspects that my colleagues in the NDP and I support. However, it was very important to ensure that none of these aspects come at the expense of Canada's agricultural heritage. The NDP has nothing against innovation, as long as it does not violate any rights. This bill forces a number of changes on the agricultural sector, and these changes are worrying a lot of people.

The witnesses we heard from were clear. This bill is good as a whole, but it needs quite a bit of clarification and more than a few amendments. I would like to go over some of them. Stakeholders want farmers' rights to be clarified and protected vis-à-vis plant breeders' rights. They call for the restriction or removal of ministerial powers to unconditionally disallow farmers' rights and privileges through regulatory change. They call for clarification and controls around when breeders can require farmers to pay royalties. In addition, they want explicit protection for seed cleaners.

My NDP colleagues and I were there for all of the testimony. We did our homework and we proposed at least 16 amendments to this bill—common-sense amendments that were all rejected, unfortunately.

Our party proposed amendments in the interest of a balanced approach between protection for plant breeders and for agricultural producers. Our amendments would have ensured that all participants could benefit fully from these ambitious changes.

Government Orders

For example, with respect to farmers' privilege, our amendments included the rights to trade, sell and clean seed, which is what stakeholders asked for. That amendment was rejected.

Many of our amendments suggested that the minister's power to exempt farmers' rights and privileges without any conditions should be subject to an assessment by Parliament.

• (1335)

This change was meant to prevent the agricultural sector from becoming politicized. These amendments were also rejected.

Another one of our amendments would have clarified and set limits on the places where plant breeders can collect royalties in the process. Many stakeholders said they were worried about the fact that the royalties they had to pay could be claimed at any time and do not take into account the quality of their crops. Our amendment was rejected.

Lastly, one of our amendments was meant to protect producers from prosecution when they did not intend to break the law. I think it is just common sense that people should not be prosecuted when a violation is accidental and not the result of negligence. Even though that amendment really made sense, it was rejected.

In other words, all the work the NDP did to try to make this bill an acceptable piece of legislation was dismissed out of hand by our Conservative colleagues. As it stands, Bill C-18 could create many problems.

I said before that we were back at square one and it is true. The many problems raised about Bill C-18 still exist. I will name three.

First, the bill does not take a balanced approach at all and will benefit only a handful of players to the detriment of another group. The NDP believes that a balanced approach is essential when it comes to plant breeders' rights. This bill is not consistent with that view.

Second, farmers' privileges are not adequately protected. In fact, in agricultural sector jargon they are known as privileges, but the stakeholders usually see them as rights. Rights are not taken away so easily. No one should be allowed to have such power, and if such power is needed, then there should be a system of checks and balances.

Third, along the same lines, I think it is unacceptable for the minister to have such broad powers. To justify putting so much power in the minister's hands, the Conservatives are saying that the department needs to be able to adapt the law as quickly as possible if complications should arise. It is not a bad idea, but they seem to be forgetting the adverse effects of this type of practice. The government's decisions on agriculture could quickly become political. The House of Commons should at least have the right to review these exemptions. I am concerned, and I am not the only one.

In closing, I have the distinct impression that we are back at square one. The concerns that I raised today are very similar to the ones I raised in my last speech on Bill C-18. I am disappointed that although a number of stakeholders came and testified in committee, almost none of their recommendations were considered in the amendments put forward by the Conservatives.

What is worse, in his testimony the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said that he would clear up the problem with regard to farmers' rights. However, instead of proposing amendments based on the recommendations made by witnesses, he proposed a token amendment that does not go far enough.

The governing party continues to turn a deaf ear. It does not want to collaborate in order to avoid potential excesses. What is more, this bill favours some stakeholders over others.

I am deeply disappointed, but I take comfort in knowing that we warned the Conservatives. It is therefore with pride in the work that we have accomplished that I oppose this omnibus bill.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from the NDP for her presentation. She does a lot of work on our committee. She provides great input and speaks quite a bit, especially in support of the farmers in Quebec.

The leader of the Quebec farmers, Mr. Van Tassel, was quite in favour of the bill in his presentation. He said one of the successes for Quebec farmers is that they have the proper certified seed, the best seed available, and he said they see great merit in this bill. There was a bit of conflict sometimes between some of the smaller growers and the commercial growers, but at the end of the day they represent a big part of Quebec farmers and they are in favour of the bill.

Would she comment on his remarks? Would she tell the House what part of the bill would suit both the bigger farmers and the smaller farmers through the amendment she has put forward?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for all of the work he does on committee. It is a pleasure to work with him.

Yes, there are some groups in Quebec that do support this bill, but there are other groups that do not. When I talk to farmers in my riding about the agricultural growth act, Bill C-18, I find, first of all, that most of them have never heard of it; then, if they have heard about it and have looked into it, they do not see exactly how it would strike an appropriate balance.

In my riding, I have a lot of smaller farmers, but I also have an aging population, so we have to look at farm transfers. As well, we know that more and more people are getting involved in organic farming. We have had people and groups say as witnesses that this bill might not be the best for organic farming. It is kind of a one-size-fits-all approach.

What we asked for and what we looked for with our amendments is support and openness from the government, which we did not see at all. We do like some parts of this bill, but it is a one-size-fits-all approach, and the member summed it up very well in his comments about a made-in-Canada approach when it comes to UPOV '91. We could have made it better, and we did try.

There is another chance. We will have a vote on these amendments, so we will see what happens. I have to stay optimistic that we can make this bill better.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the theme of my colleague from the Liberal Party. It is an important question. This particular MP is from the province of Quebec. Quebec farmers want to be competitive. Quebec farmers want access to plant technology to make them more competitive, both to sell products within Canada and to sell products abroad.

I wonder how the member is going to explain to her farmers and to the farmers of Quebec that she is letting them down and is basically telling them that they do not deserve access to the latest seed technology to help them be more competitive. How will she answer to her farmers?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I could answer by saying that I have a petition against Bill C-18 that elaborates more on a lot of the concerns that I brought up in my speech. These are people from my riding. I know as well that a lot of the members here in the House have submitted petitions because the farmers in their ridings, and even Canadians in cities, have had some grave concerns over Bill C-18.

Our amendments were balanced, made a lot of sense, and were not partisan. Everything we were asking for was based on what witnesses said at committee and on consultations that we had, because this bill has been around since December of last year, if I am not wrong.

There is a lot of concern. Yes, there are groups that support the bill, but then there are a lot that do not. We still have grave concerns when it comes to striking a balance with Bill C-18.

• (1345)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be speaking to Bill C-18 at this stage of the legislative process.

In its current form in the House of Commons, the bill has been amended to clarify and strengthen it. I am pleased to inform the House that we were able to engage in very useful discussions at the hearings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. The committee heard from more than 50 witnesses who represent many Canadian agricultural sectors. I would like to thank them for sharing their expertise and experience with the committee and for making recommendations.

I would first like to point out one of the most important aspects of this bill: the protection of plant breeders' rights. After hearing from stakeholders, the government proposed amendments to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act in order to encourage investment and innovation in the development of new varieties.

Government Orders

Patty Townsend, the chief executive officer of the Canadian Seed Trade Association said this to the committee:

Of course, if farmers are going to save grain to use as seed on their farms, they need to store it, so we were really happy to hear the minister say that they are going to propose an amendment to clarify that.

[English]

What we have done in this amendment is to strike an excellent balance between seed variety developers on the one hand and farmers on the other. This amendment ensures that seed variety breeders will see a return on their investment. Bill C-18 modifies the rights of plant breeders under the act, including their duration, scope, and conditions for protection.

However, in addition, the bill also clarifies that the right to store seed is specifically included in the farmers' privilege. The amendment allows a farmer to reserve harvested grain to use as seed for planting in subsequent seasons.

Mr. Réjean Bouchard, assistant director for policy and dairy production in the Dairy Farmers of Canada, made this point at the agriculture committee when he said:

"...the legislation strikes a good balance between plant breeders' investment in the development of new varieties and the farmers' ability to save, store, and condition seed for their own use."

[Translation]

Bill C-18, as amended, would also harmonize plant breeders' rights with those of our international partners and competitors, and would make it possible to implement UPOV 91.

Almost all the witnesses who appeared before the committee are interested in the section of the bill that deals with UPOV 1991.

[English]

Bill C-18 will encourage increased investment in plant breeding in Canada. It will also encourage foreign breeders to sell their varieties here in Canada.

Over the years, there have been several updates to the UPOV requirements for plant breeders' rights protection. Canada's current legislation meets the requirement of UPOV 1978; however, most UPOV members are already meeting UPOV '91 requirements, including many of our key trading partners, such as Australia, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, and the United States, but as it stands right now, Canada is not.

Mr. Dave Solverson, president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, spoke at committee on our amendment and on UPOV '91. He said:

The changes to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act are positive. Canadian cattle producers depend on innovation and improvements in feed grain and forages. We believe that the update to UPOV 91 will encourage investment in seed development in Canada. The protections this act confers are not just for companies, but also for institutions like universities and governments that develop new varieties of seeds. Two of our major competitors, the United States and Australia, have adopted UPOV 91, and we hope to keep pace with them.

Government Orders

With Bill C-18, we are taking the necessary steps to align the Plant Breeders' Rights Act with UPOV '91.

I also want to discuss some of the other amendments our government put forward to strengthen Bill C-18. Based on discussions the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food had with stakeholders, we have amended the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act to provide additional clarity.

Mr. Jaye Atkins, CEO, Agricultural Credit Corporation, said at committee:

I believe the act certainly allows us better clarification of some of the things that in administering the program today we find very difficult, things like better and clearer definitions around attribution rules, and...trying to ensure that the benefit of the first \$100,000 interest-free money is not abused.

One of the many strengths of our Conservative government is that we work closely with agricultural stakeholders. Our stakeholders, like us on this side of the House, fully support Bill C-18 and fully support innovation and progress.

● (1350)

[Translation]

Finally, it is important to recognize that the main objective of committees is to foster meaningful discussion and debate with respect to major bills that affect Canadians. Unfortunately, as the result of a motion introduced by the opposition, there are presently more than 50 amendments on the order paper. This is an attempt to undermine the committee's work and to dismiss the testimony of many witnesses who support this bill.

[English]

This indicates to me that the opposition members did not do their job thoroughly at committee. In fact, the number of motions on the order paper is close to twice the number of amendments submitted by opposition members at the committee. How can this be? It would seem to me that the opposition is actually undermining the work of the committee. Much of the content of these motions has already been dealt with at committee, and what was not dealt with should have been.

The NDP, the Liberals, and the Green Party are attempting to delay and obstruct the proper passage of this important agricultural bill, and they do so to the detriment of farmers and our agricultural sector.

[Translation]

I urge the members of the opposition to stop playing politics. Farmers are the ones who suffer. These members heard from a number of witnesses and stakeholders during the committee's meetings. They know that Bill C-18 is very good for farmers. I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I know that farmers would urge them to do so as well.

[English]

Before I finish, let me highlight some of my remarks again in English. The New Democrats are finally stating openly that they are going to vote against the agricultural growth act, and in doing so they are failing farmers. Almost every witness in committee supported Bill C-18 and the positive benefits that this bill would deliver to farmers and the agricultural sector.

I exclude, of course, the National Farmers Union, one of the very few organizations that opposes Bill C-18. I think New Democrats have to explain to farmers how they have let a single agricultural organization like the NFU influence their agricultural policy to this extent.

I asked a question of my former colleague from the NDP, who spoke before me, about how she could possibly explain her opposition to Bill C-18 and the increased access that Bill C-18 would give farmers to current, meaningful, and important seed technology. Quebec farmers want to be competitive too. They look across the border to Ontario and see MPs like myself supporting farmer access to seed technology. They will look at home at their NDP MPs and will wonder why they are being failed by them.

The New Democrats are going to have to answer for that. I know that farmers will not tolerate the political games they are playing at the expense of farmers.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always a joy to the listen to the parliamentary secretary. It is like *Aesop's Fables* most of the time.

If he is asking if New Democrats have failed farmers, we actually listen to farmers. It was the government over there that did not listen to farmers. Nearly all farmers were saying over and over again that there needed to be amendments to this bill. What did the government do? It came back with a couple of tiny lines in the area that farmers wanted changes, under what it has now termed "farmers' privilege". The government came back with a tiny clarification that did not meet what farmers had been asking for.

If anybody has failed farmers, it is the government. That is who has failed farmers. Ultimately what could happen, and what I think what will probably happen, is that the royalty system is going to change in this country as soon as this becomes law. When seed companies move in, they will decide if they are going to have end-point royalties, graduated ones, cascading ones, or whether they are going to be at the beginning, and farmers are going to be the poorer for it at the end of the day. Oddly enough, a Conservative government that says it believes in and preaches competition is more than likely going to take competition out of the system, and the only ones who will be affected are farmers.

Farmers are affected by competition and a lack thereof, and when there is a lack of competition in the seed business, it is the farmers who will pay. The government will have failed those farmers. Conservatives should hang their heads in shame. That is what they ought to do.

● (1355)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start. The member clearly does not represent farmers across Canada. As I said, he has allowed a single agricultural organization to influence NDP agricultural policy to this extent, and this is very sad.

Farmers want to be competitive. To be competitive in today's world, they must have access to technology. I do not know what the member and his party have against technology, particularly seed technology that would benefit farmers by allowing them to have higher yields and lower losses and to be more competitive in the international market.

The committee heard from close to 50 witnesses. Almost every single witness fully supported the measures we are putting in Bill C-18. The member and his party must start listening to farmers, or it will be at their peril.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always comical to hear the NDP and the Conservatives fighting over what is happening in the House, but the NDP does have some merit with respect to this legislation. Those members came forward with some decent amendments. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said he would look at those amendments, but he did not. The government did not accept any of the good amendments put forward by the opposition.

The Liberal Party is going to vote in favour of this legislation because there is too much good in it for farmers not to have it, but it should have been split off.

There is not a lot in this legislation for small farmers. There are a lot of good things in it for commercial farmers and big farmers, but there is not a lot for small farmers and organic farmers, and their farms are important. The government missed the mark here. We could have had a better bill. We should be pushing the government to come forward with better legislation because it would help the small farmers, the new farmers, the young farmers who are just starting up. There is not enough in the bill for them. The government has done a disservice to the parliamentary system by not putting some of our amendments into the bill. This could have been a better bill.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell me why there is nothing in this legislation for small farmers? Why did the government not do what the minister said he was going to do and put some of our amendments in the bill, which would have made it a better bill, a made in Canada bill?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, with respect to disregarding the amendments, this was a discussion that we had at committee. The member feels that the government must adopt an opposition amendment just because it feels it is their turn to have an opposition amendment adopted, as if one should be passed “just because”. It does not work that way. Every single amendment proposed at committee was studied. There was reasoned debate on every amendment, and then there was a vote. Whether the amendment was put forward by a government member or an opposition member, it was given due process in terms of being fully considered by committee and then voted upon. It is not for the committee to decide to pass an amendment just because he was the individual putting it forward.

When it comes to small farmers versus big farmers, I do not know why the member is distinguishing between the two. We are talking about farmers, big and small. Small farmers would benefit from seed technology, as would organic farmers. The organic sector made this very clear during committee. Sometimes the opposition likes to gravitate to the position that seed technology immediately means

GMO. It does not. There is a lot of seed technology that is not related to GMO at all. Organic farmers would benefit from seed technology within the organic sector. They themselves admitted this during committee, and that member was present. I do not understand the nature of his question.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, all of Quebec is coming together to denounce austerity policies, yet the federal government is moving forward with its harmful agenda to systematically dismantle the government bit by bit. The Conservative government is eliminating self-funding programs and withdrawing services that ultimately save public money. All this for purely ideological reasons.

What is even more frustrating is that these ill-gotten savings do little to help Canadians. Take, for example, the oil company Suncor, which receives millions of dollars in subsidies, even though Ottawa excluded the company from the federal bidding process because it was convicted of fixing gas prices.

The people of Montcalm, Quebec, and Canada do not want to help the Conservative government's buddies in the oil industry. They want programs that stimulate economic growth. They want a government that cares about their priorities.

* * *

● (1400)

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past weeks we have heard many personal accounts of sexual abuse involving Jian Ghomeshi, and of stories right here on Parliament Hill. In light of these high-profile allegations of sexual violence in the headlines, a national discussion has finally stirred. We must not let this conversation stop.

It is clear now, more so than ever, that changes must be made to Canada's sexual assault laws. My private member's bill, Bill C-570, proposes to make these necessary changes by introducing a mandatory minimum sentence for rape. If we want to stop violence against women, we must put sexual predators behind bars. Victims must feel comfortable going to court, knowing that their perpetrators will face consequences and not reoffend. Only then will more survivors be empowered to come forward, like the brave women who have already done so in these past weeks.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

GÉRARD-BOSSÉ FOUNDATION

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, an organization in Granby that cares about young adults aged 18 to 35, the environment, sustainable development, and nature has started a project called Les Écolos, in partnership with the City of Granby.

This project has given new life to many used items, thanks to the social engagement of more than 20 young people. On November 13, the organization's administrators held a gala titled *Vert la relève* in order to pay tribute to the perseverance and commitment of two young school dropouts who were able to make their mark and overcome life's challenges.

The Gérard-Bossé foundation is an organization that helps our youth and our environment. Congratulations to the recipients, and congratulations to the administrators for their dedication to the leaders of tomorrow.

* * *

[English]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, around the world we are seeing increasing violations of religious freedom and belief. This is not acceptable. Religious freedom is a basic human right that should exist everywhere in the world. It is a freedom that speaks to human dignity, to rights of free speech, and the right to association.

Just over a week ago, I participated in an international meeting of parliamentarians from 18 countries around the world. We gathered at the Nobel Peace Centre, in Oslo, to create the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, and to jointly sign its charter. Our goal is to work together to give all people the right to believe as they choose, to change that belief if they choose, and to practise those beliefs.

It is incumbent on all of us to do everything we can to ensure that these vital freedoms are accurately understood and adequately protected. We are inviting parliamentarians from all parties, all regions, and all religions to join with us in this fight for a basic human right.

* * *

PREMIER OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Liberal caucus to congratulate my friend Robert Ghiz on eight successful years as Premier of Prince Edward Island and twelve years as leader of the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island.

Elected as Liberal Party leader at the age of 29, Robert took the party from having one seat in the Legislative Assembly to forming a forceful opposition and then winning two straight majority governments. Robert has served the people of Prince Edward Island with distinction and has made a tremendous impact on the lives of Islanders, including major improvements to education with the introduction of kindergarten as a full-day program, which is something I know he is incredibly proud of.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I want to thank Robert Ghiz for his years of dedication and service. I want to wish his wife Kate, and children Julia, Emma, and Jack all the best for whatever the future holds for them.

* * *

● (1405)

CHEREMOSH UKRAINIAN DANCE COMPANY

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 1969, the Cheremosh Ukrainian Dance Company, founded by Chester and Luba Kuc, has enthralled thousands in Canada and around the world.

Featuring traditional dance and song from a kaleidoscope of colourful folkloric-costumed youth, the creatively choreographed productions of Cheremosh have toured to great international delight and acclaim.

A fantastic 16-foot portrait of historical Ukrainian regional dance costumes was displayed in a place of great honour in the Alberta legislature in 2010.

Cheremosh this year also celebrates 30 years of hosting the annual Cheremosh Festival, in which my daughters participated in their youth. Today, my granddaughters are beginning their own tour of cultural dance fantasia as part of the Cheremosh School of Dance.

I congratulate Cheremosh. May its delightful extravaganza of colourful folkloric dance continue to challenge our youth to great pride of accomplishment in artistic presentations of today, tomorrow, and always.

Mnohaya lita.

* * *

[Translation]

THE PEOPLE OF GATINEAU

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week two Legion branches in the riding of Gatineau, La Baie and Norris, commemorated Remembrance Day at the cenotaphs on Gréber Boulevard and Maloney Boulevard. We must never forget those who gave their lives to protect our values and beliefs.

Young students at the Greater Gatineau school also commemorated this date; these students decided to share their optimism by sending a message of peace even as the world goes through some challenging times. I had the honour of participating in these activities, and I am proud of the values of the people of Gatineau, who embody these values at home and in conflict zones around the world.

The people of Gatineau also value compassion and generosity. The holiday season is fast approaching, and far too many families are struggling and will not be able to have the celebrations they would like. I invite Anthony, Johanne, and all the people of Gatineau to join me in donating time or money, or in being there for others in need, so that everyone can have peace of mind and celebrate Christmas with dignity.

I am sure that the people of Gatineau will answer my call and that they will come through once again this year.

Statements by Members

[English]

NATIONAL DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to recognize a delegation representing the Canadian Diabetes Association, which is on Parliament Hill. It is here to mark November as Diabetes Awareness Month.

More than nine million Canadians live with diabetes or pre-diabetes. That is one in every four Canadians.

Diabetes will cost Canada's economy and health care system an estimated \$14 billion, rising to \$16 billion by 2020.

The impact of untreated or improperly managed diabetes is astounding. It causes 30% of strokes, 40% of heart attacks, 50% of kidney failure requiring dialysis, 70% of all non-traumatic amputations, and it is the major cause of blindness and eye disease.

However, there is good news. Diabetes can be prevented. With proper diabetes management, people living with it can lead healthy lives.

The CDA invites all Canadians to take the diabetes Canrisk test, which through a few questions can help them find out if they are at greater risk of having pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. John Barlow (MacLeod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to our new family tax credit and the enhanced universal child care benefit, 100% of Canadian families with children in MacLeod and across Canada will be better off. This means working, stay-at-home, and single parents and one-earner and two-earner families, and, indeed, all families with children will have more money in their pockets.

Every parent will now receive almost \$2,000 per child, but the Liberal leader committed to reversing our tax relief so he could spend the hard-earned money of Canadian families the way he wants.

Despite a Liberal leader who has positioned himself against middle-class families, I am proud our government is giving money back to each family with children in Canada.

* * *

ANTI-BULLYING WEEK

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge that this week is Anti-Bullying Week. Anti-Bullying Week was started by Bill Belsey, a teacher in Alberta. We thank Bill for his advocacy and all teachers for doing their part to make our schools inclusive and safe places for all children to learn and thrive.

One in three Canadian kids reports being bullied. In a study looking at 35 countries, Canada had the ninth-worst rate of bullying among 13-year-olds.

Among adults in the workplace, the numbers are remarkably similar.

We are not doing enough, and government inaction on a national bullying prevention strategy only exacerbates the situation. We cannot be bystanders. As adults and parliamentarians, we owe our youth more and we owe each other more.

We as parliamentarians are not exempt. We too must examine our behaviour and pledge again this week, and all weeks, our continued commitment to do better, to be better, and to expect better.

* * *

● (1410)

RUSSIA

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister made headlines around the world on Saturday when he told Mr. Putin that he had to “get out of Ukraine”. I was incredibly proud of the moral clarity our Prime Minister showed that day, but nobody should have been surprised by it, least of all Putin himself.

Our government has been a leader in the global response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and has been one of Ukraine's strongest supporters.

Canada's position on the Ukraine crisis has been clear from the very beginning. We will never recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 3, a tragic fire broke out in an apartment building in my riding of London—Fanshawe. One resident died.

This building was an unregulated, unlicensed, and illegal home for people with mental illnesses. Many of the people who live in places like this are discharged hospital patients with nowhere to go. They cannot afford most housing and are unable to access accommodation run by the Canadian Mental Health Association because the wait lists are up to three years long. As a result, vulnerable people are forced to choose between homelessness and unregulated, potentially dangerous homes.

This is the direct result of a lack of adequate resources to treat people suffering with mental health challenges. We need to work together with all levels of government, organizations such as the CMHA, and community treatment initiatives to provide real support for people with mental illness.

We can and we must prevent suffering and tragic deaths, such as that of my constituent.

Oral Questions

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is giving more money to parents, but the Liberals and the NDP want to use that money to create more bureaucracy. We are cutting taxes, but the Liberal leader wants to raise taxes.

Our plan helps 100% of families with kids, but the NDP plan would help only 10% of families. The average benefit of our family tax cut is over \$1,100, and every family will now receive nearly \$2,000 per child.

The moms and dads should have that money because they know what is best for their children. They do not need their government telling them how to spend it.

* * *

NATIONAL DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in recognition of National Diabetes Awareness Month, which takes place in November.

Diabetes is a debilitating disease and it affects millions of Canadians. At the current rate, it is estimated that 3.9 million Canadians will be living with diabetes by 2019. I encourage all Canadians to see their doctor and have a risk assessment done, because if caught early enough, there are ways to reverse it.

I ask my colleagues today to join me in extending our thanks to all of those people who work hard as volunteers to bring awareness to diabetes and to help raise money to fight this terrible disease in Canada.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 100% of Canadian families with children under 18 in Essex and across Canada will have more money in their pockets because of our family tax cut and enhanced universal child care benefit. That includes two-income families, one-income families, and single parents. The vast majority of benefits will go to low- and middle-income families.

Tax professionals agree with our family prosperity plan. H&R Block's Caroline Battista says "it's a great thing for families".

Parents do not want the Liberal leader spending their hard-earned dollars on risky Liberal spending sprees, and we side with parents. Parents work hard, and we want parents to prosper. Parents know best how to spend their money for their kids, and we are proud to be standing up for those parents.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 2, 2013, Brian Mulroney was the headliner at a fundraiser to pay Dean Del Mastro's legal fees. With a set-up like that, Conservatives should have known that something bad was going on.

The Minister of Employment and Social Development was there. The cost was a mere \$600 a plate, and the event was conveniently located just a few blocks from Bay Street.

We now learn that this entire fundraiser was conducted by Del Mastro's riding association, meaning that rather than have to pay out the full price, the guest list of senators, developers, executives, and Conservative caucus members actually got a taxpayer refund for their contributions to the "Free Dean" campaign. The Conservatives should now have to explain why almost \$24,000 of the \$39,000 raised will be reimbursed by taxpayers.

When it comes to sticking it to the little guy, there is no one better than those Bay Street Conservatives and their old friend, Brian Mulroney.

* * *

• (1415)

RUSSIA

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to strongly condemn Russia's illegal occupation of Ukraine and its ongoing aggressive military provocation.

Together with our NATO allies, we recognize the need to enhance security and stability in central and eastern Europe. This is why Canada is contributing to Operation Reassurance.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has deployed CF-18 fighter jets to take part in both training missions and Baltic air policing. Last week, two CF-18 Hornets based in Lithuania were conducting a routine training mission when they were re-tasked to respond to a non-NATO aircraft off the Baltic coast.

Our fighter jets intercepted and visually identified a Russian Federation air force plane being used as an electronic warfare and surveillance platform near Lithuanian air space. This interception demonstrates the capability of our armed forces to contribute to NATO missions.

I would like to thank our pilots and crews for their efforts.

Finally, I believe our Prime Minister said it best when he told Vladimir Putin, "You need to get out of Ukraine."

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final communiqué from the G20 meetings this weekend calls for strong and effective action to address climate change. That of course was not the message carried by our Prime Minister, even in the face of a historic U.S.-China deal to tackle emissions.

Impatience is growing with the government's inaction. On Friday, the *Calgary Herald* said, "the federal government should begin to create a realistic framework and targets for its own [emissions]."

Will the Conservatives now finally take real action to reduce emissions?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have always said that for any international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all major economies and emitters must do their part.

With the United States and China accounting for 39% of global greenhouse gas emissions, we are very encouraged to see they are taking action. As Canada only emits less than 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions, we will continue to play our part by reducing emissions at home and work with our partners across the globe to establish an international agreement that includes all emitters.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. This is the government that has stalled real action on climate change for years, arguing that we need to harmonize our oil and gas emissions reduction with the U.S. Now that the U.S. is acting, the government is not willing to lift a finger to make meaningful changes to reduce emissions in Canada. This is not leadership.

When will the Conservatives stop stalling and start taking real, effective action to cut emissions?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we are committed to protecting the environment while growing Canada's economy. We are a founding member and major financial contributor to an international coalition taking real action on black carbon and methane. We have contributed \$1.2 billion to developing countries so they can reduce emissions. This of course is over 100 projects in over 60 developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. That is real action.

[Translation]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that China and the United States have signed an agreement, the Conservative Party has become an even bigger climate change pariah.

Its number one excuse for failing to act just evaporated now that the two major emitters have committed to doing their part. The Liberals and the Conservatives have betrayed Canadians' interests by refusing to take action. This must stop.

When will the government come up with a real plan to tackle climate change?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our record. Again, we are a founding member of the

Oral Questions

Climate and Clean Air Coalition. We have made significant investments to help support green energy and infrastructure. We have one of the cleanest systems in the world. We have already regulated the transportation and electricity sectors and are planning to reduce HFCs, one of the fastest growing greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Thanks to these actions, carbon emissions will go down by close to 130 megatonnes from what they would have been under the Liberals, and without introducing a carbon tax by the NDP.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the economic update that was presented last week to a bunch of Toronto bankers is a sham.

If the minister ends up balancing his budget, it will not be because he is a good manager. It will be because he filched money from the unemployed and cut provincial health transfers.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that his tax cuts for the wealthy are funded by money that was meant for the unemployed and the sick?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP refuses to face the facts. Our plan will benefit all families with children, which is to say, all four million families. The vast majority of these benefits will flow to low- and middle-income families; 25% of those families earn less than \$30,000. That is our plan.

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we know is that the sick and the unemployed are paying the price for the Conservatives' bad budget choices.

Our veterans are receiving fewer and fewer services, Canadians' safety is at risk because of cuts to food inspection and transportation safety, and parents are still waiting for the daycare spaces that the Conservatives promised them.

Does the minister understand that what he calls a budget surplus is really just another way of saying service cuts?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP's bureaucratic plan provides a small percentage of families with access to daycare at a huge cost.

[English]

Our plan will benefit every one of the four million Canadian families with children. It will benefit them all, and disproportionately benefit those with lower and middle incomes. This is a good plan for Canadians, and we are proud of it.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to claim a surplus in 2015 the late Jim Flaherty raised taxes in each of the past four years: payroll taxes, tariff taxes, taxes on small business owners and credit unions—billions of dollars per year. He chopped services for returning veterans, forensic labs, immigration offices, national parks, the environment, food safety, and the list goes on.

Why did the government inflict all of that pain on ordinary Canadians for a deeply flawed income-splitting scheme that discriminates against 85% of Canadian households?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has increased transfers to the provinces by 50%, to \$65 billion this year. Every single province has benefited in social transfers, health transfers, equalization. We are proud of our program because our program is going to benefit four million Canadians.

The Liberal Party would rather spend money on bureaucracy. We trust mom and dad, the people who care most about their children.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all those transfers were in the budget of 2005.

Mr. Flaherty warned that income splitting would be too costly and unfair. He also—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Wascana still has the floor.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: My goodness, they are are testy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Flaherty warned that income splitting was too costly and unfair. He also worried about weak economic growth.

On page 43 of the government's fiscal update, the Conservatives confirm that the rate of Canadian economic growth will actually drop every single year through to 2019. Investments in public infrastructure could help turn that around. So say the Chamber of Commerce, the premiers, the Bank of Canada, the IMF, and the G20.

Will the government shift \$2 billion from flawed income splitting to incremental infrastructure investment for greater growth?

• (1425)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we now have more confirmation that the Liberal leader favours giving money to bureaucrats over middle-class families. Let me read a quote from this weekend:

Very clear now that [the Liberal Party of Canada] prioritizes money in the hands of Ottawa bureaucrats not Canadian families with children.

Do members know who went out of her way to reconfirm that? It was none other than the Liberal Party candidate for Ottawa Centre.

Is this candour or a gaffe? With the Liberals, it is hard to know.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's figures indicate that Canada's economic growth is going to decline every year until 2019. Investing in our roads, bridges and public transit would be good for economic growth, but the Conservatives have cut infrastructure funding by 90%.

Instead, their income splitting will not create any jobs and will help only the wealthiest 15% of households.

How does cutting infrastructure to help the wealthiest 15% of Canadians boost our economy today?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to hear the Liberal Party attacking families with children. The changes we have put in place will benefit 100% of the over four million Canadian families with children.

Let us not forget that it was the Liberal Party that opposed our GST cuts, which benefited all Canadians. All 35 million Canadians saw a decrease in the taxes they pay. Thanks to this government, Canadians are enjoying the lowest federal tax burden this country has seen in 60 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister claims to want to help out ordinary Canadians, but someone only got to hear about his plans if they could fork out \$800 for lunch on Bay Street. Bay Street executives are the ones who qualify as ordinary Canadians for the minister. It is no wonder that he came up with his multi-billion dollar income-splitting scheme that helps so few Canadians.

Now we learn that he actually plans to borrow the money to pay for a plan that does absolutely nothing for 85% of Canadians. Is this is the new Conservative math, to borrow from everybody just to help out the wealthiest few?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only the NDP could say that every Canadian parent with children is among the wealthiest few. There are four million parents with kids. One hundred per cent of Canadian families with children, including single moms and dads, all of them, will receive a significant benefit from the family tax cut, with an average benefit of \$1,200 a year. Maybe for the NDP that is just walking-around money, but for Canadian families that means they will be able to do more to take care of their kids and do the most important work in the country as parents.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): So suddenly, Mr. Speaker, being a single parent is going to be helpful to getting income splitting from the government, an outright and falsified mistruth of the facts. Governing is about serious choices. On this side, we believe in universal and affordable child care. On that side, they believe in schemes that only help 15% of all Canadians. Conservatives chose to shut down Veterans Affairs offices, slash food inspection, and cut rail safety, but it is Canadians who are paying for it.

Oral Questions

When are the Conservatives going to finally abandon their multi-billion dollar scheme that does nothing for 85% of all Canadians?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP union-run, government-knows-best daycare scheme is anything but universal. Its own plan says it would only benefit 360,000 Canadian households, less than 10% of families with kids. Compare that to this Conservative family tax cut plan that provides a net benefit to 100% of families with children under the age of 18, with an average benefit of \$1,200 a year.

The NDP plan does nothing for rural parents, it does nothing for parents who are on late night shift work, it does nothing for parents who choose to give up some income to work at home with their kids. We are supporting all of those parents.

* * *

• (1430)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the economic and fiscal update just does not get the job done. Instead of investing in people and job creation, the Conservatives are handing out tax cuts to the wealthiest Canadians and leaving the majority of Canadians falling further and further behind, like the families who are paying more for their monthly child care than for their mortgages.

Why has the government yet again failed to deliver the 125,000 child care spaces it promised?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, through our record transfers to the provinces, the Canada social transfer, we have helped to lead to the creation of even more daycare spaces. The family tax cut plan involves an increase of \$1,000 in the child care tax credit.

However, the NDP plan on child care is this. It wants to tax 100% of families with kids in order to provide a subsidy through union-run daycare for 10% of families. Our approach is to recognize the choices made by all parents, all families, all four million of them, not just 10% of them.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, child care is not the only broken promise by the government. Instead of fixing the Social Security Tribunal, the Conservatives have made it worse. The backlogs have increased, and there are now more than 14,500 Canadians waiting to have their cases heard. Now the tribunal is hiring more members to deal with the backlog, but why did the government put a cap on the number of tribunal members in the first place?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as an indication of the NDP's support for the budget implementation act, which proposes that we hire additional Social Security Tribunal members so that we can more speedily render decisions.

I am pleased to inform the House that as a result of the process of reconsideration of employment insurance refusals being done by officials in my department, we have decreased by approximately 90% the number of those refusals that are going for adjudication at the tribunal. A faster process means better results for Canadians. That is what this government is delivering.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the Social Security Tribunal of Canada was unfair, partisan, and in way over its head.

Now we have learned that only five of the 58 full-time members appointed by the Conservative government are francophones and there is not a single francophone in the appeal division. This Conservative boondoggle is violating the rights of francophones and limiting their access to justice.

Will the minister finally ensure that this tribunal respects francophones' rights?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. member is totally wrong. One-third of the members of the Social Security Tribunal of Canada speak French. That is higher than the percentage of the population that speaks French. We are making sure that we have a high percentage of decision-makers on the tribunal who speak French and can provide services in both official languages.

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[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's response to the crisis in Syria has been completely embarrassing.

With millions of Syrian refugees displaced, Canada agreed to take in a mere 1,300. Now we are learning that in June the minister knew full well that there was no way Canada would meet this goal. The minister fudged the numbers, and reached all the way back to 2011 to make his numbers seem bigger and pretend that Canada was on track.

Why did the minister mislead Canadians?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that question is completely fact-free.

One thousand seven hundred and eighty-two Syrians have come to Canada as refugees. They are in this country. We have overfulfilled our commitment to bringing 200 government-assisted refugees to this country. The number of applications from private sponsors is growing. There is no backlog.

What is embarrassing is that the NDP, which claims to want to help refugees in Syria, would have us do nothing on terrorism and would have us do nothing in Iraq. New Democrats voted against our Combating Terrorism Act, are against the revocation of passports, and are against the revocation of citizenship. New Democrats have no credibility on the Syrian issue.

Oral Questions

●(1435)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question was about refugees.

This minister took away health care for refugees. He is taking away social assistance. Conservatives are doing everything they can to make it more and more difficult for Canada to help vulnerable refugees.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by the tragic conflict in Syria. Helping them is a core Canadian value. The government promised to help 1,300 refugees.

Why did the Conservatives only accept and help 200 government-assisted refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we committed to assisting 200 refugees with government assistance. We have gone far beyond that, and 1,782 Syrian refugees are here.

What is outrageous is that member is not even listening to her own colleagues, who acknowledge that health care for refugees has never stopped being delivered under this government.

She should be ashamed for suggesting otherwise. She should stand up for the real interests of refugees. Canada is at the forefront of response in Syria and elsewhere.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. A joint report by the Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee is clear: developed countries are not doing enough. Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq are at the end of their rope.

What is Canada doing? Not a whole lot. I remember a Canada that used to welcome refugees with open arms.

Will the government finally agree to help those in need?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP is refusing to consider the facts. There are already 1,782 Syrian refugees in Canada. I am proud to tell the House today that Canada has surpassed its commitment to welcome 20,000 Iraqi refugees. They are already in Canada. That is more than any other country. Our partners in this refugee assistance mission see Canada as an example. On a global scale, we are resettling one in 10 refugees. That is a record that all Canadians are proud of.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us take a look at the real figures.

Canada promised to accept 1,300 Syrians. That is really not enough in light of the millions of people in need. However, we are now learning that the minister knew last June that he would not even be able to honour this paltry commitment.

We asked dozens of questions about this, and the minister claimed that he would reach his target even though he knew it was not true.

Why did the minister mislead the House and why is he going back on his promise to the Syrian people?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our commitment to the Syrian people is very clear: 1,782 refugees are already here. Canada was one of the first donor countries to provide humanitarian aid in response to this very wide-ranging crisis.

However, after asking dozens of questions about Syria, has any NDP member had the courage to mention Iraq? Canada has resettled 20,000 Iraqi refugees. No country has done more. We should be proud of this, and the NDP should be ashamed that it has not even mentioned it.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, uncovered government documents have revealed that the Conservatives have been secretly shifting over \$500 million allocated for the already underfunded infrastructure needs like water and housing to the chronically underfunded social programs, while still refusing to close the gaps in areas like education on first nations.

Will the minister stop hiding the underfunding and mismanagement with dishonest shell games and finally work in good faith with aboriginal communities to properly fund these programs?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows, or should know, that we have made unprecedented investment in first nations infrastructure above and beyond the core infrastructure funding, from investment in over 130 major projects, to funded maintenance of over 1,200 water and waste water treatment projects to more than 263 school infrastructure projects including 33 new schools.

We continue to work in partnership with first nations toward our shared goal of stronger and self-sufficient aboriginal communities.

●(1440)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these documents also show that the minister's own department is telling him that more money is needed to provide first nations children with education that is equivalent to other kids in Canada. It is unconscionable that he is playing politics with the future of first nations children by holding essential education funding hostage to the government's flawed first nations education bill.

Will the minister commit to delivering this badly needed education funding immediately?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is unconscionable is that member and her party and the opposition voting against a \$1.9 billion increase in funding for education last year.

Above the rhetoric of the opposition, in budget 2012 this government provided \$175 million over three years to build and renovate schools on reserves. In addition to budget 2012 investments, our government continues to make major investments, in the order of \$200 million annually, to support school infrastructure in first nations communities.

Oral Questions

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Rinelle Harper is a survivor. She is a 16-year-old first nations girl who was sexually assaulted, beaten, and thrown into the Assiniboine River. She pulled herself out of the river where she was again beaten and left for dead. Grand Chief David Harper stated, "...today, moving forward as family and as a community we ask that this is a time [that the] wind has to change. ...it is [in] each and every one of us, [it is] our responsibility [to be able] to make that change. We have to put an end to violence...".

My question is for the Prime Minister. When is the government going to call for a public inquiry on the murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls?

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an appalling and horrific crime. Our thoughts and prayers are with Rinelle Harper, who has shown tremendous courage and determination, and with her family. We understand that police have arrested two suspects in this case, thanks to her family members' brave decision to go public with her story and the close work they did with the police.

Canadians can count on our government to take violent crime seriously, including crimes against women and children. Since we came to office, we have toughened sentences for murder, sexual assault, and kidnapping and imposed mandatory prison sentences for the most serious crimes.

The opposition consistently votes against them.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the appointment process for Federal Court of Appeal justices is flawed and much too partisan.

Five seats are vacant and some court cases have been delayed by more than nine months. These delays are a miscarriage of justice. The law is clear nevertheless: 12 full-time justices must be on the bench.

Will the Conservatives stop dragging their feet and waiting to find Conservative lawyers to fill the vacant seats on the Federal Court of Appeal?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course that is factually incorrect. We make these appointments based on wide, inclusive consultations with all provinces and with all individuals involved in the judicial process. The overriding and most important criteria are those of merit and legal excellence.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, rather than delaying and politicizing the process for appointing federal judges, the Conservatives should be ensuring that Canadians and particularly women who are victims of sexual assault are able to trust the justice system.

Two-thirds of sexual assault victims who completed a Department of Justice survey reported that they did not trust the justice system. Two-thirds of respondents. That is what prevented many of them from reporting the assault to the police.

How does the government intend to restore people's trust in our justice system?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that we intend to do so through the Canadian victims bill of rights.

[English]

We are very much in line with the member opposite when it comes to addressing these very important issues of confidence within the justice system, particularly as they pertain to victims of sexual assault. Sexual violence remains a very serious concern for all Canadians, which is why we have brought forward legislation that would increase penalties and bring mandatory minimum penalties to bear. Most importantly, the Canadian victims bill of rights would place victims at the very epicentre of our justice system, restoring a greater sense of confidence in the system overall.

* * *

●(1445)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just over a week ago, Rinelle Harper, a young indigenous woman from northern Manitoba, was brutally attacked and left to die by the river in Winnipeg. Because of her incredible strength and the support of her family and her friends, she is getting better. However, until Canadians as a whole address violence against indigenous women, the violence will not stop.

The question is this. When will the current government take leadership to put an end to violence against women, come up with an action plan, and support the families, so that what Rinelle went through and what thousands of indigenous women go through will never happen again?

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, this was a horrific crime, and I commend the Harper family for their courage and determination throughout this ordeal.

We understand that the police have arrested two suspects in this case, thanks to the family's brave decision to go public with its story and to work closely with the police.

There are have been more than 40 studies into the plight of missing and murdered aboriginal women. Now is not the time for more studies. Now is the time for action. The member mentioned that there was no action plan. There is an action plan, and we are supporting women and girls and aboriginal women and girls across Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the so-called action plan is not working.

Oral Questions

Aboriginal women and girls are still being abused and going missing. Rinelle Harper's ordeal has been added to the long list of horror stories. Nearly 1,200 aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered.

Aboriginal communities are calling for a national inquiry so that the government will finally take a serious look at violence against women. No more excuses.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to conduct such an inquiry?
[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the members think that everyone wants a national action plan. I sat on that committee, and not everybody wants a national action plan or a national inquiry.

However, here is a quote that I would like to share from Bernadette Smith, the sister of Claudette Osborne, who has been missing since July 2008. She said that the action plan is something that her family has been waiting for, and stated, "I would like to thank... the Government for their commitment to addressing this issue. ... We've had numerous studies on this issue and the time for action is now. We can't stand idly by and talk about this without taking significant action."

Action is what they want. This action plan will have a direct impact on families, and it will help keep our women and girls safe.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains deeply concerned with the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine and reports of additional Russian troops and weapons crossing into Ukraine.

Last Wednesday, NATO confirmed that additional Russian tanks and artillery made their way into Ukraine. This is another troubling example of Russia's belligerence and violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territory.

I would like to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to please update the House on this very serious matter.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his leadership in this regard.

Canada and our Prime Minister have taken a strong stand in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in this crisis. When the Russian president tried to adopt a friendly "go along to get" along approach at the G20 summit in Brisbane, our Prime Minister would have none of it. "You need to get out of Ukraine" was the message he delivered. All Canadians can be tremendously proud of that leadership.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' inappropriate secrecy extends even to the Ebola crisis. They are refusing to reveal the details of their

agreement with NewLink Genetics even though the agreement is available online. Thousands of people have fallen victim to the Ebola virus, but the Conservatives are more concerned about commercial gain than they are about the public good.

Why does the government not make the vaccine available for humanitarian reasons, as permitted under the act?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us in Parliament and across Canada can be very proud that it was Canadian researchers and scientists at the Public Health Agency that developed this groundbreaking Ebola vaccine. In fact, we did donate our stockpile from the Public Health Agency, close to 1,000 vials, for humanitarian purposes. We gave it to the WHO. How that is used is up to the WHO.

• (1450)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of our researchers, but we are not proud of the government for giving away the store.

The government has refused to even release details of its licensing agreement with NewLink Genetics, even though Canadians can get access to the information on a U.S. government website. It is very bizarre.

It appears the government is trying to hide the fact that the agreement seeks to "maximize commercial return" from the vaccine instead of maximize public health.

Why will the government not do the responsible thing, take back the rights to the vaccine, and focus on saving lives?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is in no way the advice that has been given to us by the Chief Public Health Officer or anyone in the public health community.

Canadians should be very proud that not only was it Canadians who developed this vaccine, but that we gave our stockpile to the World Health Organization.

Of course, as the member knows, there are now phase 1 clinical trials happening all over the world for this Ebola vaccine. We hope we are able to move it to phase 2 clinical trials and that the vaccine will be in the hands of health care workers soon.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the administrative functions of government is ensuring adequate oversight by the Canada Revenue Agency of the generous tax incentives given to civic-minded Canadians who want to contribute to political parties. We now learn that the former member for Peterborough used this incentive to get people to pick up his legal bills.

Does the minister of the Canada Revenue Agency think this is okay? Will she look at the issue to determine whether the tax code was misused to give a Conservative insider and felon an enormous legal advantage?

Oral Questions

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all political contributions are submitted to Elections Canada. The member can look at electionscanada.ca to review the expenses and donations to all political parties.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have found a new way to dip into taxpayers' pockets by issuing tax receipts to Dean Del Mastro's friends, who are trying to keep him out of jail. At the end of the day, it is the taxpayers who will pay the legal fees for the Prime Minister's former parliamentary secretary.

Does the Minister of National Revenue, whose new priority is to target birdwatchers, really believe that taxpayers should foot this bill?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question.

[English]

At the same time, it is the NDP that has been found guilty of misusing over \$1 million worth of taxpayer funds. Those funds were meant to be used for non-partisan purposes. We know the NDP redirected those funds into paying for partisan political offices in parts of the country where it actually has no members of Parliament.

I hope the NDP will do the right thing and repay taxpayers the over \$1.5 million that it owes.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadians who marched for CBC/Radio-Canada yesterday have every reason to feel betrayed by the Conservatives.

On May 3, 2011, the heritage minister made the following statement: "We have said that we will maintain or increase support for the CBC. That is our platform and we have said that before and we will commit to that." In 2012, however, the government slashed \$115 million from CBC/Radio-Canada's budget. It sucked the life out of CBC/Radio-Canada.

Why did the Conservatives break yet another promise?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he was actually the one who made cuts when he was minister.

The president of CBC/Radio-Canada had this to say about the weekend's events: "All of our employees are currently engaged in a transformation process that will enable us to meet the challenges of the new media world that are facing all large broadcasters."

CBC/Radio-Canada is attracting fewer viewers than before, despite the fact that it is receiving more than \$1 billion in direct subsidies from taxpayers each year. The changes to CBC/Radio-Canada are a result of that decrease. It is up to CBC/Radio-Canada to deal with it.

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a direct quote from today's media report on Syrian refugees is as follows: "Only 219 had actually been resettled from overseas, of which 93 had arrived in 2014 and would count toward the commitment to take in 1,300." The big 1,700 number he uses includes Syrians already travelling in Canada and other permanent residents.

Would he stop playing with numbers, which is what he always does, get serious with Canada's long-standing generosity, and admit at least 10,000 Syrian refugees as government-assisted refugees?

• (1455)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we just heard once again why Canadians understand, and certainly Syrian refugees understand, that the one member of Parliament who they cannot count on to get the facts straight is the member for Markham—Unionville.

There are no permanent residents who came as part of that 1,782. They are protected persons. They are refugees. We went over our commitment for government-assisted refugees, and there are hundreds of private sponsors who have put in their applications and who will take those numbers even higher.

What is embarrassing with both the NDP and the Liberals is their refusal to recognize Canadian humanitarian achievements when we work hard to achieve them. We have resettled 20,000 Iraqi refugees.

* * *

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I took to the streets of Montreal with more than 25,000 people who were demonstrating their love for CBC/Radio-Canada. There were protests from Montreal to Gaspé and in Sherbrooke, Moncton, and Ottawa. It was a massive demonstration that was organized by Nicolas Bédard, who feels it is unacceptable that our public broadcaster is being dismantled. We all chanted in unison that we love the CBC and it is important to us.

Will the minister finally hear the message?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said today, I fully understand the important role that CBC/Radio-Canada plays. It is attracting fewer viewers than before, despite the fact that it is receiving more than \$1.1 billion from taxpayers each year.

The changes to CBC/Radio-Canada are a result of that decrease. The corporation is responsible for its own activities. I leave that to the corporation.

Once again, I fully understand the important role that CBC/Radio-Canada plays.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at just \$28 per Canadian, Canada ranks really low when it comes to funding our public broadcaster. It is hopeless.

Oral Questions

The CBC cannot function properly without adequate parliamentary funding. I am repeating this because it seems that the Liberals and some Conservatives clearly do not understand it. In a letter published Friday, even Hubert Lacroix admits that he does not have the resources needed to fulfill the public broadcaster's mandate.

Some 25,000 ordinary Canadians are worried. Will the minister ever see the light and understand that?

[English]

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said in French, I understand perfectly well the important role the CBC plays. That is why we provide it with over \$1.1 billion every year.

I want to repeat the quote from the president of the CBC with regard to this issue, "Our employees are currently engaged in a transformation process aimed at helping us meet the challenges of a rapidly changing media environment to which no mainstream broadcaster is immune."

That is the point. CBC is not the only one faced with this changing demographic in the television and broadcasting industry. We must all adapt, but it is getting \$1.1 billion.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, on November 11, we all took time to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our veterans and serving members and for their courageous dedication to our country.

We were also reminded that the fight against oppression and tyranny is not limited to the past century and that it continues on different battlefields today.

We now have confirmed reports that ISIL has murdered Peter Kassig, a former U.S. Army Ranger who was an aid worker in the region.

Could the Minister of National Defence please provide an update on Operation Impact and how the Canadian Armed Forces are contributing in the fight against ISIL?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week a series of coalition missions were conducted where ISIL was known to operate in the area north of Baghdad. An RCAF CF-18 struck an ISIL artillery piece by using laser-guided ammunition in support of Iraqi security forces' ground operations in the area. This denied ISIL the military means to attack either the Iraqi security forces or the coalition assets.

This strike demonstrates Canada's resolve to tackle the threat of terrorism and to stand with our allies against ISIL's atrocities against innocent women, children and men. We condemn these barbaric actions and will continue to support the security forces in Iraq in their fight against these terrorists.

● (1500)

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers believe in and benefit from a fair and open competitive marketplace.

A few days ago, Club Coffee filed a complaint with the Competition Bureau, seeking an investigation into the behaviour of the largest foreign corporation operating in Canada in the field of single-serve coffee pods. Five other companies support the complaint, including Granville Island Coffee Company and St. John's-based Jumping Bean Coffee.

Could the government assure the House that an investigation will be promptly undertaken?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not direct the Competition Bureau in its investigations or the timeliness of its investigations. However, this is a very good moment because if the biggest concern we have in our country right now, according to the questions from the opposition, is a lack of choice in coffee, we are doing pretty good as a country. It is a good sign.

Added to that, we have given the Competition Bureau extra powers. In fact, as has been reported by the Competition Bureau in its annual report, the estimated dollar savings per annum to consumers by the bureau, because of the new powers we have given it, are \$572 million in the pockets of consumers. We are standing up for consumers in every way.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC BRIDGE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, CN paid for advertising in the Quebec media. CN clearly does not plan on painting the bridge. It is even prepared to give it away—yes, to give away the bridge—just to make the problem go away. Once again, CN is demonstrating that it is not a responsible corporate citizen.

Now the question is whether the Conservatives will honour the promise they made to the people of Quebec City. Will the minister ever take responsibility and ensure that the rehabilitation of the Quebec Bridge is completed?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been no discussion of any transfer. To be clear, we are not interested in that option.

CN, which owns the Quebec Bridge, is responsible for painting the Quebec Bridge.

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have acted with professionalism, bravery, and selfless courage in the face of danger. While stationed in Antalya, Turkey, several members of HMCS *Toronto* responded to a fire on the second floor of the restaurant where they were having a meal ashore. Without hesitation, our armed forces members acted not only to put out the fire but to assist those in need.

Can the Minister of National Defence please provide further details on this incident and the brave actions taken by our crew on HMCS *Toronto*?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all members of our Royal Canadian Navy ships companies are trained in first response firefighting techniques. Clearly, these officers and crew were in the right place at the right time.

I would like to personally commend the efforts of Lieutenant Samuel Gaudreault and Lieutenant Daniel Willis, who first detected the fire and rushed to assist. Leading Seaman Jean-Francois Martineau and Able Seaman Chris Richards then hurried to provide further support. Master Caporal Shirley Jardine and Caporal Jo Boivin, from the ship's air attachment, also provided first aid assistance.

These courageous actions of our members who helped put out this fire once again demonstrate that the Canadian Armed Forces are ready for any challenge. Ready, aye, ready.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board recently launched Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2.0. How hypocritical. Access to information complaints increased by 30% last year. The Information Commissioner of Canada is so overloaded that she no longer has the resources she needs to help users.

Will the minister honour his commitment to transparency and provide the commissioner with the means to do her job?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the federal government has in fact increased its reaction, data, and access to information requests by 27%.

Over six million more pages were released last year. That is two million more pages than the year before. In fact, as a result of our new open data and open government action plan, we are going to put more information online and have more data available for citizens, researchers, entrepreneurs, and the public.

We are proud of our record.

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD): Mr. Speaker, the Lac-Mégantic disaster showed that everyday citizens are the ones who have to assume the risks, including the financial risks, of shipping oil. Elected officials on Montreal's south shore are joining others in Quebec to reject this idea. They are calling on the federal government to require oil companies to create a mitigation and compensation fund for modifying dangerous infrastructure, training first responders, and paying for any spills.

Instead of trying to have us, like the NDP and the Liberals, believe that the solution is to build pipelines, will the minister listen to local officials and force the creation of a mitigation and compensation fund?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite. The Minister of Transport has been doing everything in her power to ensure that we are responding appropriately with respect to rail safety, including in the transportation of oil by rail.

We have taken a number of important actions in that particular regard. As well, the Canadian Transportation Agency has been tasked with looking into questions of liability and will be reporting back on that matter.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, unlike other members of the opposition, I actually support the government's intention to introduce income splitting, because I support income tax relief generally. However, I do agree with the opposition that income splitting will benefit far fewer Canadians than would generalized, broad-based tax relief.

Why does the government prefer boutique tax credits and a complicated tax code over simply lowering income tax rates for all Canadians?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the question was criticizing the platform the member was elected on. The electors of Edmonton—St. Albert sent him here to fight for income splitting, not to argue against it.

In terms of broad-based tax relief, that is exactly what the government has done with over \$200 billion in tax relief, saving the average family \$3,400 a year—that is before this most recent tax cut—bringing the total federal tax burden down to its lowest level as a share of our economy since the 1950s.

We are expanding the horizons of human freedom by reducing taxes, and we are proud of it.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to boast about open federalism when the provinces have to pay for the government's unilateral decisions. For example, the cuts to employment insurance are putting increased pressure on welfare services across the country. It is irresponsible to go after health care. When it budgets for federal transfers, the government must ensure that everyone has access to local health care services.

What is the government doing to ensure that the next round of cuts will not affect public health care?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our government's record, because since forming government, health transfers have actually increased by almost 60%. This now is record funding, which will reach \$40 billion annually by the end of the decade.

We are obviously committed to increasing health transfers year after year after year.

* * *

• (1510)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Jackie Jacobson, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to a matter arising out of question period.

I have served in this place for almost nine years. I have great respect for the member for Wascana. I know him to be an honourable man. The member for Wascana is free to criticize this government, its ministers, its policies, and the record of this government. However, on the very day that the late Jim Flaherty's friends, neighbours, constituents, and community are going to the polls to elect a successor, I think Canadians deserve better than the cheap shot we saw from the member for Wascana. He should be ashamed of himself.

The Speaker: It sounds like a point of debate, not necessarily a point of order. However, I do see the hon. member for Wascana rising. I will give him the floor.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I must note that I truly admire the way Mr. Flaherty had the courage to stand up against a whole variety of issues, including when he conscientiously believed his government had erred.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 66 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled "Eating Disorders among Girls and Women in Canada".

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

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chair of our committee for presenting the report. On behalf of the NDP official opposition members, I would also like to thank every single witness who came forward, particularly survivors of eating disorders, who came with such courage and told us what we need to do.

Sadly, we find that this report is wanting. Our recommendations in our part of the report indicate that there needs to be strong leadership from the government, that we are at a crisis point in the way women and men who are living with eating disorders are not being supported. This is across the board in every region across the country. There is a deep need for federal leadership when it comes to data collection, supporting health care, and finding solutions for families who are trying to support their loved ones. We hope that the recommendations we have put forward will be duly implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a comment on the fourth report just brought forward by the New Democratic Party. I too would like to—

The Speaker: In order to respond or add his comments, the member would need the unanimous consent of the House to do so, because it is just the official opposition that is able to table a dissenting report.

Does the member have the consent of the House to speak—

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, if the House will give its consent, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House on September 30, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP) moved that the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Thursday, June 12, 2014, be concurred in.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today about the report of the Standing Committee on Finance, which I worked on with my colleagues from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques and Victoria and even my colleague from Davenport, who paid us a visit to speak about the issue of unpaid internships.

It is very important to speak about this today because this study was conducted over almost 10 meetings. That is a fairly long study, but this is a very important issue. We are talking about youth unemployment, which is a rather complex issue. At the outset, I would like to say that I was very pleased to see that even though we sometimes disagreed on what action should be taken, the Conservative members showed a certain openness to dealing with this problem.

We must now look at the recommendations. However, before I get to that, I would like to provide a brief summary of the situation and try to clear up some of the points that the government has made about youth unemployment.

We often like to remind the government that the youth unemployment rate is twice the national average. That is quite discouraging for my generation, those between the ages of 15 and 35. That is a large group. Apparently, some of these young people are still in school. However, many of them have just graduated from university or completed different kinds of post-secondary studies and are looking for a quality job. I will come back to the issue of quality jobs a little later.

However, first and foremost, we must point out that the government often likes to tell us that an unemployment rate that is double the national average is normal. The fact that this has become normal over time does not make it acceptable. Those are two very different points. Even though in the past, following a recession, it was normal to have such a high unemployment rate, I do not find that acceptable.

When speaking about the youth unemployment rate, the government often makes the same comparison. It is even on the first page of its response to the Standing Committee on Finance. The response states that the participation rate of young people in Canada's labour market is higher than that of young people in most other developed countries.

When we talk about developed countries, we often forget to mention countries such as Italy and Greece where the unemployment rate is even higher than it is here. If I am not mistaken, the youth unemployment rate in Greece is 50%. That is incredible, but does not make for a very good comparison. With all due respect to the Greek people, that is not something we should aspire to. Saying that the bar is set very low elsewhere is not an excuse to keep it low here. We must set the bar higher.

• (1515)

[*English*]

The other question is the quality of the jobs, which I said I would come back to. It has come up several times, including at committee. It is this phenomenon called “wage scarring”. There is one Conservative member on the committee who even disputed the use of that term. I suppose it was because it was a union witness who

brought it up, so maybe we can look at other folks who have talked about wage scarring in the recent weeks.

One of those is the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who also talked about wage scarring recently. Notwithstanding his comments on young people taking volunteer work, which is, of course, important, because if I am here in the House it is in large part due to some volunteer work that I did in my youth, which got me involved in my community, the question of encouraging young people to take unpaid internships and to look at volunteer work for their experience is problematic. I will explain why, because he made a link with the question of wage scarring.

The question of wage scarring is something that was brought up in a TD bank report. The TD bank said that wage scarring would have a long-term impact on young people and their future job prospects. For someone in their 20s who has just finished their post-secondary education and is working a job for which they are overqualified, it might seem only temporary, but the problem then is that they will feel its effects into adulthood and for the rest of their lives, when it becomes difficult to translate that work experience into a quality job. That is something the government fails to mention all too often.

[*Translation*]

We heard all about the job-quality phenomenon one day in committee. A Statistics Canada report indicated that there is an increasing number of educated young people who are overqualified for their jobs. These numbers have even reached historic highs in recent years, most recently in 2013. These young people have varying levels of post-secondary education, such as a university degree or a three-year CEGEP program—or a trade school or community college program, in provinces outside Quebec.

Once again, this is a growing phenomenon. However, it does not help to simply talk about the unemployment rate and make questionable comparisons to countries where the situation is not very encouraging. Unfortunately, this illustrates the government's careless approach, especially in light of the notorious Kijiji data, which my colleagues from Saint-Lambert and Newton—North Delta love to bring up.

Not only was the government unable to take any measures that reflected the realities of the labour market, but it does not even seem to want to talk about it. That is why we were happy to study these issues in committee, and that is why it is important to discuss them today.

This situation aside, it is important to look at the recommendations and solutions proposed. I was very pleased to learn that a number of witnesses who appeared in committee—from the labour, student and business worlds—supported a very good solution. I think it is a great solution, although my opinion may be a bit biased since it was proposed by the NDP, namely by the leader of the official opposition. We are talking about universal child care, and this solution was advocated by eight out of ten witnesses. Even if it was not in their presentation, they thought it would have a positive effect on young workers and especially, of course, on young female workers.

Routine Proceedings

• (1520)

[English]

The question of child care came up at nearly every single meeting in a very positive way. Witness after witness said that even if it were not something he or she was going to be lobbying or pushing for, none of them was able to deny the positive impact that a universal child care program would have on the plight of young workers, specifically young female workers. It would make it easier for them to get the experience necessary to move on with quality employment opportunities throughout their lives and into adulthood, and hopefully one day being able to secure a proper retirement, which is a whole other issue that young people are facing but is for the moment beyond the scope of this particular study.

If we are talking about the child care question—I said this in French, but it is important that I repeat it for our hard-working interpreters—the government might have an argument saying it was only union members or union representatives at committee that were defending this point and talking about the positive impacts it could have. It was not. It was student representatives, and union representatives, yes, but also representatives from business.

After all, if we were to ask small and medium-size business owners the best way for them to get more young workers into the system to give them the long-term experience that would lead to quality jobs, which would in turn lead to quality businesses and getting the economic wheel turning, they would say that one of the solutions was obviously child care, making sure it was affordable and that workers from my generation were able to have the tools necessary to start families. That is obviously important for the economy because it is what leads to businesses and schools opening, and the strengths of our communities based on the families that decide to live in them. Obviously, in order to have that phenomenon take place, we need to give young people the tools they need to work in high-paying, quality jobs. One of those tools, as I said, is the universal child care program as proposed by the NDP. That was heard in meeting after meeting.

Despite the fact it is unfortunately not in the main committee recommendations, it is important to bring it up because it was definitely, as far as we are concerned on this side of the House, a focal point of the study. I am sure that my colleagues who were at the meetings with me would agree.

[Translation]

There is another important point, and this time we are very happy to see it in the committee's recommendations. It is recommendation 16.

That the federal government explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada [which is a laudable goal], such as tax credits for businesses that hire Canadians aged 18 to 30.

I am very pleased to be speaking about this recommendation because it is exactly what I proposed in a press conference with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park last fall. To explain it in the context of our discussion here, the NDP's proposal builds on the general hiring tax credit for small and medium-sized businesses.

We want to offer that tax credit for hiring youth and training them as well. It ties in directly with the reality facing young people in

terms of quality jobs, which I described earlier and which we heard about a number of times during the committee meetings.

Sometimes, the skills and qualities of a young person are matched with an employer. Then there is the question of training. I want to explain our proposal because, after all, this recommendation looks a lot like what we proposed.

This is not about replacing workers who have seniority. For example, I do not mean to criticize them, but this is not about allowing McDonald's to fire a worker who has been there for 30 years in order to hire a young person for so-called cheap labour.

The youth hiring tax credit for small and medium-sized businesses that we are proposing is meant above all for expansion. For example, a business that is expanding and considers creating new long-term positions would receive this tax credit to hire and train a young person. The youth hired would be assured of a long-term job and good training. It is important for communities to have young people with quality, well-paid jobs.

We would also like this tax credit to be doubled in parts of the country where the youth and general unemployment rates are extremely high compared to the national average. That is a good way to foster youth employment.

After all, if the youth unemployment rate is double the national average, it goes without saying that it is even higher in areas where the general rate is higher than the national average. I am thinking of the Atlantic provinces, for instance, where there are huge unemployment problems.

• (1525)

[English]

The other recommendation I would like to speak about is recommendation number nine, which discusses this whole question of unpaid internships. We had the pleasure of having my colleague, the member for Davenport, join us for the meetings. That was important because he has been a great ally of some of the folks who have had the courage to take their stories to the media and talk about the way they were treated as interns, and some of the high profile cases that we have seen in the last couple of years. One of those cases resulted in a death, tragically, due to the fact we do not have the proper measures in place for how to apply the Canada Labour Code to unpaid internships and how young unpaid interns working in these positions are treated.

We had several witnesses at committee speak to this particular issue. It goes without saying that they support the bill that my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles has proposed, seconded of course by the member for Davenport. The bill seeks not only to improve protection of unpaid interns, but also to move away from this model and create more and more proper opportunities, as opposed to simply having coffee and photocopy runners in companies that are under federal jurisdiction, such as telecommunications companies, banks, and so on.

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Once again, not only would this protect young workers who are, in some cases, desperate to find very good experiences in the work place, but it would also go a long way to addressing the point I have been making so far, which is the question of high quality jobs. One way we could encourage this is by making sure that companies are offering high quality internship experiences, which, of course, would have the domino effect of leading young people to take jobs in these sectors as they move forward in their careers.

It is important to mention that when it comes to unpaid internships, if we read the government response to this committee report, one of the points it mentioned seemed to be very light in terms of taking concrete action.

The government said that it would continue to monitor the situation and left this wishy-washy element of the Canada Labour Code that says that employers are obliged to discuss with employees the risks associated with their jobs without mentioning how they are actually treated in their jobs. It also talks about continuing to consult with provincial and territorial authorities. I am concerned about that particular line, because we do not want to see this as a situation in which we are passing the buck.

As with another NDP proposal that speaks to a federal minimum wage, unpaid internships are a great example of where we can show federal leadership on an issue. By adopting the bill that my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles has proposed, we could set the example of not only protecting unpaid interns who are working for companies under federal jurisdiction but also show the lead for a lot of provinces. We are pleased to see this action, but from what we have seen so far, it is definitely the provinces that have taken the lead in their jurisdictions. As in all issues that affect our country, often it would require both actors to take care of what is under their jurisdiction, and that is something we hope will happen. There have been some pretty tragic examples. I spoke of the death of one individual.

As I said, my colleague from Davenport has been a leader on this issue. The witnesses at committee were happy to see him there and congratulated him on the work that he has done.

Given the recommendation from the finance committee on the need to properly support internships in our country, we definitely hope that the government will support the bill put forward by my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. It is important for young people not only now but also in the future.

● (1530)

[Translation]

I would like to go over some issues that were raised in committee. The NDP makes solid proposals. We proposed a youth hiring tax credit, which is just a first step toward creating good jobs for young people. My colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles introduced a bill about unpaid internships. To me, these two tangible measures are the most important ones because they flow directly from the recommendations in this report. We hope that the government will support our measures because, after all, the Standing Committee on Finance recommended them.

There are other recommendations that do not stand out as much, but that we still need to talk about. Among these is training mobility

among the provinces. The government announced its intention to make it easier for workers to move. In committee, many people commented that they would not want that movement to hurt the regions too much. All the same, we have to understand and accept the realities of the labour market.

Unfortunately, the recommendation as written does not address the importance of close collaboration between the federal government and the provinces and territories on the worker training front. I wanted to talk about this because the government has not always been very good at working with the federation even though the Conservative ministers' announcements suggest good intentions, as do the questions that Conservative members ask the witnesses. We have to collaborate on worker training because agreements have already been signed. The government still has work to do. It has to respect what the provinces and territories want. That is an essential part of the federal government's leadership.

I would like to reiterate the importance of considering the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Finance regarding youth internships and the question of tax credits for businesses that hire young people. The government likes to brag about its record when it comes to youth employment, but the fact is that youth unemployment remains a problem. It is unacceptable that it is twice as high as the national average.

It is also important to create high-quality jobs, and not McJobs. Our future and my generation are depending on it.

● (1535)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in looking at the study before us, it is important to note that the committee actually met from March 6 to March 8, 2014. It held seven hearings in relation to the study, 38 groups or individuals made presentations to the committee, and an additional 26 written briefs were provided. As a result of the committee's work, there were recommendations, a couple of which the member referred to. In total, there are 23 recommendations.

Would the member not agree that not only is it important that we act on as many of these recommendations as we can but that there is also a need to emphasize the importance of the good work that committees can do if they are prepared to get down to business and work?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of recommendations. There are several, in fact, which is why, as the NDP critic for youth, I felt it was so important to talk here in the House about the committee's fantastic work and the reason for this concurrence motion.

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It is also important to return, as I said several times in my remarks, to recommendations 9 and 16, which deal directly with NDP proposals both for a tax credit for youth hirings by businesses in Canada and the question of unpaid internships, which came up several times during the different committee meetings. At the end of the day, the length of the government's response, the length of the report, the number of recommendations in the report, and even the number of hearings are all proof of how seriously all parliamentarians take this issue. I hope that the government will follow the finance committee's lead and continue to take this issue seriously.

Unfortunately, from the government's response, we see a lot of proof that it seems to be falling back on its talking points and saying how good Canada is compared to some other countries in the developed world. When we look at some of the comparisons, we see they are not always comparisons that are acceptable for Canada. We need to have the highest possible standards for ourselves. If we look at countries like Greece, we see there is a 50% youth unemployment rate. When the bar is that low, it is not very hard to jump over it, and we owe it to ourselves to hold the bar that much higher. It is what we did in committee and it is what we will continue to do in our proposals.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I notice table 4 in the report talks about the unemployment rate for young people. The first side of the table shows the unemployment rate when the Conservatives came to power, and then we see, as the member mentioned, what it is now. There is a staggering increase in unemployment among young people. It has risen from 15.7% when the Conservatives took power to over 20% now. Those numbers have been reflected in staggering increases in youth unemployment rates in many provinces, including my province of British Columbia, which has seen a 66% increase in the number of unemployed young Canadians. There are staggering increases.

We often talk about the Conservative government doing so little for young Canadians, and the figures are right there in black and white. We have seen a staggering increase in unemployment among young people, yet recommendations are not put into effect. Could the member for Chambly—Borduas comment on how the Conservatives can see that staggering increase in youth unemployment, yet do nothing about it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, that is very troubling. In its presentation, Statistics Canada explained that at the end of a recession, it is not unusual for youth unemployment to be higher. I find it unusual. Although that may have been the pattern in the past, it is completely unacceptable to do nothing to overcome this challenge, when we know that young people represent the future of our economy.

Furthermore, every time the government brags about lowering youth unemployment, this usually refers to low quality jobs relative to their training, or to part-time jobs. As we know, this trend does not affect just young people, as it is prevalent throughout this government's entire employability record.

Lastly, to come back to my colleague's point, what matters is the issue of the forgotten generation. For instance, if we look at the age of eligibility for old age security, which was raised from 65 to 67, yes, this affects people who are retiring today or tomorrow, but it also affects people who will be retiring many years from now. This has an impact on young people. It makes the issue even more worrisome. The Conservatives seem to be forgetting our youth. We hope this does not continue, following these recommendations.

• (1540)

Ms. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Chambly—Borduas for his presentation and his comments about young people and their current situation. I want to congratulate him, because he is one of the young MPs who was elected in 2011. Today we are seeing the results of what these young people do in the House. Again, I thank them for all their work. They do a great job representing our youth.

I would like him to comment on what the situation is like for young people in his riding. I see it in my riding, Hull—Aylmer. Young students are discouraged by the job market and the chances of finding a job in their field. I would like the member to say more about this situation in his riding.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her kind compliments. I just want to quickly say that I am very pleased to belong to a caucus that has a good mix of youth and experience. We are also very proud to have lowered the average age in the House of Commons for the first time in Canadian history. We were very pleased to be part of that.

The hon. member made a very good point when she talked about discouraged youth. This is very important. Last week, during our constituency week, I visited a youth employment centre and took the opportunity to talk about this reality with the young people there. One of the issues they raised was the fact that some young people do not even bother to look for work anymore.

We are talking about measuring youth unemployment. During our study at the Standing Committee on Finance, a number of witnesses mentioned the fact that a young person who no longer actively looks for a job because he is so discouraged by the current situation—my colleague is quite right in using this word—is no longer counted in the statistics. We rather like statistics and numbers, but there is also a reality behind those numbers and this is part of that reality.

In my previous answer, I spoke about the forgotten generation, which is relevant to this question. That is why I am pleased to be a voice for young people in Parliament. However, we need to do more than that. We need to take action. We have some good recommendations here. I was particularly proud of the recommendations regarding the concrete measures proposed by the NDP. We would very much like to see the government support these measures. This would send a good message to young people. It would show that we have not forgotten them, that we recognize their reality and that we are the ones who will bring in the economy of the future here in Canada.

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a mother of three teenagers, and they often ask me about what they will do in the future, whether they will find work and whether they will have to pay for my pension.

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Young people are not very optimistic about the future. Even in my office, we have a number of students who have a master's degree but cannot find work.

Will this discourage them from having children and cause the birth rate to decline? People are wondering how they will rent an apartment or pay back their student loans.

I would like to talk about intergenerational responsibility.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from my colleague. Since she spoke about going to school and student loans, it also gives me an opportunity to mention that, although I unfortunately did not have time to talk about it, the committee also addressed the issue of student debt in its study.

Many surveys and studies were conducted. Again, the timing was very good because many of these surveys and studies came out just as the committee was examining this issue. That research focused on both the reality and people's perceptions. There are important economic realities but perceptions are also very important.

If we want to have a strong economy, people need to be able to be optimistic about their ability to find a job so that they can participate in the labour market, as my colleague rightfully pointed out. However, fewer and fewer young people feel optimistic in this regard and fewer and fewer young people feel that they can participate in the economy, since they see that they have fewer opportunities to succeed in life and achieve the high standard of living that people have come to expect in Canada. This is a major problem that needs to be resolved.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking and congratulating the members of the finance committee for their excellent report on the challenges facing young Canadians in the labour market. Thanks also to the Minister of Employment and Social Development for the government's response that has just been tabled.

The fact that some young people face special challenges getting into the workplace is not a new revelation, nor is it a situation that is unique to Canada. It is a global issue. Every country faces it, and every country must respond in some way to the challenge.

In Canada, as we know, the average unemployment rate for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is slightly more than twice what it is for people in the 25 and older group. Last year the youth unemployment rate was 13.7% compared to just 5.9% for those aged 25 and older. This is in comparison to the United States, where the youth unemployment rate in 2013 was 15.5%, and the United Kingdom, where it was over 20%. In fact, over the past decade or so, the youth unemployment rate in Canada has been well below the average of the OECD countries.

While it is certainly good to know that we are doing better than many of our major trading partners, it is still an issue that demands constant attention from the federal government.

Ours is a multi-faceted approach that starts, quite reasonably, at the beginning, when young people are still in school. Since 2006 our

government has helped over six million youth obtain skills, training, and jobs, and there is still more to do.

The federal government transfers large amounts of money to the provinces to support post-secondary education, but it has also developed specific initiatives to ensure that young people are aware of all the career options available to them. The more young people know about the labour market and what is required in it, the more likely they are to pursue an education or a career path that will see them working in a field related to their training.

For example, the government is investing \$8 million per year in a job vacancy survey that will provide better information on in-demand occupations, job openings, length of job vacancies, education and skill requirements, and other relevant facts. It will greatly expand the scope of our knowledge by increasing data collection from employers. Similarly, a new national wage survey will collect more information from more employers and will provide a much clearer picture of the real situation on the ground by province and by territory.

We are also improving the job bank, which currently gets more than 60 million visits per year. The job bank allows job seekers to search by occupation, industry, skills required, and location and has up-to-date labour market information.

After launching the job alerts system, we currently have over 380,000 subscribers who receive daily emails about the jobs listed in the job bank as well as up-to-date information on the job market. A new job-matching service allows Canadians to apply directly through the Canada job bank for jobs that match their skills and experience.

Another refinement will be the career choice tool that will tell students, parents, and other influencers, such as guidance counsellors, whether or not graduates of a particular program found jobs, what kind of jobs they found, how much money they made, and what jobs in that field are available right now.

All these initiatives give students an eyes-wide-open approach to planning their studies. The goal is to see them enter the labour market much better prepared and better able to take advantage of the opportunities available now and in the future.

There are a number of other government actions worth mentioning. For example, the sectoral initiatives program funds national partnership-based projects that support the development and distribution of labour market information aimed at helping Canadians make more informed career and training decisions.

The government has also developed new kinds of outreach to promote careers in high demand areas, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and skilled trades.

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Instead of just telling young people to stay in school and get a degree, the government has shifted the emphasis to encourage young people to consider a career in the skilled trades. That is not to say that people should not get a university degree. We still need lots of them with the right kind of higher education, such as in the STEM fields, as well as the drive to make our economy prosper. The point is that we need both. We need young people to know that having a skilled trade can be just as rewarding and in several cases even better paying than jobs that require a degree.

Promoting the skilled trades as a career option also helps us develop a more qualified and more mobile workforce and opens opportunities across the country for young people. To help students make choices, we also have the registered apprenticeship information system, which provides data on the number of apprentices taking in-class and on-the-job training in trades and on how many provincial and interprovincial certificates are granted to apprentices.

At the same time, the government continues to create a new and better way to help students and their families plan and save for education. With the registered education savings plan, for example, families can put away tax-sheltered money to use for their children's education.

• (1550)

There is also the Canada education savings grant and the Canada learning bond. The CESG could provide up to \$7,200 toward a child's RESP. Parents receiving the national child benefit supplement might be eligible for Canada's learning bond, which may provide \$2,000 toward an RESP.

The government has created tax-free savings accounts, which young people and their families can use to save money for education. Today about 30% of the assets of Canadians under 35 are held in tax-free savings accounts.

We should not forget the Canada student loan and the Canada student grants programs that have put post-secondary education within the reach of every Canadian student. In the last fiscal year, about \$2.6 billion in loans went out to some 477,000 students, and nearly \$700 million went out in grants to some 350,000 students. These programs have also been updated to make them work better for students. For example, the money people can earn without affecting the amount of their loans while still studying was increased to \$100 per week from \$50. Also, the accumulation of interest on loans during the study period by part-time students has been eliminated, and the value of student-owned vehicles is no longer taken into account.

That is not all. The Canada student loans program has been expanded to include a new Canada apprentice loan, which will help apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades cover the costs of their technical training. It will provide over \$100 million a year in interest-free loans to more than 26,000 eligible apprentices.

As one can see, there are a number of programs now in place that are helping more and more students make the right learning and training choices for their jobs into the future. The government will continue to work to improve these initiatives, and I hope my hon. colleagues will support this effort.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments, but he seems to underplay what has been a dramatic and tragic rise in youth unemployment. He sees table 4 in the report, like we all do, which shows the rate of youth unemployment when the Conservatives took office, or just after, at 15.7%, rising in 2013 to 20.1%. The increase has been dramatic in provinces like my own province of British Columbia, where it is 66%.

These are tragedies. As the member for Chambly—Borduas spoke about just a few minutes ago, there is scarring that takes place permanently with that degree of youth unemployment. We already have record levels of student debt across the country, so young people are now mortgaged in many ways. They have record levels of student debt, and now, under the current Conservative government, we are seeing record levels of youth unemployment.

How are they going to pay down their student debt? How are they going to actually move to a career when we have unemployment rates that are skyrocketing under the current Conservative government? Why have the Conservatives not undertaken the suggestions that have been put forward by the opposition, including by the NDP, that would actually serve to reduce the high levels of youth unemployment we are seeing in this country?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the member that the youth unemployment rate was 13.7% in 2013, compared to the U.S. with about 15.5% and the United Kingdom, with over 20%. I will also remind him that in some provinces the youth unemployment rate is drastically lower than in other provinces. There is a regional aspect.

That is where we can come in as a government and help out by giving students the ability to see what fields and occupations are in demand, giving them the knowledge to know where those jobs are located, and making them part of the job bank so they can go online and see what jobs are available on a daily basis and get the email on a daily basis. Those are initiatives we can use to help bring the employer and the employee together and hopefully tackle the youth unemployment rate in Canada.

It is never perfect. One per cent is probably too high a number for youth unemployment. We would like to see full employment. In fact, in my province of Saskatchewan, we are sitting at roughly a 3.9% unemployment rate right across the board. We need more employees. We want more skilled trades. We want more skilled employment and more students going through the skills and training programs so they can fill these jobs that are sitting there in Saskatchewan.

I am very optimistic for youth as they come into the job market. There are lots of opportunities, and we are giving them the tools to help them identify what those opportunities are, where they are located, and what they can do to secure jobs in fields that actually have a bright future.

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• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to go directly to recommendation number 23. It states:

That the federal government and the appropriate parliamentary committees consider further study of the following three topics: student enrolment in post-secondary institutions and the effectiveness in job preparation; student tuition fees and debt; and domestic and international youth employment rates, as well as the factors contributing to those rates.

I wonder if the member might want to provide a comment, when we look at these recommendations, in particular recommendation number 23, which calls on parliamentary committees to actually meet and have discussions on these topics, on the importance of these meetings happening.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's questions and comments, but I think what students and young people want is action. They want to see us move forward on things that they already know are tangible issues.

The jobs bank is just one example of where we are doing that. There are 380,000 subscribers who receive daily emails about what jobs are available. That is action, and that is what this government is doing.

We can look at the job matching services. We are taking people who are on the job bank and matching them with employers who need these skilled and experienced people. We can look at the new career choice tools and other initiatives that give an eyes-wide-open approach for students, so they can see what skills are required for jobs, match them up, and actually get that job.

It is very rewarding for a student to know that all of their hard work and effort in studying and training will result in a job that they want to do and a career they can have for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for this particular concurrence motion. I also want to thank the finance committee that is looking at this issue.

In my own household, I have two young women: one has just graduated and one is in her final year. The experience in my household and in my daughter's peer group is that some are having difficulty finding work but others are not. It depends on which field they have chosen, where they are looking, whether they are willing to be mobile, and so on. It is an issue that I am quite familiar with, based on the challenges of my own family and daughter's peer group.

Fortunately for us, my daughter seems to be on the lucky side and was able to find employment in her field. She is a graduate from the University of Ottawa.

In my newsletter that goes out three times a year, I have a column on industries that need people. I do not expect youth to be reading my newsletter; I am gearing it to the parents of young people who will be able to better inform their young people of where the opportunities might be.

Does the member have any comment about the role of parents in the future of the young people and whether they choose a university or skills trade path?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. I compliment my colleague in taking the initiative to put this in his

householder four times a year so that parents will read it and maybe give some hope to their kids.

I think it is very important to have a team approach, a family approach, when one is graduating from high school and going into the workforce. What do we want to see our kids do, and what do our kids want to accomplish?

When I was going to school, it was "I am not sure what you're going to take, but go to university." Everyone wanted to go to university.

Now when kids graduate, they have so many options that pay so well, depending on what field they want to go into. If they want to be a welder, they can make \$100,000 plus a year. If they want to be a pipefitter, they can make \$100,000 a year. They can work in a variety of occupations that are skilled and where apprenticeships and journeyships are required, and they can go through the process starting in high school in some cases. They can get well-paid jobs in those fields because there is such a high demand for those skills.

Parents can now tell their kids that they have opportunities and ask where they would like to have a career. As they sit down with their kids and talk about that, they can talk about whether they like working outdoors or indoors, whether they want to be in an office or outside. They can look at a variety of different aspects to find something that has a huge demand in Canada, and they can fill that demand.

Again, we have a lot more options, and I think parents are taking a more broadened approach. They are looking at the big picture. They are thinking that it is not just a university degree anymore, but that maybe a plumber or electrician might be a good career path. Those types of things are options that I think parents are sitting down and talking to their kids about, and I think that in the end everyone will be a winner.

• (1600)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this report.

One of the things that the government put in a budget two years ago would have done a lot to help youth unemployment, particularly in my riding of York South—Weston. We have the Central Ontario Building Trades in our riding, which runs the hammer heads program. It gives unemployed youth an opportunity to have a leg-up on apprenticeship programs, but requires that at the end of the 12-week training program that there be an apprenticeship job for them.

Two years ago, then finance minister Mr. Flaherty said that the government, as it spends infrastructure money, would encourage the contractors it hires to create apprenticeships to fulfill the need for student jobs in these programs. That was in the 2013 budget. To date, the government has not introduced any such motion or any such provision. In any of the budget implementation bills, there is no indication of that.

We have been asking the Government of Ontario, which is spending billions on infrastructure, to do the same thing. Thus far it has failed to provide a link between the infrastructure spending and apprenticeships.

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Would the member like to comment on why the government has failed to introduce such legislation?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I cannot comment on the Government of Ontario. I am from Saskatchewan, but I understand that the Government of Ontario has failed in many different aspects in its reign here in Ontario. I think the results are showing up on the power bills and everything else that is happening here.

It is also important that the business community take ownership as a role model, a person or group that will bring students into organizations and the jobs that are available, and encourage students to look at the fields it is hiring in. It is not just the role of the government to try to encourage people; the business community also has to step forward. It has to say that there are opportunities to become a welder, an electrician, a lawyer, a doctor, or a pharmacist. Those type of sectors can do the same thing, if not better, and I would say much better, than what government could ever do.

I think those sectors should do what they can to encourage students to enter their fields of occupation, so that they receive the benefit of having employees to hire in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the important issue of youth unemployment.

I listened to my New Democrat friends talk in particular about recommendation number 16. Following the NDP talking about that recommendation, the government then said in answer to a question I posed that people want action and results, not necessarily more studies. This somewhat contradicts, at least the latter part of my comment about not having more studies or committees not doing more work, which somewhat contradicts what recommendation number 23 states.

I hope to go through a number of the recommendations. I would like to address recommendation numbers 16 and 23, and I will start by reading verbatim what recommendation 16 states. It says, "That the federal government explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada, such as tax credits for businesses that hire Canadians aged 18 to 30."

The New Democratic Party has emphasized that recommendation, and the Conservative government has said that it needs to take action. I have a question that I would like to put to both the NDP and the Conservatives.

The leader of the Liberal Party introduced a wonderful idea that would have dealt with recommendation 16. Members will remember the EI premium exemption that was suggested by the Liberal Party and that was brought to the House for a vote. That EI premium exemption would have provided a tax exemption for every worker who is hired to fill a new job in 2015-16. Who would have been the biggest benefactor had the government and the New Democratic Party recognized that as being a good idea? The biggest benefactors would be the young people of Canada, no matter where they live. Had the government acted on that policy, young people from coast to coast to coast would benefit. They would be employed.

I was surprised to a certain degree with respect to the government's total rejection of the idea, from the Prime Minister's Office down to all of the ministers. I would like to think that if a

good idea is brought forward that the government, wanting to serve the people of Canada, would jump on it if it would make a positive difference. However, the government had its own tax plan in mind, the small business tax credit, which in essence would draw upon the same fund. That plan would be exceptionally more costly.

If we are to compare the two ideas, we would find that the Liberal plan would have generated well over 100,000 jobs across this country. On the other hand, the Conservative plan, even in a bizarre situation, might have led to some businesses laying off people, or it might have generated 20,000 possible jobs, on the high side. I was disappointed that the Prime Minister did not acknowledge how all Canadians would have benefited from the Liberal Party policy by accepting our policy.

I was quite surprised to see the New Democratic Party vote against the proposal. Think about it. Today those members are talking about it in the form of a recommendation, and the recommendation says "That the federal government explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada, such as tax credits for businesses that hire Canadians aged 18 to 30."

● (1605)

One of the biggest, if not the biggest, benefactor under that Liberal plan was those youth, who are being referred to in this recommendation.

On the one hand, we have the New Democrats saying that they love this recommendation, and they espouse about how much they like it. However, when it came down to the time to vote, what did the New Democrats do? They voted against it. I somewhat expected it from the Conservatives, but I did not expect the New Democrats would have turned down an idea that would have employed more young people from coast to coast to coast in Canada.

Let us go on to the other recommendation that I made reference to in the form of a question. Again, for the benefit of all members, I will read the recommendation verbatim from the report. It states, "That the federal government and the appropriate" and I want to underline this part because I know the House leader of the official opposition loves this one:

—parliamentary committees consider further study of the following three topics: student enrolment in post-secondary institutions and the effectiveness in job preparation; student tuition fees and debt; and domestic and international youth employment rates, as well as the factors contributing to those rates.

In essence, the recommendation says that there is a very important role for our parliamentary committees to conduct studies. There are some within this chamber who do not recognize the value of having our standing committees meet. I would suggest for those members that they recognize what recommendation 23 talks about.

● (1610)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know, just before the break, the member for Winnipeg North was basically ruled out of order five days in a row. He was doing better now, but he is starting to get off into his own private world. As we know, he has to be relevant to the committee report and should stay focused on that. I just want to raise that. He seems to be going off on tangents again.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The member raises the point of relevance, but it is only fair to state that the member for Winnipeg North has been speaking to the matter. As all members know, members are given latitude to bring other matters to bear in the conversation.

In this case, the Chair would be pleased to give the floor back to the hon. member for Winnipeg North,

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that. The point I am trying to get across is, as it has been stated in recommendation 23, "That the federal government and the appropriate parliamentary committees consider further study of the following three topics". Then it lists off the topics.

The Liberal Party believes the committees need to meet to have following dialogue to ensure that the work that is important gets done. We will continue to push for this.

Having said that, and listening to many different comments, let us go back to recommendation 1, which states:

That the federal government work with the provinces and territories to improve education and labour market information for secondary and post-secondary students so that they can make informed career choices. As well, efforts should be directed to promoting apprenticeships.

There is a couple of things that really come to my mind that are very important to emphasize. The national government has a role to play. We, in the Liberal Party, would ultimately argue that the national government has been found wanting in meeting the needs of fulfilling that role, that there is so much more the national government can do.

We know we have a Canada social transfer. That social transfer is in excess of \$10 billion. I suspect it is probably closer to \$12 billion. I do not have the hard number, but I know it is definitely well above \$10 billion. What is that social transfer for?

I can bring to the chamber a perspective that goes beyond just the House of Commons, because I also served inside the Manitoba legislature. I can reflect on many of the debates that occurred there and how important it was that we had that Canada social transfer, and the role that the federal government could play in not only providing money, but even going beyond the issue of money.

The best example I can think of right off hand is something of which many apprentices throughout Canada would be very much aware. In this recommendation, it talks about promoting apprenticeships. There are apprenticeship programs in every province, primarily administered by the provinces, but the federal government does have a role to play in working with the provinces.

More and more, labour is very mobile. Labour wants to ensure that, as much as possible, it is able to benefit from education and training often received at a fairly expensive cost such as going to a college or university. It wants to ensure there is mobility. When I say mobility, I am talking about more than, for example, just becoming a specialty cook or chef and getting a certificate from the Red River College in Manitoba, and only working in Manitoba. People would like to enter into future potential employment opportunities that go beyond one province.

We have the Red Seal program that has afforded many, in many different occupations, the opportunity to not only practise the training they have acquired in one provincial jurisdiction, but to take that training and go to other jurisdictions, quite often with that Red Seal.

• (1615)

As we go forward into the future, I believe we will see more of a demand for things such as the Red Seal. There will be more of a demand for the federal government to look at ways in which it can work with provincial entities. When I say provincial entities, I am not just talking about the provincial government, I am also talking about other stakeholders such as our colleges, universities and other post-secondary types of facilities, even our high schools in some situations. People would be amazed at the types of education coming through our high schools today.

I have the good fortune to have Sisler High School, Children of the Earth High School, R.B. Russell Vocational School, St. John's High School, or Maples Collegiate, all in Winnipeg North. Canada's brightest and most talented graduate from those institutions every year, which might sound a bit biased. However, many of those individuals are going directly into universities, colleges and other forms of post-secondary education. Many of them will go into the private sector in the hope they will be able to continue on through apprenticeship programs.

Generally speaking, those apprenticeships programs are initiated through the provincial government and different stakeholders, in particular industry representatives. They all have an important role in recognizing those who graduate and, as much as possible, to ensure there is the right connection. It is critical that government recognize it has a role to ensure there is a connection to the type of jobs that are there today and that will be there tomorrow, and ensure that our educational facilities across the country move in a direction that will see jobs for those people who graduate.

There are certain industries, and every province has them. I often talk about Manitoba's aerospace industry. It is a very important industry to our province. It has and provides hundreds of jobs for Manitoba. The impact it has on our families, our social life, our economy is virtually immeasurable. It would be upsetting to not have the educated or those graduates to fill those jobs.

I have lost the context of time somewhat, but I believe it was three or four weeks ago that I took a tour of Magellan Aerospace. It was nice to see that it had world-class workers who were providing state-of-the-art production of military hardware. As I went through the tour, one of the places we went into was a college classroom. We have an industry working with a post-secondary facility, which has provided the chairs. Those youth, and they are primarily youth, have the benefit of having a class in a world-class manufacturing company that has some of the most expensive and totally unique capital infrastructure. It is one of the reasons why places around the world turn to Magellan to get certain parts manufactured.

These are the type of connections that are important. Governments do have a role to play in this.

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• (1620)

The leader of the Liberal Party talks about reaching out and connecting with Canadians and the importance of the middle class. Liberals are talking about making sure that people get good, quality jobs. We are putting an emphasis on how important education is. How can we provide more opportunities for young people? Without a doubt, it is through education. Education equates to opportunities, but there are many opportunities being lost because in many ways we are not making the connections. If we read some of the committee comments with regard to other social issues that need to be addressed in order to afford people the opportunity to gain employment, especially disadvantaged youth, we would go a long way in addressing youth unemployment in Canada today.

With those few comments, my time has already expired. I only covered 3 of the 25 recommendations made. In answering a question, I may be able to cover a couple more.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North and I want to follow up on the education aspect.

Clearly, we have a situation in which we have people without jobs and jobs without people. Particularly as it relates to young people, to me one of the biggest challenges is that the people without jobs are not qualified to fill the jobs that are looking for people. In Germany, Austria, Denmark, and some other European countries, there are very aggressive programs that highlight the trades at a very early age. The average age of a German apprentice with the equivalent of Red Seal would be 19. The average age in Canada is probably about 10 years older than that because young people get into the education stream, whether it is university, a B.A., B.Sc., whatever, and find they cannot get work, wind up in the trades, and have lost a decade.

Would my colleague see some merit in having some kind of mechanism, perhaps in social or education transfers, with the provinces for that? I mention the provinces because it is a provincial responsibility obviously. With reference to his time in the Manitoba legislature, would he seem merit in encouraging the provinces to start a program much sooner in high school, highlighting the trades and starting that stream whereby young people would go into the trades much earlier?

• (1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, even at the provincial level there are school divisions. Quite often, the school trustees are making the decisions that impact what is being taught in high schools in particular. I think we could do a lot more in ensuring that there is a more comprehensive overall approach in dealing with the bigger picture, so that there is more continuity and consistency across Canada.

Yes, the provincial government obviously has a very important role constitutionally and otherwise with regard to this issue, but we should not underestimate our role. We have more of a role than just providing money. Nothing prevents the federal government from being creative on the issue of apprenticeship. Nothing prevents the government from looking at ways to co-operate with different levels of government, allowing for more consistency throughout Canada, so we can make sure that the jobs today and tomorrow will be filled

by the people who are graduating high school today and going into the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to address the member's comments about how the New Democrats voted on the Liberal scheme involving EI premiums. My constituents, and I am sure many of my colleagues' constituents, are happy when we vote against the Liberals messing around with EI, because historically that has not been very positive for workers. I understand that the Liberal finance critic might be a bit confused about his position on issues. We have heard him in question period.

The NDP proposal, which is a recommendation in this finance committee report, is to offer a tax credit to small and medium-size businesses that are hiring and training young people.

The member can try to deflect this and turn it into a question on how New Democrats voted on a Liberal scheme that clearly was not going to do what it was supposedly intended to do. Rather than deflect on that, can he perhaps tell us whether he would vote on this kind of idea, if it were to come before the House, or if this is the kind of thing his party would support, this NDP idea of a tax credit for young workers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the member might be feeling a little bit guilty about the way he voted. I do not blame him if that is the case.

If we look at recommendation 16, it is very clear. It says:

That the federal government explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada, such as tax credits for businesses...

The Liberal proposal was an EI premium exemption. That is a tax credit of sorts.

At the end of the day, what is recommendation number 16 hoping to achieve? It is hoping to have more young people in Canada getting jobs. What was the idea behind the Liberal proposal? Getting more Canadians jobs. In particular, it would have helped the youth that the member is referring to.

I do not understand how members can speak in favour of recommendation 16 and vote against what the leader of the Liberal Party came forward about and asked the government for, which was an EI premium exemption that would have resulted directly in thousands of youth being employed had it passed.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only number I want to point out to my colleague is 1995.

In 1995, the Liberal government decided to cut transfer payments to the provinces for education. When he gave his speech about education, I thought he should have looked at his own history, since his party balanced the budget on the backs of students and young people.

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His government never reviewed the federal Canada summer jobs program. Demand has only increased since the program was created. Nevertheless, the Liberal government did not take that increased demand into account during all the years when it could have introduced legislation.

What would his party do if we had to review the Canada summer jobs program?

I hope that he would say that he would increase the budget.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member is somewhat misleading. I was there in a provincial legislature in 1995 when the cuts she is referring to were made. I can tell Canadians that had Ottawa not made the decisions back in 1995, we would not have the health transfers and other transfers that we have today.

The transfers back in the 1990s were based on tax credits, as opposed to cash transfers. Yes, there were some real cuts made. I will acknowledge that. However, at the end of the day, the member should at least acknowledge that transfer payments and equalization payments are at record highs today, and it is because of Paul Martin, the former minister of finance and prime minister, and former Prime Minister Chrétien. That is why we have the billions of dollars, record highs, flowing today. It is not because of the current government.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North made reference to other recommendations that he did not have the opportunity to address. I wonder if he might inform the House of a few of those recommendations, particularly recommendation 19.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question. Let me quickly read recommendation 19:

That the federal government commit to renewing the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy program.

There is absolutely no doubt about this, and the Dauphin Friendship Centre made an excellent presentation at the committee about the need for it. Some provinces may be more affected than others by this, but overall when we are talking about Canada, it is a tragic mistake if we do not deal with the issues in recommendation 19 about the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy.

It is one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing communities in some areas. For us to realize its potential, we need to invest and make sure that our first nations and aboriginal people are being brought in, in consultation, and that we start being a whole lot more progressive in providing opportunities.

I would really emphasize the importance of education. My leader was quoted over the last number of days about the importance of education in our schools and the need for more resources for many of our aboriginal and first nations children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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 Edmonton—Strathcona, Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

I would first like to commend the members of the finance committee for their excellent report on the employment challenges faced by young Canadians and for their recommendations.

As all hon. members know, this is a file on which the government has been particularly active and I welcome the opportunity to add a few observations to this discussion.

Let us start with the big picture. Overall, the economy is doing well. We bounced back from the 2008 recession in much better shape than most countries in the G7. On job creation, the numbers are solid. Over a million net new jobs have been created since 2009. That is 675,000 more than pre-recession levels. Contrary to what some people may think and some members of the media like to say, over 85% of the jobs that have been created are full-time positions, with more than two-thirds in high-wage industries.

As well, the IMF and the OECD expect that Canada will have one of the strongest-growing economies in the G7 for the next year, and the year after that.

Trade deals have been established with 44 countries, including South Korea and the 27 members of the European Union.

To top it all off, we will be presenting a balanced budget for next year.

The challenge is to ensure that we are thoroughly prepared to take advantage of the opportunities that are now before us.

One of the biggest opportunities is what is being called Canada's "new industrial revolution" in commodities and the extractive industries, specifically in the mining and oil and gas industries. It is estimated that investment in those areas over the next few years could reach as high as \$650 billion. I am talking about offshore oil and gas in Newfoundland; precious metals in northern Quebec; mining operations in northern Ontario's Ring of Fire; new hydro developments in Manitoba; potash and uranium in Saskatchewan; bitumen reserves, oil and gas, and other resources in Alberta; and new mining developments in northern B.C. and across all three northern territories.

It is clear. We are going to need people with the skills, expertise, knowledge, and drive to see these and all other economic ventures come to fruition. This will translate into high-paying, high-quality jobs, primarily in occupations requiring university or college, or apprenticeships.

What does this opportunity mean for the young people of this country, young people who are getting ready to make the transition from school into the labour market, young people who are making the decision of what fields they are going to engage in as they go on to post-secondary education, as they go on to trades, as they go on to apprenticeships? What information do they need so they can challenge these new jobs and try to get employment for their future, to build a family, and to continue to build this great country?

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First, it means that our economy is going to continue to expand and provide a huge number of opportunities for these young people.

However, as the committee report rightly points out, young people have particular challenges in getting a job and staying in the labour force. In Canada, the unemployment rate for young people is about double that of all other workers. The only good news is that young people tend to be unemployed for shorter periods of time—on average for 12 weeks, compared with twice that for workers over the age of 25.

I would like to point out that high youth unemployment is not just a Canadian phenomenon. It is a worldwide phenomenon or problem. In fact, our youth unemployment rate of 13.7% in 2013 was lower than the OECD average of 16.2%. For example, the U.S. rate was 15.5% and the rate in the U.K. was over 20%.

That being said, the government has a whole range of programs and policies to help guide and support young Canadians as they ready themselves for a positive career. These start at home with things like the registered education savings plan that allows families to put aside money in a tax-sheltered education savings account for future post-secondary education expenses. This is supplemented by the Canada education savings grant that can provide up to \$7,200 more for Canadian youth for their education. Then there are Canada student loans and grants that continue to help hundreds of thousands of Canadian students pay for their post-secondary education.

As of this year, and because we want to encourage more people to get into the skilled trades, the student loan program has been extended with the \$100 million a year Canada apprenticeship loan. It would help apprentices registered in the Red Seal trades to pay for technical training.

Recently, we also approved significant investments to expand the labour market information provided to young people across this country. This includes an additional \$14 million annually on two new Statistics Canada surveys. Together, the surveys would provide Canadians, including youth, with relevant information on in-demand jobs by regions and by economic sectors. They would also provide reliable wage information from employers at the regional and local levels.

● (1635)

The youth employment strategy has a budget of over \$360 million in 2014-15 and is helping young Canadians between 15 and 30 develop the skills and get the job experience they need for success in the workforce. The strategy includes such things as funding for Career Focus to support internships for post-secondary graduates and subsidies to employers to hire students through the Canada summer jobs program. Since 2006, our government has helped over six million youth obtain skills, training and jobs, and there is still more to do.

As hon. members know, the government has also transformed the labour market agreements and introduced the Canada job grant to bring private sector employers into the training mix. The Canada job grant gives employers a real stake in training programs and allows them to help shape those programs to better match their specific needs. By 2017-18, a total of \$300 million per year will be invested nationally in the Canada job grant.

The government has also created more targeted supports for young people who have historically been under-represented in the labour force, particularly young aboriginal Canadians and young Canadians with disabilities. Upwards of 400,000 young aboriginal Canadians will reach working age over the next 10 years. We have a great opportunity with this population. Also, there are some 800,000 individuals with disabilities, including many young Canadians who are able to work but are not currently working, even though their disability does not prevent them from doing so. This represents enormous untapped potential.

The government is using the youth employment strategy, the opportunities funds for people with disabilities, and targeted funding for aboriginal youth to help young people in these groups get ready to participate full time in Canada's workforce.

In conclusion, a strong and growing economy marches forward on the skills and expertise of its workforce. That is why our government is committed to doing everything in its power to help young Canadians obtain the highest skill levels they can.

A stronger workforce would give us a more dynamic and faster-growing economy. This is something I am sure all of us here want to see and support for future years.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the same question I asked my other colleague.

As I said, the Canada summer jobs program, which helps hundreds of thousands of Canadian students acquire experience, has never been reviewed. Its budget no longer meets the demands of the past 20 years. Funding has not been increased for 20 years. Everyone would agree that, for years now, we have been seeing an increase in demand every year. I think that all of the members here can attest to that.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the recommendation in the report that addresses the Canada summer jobs program and calls on the government to review the program. What will his government do for the Canada summer jobs program and how will it help young people gain experience and find work?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that very important question.

One of the biggest challenges for youth who are trying to find employment is that often when they knock on the door and ask an employer to give them a job, the employer says that they would love to hire them and asks what experience they have. Sometimes they have no experience. They do not have the employable skills in their background to take on the job being offered by the employer.

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That is one of the focuses of the youth summer employment program. We need to make sure that this program not only provides summer employment for students between semesters but also provides employment that will help them build the skills they need to go to work every day in their own communities after they graduate from post-secondary education or finish an apprenticeship.

We need to make sure that the youth employment program, the summer jobs program, the Career Focus program, and the skills link program have a work experience basis underpinning the fact that they are going to develop skills. It is not just a summer job between semesters; it has to provide the skills and work experience they need. It has to provide an ability to build their own skill base so that they can apply for jobs when they finish their education.

There is a continued push toward strong funding for the youth employment system and the summer jobs program, but we must also keep in mind that these programs have to include work experience that provides the skills young people need to take on the jobs of the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the hon. member's answer.

The only problem is that he forgot to answer one thing: will the budget for the Canada summer jobs program increase? It is very simple.

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to do an end run. The finance minister has not put forward the budget yet for next year. We will have to wait and see what is contained in that budget. However, I can say that the focus of this government is jobs, growth, and prosperity for this nation.

I am sure that the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, when they were putting together this budget, consulted with people all across this country, and I know MPs from our party are doing constant budget consultations. When I do budget consultations, I am hearing from employers in my riding that they need to have a more highly skilled and developed workforce, a youth workforce that can take the jobs that they are offering.

I am sure that in the upcoming budget there will be continued support for the youth employment strategy and continued support for the programs that are in that strategy: the career focus program, the skills link program and the Canada summer jobs program. However, I think we will also see a continued support for what we have done since the economic action plan in 2008, whereby a greater focus will be put on ensuring that the focus for the summer jobs program is on the skills that are going to be needed to fill the jobs of the future.

There are 300,000 jobs in the construction trades and 150,000 jobs in mining, and many other of the skilled trades are going to be needing literally hundreds of thousands of young Canadians who are trained. I think we will see this government continuing to support that. I hope the opposition, when the time comes to vote for the budget, will support those measures. They are for the good futures of our young people in Canada.

● (1645)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here today and to speak to this issue.

Our government is committed to helping young people participate in the labour market. In fact, we agree with the recommendations of the finance committee's recent report on youth employment.

Canada's future success is very much dependent on the academic and economic success of our young people. Our government is keenly focused on creating jobs, growth, and economic prosperity.

That said, we are very aware of the fact that it is not the government's job to create jobs. We need to help young Canadians actually get the jobs that are available.

From helping youth access education to encouraging entrepreneurship, we offer a wide range of supports to youth. Since 2006, our government has helped over six million youth obtain skills, training, and jobs, and there is still more to do. Today I am going to focus on the programs we offer to apprentices in the skilled trades.

First let me say a few words about the growing labour market demand for skilled trade workers. BuildForce Canada tells us that the construction sector will need 300,000 new workers in the next 10 years, that the mining sector will need 145,000 more workers over the next 10 years, and that the petroleum sector will need up to 150,000 workers by 2022.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce cites estimates that there will be 550,000 unskilled workers who will not be able to find work by 2016. By 2021, the chamber says that the number of unemployed unskilled workers could be well over a million.

At the same time, the Department of Employment and Social Development estimates that there will be 5.8 million job openings over the next decade, of which two-thirds will be in high-skilled occupations requiring a post-secondary education or management skills.

The Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business all say that skills shortages are the greatest obstacle they face right now.

The problem is further complicated because workers of the baby boom generation are beginning to retire, taking their skills with them. Over the next decade, the Department of Employment and Social Development estimates that 4.3 million existing positions will be freed up, mainly as a result of workers retiring. The largest number of retirements will be in occupations requiring college education or skilled trades training.

In certain sectors and regions of our country the demand for skilled trade workers is growing, yet at the same time, 13.7% of young Canadians were unemployed in 2013. There is obviously a disconnect here, and I spoke of it during my by-election last fall. The question is, how do we address it?

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We need to give young Canadians the right kind of labour market information. They need to know the real value of a job in the skilled trades. Somehow we have come to see getting a university degree as the only way to get a good job. While earning a bachelor's degree can lead to a well-paying job, it will not prepare people for many of the jobs available in the trades. We need to start giving jobs in the trades the same respect that we give to other occupations. I always have, but this respect is being heightened nationally at this time, and we need to send that message to young people. The youth unemployment rate is too high. It is unacceptable.

The good news is that we can bring that rate down, because job opportunities do exist for Canadians with the right skills. Therefore, to encourage more participation in the trades, we included support for apprenticeship training in all our federal budgets, including the most recent one.

Currently we have a number of financial supports available to apprentices. First, we offer the apprenticeship incentive grant, which is a \$1,000 taxable cash grant for apprentices who complete the first and/or second level of their apprenticeship program in a designated Red Seal trade. Through this grant, apprentices can receive up to \$2,000.

Second, we offer the apprenticeship completion grant. This is a \$2,000 taxable cash grant for apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship training and receive their journeyman certification in a designated Red Seal trade.

By combining these two grants, apprentices who complete their apprenticeship training in a designated Red Seal trade and become certified journeymen are eligible to receive up to \$4,000.

• (1650)

To date the government has issued more than 500,000 apprenticeship grants and has provided nearly \$700 million in support to apprentices to help them pursue and complete their training programs. In Brandon—Souris alone we have had 477 apprentices receive these apprenticeship completion grants since 2009. It is very effective.

Apart from the grants, the government also offers tax credits and deductions to apprentices and their employers. These include the apprenticeship job creation tax credit for employers who hire apprentices; the tradesperson's tools deduction tax credit, which allows apprentices and tradespeople to deduct the cost of their tools; and the tuition tax credit for certification and examination fees, which allows apprentices to recover some of the cost of their examination fees.

In addition to these existing incentives, we expanded the Canada apprentice loan. When the apprentices are doing their formal block training, they will be able to apply for up to \$4,000 in interest-free loans. At least 26,000 apprentices are expected to benefit from the Canada apprentice loan in the first year.

I think I have demonstrated that our government provides a full range of supports to apprentices. However, financial support is not enough. There is also the issue of labour mobility.

Because skilled trades shortages are restricted to certain sectors and regions, it is vital that workers are able to move to where they

are needed and have their qualifications recognized. Harmonizing apprenticeship requirements across the country will help create new opportunities in skilled trades across all of Canada. We have to coordinate our efforts in the provinces and territories to facilitate labour mobility, not restrict it, and our government is doing just that.

The Atlantic provinces are currently leading the way on this front. In January 2014, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador agreed to remove the barriers created by different training and certification requirements for apprentices in that region. So far they have harmonized requirements for 10 trades, including bricklayers, instrumentation and control technicians, and construction electricians. This is a great step forward.

The provinces have agreed to recognize each other's requirements or otherwise reconcile any unnecessary differences in their standards and regulations. This will help more Canadians get the training they need for in-demand, well-paying jobs in the skilled trades. Hopefully it will encourage more young people to pursue this career path as well.

In addition to problems with labour mobility and harmonization, there are other barriers to pursuing a career in the skilled trades. At the end of 2012, there were 360,000 people enrolled in more than 300 apprenticeship training programs, but typically only half of them complete their training and move on to get their journeyman's certificate. This may be because it is costly for young people to leave their good-paying jobs as apprentices to go do their formal technical training. That is why we will soon launch a research pilot project to support flexibility in apprenticeship training. The idea is that instead of obliging apprentices to leave the workplace and move to a college for two months of technical training, we could find innovative ways to deliver this training in a more convenient way by putting it online, for example.

Young people are the future of our country.

We have new mining projects opening up in Quebec, offshore oil in Newfoundland and Labrador, and potash oil and gas in Saskatchewan, just to name a few. We are going to need skilled, qualified workers to support those projects in the natural resources industry. That is why our programs are increasingly focused on apprenticeship in the skilled trades. The skilled trades are where the jobs of the future will be, and those are the kinds of jobs we need more young people to pursue.

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•(1655)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague basically the same question I asked his colleague. Two budgets ago, in 2013, the then finance minister stated that this government would introduce the concept of attaching apprenticeships to infrastructure spending. In other words, they would put their money where their mouth was with regard to creating jobs for young people. To date, that has been an empty promise, because nothing has been done.

We have tried to get the provincial government in Ontario to do the same thing, but it has failed.

More concerning here is that the finance minister actually put in a budget that infrastructure spending would include the ability to create apprenticeships as part of the requirement for the infrastructure spending.

I wonder if the member would comment on why his government has failed to follow up on that budgetary promise made by the previous finance minister.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, the assumption is that the infrastructure is not being built in Canada, but it is. We have tremendous infrastructure projects going on in Canada. Exactly the types of programs I outlined in my presentation today are the reason young people are able to access the trades, whether it is welding or electronics. The pipeline industry in western Canada comes to mind. Right now, all across Canada, particularly in that area, there are a great many of the apprenticeship programs I just spoke about, where the government is giving \$1,000 for the apprenticeship programming incentive for each of the first two years of those courses and another \$2,000 upon completion of those courses.

The premise of the individual's question is suspect. There is tremendous growth in the job market in Canada. We have had over 1.1 million new jobs, virtually full-time. As we can see from the type of work that is available, there are thousands to come, too.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I share the same home province. One of the big issues in Manitoba, when it comes to youth unemployment, is our first nations and aboriginal people. There is a huge need there. Many complicated areas need to be discussed in consultation with different individuals, particularly first nations leaders, to come up with apprenticeship programming, even at the high school level. We need to get more engaged so that our youth can have better opportunities for employment.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on how important apprenticeships and high school education are.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is correct with regard to the importance of the aboriginal community in our society, particularly in Manitoba, which has the second-highest rate of aboriginal growth in Canada. That is why the very programs I have outlined are so important. Everyone is eligible to access these programs.

We have a situation where there is a lot of growth in those areas, but there is a lot of growth in job opportunities as well. A number of first nations youth in the area I represent have gone into those areas.

My colleague has experience in that area as well as a result of his days in the Manitoba legislature.

These apprenticeship courses are designed to help feed into the need of those individuals to get jobs in our society, not just in Manitoba but across Canada.

•(1700)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand today and speak to the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their work on this. I would like to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, a hard-working MP, full of energy and passion, who is very devoted to this file and really does an amazing job back in his riding as well. I would also like to thank the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques and the member for Victoria.

I would also like to thank the witnesses who participated in this study. It has led to some important recommendations. Although we are pleased to support the report as a whole, we would be remiss if we did not focus on some of the major challenges youth in Canada are facing in today's labour market, points to which I worry my colleagues across the way are not paying enough mind. We have the words; we need the action.

Since the Conservative government came to power, and over time, it has become apparent that youth employment is not a priority for the government.

I door-knock in my riding almost every weekend. Let me tell members that our youth are hurting. Young people in Surrey and their parents and grandparents all tell the same story. I am sure that MPs from coast to coast are hearing similar stories. It is our youth looking for work and parents and grandparents wanting them to have decent paying jobs so they are not helping to subsidize them. They want to see their children on their feet.

As the official opposition critic for employment and social development, I am deeply troubled when I meet youth who have good grades, who have studied hard, and who are passing out resumes left, right, and centre yet cannot get jobs at all, or at least cannot get decent hours or decent pay.

To this day, as stated in the committee's main report, Canadian youth still suffer from the effects of the economic crisis. While employment growth for Canadians as a whole was not sufficient to recover lost jobs during the crisis, young people have been particularly affected. More than 455,000 jobs for people under 25 have been lost since before the recession, and the youth unemployment rate is now double that of the population aged 25 years and older.

As Amy Huziak, from the Canadian Labour Congress, said:

Recessions are always harder on young workers, but we are nearly five years past the end of the last recession and there's still no recovery in sight for young workers.

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There has not been any pick-up with respect to jobs for the cohort aged 15 to 25 in this country. It does not seem right that we have missed an opportunity to get youth back into the labour market. This is where we need to focus right now.

My New Democrat colleagues and I are deeply concerned about the current labour market situation for young Canadians, and we refuse to accept soaring levels of youth unemployment as normal. It is not enough to say to our youth to just go volunteer more and work for nothing. The federal government has a responsibility to help create jobs for young people. It requires collaborating with the provinces on training, apprenticeships, and education. Why is the government not showing leadership and doing just that?

Of course, education is a major factor in social mobility. About five hours ago, I met with students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Vancouver Island University in my beautiful home province of British Columbia. They are very concerned. Youth are accepting unpaid internships in the hopes of eventually securing employment with that employer. However, unpaid internships do not pay off student debt, and they do not allow young people to move forward out of their parents' homes into homes of their own to live modestly but independently.

The pursuit of post-secondary education means that young people are able to increase their opportunities in the labour market as well as their conditions of employment. However, an increasing number of students have trouble repaying their loans, and so many are deterred from furthering their education for fear that it may result in insurmountable debt.

• (1705)

We have all heard stories of the growing debt students have after graduating from post-secondary institutions, in many cases, much higher than the price of the first house I bought when I graduated. Too many young workers are unemployed. The unemployment rate for youth was estimated at 27.7% last year.

There are also troubling gaps between the graduation rates of aboriginal and non-aboriginal students, so we need to establish some programs to address these issues. The post-secondary graduation rate on reserves is about 14.4% compared to 39.1% for the non-aboriginal population. Even more troubling is the fact that high school graduation rates are just 36.8% on reserves compared with 66.8% for the broader population.

The first nations population is young and growing fast. Fully half of the population of 930,000 is under the age of 25 and, as it stands, the majority of first nations youth have not graduated high school. Unfortunately, the government consistently underfunds first nations education and schools. In my previous life, I had the privilege to visit some of the schools in these communities and I was outraged at the standards of the buildings, which appeared to me more like what one would expect in third world countries rather than in a developed wealthy nation like Canada.

Youth face competition in the labour market with the growth of the temporary foreign worker program. As we know, the government opened up the floodgates without too much regulation and when it got caught, it tried to do a bit of damage control. Temporary foreign workers admitted under the low-skilled occupation stream are

actually competing directly with young people. All year long, case upon case has been highlighted in the media from coast to coast to coast. We are all familiar with the infamous example of the McDonald's in Victoria ignoring local students, not hiring them and giving them reduced hours in favour of paying lower wages to foreign workers. Heartbreakingly, this was one example of a countrywide crisis.

One of the issues brought forward in the material provided by the students who came to see me earlier this afternoon was that of data or, rather, the lack of it. There is a serious data shortage in Canada right now. As I have said tongue in cheek many times in the House, it is as if the government is allergic to data and evidence-based decision-making. It does not seem to want to have that kind of information get in the way of its own agenda.

I want to spend a bit of time expressing my particular support for recommendation 9 of this report, which states:

That the federal government collect data on unpaid internships in Canada and work with the provinces and territories to ensure the appropriate protections under relevant labour codes. Moreover, the government should study the impacts of unpaid internships.

I grew up in England, and in school we were encouraged to volunteer and get involved in the community. I was involved with Meals on Wheels. I would read at a local hospital. I got involved with the Duke of Edinburgh program. I did a variety of volunteer work, but that was on the side. Surely we should not tell young people, who have finished their university and have huge debt loads, that they need about a year's worth of experience and they should work for nothing for a year somewhere. We really have to pay attention. I do not think we have enough data to even begin to understand how serious this situation is, so data collection becomes important.

Logic alone suggests that if people are doing jobs and not being paid for them, they are not going to have money. If they are devoting their time to unpaid internships in the hopes of gaining experience that would lead to eventual employment, they do not also have time to work interim jobs to earn meagre salaries, even enough to pay the interest on their student loans. This is the conundrum for many young people right now.

• (1710)

However, without data, we are unable to assess just how bad the situation is. We can merely speculate and go to the stories we hear, but speculation does not good policy make. Nor does guesswork. Furthermore, we need to find out what is actually resulting from unpaid internships. Are youth ultimately gaining? Are our youth being exploited? Do they work the year and then the employer looks for another freebie for a year? All that information needs to be gathered.

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In order to work effectively at the federal level and with the provinces to remedy this problem, we need to know the exact size of the problem so we can deduce the size of the solution needed. Make no mistake that I and my NDP colleagues agree that there are good internship programs associated with academic institutions and that help young Canadians benefit from a first work experience. We have many co-op programs and ones that will be relevant to and even improve their career prospect as another part of their learning package. However, the increasingly frequent use of unpaid internships by employers also poses a particular challenge for young Canadians, and it is the data associated with that challenge that we desperately need to analyze.

Unfortunately, some employers do not use unpaid internships as a prerequisite to employment and as a way to fill positions that would otherwise be paid, so for them it is just a revolving door. Unpaid internships do not necessarily lead to the acquisition of relevant experience for the career of a young worker. Sometimes what interns end up doing has very little to do with their expertise or with their background. Amendments to the Canada Labour Code could ensure better working conditions for our young people and protect them from exploitation.

Next I want to emphasize the importance of recommendation 16 of the report, which states, "That the federal government explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada, such as", and the NDP has been suggesting this, "tax credits for businesses that hire Canadians aged 18 to 30." That is a positive step the government could take tomorrow. The Conservatives are really fond of making announcements in all kinds of locations. Here is one they should make, and they should stand here and make it today or make it tomorrow. This would actually benefit our youth.

A youth hiring tax credit is a practical step to creating new jobs for young people. I have spoken to business people in Surrey and to the Surrey Board of Trade, and they agree that kind of policy is a win-win. The New Democrats have proposed a \$1,000 incentive that would be available to businesses that hire young Canadians aged 18 to 25. That credit would double in areas of dire unemployment. Businesses would also be able to access matching federal funds to help train newly hired employees.

The time is now. Let us do this and show today's young people that we are paying attention and that we are not leaving them behind. By ignoring youth unemployment, or only paying lip service to it, the government is actually threatening Canada's long-term economic prosperity.

Members may be aware that Germany just announced a few months ago that all post-secondary education fees in Germany would now be waived. No matter what post-secondary program people take, there are no fees in Germany. The Germans are not just doing it because they woke up one day and said they needed a new announcement. They did their research. They looked at how much common sense it made to do that, and how investment in their youth was really about the future and that their country was willing to make those sacrifices. They like it and they can see the economic and social benefits.

If the Canadian government does not act now, we risk becoming the first generation in history to leave less to our children than we

inherited from our parents. As a mother and a grandmother, I cannot say how much that breaks my heart. I always tell people that I do what I do because I want a better world for my grandchildren, the students I have taught over the years and all young people in our country. I want to give them that promise of hope and of engagement, but right now many youth are feeling disenchantment.

Canadians deserve better. Canadians deserve smart investment in today's youth and tomorrow's economy. The New Democrats recognize that smaller enterprises are the job creating backbone of Canada's economy. In that vein, we launched a Canada-wide campaign to engage small businesses. We are talking to business owners about practical ideas to help them expand, and the feedback we are getting is very positive.

• (1715)

I would be remiss not to discuss the fact that youth with disabilities face particular challenges in the labour market. They face a more difficult transition from school to work, reduced support services to meet their individual needs, job opportunities and ignorance of their actual capabilities. Youth with disabilities are more educated than ever. However, as indicated by one witness, the employment rate of youth with disabilities in Canada was 45.7% in 2011.

When I learned that, I was shocked. The government must take action immediately to enable young people with disabilities to benefit from better opportunities to enter the labour market permanently.

Last and very dear to my heart, is that I recently have learned that 60% of students will postpone buying a house because of their debt and 40% will postpone their plan to start a family. This highlights another issue of pressing importance for young professionals, the work-family balance.

With that, I will state again in the House, and as many times I am able, that a national child care system is vital for women to enter the labour force when their children are younger. When a woman first starts out in the labour force, in the 25- to 29-year old range, the gap is not very large. It is after a few years when they have had to take leave to care for young children that the gap grows. Women hit that glass ceiling, but they also hit many other barriers and end up having to make very difficult choices, choices that not only impact their career aspirations but also impact the economic base for families.

Improving our child care system is fundamental to improving employment opportunities for both men and women. If we are to tackle poverty in a serious way and tackle the growing gap between the rich and poor, one of the key pillars in that platform to do that is a universal, accessible, affordable, regulated child care system. That is what the NDP stands for.

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We are talking about youth unemployment. Recently, when I was at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, I met with a group of students. They told me that their challenges were the high costs. Education is incredibly expensive these days, but they are willing to take on that burden. The difficulty is that once they leave those institutions, it is going to be between one to seven years before they can get a full-time job in the field in which they have qualified. That just does not seem right. This is the kind of thing we need to address.

I talk to my constituents in Newton—North Delta all the time. Of the three top issues, education and young unemployment are an integral part. Honestly, the lack of a national child care system in Canada right now is a marked failure. We need affordable, accessible, safe child care in our country, and we need it now.

The Leader of the Opposition has said that we are only one election away from having child care that will be no more than \$15 a day per child. That is music to the ears of people from coast to coast to coast.

I am happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this report today. I thank my colleagues for their good work and I look forward to seeing these recommendations come to fruition.

I would like to end with an appeal. Words on paper are meaningless. Let us have action.

• (1720)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, prior to politics I worked as a youth counsellor for persons with disabilities and youth at risk.

I would ask the member how important it is for there to be a federal plan for creating child care spaces and making sure they are accessible and available to all women and families.

A critical part of our economic engine is to facilitate the ability to work. We cannot do that in our current system because child care is really costly now for many people across our country, including in my own community.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hard-working colleague for his very thoughtful question. I am always impressed with how connected he is with the issues in his riding and how articulate he is in bringing those into the House.

When the universal child care program was implemented in Quebec, over 70,000 women re-entered the workforce. When they re-entered the workforce, not only did they pay taxes on what they were making, but they also addressed a labour issue that was out there. Most importantly, it strengthened the family's economic base in order to make progress.

It did something else as well. We know that early childhood education is very important, and once we have quality child care that is universal, accessible, and regulated, we get amazing things happening with kids. I think that option needs to be available for every parent across this country.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused by what the member just said. The member said that once there is a universal child care program for all, parents things would be better. What she is forgetting is that it is in place right now.

There is a cheque that goes to parents with children under school age, which will be increased in the future. The member knows that. Does she want to get rid of that? I simply do not believe that is the way to go.

I think the member should acknowledge that a big bureaucratic daycare program like her party is proposing has been a disaster in Quebec for many families. Only a small percentage of the families can in fact access the program. The money goes to the bureaucrats, the people running the program, instead of actually providing the service to a wide range of parents.

I would like the member to acknowledge that the government has in place the best kind of child care program that goes to all parents for children. It actually allows parents to make the decision on what kind of child care they want to provide for their children.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely flabbergasted by that question.

First of all, I do not know if that member has tried to look for child care, but I can tell him that Surrey, B.C. has among the most expensive child care out there. A report released recently shows it at around \$1,200 a month. It is not \$100 or \$160 a month.

Also, there is nothing in the plan that we have proposed that would force parents to use daycare. If parents opt to stay at home and they have the financial wherewithal to do so, then that option is there. The NDP is saying we need a universal plan that is more inclusive and would allow parents to make real choices based on their circumstances.

It is not a choice for a 23-year-old mother working at minimum wage and whose husband is also working at minimum wage. If both of them are working, they still cannot earn enough to pay their bills, including food and rent. They cannot afford that daycare so only one can work. The poverty level increases, and when a child goes hungry or when we have children living in poverty, that demeans every single Canadian in this country because there is no excuse for it.

Sound policy supported by very well-established economists says that if we want to tackle child poverty, if we want to tackle the labour issues, if we want to have good economic and social policy, then universal, accessible, affordable, regulated child care is the only way to go.

• (1725)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Newton—North Delta for her passionate defence of programs that would address chronic and rising youth unemployment and increasing poverty in this country.

I am still flabbergasted by my Conservative colleague across the way who tried to compare the \$2 or \$3 a day that the Conservative government wants to provide to families to the \$1,600 a month it costs the average family in Toronto to pay for child care. The Conservatives are telling Canadians that they are giving them \$2 or \$3 a day and that they can raise the other \$1,400 or \$1,500 a month by themselves. This is an appalling and irresponsible attitude toward families. This means that families simply go without child care. There is no other way to put it.

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Does my colleague from Newton—North Delta think the Conservatives even understand the pressures that working families are under, if they can say that for \$2 or \$3 a day they have taken care of child care when thousands of families in this country cannot afford child care because of the Conservative government's negligence?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his thoughtful and passionate question. He cares deeply about this issue and in his riding specifically he has also been hearing from people about the need for a universal child care program.

Sometimes we get into partisan spats in here, and I have heard a few of them. Child care should not be one of those. We should be paying attention to the science and researchers. Europe has proven models. Quebec has a proven model. Sound research shows that not only is child care good for the economy but it is also good socially. It is good for the family, good for increasing gender equity, and good for raising family income. It is also good for mental health reasons.

Let us start paying attention to this because this is doable. Based on the science and evidence, all parties should be moving toward this. A couple of dollars a day is not going to cut it.

I am talking to more and more parents and grandparents of young people. They are telling me that they did not think they would be raising their great grandchildren so that their grandchildren can pay their bills. They cannot afford to put their children into daycare, so in many cases family members are helping out. There is nothing wrong with that as long as they are healthy, but I have been talking to individuals who are suffering when they have to do that. The Conservative government shut the door on family reunification, so that extended family support system is not even there for many Canadians either.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Jack Layton and the NDP had a policy platform in 2011 stating that employers would receive a one year rebate on employer contributions to the Canada pension plan and employment insurance premiums for each new employee hired.

Could the member tell us whether or not her party still believes that Mr. Layton's idea was a good one?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, it is evident to me that both the government and the party at that end have miserably failed small and medium-size businesses over the years, as they have pandered to big transnational corporations with profits that leave the country. They have ignored the job creating engines of this country, which are small and medium-size businesses.

We are committed to working on a variety of tools and incentives to support small businesses so they can grow the jobs. We have talked about the tax rate. We have talked about hiring credits. We have talked about transaction fees for credit cards. There are many ways to support small business. I would urge my colleague down the way to wait for the rest of our platform. We are not scared to put our platform out. We are putting it out right now because we want Canadians to discuss and debate it, unlike the red door that is keeping it hidden.

● (1730)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand here and talk to this very important issue of youth unemployment and the important report that was put forward by the Standing Committee on Finance with a number of recommendations.

First of all, we need to put this into a framework of what the government has been doing and the very important work that we have been moving forward with.

I have three children in their twenties, and I remember that back in the nineties when they were quite young I used to think that the baby boomers were all going to retire, so that when my children finished university, finished whatever path they had chosen in their life, the world was going to be their oyster and that they would have many opportunities and, indeed, that there would be a shortage. That has not happened. We know there are some challenges for youth and we know our unemployment rate is higher than we would like it to be.

The government understands that it is important that we create the right environment for the economy to thrive, that we create the right environment for the job creators of this country to be successful and to create those jobs. It is ironic that the NDP members like to talk about their great concern about this issue, but every single measure, everything we do to support the job creators in this country, they tend to vote against.

For example, as we look at lowering the tax rates for our corporations, it is important to recognize that lower tax rates encourage growth. Money is international these days, there is international mobility, and we are encouraging job creators, groups like Tim Hortons, to come back to Canada.

First of all we need to look at the policies that we have in place, including around natural resources. Here again I would have to look at the New Democrats because I do not think there is a natural resource project that I have heard them support yet, especially for our aboriginal peoples. In Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, we have a mine that opened called New Gold, and as part of that mine opening, there were some job agreements created with the local bands that allowed for employment opportunities for their youth.

It is important that we have policies in place that support the job creators, whether regarding corporate tax rates or, more importantly, resource development policies whereby we get to a yes or no, so that companies will not have to spend 6, 8, 15, 30 years before they get an answer about what are to be doing. That is one thing that we have focused on.

The government has played a role in terms of some of the more direct supports that we have put in place for aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, youth in general. Here I would like to spend time talking about the different programs that are in place. Again, this means significant dollars. It is also important to recognize that the provinces and municipalities are our partners in these issues. We work in partnership with provinces and municipalities.

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As for some of the important programs in place, we have to start when young. Some of the first work experiences youth have are as high school students. Maybe a first job is supported through our Canada summer student job program. It might be working in a camp, or with an engineering company, or many of those jobs. In the riding I represent, there is over \$450,000 that goes into providing that experience for youth, often their first experience in the workforce. We have programs related to paid internships.

● (1735)

Again, we have a company that is thinking of the need to expand the number of people it has. With respect to those entry-level jobs, creating those positions and those paid internship is a hugely successful program that encourages our businesses to hire youth.

Some of the more powerful programs I have seen are through our skills link and opportunities programs. Sometimes we have youth who experience specific challenges in their lives. I will again use Kamloops as an example; however, in the 308 ridings across the country, there are many similar groups in place. In one case we have a program that is giving funding to support a group called ASK Wellness Society. It has people who have perhaps had issues with drug or alcohol addiction and have had a few challenges in their life, but who have decided to turn their life around. We know that part of supporting people in turning their lives around is to provide meaningful support and opportunities for jobs.

I can remember going to a particular announcement where we talked about the ongoing support for some of these programs, and the story of the youth who stood up. He talked about the bad path he had taken in his life, about getting clean in terms of his drug and alcohol addictions, and about the support he had in terms of the basic skills he would need to be successful in his future. He had that support, from federal government funding delivered through an agency in town, and was now gainfully and happily employed. He was pleased and very happy about the change he had made in his life. More importantly, he did not feel he could have done it without the support of the program that was available to him.

We also recognize that our aboriginal youth have an unemployment rate that is of particular concern. There is support for aboriginal youth, and also programs like the ASETS program, which not only provides aboriginal youth with some pre-employment skills but actual skills training.

Our human resources, skills and development committee had the opportunity to not only look at ASETS, but the strategic partnerships fund, which is where industry works with the communities and community groups to create jobs. It is an important opportunity for supporting aboriginal youth and the extraordinarily high unemployment rate there.

The last thing I want to reflect on that has been part of an ongoing dialogue in the House, and although not directly related to youth unemployment there is a link, is support for child care. I have said this before, and I will say it again. I will use the example of someone from a rural community, someone who has to work nights, maybe a young mother who is 17 or 19 and needs someone at home. To be frank, the child care spaces proposed by the NDP would not do her any good if she goes to work for a 7 p.m. to midnight shift. Those spaces are not available, though they might be great for a nine to five

shift. I understand that recent research has shown that people with higher incomes tend to take more advantage of those low-cost daycare spots. We would put that money in her pocket, so that if she needs to hire a babysitter or an aunt to come to the house, she would have that flexibility.

The last point I would like to focus on is what we hear about the extraordinarily high costs of child care. However, what the NDP are neglecting to say is that every province in this country provides support for low-income parents. With the supported child care program, sometimes the parents are paying nothing. If they are on a low income or are a single mom, they might be on a program delivered through the provinces where their child care cost is appropriately subsidized.

● (1740)

This conversation has been a little misleading, first in the fact that there is some important support available for those on a low income. More importantly, the jobs that our youth have, and perhaps single mothers, are not necessarily Monday to Friday and nine to five. Our plan is going to provide the parent of a young child with \$1,900 a month. In addition to that, we have to remember that they have support from a number of different sources. It will allow them to enter the market more viably.

In conclusion, we all agree that the youth unemployment rate is an issue. It is an issue that we need to be concerned about. We need to find important ways to match opportunities to the interests of our youth, and we need to create an environment, both for corporations to be successful and to give youth the skills through the important programs that I have already mentioned. Whether it is the Canada summer student job program, youth opportunities, or disabilities, we have many programs in place, and we will continue to ensure that we have an important focus on this area.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have asked this question twice before and I have not had a straight answer either time, so I will ask it again and hope for a straight answer.

In the 2013 budget, the finance minister announced that one of the conditions of government spending on infrastructure would be the creation of apprenticeships through the procurement process to create infrastructure in cities, towns, and provinces across the country. However, the new Canada building fund of \$14 billion has nary a mention of apprenticeships anywhere in it.

I would like to know why the government will not put its money where its mouth is. It said very clearly that it would be a condition of the creation of infrastructure in this country, yet the provinces and towns that receive this money are under no obligation to create apprenticeships. That would be a tremendous way for the government to create the kinds of jobs that young people need. It would create the kinds of employment that young people need. It would do a tremendous service and give a great example to the provinces and municipalities for how to use government spending to create jobs.

Routine Proceedings

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there has ever been a government that has done more to support youth in apprenticeship programs. In the last budget, we made loans available for people on apprenticeship programs. We have support for their tools. We have measure after measure in terms of supporting apprentices.

It is also important to reflect on the fact that apprentices are some of the ones in the highest demand. There are very few people who enter an apprenticeship program and do not find work opportunities right away. Every week, when I get on the plane that goes from Kamloops to either Calgary or Vancouver, I would bet that one third of the passengers on the plane are heading up to the oil sands and that they have some sort of apprentice background.

Again, I do not think that there has been another government that has done so much for the apprentices of Canada.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's answer with great interest. Right now we can broadly agree that we are in a youth employment crisis in Canada. In fact, it is so significant that we had the Governor of the Bank of Canada recently suggest that young people should work for free to beef up their CVs.

What the member opposite just said was that apprenticeships lead to employment, but the fact is that more and more young people are working several unpaid internships. We can call it payment on a non-payment basis. That is what it is, but those internships are not leading to jobs.

I would like to know what the government is doing about this blight of unpaid internships in Canada.

• (1745)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the numbers in front of me, but one of the very important things we have done as a government is to provide funding for paid internships. I suspect in the member's riding a company is available that has been given the contract and is putting out the requests for proposals. I know it has been a very successful program across Canada in terms of paid internships moving people into longer-term jobs with the companies.

Again, I am not diminishing the fact that we are seized with the issue of youth unemployment. I think we are all seized with that particular issue, and one of the measures, of course, is the provision of paid internships.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for telling us about the difficulty of accessing daycare services in remote areas.

However, since I am quite familiar with the Quebec system, which we are proposing for all of Canada, I know that there are child care co-operatives in rural areas, and there are services offered outside regular hours to allow young people to work.

We need to address the unemployment rate as well as the participation rate. Young people need to participate in the workforce. Right now, far too many young people stay at home and continue their studies because they cannot find work and would rather study.

My esteemed colleague's solution gives the impression that she does not want to provide jobs for young people. She would rather provide cheap labour to employers who will not be required to pay for child care or contribute to the Canada Pension Plan and who will not need to have a nationally recognized training service. However, all those elements are essential.

Does the hon. member understand how important and how urgent it is to intervene in these areas to ensure that young people who want to work not only have a job but also have a future?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, as someone who has spent a number of years of my adult life representing rural communities, I have a very good appreciation for both the challenges and the beautiful benefits of living in rural communities. Child care is absolutely an important piece of that. Having licensed child care is important. However, someone may live 30 kilometres up the valley taking care of a farm, and a grandmother takes care of the children. The point is that we need a lot of different options, and we believe that parents are in the best position to decide them.

I also want to connect one other point. The government is setting the environment for success in rural communities. I always like to give examples, and an example is in Lac La Hache. It is a very rural, very remote area. They have found a niche market in making pepperoni, and 60 to 80 people are employed in that niche market. What we, as a government, are responsible for doing is creating the environment for it to be successful, and that is what we plan to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about summer jobs for students. The first thing I did in my official capacity as an MP, practically the day after I was elected in 2011, was to sign the list of summer jobs. Looking at that list, I knew right away that there were not enough resources and that all of the decisions had been made in advance by government employees who had reviewed the applications. I could have made a few minor changes to the list, but all of the choices to be made were tough ones.

This program helps young people go back to their region and gain initial work experience in forestry, the environment and all sorts of specialties. It provides a great deal of assistance to community organizations and small municipalities. As I reviewed the list of organizations and municipalities that had real needs, I was disappointed to see that things looked the same year after year. The young people who did not make the cut could have met those needs and acquired essential work experience. A few times, I was able to achieve a remarkable feat and make tough choices to give jobs to groups that I felt were more essential than others.

Will there ever be an end to this? Will the government decide to invest the necessary resources? That is what I would like to ask my colleague.

Routine Proceedings

● (1750)

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Canada summer student job program is a critical piece. The member might not be aware, but in actual fact the budget for that particular program increased during the global economic recession and has stayed at that higher level. It involves many students and, as I indicated earlier, close to half a million dollars goes into many different ridings.

It is one piece of the puzzle, but it is not, by any means, the only piece. For example, all members of Parliament have a budget. I would encourage members to hire summer students for their own offices in the summer when they have the opportunity.

Again, it is an important piece of the puzzle, but it is not the only piece of the puzzle in dealing with the student summer job issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

I am very pleased to participate in today's debate about the report of the Standing Committee on Finance entitled "Youth Employment in Canada: Challenges and Potential Solutions".

I am very concerned about youth unemployment, and I will talk later about my bill, Bill C-620. I have worked extremely hard on this file with my colleague from Davenport. We have also considered the issue of unpaid internships and the best ways to protect unpaid interns.

Youth unemployment is a serious concern. We know that the youth unemployment rate in Canada is almost double the national unemployment rate.

According to the committee's report, witnesses said that young Canadians are still feeling the effects of the economic crisis.

Although job growth has been too weak across the board to recover the jobs lost during the crisis, young people have been particularly hard hit. More than 455,000 jobs for people under the age of 25 have been lost since the recession, and the youth unemployment rate remains stuck at double the rate for the population aged 25 and over.

Furthermore, if we look at the figures for young Canadians who are underemployed—meaning that they cannot find full-time jobs in their sector—we can see that one out of three young Canadians is underemployed. I find that figure extremely worrisome.

In light of the current climate, I introduced Bill C-620 to protect unpaid interns in Canada. I worked on this bill with the family of a former intern, Andy Ferguson. He was an intern at a radio station in Edmonton, Alberta. After working 16 hours straight, he unfortunately fell asleep at the wheel while driving home and was involved in a fatal accident.

He did not have the benefit of federal protections. Interns working in areas under federal jurisdiction, including the telecommunications sector, in which Andy Ferguson worked, the transportation sector and the banking sector, have no protection.

There is nothing in Canadian law to protect the health and safety of these interns. That is very disturbing. Andy Ferguson's case sparked a national debate.

We have seen other cases across the country in which unpaid interns have been abused. For example, Jainna Patel was an unpaid intern in Toronto with Bell, a very profitable company that makes a lot of money. This unpaid internship program was shut down a few months ago. However, Jainna Patel says that she did the same kind of work as paid employees, but she did not receive any compensation.

This is part of a disturbing trend in which employers transform paid jobs into unpaid internships. We think that this is an abuse of the concept or the very idea of unpaid internships.

● (1755)

This spring, I introduced Bill C-620, which has two parts. Unpaid interns are in a grey area and get no protection. Bill C-620 would ensure that unpaid interns working for employers under federal jurisdiction get a certain level of protection. For example, my bill will give interns the right to refuse dangerous work and protect them from sexual harassment. Harassment cases have surfaced recently in various workplaces, including in the telecommunications sector. The first part of my bill is designed to protect interns.

The second part is designed to prevent employers from converting paid positions into unpaid internships. Canadian employers need to understand that unpaid internships are not a source of cheap labour. Unpaid interns must not be exploited. If interns are doing the same work as paid employees, employers must pay them. My bill stipulates that internships must benefit interns first and foremost. We have to put a stop to the abuse of unpaid interns in Canada, and I think my bill is a good place to start.

This is also about gender inequality, as several witnesses pointed out in committee. Internships tend to be in female-dominated fields. Witnesses from the Canadian Intern Association and the University of Toronto Students' Union told us that unpaid internships are most popular in journalism, nutrition, social work, marketing, public relations and fashion. We have to improve conditions for all workers in the labour market, but it is important to note that women are affected more than men.

According to recent studies, especially one out of the University of Victoria, unpaid interns are no more likely to get a paid job after their internship. Most unpaid interns did not get a job offer after completing an unpaid internship. The Governor of the Bank of Canada claimed otherwise, but he is quite wrong. It is simply not true that unpaid internships increase young people's chances of getting a paid job. The real problem is that those jobs do not exist. The Conservative government has not managed to create jobs for young people. We should start by taking a closer look at that problem.

Routine Proceedings

At a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, I had the great pleasure of asking Claire Seaborn, a representative of the Canadian Intern Association, some questions. Many of her recommendations were quite relevant and very interesting. Since I only have a minute left, I would like to draw the attention of the House to some of the recommendations of that report, specifically recommendation 9, which calls on the federal government to collect data on unpaid internships in Canada. A number of witnesses pointed out that Statistics Canada has no data on the number of unpaid interns in Canada. We need to have this information if we really want to tackle the problem.

• (1800)

Furthermore, recommendation 10 calls on the federal government to continue to invest in internships, especially in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. That is an excellent recommendation.

The final recommendation I would like to highlight is recommendation 16, which calls on the federal government to explore ways to promote youth hiring in Canada, such as tax credits for businesses, for instance, which was an NDP proposal.

I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues.

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I hear about internships, I think of university internships. It often ends there. However, if we ask people to continue doing internships, what we are basically telling them to do is to volunteer and then, one day, they will be lucky enough to find a job. Honestly. These young people already have huge debt loads because education today is not cheap. As a result, they have huge debts once they finish university. They may be at the age where they want to start a family. We could also talk about those who have finished high school.

As a society, what are we asking them to do? To work for us for free and then to pay for our retirement. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made an excellent point.

An increasing number of young people are coming out of university with debt. Many students cannot accept an unpaid internship because that would be costly. They have debts to repay and they have to pay for other needs, such as room and board. Unpaid internships are often only feasible for a very small group of young people who come from families that might help them with their expenses.

That is why the NDP, in the dissenting finance committee report, asked the government to provide for better management of the practice of unpaid internships, mainly through amendments to the Canada Labour Code, in order to ensure better working conditions. That is what my Bill C-620 would do.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest. I want to congratulate my colleague on her excellent work on the issues of protection and on creating a stronger framework for looking at internships and unpaid internships.

However, what I wanted to ask and talk about right now is the fact that we know that for young people, the job market is precarious. We know that the jobs that are available are often part time and often on a short-term contract. They usually provide very little in the way of job protection or benefits. In other words, they are not the kinds of jobs that a young person finishing a post-secondary degree would imagine launching his or her adult life in. As a result, what we see is that more and more young workers are delaying some of those other markers, such as the buying of a house or potentially starting a family.

One of the measures that we are focused on is the issue of access to child care. Could my colleague speak to why that is so important for young workers?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, people talk a lot about child care across the country and in Quebec. It is essential to provide affordable child care, and that is why the leader of the official opposition proposed creating a national child care plan to limit the cost of care to \$15 a day. It is a very important issue for young people.

My colleague also raised an excellent point. We know that the youth unemployment rate is somewhere between 13% and 14%. That is very high. That is twice the national unemployment rate. We know that nearly one in three young people is underemployed. Nearly one in three young people has to take a part-time job or go back to school because he cannot find a job or he has to work as an unpaid intern.

There is a real crisis here in Canada, and the federal government has a role to play in helping young workers.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we start resuming debate with the hon. member for Davenport, I will let him know there are only about six minutes remaining in the time allocated for this debate on the concurrence in the committee report. He will have six minutes to do with as he pleases.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could see the disappointment on your face when you came to the realization that I have only six minutes to speak on this issue tonight.

There was a time in the history of our country when young people could finish high school and look with hope and optimism to the future. They could get jobs with employers they would potentially work for over their entire working career. Then they would retire with pensions that would keep their senior years dignified.

All that is changed today. For young people, that change has been a matter of increasing concern. As I look at the members present tonight, I can imagine that many of them, in all parties, either have adult children or know adult children of friends who are very qualified, who have worked hard, who have taken some great financial risks in the form of student loans, and who are still unable to get a foothold in the labour market so that they can, as we say in the vernacular, launch.

Government Orders

What the government fails to see in many of its boastful statements is the harm this situation is causing to the long-term prosperity of the Canadian economy. There is a cohort of young people who, first of all, are working for free. This is where we are in the Canadian economy. We are compelling young people to work for free.

Again, as I look at the average age of our members here tonight, I think most people launched in an era when that would have been bizarre. There are and always have been apprenticeships, but most of them have been paid. There have been internships, and many of them have been paid too.

What we are seeing today is an economic climate in which employers know that it is a buyer's market out there for labour. No one gets hurt as hard, and hit as hard, by this reality as young people.

We know that the official unemployment rate for young people is twice the national average, but what the statistics do not show are all those young workers, desperate for that full-time job, who are working part time and often working multiple part-time jobs. They are working in casual labour without a set schedule. Their hours are undetermined. They are working on short-term contracts. They are even working for free.

We are letting down a generation of young workers in our country by failing to act in a focused and determined way to ensure that our young people get paid. How is it that we can generate an economy in which the unemployment rate for young people is twice the national average, and we have a government that boasts about that situation?

Members on the government side rarely explain to Canadians what those jobs are that they say they are creating. Do those jobs come with a pension? Do those jobs come with benefits? Are those jobs full time? Do those jobs have a living wage attached to them?

For most young people, the answer is no. These new jobs that are apparently being created do not come with those things.

• (1810)

Therefore, their value for young people is diminished.

We are in an era of what many people call intergenerational inequity. In the very same company, we have young people who will never have access to the benefits and job security that older workers have, and we have a government sitting on the sidelines.

On behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party in the House of Commons, we are happy that the government has finally listened to us around the issue of unpaid interns and has put some money toward creating more paid internships. That would not have happened without the pressure, work, and the fight from New Democrats on this side of the House. I will give credit where credit is due on that one.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1815)

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you defer the vote until after government orders today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly, the recorded division is deferred until the end of government orders today.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PROTECTION OF CANADA FROM TERRORISTS ACT

BILL C-44—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-44, An Act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other Acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at a future sitting motions to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages of the said bill.

* * *

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

BILL C-18—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must advise that agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report and third reading stages of Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at a future sitting motions to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stages of the said bill.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to table two petitions.

The first petition is with respect to stopping the cuts to our postal services. The petitioners are concerned about the cuts to home delivery for millions of urban customers, the fact that this will get rid of over 8,000 jobs, and that Canada Post has increased postal rates but has provided less service.

The petitioners are asking the government to stop the devastating cuts to Canada Post.

PENSIONS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to increasing the CPP and QPP.

The petitioners are asking the government to expand the Quebec and Canada pension plans and maintain the retirement age for old age security at 65.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on behalf of constituents to present a petition on gender selection pregnancy termination. These constituents note that 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be illegal. They call upon Parliament to condemn the practice of gender selection abortion, which is clear discrimination against females because it is females who are aborted in that fashion.

[Translation]

HEAT ISLANDS AND SMOG

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions that have been signed by many of my constituents.

The first is about decreasing the effects that urban heat islands are having on the health of Canadians. The petitioners want to see coordinated measures to combat heat islands and smog in order to protect our health.

CANADA POST

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is about the cuts to Canada Post services. Residents want to continue receiving mail at home.

[English]

PALESTINE

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by hundreds by my constituents in Newton—North Delta.

The petitioners want to draw the attention of the government and the House of Commons to the fact that millions have been caught in the line of fire on all sides, and that specifically in Gaza, the impact

Routine Proceedings

of the conflict upon the civilian population has become a humanitarian crisis.

The petitioners are asking that we, as a government, support the proposal launched by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish to bring injured Palestinian children from Gaza to Canada for treatment and to support the idea that to achieve peace, we must refuse to hate. Only in that spirit can we hope to bring people together to forge a just, secure, and lasting peace.

• (1820)

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition condemning the cuts at Canada Post and the elimination of door-to-door mail delivery in particular. It will have a truly negative impact on residents of my riding. Many people are condemning this decision and are calling on the government to reject Canada Post's service reduction plan. They want the government to explore other options.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, across the country there is a patchwork of rules governing unpaid internships. Provinces have different regulations. Some provinces have none, and there are no clear rules at the federal level.

This petition, on behalf of dozens upon dozens of people in Toronto, calls upon the government to support a national urban worker strategy that would provide much clearer rules around unpaid internships, among many other measures.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 700, 701, 703, 704, 706, 712, 715, 721, 722, and 727.

[Text]

Question No. 700—**Mr. Malcolm Allen:**

With regard to confined field trials of crops with novel traits, as conducted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada scientists at the Central Experimental Farm, and the possibility of these being prohibited by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, in the summer of 2013: (a) what was the decision made and why; and (b) have there been any field trials of crops with novel traits at the Central Experimental Farm since 2013?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), in 2013, confined field research trials were not prohibited at the Central Experimental Farm, CEF. While Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, received authorization from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, to conduct field trials at the CEF, AAFC withdrew the approved application as it was determined that the project did not require field trials. Thus AAFC did not proceed with any trials during this period.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (b), in 2014, AAFC did not have any projects requiring field trials at the CEF, and thus no applications were made to CFIA to conduct confined field research trials during 2014. Therefore, there were no field trials of crops with novel traits conducted at the CEF in 2013 or 2014.

Question No. 701—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Articles 39 and 40 of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Conservation and Enforcement Measures: what penalties, fines, and court actions have been imposed by the home countries of foreign trawlers that have been cited for illegal fishing in the NAFO regulatory zone off Canada's East Coast over the past ten years?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, over the past 10 years, there have been 13 home countries of foreign trawlers that have been cited for illegal fishing in the NAFO regulatory zone off Canada's east coast. In total, there have been two verbal rebriefs, eight warnings, two vessels ordered to leave the NAFO regulatory area, one vessel suspended, € 696,980.48 in fines, 12,000 Estonian kroon in fines, 100 Latvian lats in fines, and \$285 USD in fines.

Question No. 703—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the so-called "last-in, first-out policy" (LIFO) that governs the northern shrimp fishery: what studies has the government carried out on the impact of LIFO on rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the department has undertaken economic analyses on the impacts of reductions in total allowable catch to the offshore and inshore fleets in 2010, 2011 and 2014. No studies have been undertaken to look at the impact of LIFO on rural communities directly.

Question No. 704—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the closure of the Corner Brook Veterans Affairs office: (a) has the Department hired personnel specifically to provide the services of the closed Corner Brook office; (b) if so, what offices in Newfoundland and Labrador do the personnel work from; and (c) are their positions full-time permanent, if not, how are they classified?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), no, Veterans Affairs Canada did not hire personnel specifically to provide the services of the closed Corner Brook office. When the Corner Brook office closed, the employment end date for one existing employees of that office was extended. This employee is located at the Service Canada office in Corner Brook.

With regard to (b), no additional personnel were hired. There is one Veterans Affairs Canada employee working at the Service Canada office at 1 Regent Square, Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. All remaining Veterans Affairs Canada staff work out of the Veterans Affairs Canada office in St. John's or at the integrated personnel support centre at Canadian Forces Station St. John's.

With regard to (c), the Veterans Affairs Canada employee working at Service Canada in Corner Brook is a full-time employee and will continue to be employed there as long as the services are required.

Question No. 706—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces: (a) what are the full costs to date for army, navy and air force contributions to Operation Reassurance, broken down by each service; and (b) what are the estimated future costs of Operation Reassurance, as

well as the costs for any other initiatives by the Canadian military to promote stability in Eastern Europe?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), full costs to date are unavailable, as the costs of a mission are not available until publication of the annual departmental performance report or 90 days following the end of the mission.

With regard to (b), cost estimates are dynamic and evolve with the refinement of planning and operational assumptions. These estimates are updated regularly to support planning efforts and decision-making, and would therefore be inaccurate.

Question No. 712—**Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to the distribution of funds from the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program from June 2013 to present: (a) for each contribution what is the (i) dollar amount, (ii) the name of the recipient organization, (iii) the electoral district by the 2003 representation order, (iv) the electoral district by the 2013 representation order; (b) what is the total amount contributed by calendar year in (i) each electoral district by the 2003 representation order, (ii) each electoral district by the 2013 representation order; (c) what is the total amount contributed by calendar year to each organization; (d) what is the number of applications made in each province by calendar year; and (e) what is the number of applications made by calendar year in (i) each electoral district by the 2003 representation order, (ii) each electoral district by the 2013 representation order?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not track the information on funding levels under the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program by electoral district and calendar year.

Question No. 715—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Deficit Reduction Action Plan Track 16: Reduction in Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Activities: (a) what is the government's objective with regard to this reduction; (b) how many employees have been eliminated to date due to this objective and what are their positions and locations; (c) how many employees will be eliminated in total and what are their positions and locations; (d) has the government done an analysis on what effects this reduction of NAFO air hours from 1000 to 600 and sea days from 785 to 600 may have on foreign overfishing off Canada's coasts and, if so, what are the findings of any such analysis; (e) what are the internal tracking numbers for any documents or briefing materials on this Track provided to senior government officials at the level of Director General or above; (f) what is the total budget reduction of the Track in (i) 2014-2015, (ii) beyond; and (g) what methods used to monitor fishing activity on the high seas, including aerial surveillance, at-sea and port inspections, international observers, satellite (RADARSAT II) and vessel monitoring systems will be effected by this reduction and what are the details of how these methods will be effected?

*Routine Proceedings***Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the objective of this exercise was to rebalance the mix of surveillance and enforcement tools at disposal in the NAFO regulatory area, or NRA, in order to better reflect improvements in compliance, improvements in electronic monitoring, and a reduction in the days fished in the NRA by foreign fleets. These changes allowed us to optimize the distribution of our compliance and enforcement assets without compromising our overall enforcement effectiveness.

With regard to (b) and (c), 23 positions have been eliminated as a result of this objective. No employees will be eliminated as a result of the reduction of three fishery officer positions in the NAFO/Offshore Surveillance Unit and 20 seagoing Canadian Coast Guard positions in Newfoundland and Labrador. Position reduction will be managed through attrition and existing vacancies.

With regard to (d), NAFO enforcement will not be affected as part of this measure. The current enforcement program will continue to focus on detection and deterrence of non-compliance by foreign vessels.

With regard to (e), the tracking numbers are 2012-006-02401.

With regard to (f), the total budget reduction of the track in 2014-15 and beyond is \$4.2 million per year.

With regard to (g), no methods used to monitor fishing activity will be affected. Dedicated, armed, boarding-ready patrol ships will continue to remain available for patrolling Canada's 200-mile limit and for carrying out inspections in the NRA.

Question No. 721—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) terminated Prison Farm Program: (a) has CSC studied the possibility of re-opening a prison farm program; (b) what studies, reports or assessments have been prepared by CSC regarding the re-opening of a prison farm program, broken down by (i) date of studies, reports or assessments, (ii) title of studies, reports or assessments, (iii) internal tracking number of studies, reports or assessments; (c) what briefing documents have been prepared for ministers and their staff regarding the re-opening of a prison farm program, broken down by (i) date of request for briefing note, (ii) title of requested briefing note, (iii) internal tracking number of briefing note; (d) what is the anticipated cost, broken down annually for the next ten years, of re-opening a prison farm program; (e) how much money has currently been budgeted to re-open a prison farm program; (f) how much money has currently been budgeted to study the re-opening of a prison farm program; (g) has the government's policy changed regarding a prison farm program since 2010; and (h) what records exist regarding meetings at which CSC was asked to re-open a prison farm, broken down by (i) date of meeting, (ii) attendees, (iii) any internal tracking numbers assigned to the meeting's documentation?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada will not revisit the decision to close the prison farms. There is no desire to reinstate this ineffective program. The Government of Canada invests in programs that are efficient and effective. CSC is focusing on programs that provide relevant and practical employment skills as part of their rehabilitation.

Question No. 722—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to Service Canada, specifically to the 2008 document, "Moving Forward, Growing Service Canada in the Ontario Region": (a) what are the dates, titles, and file numbers of any file, memorandum, instruction, directive or any other record which document (i) the decision which resulted in removing Kingston from the list of physical processing areas of hubs for the Employment Insurance business line of Service Canada since the issuance of the 2008 document, (ii) the rationale

which resulted in removing Kingston from the list of physical processing areas of hubs for the Employment Insurance business line of Service Canada since the issuance of the 2008 document; and (b) what are the dates, titles, and file numbers of any file, memorandum, instruction, directive or any other record which documents (i) the decision which resulted in adding North Bay to the list of physical processing areas of hubs for the Employment Insurance business line of Service Canada since the issuance of the 2008 document, (ii) the rationale which resulted in adding North Bay to the list of physical processing areas of hubs for the Employment Insurance business line of Service Canada since the issuance of the 2008 document?

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, in 2010, ESDC undertook a comprehensive review of program and service delivery. These reviews are done on an ongoing basis to ensure programs and services are focused, modern, and efficient, that they continue to respond to the priorities of Canadians, and that they are in line with core federal responsibilities. Modernizing the employment insurance processing system was part of the review.

In August 2011, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development announced a plan to consolidate smaller and more costly employment insurance processing sites into larger regional hubs. This new service delivery model was a national strategy, informed by but not exclusively based on the 2008 regional document "Moving Forward, Growing Service Canada in the Ontario Region". The model, to be implemented gradually over three years, focused on moving from 120 sites across the country to 22 sites.

Question No. 727—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to questions Q-1 to Q-644 submitted to the Order Paper during the Second Session of the 41st Parliament: (a) what are the details of all information, provided by responding departments to the Privy Council Office (PCO), that was omitted in the final responses to the questions; (b) what are the details of any correspondence, memos, notes, emails, or other communications, sent within the relevant departments, within the PCO, or transmitted between the departments and the PCO, regarding the omission of such information, broken down by (i) relevant file numbers, (ii) correspondence or file type, (iii) subject, (iv) date, (v) purpose, (vi) origin, (vii) intended destination, (viii) other officials copied or involved; (c) what are the reasons for the omission of information in the responses to these questions; and (d) what are the details of all objections to such omissions?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, except for those questions requiring an oral answer pursuant to the Standing Orders, the government's answers to questions on the order paper are contained in documents tabled in Parliament that bear a minister's or parliamentary secretary's signature. Any other version of a response is considered draft and unofficial.

In processing Parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and any draft responses would be considered advice to a minister.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 702, 705, 707 to 711, 713, 714, 717 to 720, 724 to 726, and 728 to 737 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 702—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the recreational and food fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador: what amount of money has been spent by the government to monitor and enforce the fishery in each of the last five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 705—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to the staffing of Canadian Armed Forces clinics: (a) at each base or location, what is the number employed of (i) military psychiatrists, (ii) civilian psychiatrists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (iii) Calian psychiatrists, (iv) military psychologists, (v) civilian psychologists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (vi) Calian psychologists, (vii) military medical doctors, (viii) civilian medical doctors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (ix) Calian medical doctors, (x) military medical social workers, (xi) civilian medical social workers employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xii) Calian medical social workers, (xiii) military registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xiv) civilian registered nurses specializing in mental health employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xv) Calian registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xvi) military addictions counsellors, (xvii) civilian addictions counsellors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xviii) Calian addictions counsellors; (b) what is the average full-time equivalent salary for (i) military psychiatrists, (ii) civilian psychiatrists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (iii) Calian psychiatrists, (iv) military psychologists, (v) civilian psychologists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (vi) Calian psychologists, (vii) military medical doctors, (viii) civilian medical doctors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (ix) Calian medical doctors, (x) military medical social workers, (xi) civilian medical social workers employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xii) Calian medical social workers, (xiii) military registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xiv) civilian registered nurses specializing in mental health employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xv) Calian registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xvi) military addictions counsellors, (xvii) civilian addictions counsellors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xviii) Calian addictions counsellors; and (c) what is the average number of patients treated per month by (i) military psychiatrists, (ii) civilian psychiatrists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (iii) Calian psychiatrists, (iv) military psychologists, (v) civilian psychologists employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (vi) Calian psychologists, (vii) military medical doctors, (viii) civilian medical doctors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (ix) Calian medical doctors, (x) military medical social workers, (xi) civilian medical social workers employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xii) Calian medical social workers, (xiii) military registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xiv) civilian registered nurses specializing in mental health employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xv) Calian registered nurses specializing in mental health, (xvi) military addictions counsellors, (xvii) civilian addictions counsellors employed directly by the Department of National Defence, (xviii) Calian addictions counsellors?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 707—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Halifax West, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the

municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 708—Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Bourassa, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 709—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Cape Breton—Canso, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 710—Ms. Judy Foote:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Random—Burin—St. George's, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 711—Ms. Lise St-Denis:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 713—Mr. Arnold Chan:

With regard to government office space from 2008 to present: (a) what is the occupancy rate for government-owned buildings both in percent and square feet; (b) by ministry and agency, what is the location and occupancy rate of each government-owned building; (c) by ministry and agency, what is the location and occupancy rate of each privately-leased office space, and for vacated buildings, what is the date the government vacated the space; (d) what is the lease cost and what is the length of the lease; (e) what was the intended use of the space; and (f) who is the owner of the property?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 714—Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to government funding: what is the total amount of funding since fiscal year 2011-2012, up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Windsor West, broken down by department or agency, initiative, and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 716—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Deficit Reduction Action Plan Track 24: Prioritization and Restructuring Habitat Management and Associated Ecosystems Management Activities: (a) what is the government's objective with regard to this Track; (b) how many employees have been eliminated to date due to this objective and what are their positions and locations; (c) how many employees will be eliminated in total and what are their positions and locations; (d) has the government done an analysis on what effects this reduction in funding, combined with the government's changes to the Fisheries Act and regulatory changes authorizing the deposit of deleterious substances will have on Canada's marine environments and fish habitat and, if so, what are the findings of any such analysis; (e) what are the internal tracking numbers for any documents, briefing materials, or communications from provincial governments and key stakeholders regarding this Track provided to senior government officials at the level of Director General or above; (f) what is the total budget reduction of the Track in (i) 2014-2015, (ii) beyond; (g) has the government developed the regulations, policies, and tools needed to implement these changes and, if so, what are the details; (h) what is the government's definition of a practical, common-sense approach to managing threats to Canada's recreational, commercial, and Aboriginal fisheries and the fish habitat on which they depend; and (i) since this Track has begun to be implemented has the government had any instances of failure in its objective for no net loss to fish habitat and, if so, what are all associated details?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 717—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Yellowhead, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 718—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Whitby—Oshawa, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 719—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Barrie, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 720—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' monitoring of ocean acidification: (a) what are the details of the government's monitoring, including (i) total budgetary resources allocated to this issue to date, (ii) projected budgetary resources allocated through 2016-2017, (iii) the number of full-time employees who are involved in researching, monitoring, or studying ocean acidification, (iv) locations of any and all researching or monitoring sites; (b) what are all reports, documents, briefing materials, and communications on this subject, broken down by (i) title, (ii) internal tracking number, (iii) recipient, (iv) date of production or distribution; (c) has there been an economic impact analysis of the effects of ocean acidification and, if so, (i) what are its findings, and, if not, (ii) why not, (iii) does the government have any plans to do such an economic impact analysis; and (d) does the government have a plan to deal with the long-term risks associated with ocean acidification and, if so, what are the details of any such plan?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 724—Mr. Scott Andrews:

With regard to government funding, for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Avalon, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 725—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:

With regard to complaints filed with the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre since 2010: (a) what is the breakdown of complaints submitted by (i) phone, (ii) email, (iii) online form, (iv) fax; (b) what is the breakdown by province; (c) how many complaints have been filed regarding (i) advance fees, (ii) identity fraud, (iii) investment fraud, (iv) online auction fraud, (v) health fraud, (vi) counterfeit, (vii) fraudulent bankruptcy, (viii) property fraud, (ix) corruption, including, but not limited to, bribery, (x) other types of fraud; and (d) how many complaints have been resolved regarding (i) advance fees, (ii) identity fraud, (iii) investment fraud, (iv) online auction fraud, (v) health fraud, (vi) counterfeit, (vii) fraudulent bankruptcy, (viii) property fraud, (ix) corruption, including, but not limited to, bribery, (x) other types of fraud?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 726—Ms. Yvonne Jones:

With regard to government funding: for each fiscal year since 2007-2008 inclusive, (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group in the electoral district of Labrador, providing for each (i) the name of the recipient, (ii) the location of the recipient, indicating the municipality, (iii) the date, (iv) the amount, (v) the department or agency providing it, (vi) the program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) the nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 728—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With respect to access to information requests to government departments, institutions and agencies: for each year from 2003 to 2013, (a) what is the number of notice-of-release or notice-of-reply requests signed by a representative from the Minister's office before an access to information request was released by the Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) directorate; (b) were these requests identified for review by the Minister's office, and, if so, on what grounds; (c) did the ATIP directorate wait for a representative from the Minister's office to sign the release or request referred to in (a) before releasing the access to information request, and, if so, for how many days; and (d) did these delays extend the release of information beyond any established guidelines, protocols or agreed upon timelines?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 729—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With respect to government departments, institutions and agencies: for each year from 2003 to 2013, (a) broken down by department, institution or agency, (i) how many requests for information were made to non-governmental organizations under section 7(3)(c.1) of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), (ii) under what lawful authority were each of these requests made, (iii) for how many of these requests was consent received from the impacted individual, (iv) for how many of these requests was the impacted individual notified; (b) broken down by department, institution or agency, (i) how many disclosures were made under section 7(3)(d) of PIPEDA, (ii) under what lawful authority were each of these requests made, (iii) for how many of these requests was consent received from the impacted individual, (iv) for how many of these requests was the impacted individual notified; (c) what is a type 2 request for information according to Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA); (d) how many type 2 requests have been made by CBSA; (e) under what lawful authority was each type 2 request made; (f) did each of these type 2 requests by CBSA require a warrant; (g) will the Department of Justice table its legal analysis of the charter compliance of Bills S-4 and C-13; and (h) has the Department of Justice produced a legal analysis of the impacts of the Supreme Court's Spencer decision on provisions 7(3)(c.1) and 7(3)(d) in PIPEDA, and, if so, what is it?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 730—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to the government's processing of immigration applications: what is the total average cost to government and time required to complete a single application for (i) federal skilled worker, (ii) federal skilled trades, (iii) Canadian Experience Class, (iv) Quebec-selected skilled workers, (v) Provincial Nominee Program, (vi) start-up visa, (vii) self-employed people, (viii) live-in caregivers, (ix) spouse, common-law or conjugal partner, or dependent children sponsorship, (x) parent and grandparents sponsorship, (xi) inland asylum claimant, (xii) government-sponsored refugee, (xiii) privately sponsored refugee, (xiv) temporary resident visa, (xv) parents and grandparents super visa?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 731—Ms. Laurin Liu:

With regard to the employment of interns by the government since 2008: (a) how many internships have been hosted, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) agency, department, Crown corporation or Canadian embassy, (iv) average durations, in weeks, (v) average number of hours per week, (vi) the number of paid versus unpaid internships, (vii) average salary, if paid; (b) what was the ratio of female to male interns, and for each of these, the ratio of paid versus unpaid positions, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) agency, department, Crown corporation or Canadian embassy; (c) how many First Nation interns were there, in paid and unpaid positions, broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) agency, department, Crown corporation or Canadian embassy; (d) how many members of visible minority groups were interns, in paid versus unpaid positions, and broken down by (i) year, (ii) province, (iii) agency, department, Crown corporation or Canadian embassy; and (e) what proportion of interns, broken down by paid versus unpaid positions, were subsequently offered permanent full-time employment within the organization with which they had completed their internship?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 732—Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program: (a) how many Labour Market Opinion (LMO) and Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) applications did Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) receive in total in 2011, 2012, 2013, and to date in 2014, broken down (i) for each month in 2011, 2012, 2013, and to date in 2014, (ii) by province, (iii) by industry sector; and (b) after receiving these applications, how many LMOs and LMIAAs did ESDC grant in total in 2011, 2012, 2013, and to date in 2014, broken down (i) for each month in 2011, 2012, 2013, and to date in 2014, (ii) by province, (iii) by industry sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 733—Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:

With regard to the International Mobility Programs: (a) which program streams of the International Mobility Programs enable foreign workers to work in Canada temporarily; (b) which streams were part of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program before the government announced reforms to the program on June 20, 2014; and (c) how many foreign workers entered Canada under the International Mobility Programs each year between 2005 and 2014 to date, broken down (i) by program stream, (ii) by month, (iii) by province, (iv) by industry sector?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 734—Mrs. Sadia Groguhé:

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program: for each year since 2000, (a) how many full-time equivalent (FTE) positions were assigned to review the hiring requests for temporary foreign workers and to review the processing and preparation of labour market opinions, accelerated labour market opinions, and labour market impact assessments; (b) excluding on-site audits, how many FTE positions were tasked with carrying out audits and ensuring that employers complied with the conditions of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program; (c) what departments are responsible for carrying out on-site inspections to ensure that employers comply with the rules of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program; and (d) how many FTE positions were tasked with carrying out on-site inspections to ensure that employers complied with the rules of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 735—Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:

With regard to reducing processing backlogs of sponsorship applications: (a) what are the details of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's implementation of its Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification, in order to reunite families more quickly while reducing backlogs and improving processing times; (b) what are the details concerning the staffing levels of the processing center for inland sponsorships; and (c) what are the details of any delays currently being experienced by spousal sponsorship applicants?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 736—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to Shared Services Canada: (a) what is the total amount of late payment charges for all telecommunication services incurred in each month since January 2012, inclusive; (b) what are the names of the service providers and the types of telecommunications services provided, in all cases in part (a), broken down by (i) internet, (ii) cellular telephone, (iii) telephone service other than cellular, (iv) other wireless services, (v) cable television, (vi) satellite television, (vii) rental or other provision of telecommunications equipment, specifying the type of equipment, (viii) other type of telecommunications service, specifying the type; (c) what were the location or locations of service in respect to the telecommunications services which incurred late payment charges in part (a); and (d) what is the total amount of the late payment charges?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 737—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to government telecommunications: since January 2012, inclusive, (a) on how many occasions was a service terminated, disconnected, or otherwise interrupted due to non-payment or overly late payment, and for each such instance, what was the type of telecommunications service, broken down by (i) internet, (ii) cellular telephone, (iii) telephone service other than cellular, (iv) other wireless services, (v) cable television, (vi) satellite television, (vii) rental or other provision of telecommunications equipment, specifying the type of equipment, (viii) other type of telecommunications service, specifying the type; (b) what was the date on which any service was terminated, disconnected, or interrupted; (c) what was the date on which service was restored or reconnected; (d) what were the costs associated with restoration or reconnection of service; (e) what was the location of the facility where service was terminated, disconnected, or otherwise interrupted; (f) what was the number of employees whose services were affected by the termination, disconnection, or interruption; (g) what type of work was undertaken at the facility where service was terminated, disconnected, or otherwise interrupted; and (h) what were the names of the service providers?

Government Orders

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

VETERANS HIRING ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-27, an act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There is one motion in amendment outstanding on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-27. Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is not present to move her motion at report stage. Therefore, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Julian Fantino moved that Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (enhancing hiring opportunities for certain serving and former members of the Canadian Forces), be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I will let him know we have five minutes remaining in the time for government orders, so he may want to judge his time accordingly.

Mr. Bryan Hayes (Sault Ste. Marie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to be speaking today on Bill C-27, the veterans hiring act. It is truly an honour to rise today in support of our men and women in

uniform, past and present, and to do so just days after Canadians from coast to coast to coast came together in almost record numbers to recognize and honour our nation's heroes on Remembrance Day. If there had ever been any doubt, Canadians made it abundantly clear that they hold our veterans and still-serving members in the highest regard and with the greatest pride and gratitude.

The ceremony in Sault Ste. Marie was a testament to that. It was incredibly well attended on a snowy and blustery day, and I was so very proud to be there as we paid tribute to all of our fallen, including, most recently, Sault Ste. Marie's own Sergeant John Wayne Faught and Master Corporal Scott Vernelli, whom we lost in the war in Afghanistan.

Canadians have also let our military families know that they share in their tragic loss when brave men like Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and Corporal Nathan Cirillo make the ultimate sacrifice to defend our cherished way of life and the values we hold so dearly. Our nation has lost two of its finest sons, and we will never forget them, especially those of us who were on the Hill that dreadful day. I was one of them, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all security forces, who did an amazing job keeping the entire parliamentary precinct safe that day. It was a mammoth task. I also want to thank my colleagues, who took true leadership roles during the event, and I especially want to thank Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers for his unselfish action in placing his life in jeopardy to save ours.

This is why the legislation before us today is important. Bill C-27 is another way for Canada to demonstrate its steadfast support for the men and women who have always been there for our great country. These men and women include my own father and mother, as well as my two sisters and brother-in-law. Collectively they have provided almost 100 years of service to their country, with my dad leading the way with a 36-year distinguished career in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

It is because of my immediate family's Canadian Armed Forces background that I was so pleased to be appointed to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I take great pride in working with members from all parties as we strive to bring forward legislation such as Bill C-27 to better serve our veterans. Members of the committee work very well together, as demonstrated by the unanimous report on the new veterans charter moving forward. I am confident that in time, the government will adopt the 14 recommendations brought forward.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their hard work. However, I would like to especially thank my colleague from Guelph for his expertise on the committee. I understand that he will not be seeking re-election in 2015, so I would like to thank him for his service to Canada since his election in 2008 and wish him great success moving forward and great quality time with his children, as he will no longer have to live in Ottawa for six months of every year. As much as we all love Ottawa, it is a tremendous strain on our families. We can all attest to that.

Routine Proceedings

Specifically, this legislation is another meaningful way for us to create new opportunities for eligible veterans and still-serving members to continue serving Canada through the federal public service and to ensure that Canada continues to benefit from their skills, training, and can-do spirit. Bill C-27 would do this by giving veterans and still-serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces greater access to rewarding jobs in the federal public service.

First and foremost, it would create a statutory period of entitlement for those eligible men and women who are medically released from the military because of a service-related injury. These deserving men and women would be moved to the front of the hiring line in recognition of their service and sacrifice on behalf of Canada. As the Minister of Veterans Affairs has said, this is the right and honourable thing to do, and all Canadians would be proud of this support for our men and women in uniform.

● (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie will have 15 minutes remaining in his time for his comments on the question when the House next resumes debate on the motion.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It now being 6:30 p.m., the House will proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Call in the members.

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

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

(Division No. 272)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Barlow
Bateman	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blaney	Block

Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Cash	Chan
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Cullen
Daniel	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Devolin	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hughes
James	Jones
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Latendresse	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leaf
Lemieux	Leung
Liu	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Michaud
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	Pacetti
Papillon	Paradis
Payne	Péclét
Perreault	Pilon
Poillievre	Preston
Quach	Rafferty
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia

Government Orders

Schellenberger
Seeback
Shea
Shory
Sitsabaiesan
Sopuck
Stanton
Stewart
Sullivan
Thibeault
Tremblay
Trottier
Turnel
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Vaughan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 245

Scott
Sellah
Shipley
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Smith
Sorenson
St-Denis
Stoffer
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Wong
Yelich
Yurdiga

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-21, An Act to control the administrative burden that regulations impose on businesses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-21.

● (1900)

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

(Division No. 273)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Albrecht
Allen (Welland)
Allison
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Ashton
Aubin
Baird
Bateman
Bennett
Benskin
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boivin

Adams
Albas
Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anders
Andrews
Armstrong
Aspin
Ayala
Barlow
Bélanger
Benoit
Bergen
Bevington
Blanchette
Block
Borg

Boughen
Brahmi
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Carrie
Cash
Charlton
Chisholm
Choquette
Clarke
Côté
Crockatt
Cuzner
Davidson
Dechert
Dewar
Doré Lefebvre
Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dusseault
Easter
Eayking
Falk
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Foote
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Gill
Goguen
Goodale
Gosal
Gravelle
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Jones
Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Latendresse
Lebel
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Lemieux
Liu
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
Marston
Mathysen
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menegakis
Miller
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Murray
Nicholls
Norlock
Obhrai
Oliver
Opitz
Papillon
Payne
Perreault
Poilievre
Quach
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rempel
Rickford
Saganash
Saxton
Schellenberger

Boutin-Sweet
Braid
Brousseau
Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Caron
Casey
Chan
Chicoine
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cotler
Cullen
Daniel
Day
Devolin
Dionne Labelle
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dykstra
Eyking
Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Freeland
Galipeau
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Glover
Goldring
Goodyear
Gourde
Grewal
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Hughes
Jones
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lapointe
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leaf
Leung
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mai
Masse
Mayes
McGuinity
McLeod
Michaud
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Nantel
Nicholson
Nunez-Melo
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
Pacetti
Paradis
Péclet
Pilon
Preston
Rafferty
Rankin
Ravignat
Reid
Richards
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scarpaleggia
Scott

Routine Proceedings

Seeback	Sellah
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Toet
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Turnel	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vaughan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 245	

NAYS

Members

Fortin— 1

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

• (1910)

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

(Division No. 274)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Angus	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Barlow
Bateman	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette

Blaney	Block
Boivin	Borg
Boughen	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brosseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Cash	Chan
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Devolin
Dewar	Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Footé	Fortin
Freeland	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	James
Jones	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
Mayes	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Murray
Nantel	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	Obhrai
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Pacetti	Papillon
Paradis	Payne
Pécelet	Perreault
Pilon	Poillievre
Preston	Quach
Rafferty	Rajotte
Rankin	Rathgeber
Ravignat	Raynault
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford

Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Shea
Shiplee	Shory
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Toet	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Uppal	Valcourt
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vaughan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Williamson	
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 246

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 17 of this year, I put a question, through you, to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The question was about what additional action we could expect from the government to address the huge deficit in safe drinking water for first nations, particularly in Alberta, where a number of first nations were in such extreme circumstances that they were forced to take the federal government to court.

I would like to take the opportunity today to raise this matter again. I am not going to address the court action, because I know that the response would be “we cannot discuss that matter as it is before the court”, and so it should be. That is where the matter should be resolved. However, there are much bigger issues.

We still have 17 boil water advisories for first nations in Alberta alone. Time after time, when these matters are raised, either by the first nations or by the opposition in this place, we get the same old tired refrain from the government, which is that the federal government has spent a lot of money on first nations, as if that should be some kind of appropriate response. I hate to remind the federal government that it has a constitutional responsibility to meet the needs of first nations. It also has obligations and commitments under treaties, so that is simply not an adequate response.

What the government did was move forward, proposing a law that would regulate safe drinking water for first nations communities.

Adjournment Proceedings

There were a lot of qualms in first nations communities about that, but eventually, when consultations were held, the Alberta first nations of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 said that under a number of conditions, they would agree to this law. I will get to that in a minute.

That law did pass in this place. Unfortunately, it is only a framework law, so specific standards to ensure safe drinking water for first nations are still not in place.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps you would like to intervene just for a moment. Across the way, they might have courtesy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I would ask all hon. members who wish to carry on conversations to take them outside to the lobby. We are in the middle of the adjournment debate.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that my colleague across the way also has an opportunity to hear what my issues are and what my eventual question will be.

The government is moving forward. The legislation was simply framework legislation. Essentially, it simply passed liability from the federal government to the first nations to begin delivering waste water services and safe drinking water. Regrettably, it still does not have the regulations in place that will clearly say what the standards are that first nations have to live up to and deliver on. Second, there is still no new money.

First nations across the country, including Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 first nations had agreed to support this law, but on condition that they received \$162 million for water infrastructure to cover the deficit faced by Alberta first nations as identified by the independent national engineering assessment. They agreed that they would accept this legislation being imposed on them, even though constitutionally and under the UN declaration they are supposed to have responsibility for self-government in determining their own regime for regulation. They agreed to consent to that legislation on that condition.

The second condition was that Canada develop a satisfactory and adequately funded process for collaborative development of the implementing regulations. Thus far, I am told by the Treaty 6, 7 and 8 first nations in Alberta that they have come to the conclusion that they must withdraw from the process because the money has not been forthcoming and they have not been supported in the consultation on the regulations.

My question for the government is this. When can the first nations expect this money? The government has committed only \$323 million for the whole country, and yet half of that is needed to meet the needs of the first nations in Alberta in order to enter the 21st century of basic minimum standards for their community.

Adjournment Proceedings

●(1915)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the question of the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona. Let me begin by assuring the hon. member that the health and safety of first nation communities is a top priority of our government. We are committed to ensuring that first nation residents have access to emergency assistance services at the same level as those available to Canadians living off reserve.

In the case of the recent flooding in Alberta on the Siksika reserve, our government took swift action working with the Province of Alberta to ensure that the community's immediate health and safety needs were being met. We were in regular contact with regional first nation leadership, and officials also visited the community to ensure that it had the support it needed in that very difficult time.

Our government, through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, has an agreement with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. This allows Canada and Alberta to work in partnership to support Alberta first nations in certain emergency situations, such as natural disasters. Under this agreement, our government provides the Alberta Emergency Management Agency with an annual funding base of \$680,000 for the 2013-14 fiscal year, and the agency provides emergency management services for Alberta's 45 first nations, as it does for all other communities in the province.

In addition, the agency works closely with Alberta first nations to build emergency management capacity within their own communities. This is done through a variety of activities, including training and support for emergency planning and preparedness. In additional preparedness work, this fiscal year our government will provide funding to five first nations in Alberta to support them in the development of wildfire mitigation strategies. This is a further example of our government working closely with first nations to build capacity on reserve. Our government continues to partner with Alberta Emergency Management, first nation leaders, and other emergency partners to help support the emergency recovery needs of the affected communities.

Furthermore, I want to inform the House that our government has taken action to streamline the process of funding emergency management on reserve and to ensure that first nations, provinces, and territories have improved access to emergency funding when needed by putting in place a single window for securing funding for first nation emergency costs. This single window came into effect on April 1, 2014, with all eligible emergency management costs on first nation reserves now being reimbursed by one department, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

In order to help implement all that I have just described, our government is making significant investments to protect the health and safety of first nations on reserve. To that end, economic action plan 2014 provides \$40 million over five years starting in 2015-16, for disaster mitigation programming in first nation communities. Our government believes that all Canadians deserve to feel safe and

secure in their homes no matter where they live. That is why we are actively working with our partners to ensure that first nations on reserve in Alberta met this rigorous standard.

●(1920)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am left very puzzled. My questions were clearly about providing safe drinking water to first nations.

Over the last couple of years, a good number of first nations in Alberta have suffered deeply because of flooding. It is also the responsibility of the government to step in and provide them with an emergency response, and to assist them in building new housing to replace the housing that was destroyed during the flooding.

The government has absolutely failed to respond to my question. When will it step up and provide the funding needed to meet the millions of dollars deficit for safe drinking water? This is a completely separate issue and is occurring in tandem. I do not know if we call the lack of safe drinking water going on for decades an emergency, but it certainly is an emergency for first nations families that are trying to provide safe drinking water for their children or to bathe their babies. I remain puzzled.

Perhaps the government would like to respond to my initial question about when it will deliver the promised \$162 million to deliver safe drinking water to Alberta first nations.

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, to answer my colleague's question, our government has dedicated significant resources toward providing fresh water for on reserve first nations. We have made significant progress to date and we will continue to do so.

As I have said, the health and safety of first nation communities, including timely effective support in times of emergency, is a top priority of our government. We appreciate that this is a difficult situation for some first nations in Alberta and we continue to work closely with the province, first nations emergency management and public health system partners to support Alberta first nations emergency management activities.

We recognize that for those still out of their home communities as a result of flooding in 2013, this is a difficult time. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is working with the affected first nations, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, and other partners, and is making progress toward our mutual goal to help people return home safely as soon as possible.

Our government continues to work to ensure the health and safety of Alberta's first nations and all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:22 p.m.)

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